

Touring in Safety

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Introduction

It has been suggested that tourism embodies the desire for contrast and escape (Rojek & Urry 1997). Travelling to unfamiliar or foreign places is said to offer a form of stimulation that enables the tourist to break away from the banalities of everyday life. Such escape comes at a cost: uncertainty. For tourists, uncertainty may come in many forms, including unknown local customs and languages, unfamiliar food, confusing transport systems, unfathomable street maps, unidentifiable strangers, and so on. Whilst uncertainty is one of the things that makes the experience of tourism so exciting, an excess of uncertainty or the wrong kinds of uncertainty can threaten a tourist's sense of personal security and safety. Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in the relationship between tourism and crime. Research indicates that '[m]ost tourists select their destinations not only on the basis of price and destination image, but, most importantly, on personal safety and security' (Pizam, Tarlow & Bloom 1997:1). In particular, locations that are associated with the risk of personal violence are especially unattractive to tourists (Prideaux & Dunn 1995; Pizam 1999).¹

Generally, in both local and international markets, Australia has a reputation as a safe tourist destination (Prideaux & Dunn 1995; Beirman 2003). This is supported by recent research demonstrating that the murder of overseas visitors in Australia is a 'statistically rare event' (Venditto & Mouzos 2006:5). However, during the mid-1990's, especially 1996-1997, a number of popular Australian tourist locations were the sites of extreme and horrific violence. The most notable of these was the mass murder of thirty-five people in Port Arthur, Tasmania by Martin Bryant on April 28, 1996. In the same year, Ivan Milat was tried and convicted for the murder of seven people, whose bodies had been discovered in the Belanglo State Forest in New South Wales. All of the victims were backpackers who had stayed in or near the popular tourist precinct of Kings Cross in Sydney. Also in 1996 Brian Hagland, an English tourist, was killed in an attack on Bondi Beach. In September of the following year a tourist from the Czech Republic, Jiri Zoufal, was killed by a man wielding an axe in Kings Cross, Sydney. In the weeks following Mr Zoufal's homicide three other tourists were assaulted by a man armed with an axe in the same area. September 1997 also saw the murder of Michiko Okuyama, a tourist from Japan, in Cairns, Queensland. Although not all of these incidents involved international tourists, it is worth noting that 1996-97 recorded the highest number of separate homicide incidents involving

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1 In the wake of the bomb explosions in tourist venues in Bali over the last few years, there is little doubt that terrorism is now likely to be a prominent safety consideration for Australians travelling overseas. However, in this article I address the more long-standing relationship between successful tourism and criminal violence that is unrelated to terrorism.

overseas visitors during the nine-year period from 1 July 1994 to 30 June 2003 (Venditto & Mouzos 2006). In a response to these collective incidents, Bruce Baird of the Tourism Council of Australia stated, in October 1997: 'It does have an unfortunate impact in terms of our image. We have been seen as a safe environment and a lot safer than the United States. ... If you have more of these tourist killings and bashings, you have a serious problem.'²

The Australian tourism industry — the large corporations, small businesses, government agencies and political institutions that constitute and service the trade — is highly attuned to this delicate correlation between acts of violence in a given location, the safety image of that location and its tourist numbers. Although the locations that appear to suffer the most are those with sustained high crime rates, within the industry there is also a perception that a widely publicised incident of isolated violence can constitute a serious problem, or crisis, in itself (as indicated by Baird's comments). In this article I am concerned with this kind of crisis. Baird suggests that more killings will lead to a serious problem. I ask, is the 'problem' that Baird identifies, and that many others in similar positions have identified, a social problem of violence (of 'killings and bashings') or is it an economic problem related to 'image'? To answer this question I examine two widely publicised cases of extreme criminal violence in Australia — the Port Arthur massacre in Tasmania in 1996 and the murder of Michiko Okuyama in Queensland in 1997 — and consider whether the impact of each case was defined by the tourism industry as a crisis or potential crisis. Drawing upon industry definitions of a crisis (Beirman 2003; Sonez, Backman & Allen 1994) I will suggest that in both of these cases this question should be answered in the affirmative. Through an exploration of how industry stakeholders responded to these crises, — including the kinds of messages they used to construct their response, I will consider the possibility that, when it comes to violence, the management of a tourism crisis has little to do with the actual safety of a given location and more to do with the representation of that location as safe. In order to make this argument I will draw upon an exploratory study of print media coverage of these two cases. They offer comparable yet contrasting examples of significant crimes of violence. Before setting out the rationale and method of this study, I provide an overview of relevant literature and research on tourism and crime, focusing on what this tells us about the industry's response to crisis events that are constituted by highly publicised violent crimes. Although the scope of this article is limited by the exploratory nature of the research, it does aim to offer initial insight into the ways in which certain kinds of violent crime are assumed to affect the business of tourism in Australia and the kinds of strategies that are used to address this perceived problem.

Crime and Tourism

The study of tourism and crime is not new. Much academic research has been undertaken in Australia and overseas on the impact of tourism upon the crime rate as well as the victimisation of tourists as a specific group (Allen 1999; Ross 1992; Homel, Hauritz, McIllwain, Wortley & Carvolth 1997; Israel 1999). Although the question of whether crime affects tourism (rather than whether tourism affects crime) has generated less criminological interest there is a solid body of research on this topic, much of which appears in the field of leisure and tourism studies (Mawby, Brunt & Hambly 1999; Jackson & Schmierer 1996; Pelfrey 1998; Pizam 1999; Dimanche & Lepetic 1999; Prideaux & Dunn 1995; Pizam, Tarlow & Bloom 1997; Smith 1999; Strizzi & Meis 2001). In adopting a standard law-based definition of crime (thereby by-passing thorny questions of consumer

2 'Violence against visitors hurts safe image', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 October 1997, p 2.

'rip-offs' and the like that might well be seen as 'criminal' from a tourist's perspective) this research recognises that different types of crime are likely to affect tourism in different ways. For example, victimless crimes such as those involving drugs or sex work may give a destination a seedy image thereby encouraging tourists to adopt precautionary strategies in response. Some crimes, however, are likely to deter tourists from visiting a site altogether. Surveying the research, Pizam concludes that 'serious acts of violence (ie, murder, rape, and terrorist attacks) committed against tourists can cause significant declines in tourist demand' (Pizam 1999:6). In addition, the effects of violence against locals may be equally negative if these acts are very severe (Pizam 1999:10). Prideaux & Dunn (1995:7-8) crystallise the reason for this: 'Any destination that cannot offer personal security, especially against violence, finds itself in danger of losing its tourist traffic to competing destinations that are regarded as offering a higher standard of personal safety'. In other words, personal safety is one of the fundamental criteria by which people choose a tourist destination.

Hence, serious acts of violence in popular tourism sites have the potential to produce what is often referred to as a tourism or destination 'crisis'. Beirman (2003:4) defines a destination crisis as:

a situation requiring radical management action in response to events beyond the internal control of the organisation, necessitating urgent adaptation of marketing and operational practices to restore the confidence of employees, associated enterprises and consumers in the viability of the destination.

In this definition, a crisis arises when the viability of a given tourist destination is thrown into question because tourists are no longer prepared to visit the destination. The problem to be addressed is consumer confidence and the solution is effective marketing. The cause of this downturn in confidence is largely irrelevant. The components of a tourism crisis can be further broken-down into several specific components. For Sonmez, Backman and Allen a crisis has the potential to:

threaten the normal operation and conduct of tourism related businesses, damage a tourist destination's overall reputation for safety, attractiveness, and comfort by negatively affecting visitor's perceptions of that destination; and, in turn, cause a downturn in the local travel and tourism economy (Sonmez, Backman & Allen 1994:2.2).

Although a tourism crisis tends to be the product of recurring incidents of violence over a period of time, isolated incidents that involve severe violence, such as the murder of a sole victim, are also believed to have the capacity to precipitate a crisis (Prideaux & Dunn 1995). This is especially so if such incidents occur in tourist destinations that have an existing reputation for safety. The attraction of such sites is due, at least in part, to the sense of personal security and safety that they offer as holiday destinations.

The likelihood of violent crime engendering a tourism crisis is thus dependent upon the extent to which it tarnishes the public image of the location in question. In tourism, image is everything. Or, as Dimanche and Lepetic put it: 'Researchers have long known that the image of a destination is a critical factor in tourists' destination choice process' (1999:2). Although tourists acquire their safety image of particular locations from a variety of sources, including travel agents, friends and guidebooks, such images are heavily shaped by the media (Shaw & Williams 1994). Thus it is not so much actual rates of violence or crime that give a particular site a negative public image, it is intense or sensationalist media scrutiny of that crime (Dimanche & Lepetic 1999). This is why isolated crimes of extreme violence are believed to have the capacity to trigger a tourism crisis, especially amongst sensitive consumers. Such crimes attract concentrated media attention that can easily give an exaggerated impression of the danger of a given location. Moreover, it may be that when

violence does erupt in locations with a safe image it tends to attract greater media coverage due to the newsworthiness of events that are thought to be out of the ordinary. In his study of tourism crises around the world, Beirman (2003) therefore argues that the successful management of a tourism crisis hinges on good marketing. Once the nature of the crisis has been identified, and co-ordinated and co-operative relationships established between stakeholders, it is essential for any crisis management team to both limit initial media fallout and adopt a strategy for the long-term promotion of the destination. This should involve marketing the site in ways that downplay its unsafe image, such as isolating the trouble spot from the remainder of the destination or redesigning destination marketing to 'promote the subliminal message that the crisis [has] passed' (Beirman 2003:34).

The tourism industry, and the individual stakeholders and businesses that constitute it, is very aware of this assumed association between violence, image, marketing and destination popularity. This concern is apparent in the regularity with which articles devoted to the issue appear in industry newsletters, magazines and journals: 'ASTA calls for industry wide safety summit'³; 'Coping with crisis'⁴; 'Good image counts with Japanese'⁵; 'Toward a United States policy on traveller safety and security'⁶; 'Anticipating the unpredictable: The dicey game of travel risk'⁷; and so on. Such concern, in turn, generates responses from the industry. In particular, the public sector (local councils, state governments, other government agencies and service organisations) frequently attempts to tackle problems of crime and violence in popular tourist sites (Homel, Hauritz, McIllwain, Wortley & Carvolth 1997). Prideaux and Dunn (1995) describe an example of prevention initiatives on the Gold Coast specifically motivated by concern about the possible effects of crime upon the tourism market in that site. Despite being tailored to the specific needs of a given tourism site, such interventions are, nevertheless, little more than the staple crime prevention work of the public sector in the sense that they are designed to tackle crime problems on an on-going basis. They tell us little about how the tourism industry as a whole, including its massive private sector, responds to a crisis precipitated by sudden, extreme and well-publicised acts of inter-personal violence in popular tourist destinations.

In the remainder of this article I consider two examples of highly publicised violent crimes that occurred in popular tourist locations. In the following section I provide an overview of the empirical study that produced case study data on each of these crimes. With the above discussion in mind, I demonstrate that, in industry eyes, these crimes were said to engender, or to be capable of engendering, a tourism crisis. I then move on to consider the nature of the industry response to this crisis: how did the industry choose to address or manage these crises and what might this tell us about the way in which the problem was defined to begin with?

The Study

Two case studies were selected for this exploratory research, the mass murder of 35 men, women and children in Port Arthur, Tasmania in April 1996, and the murder of a sole Japanese woman, Michiko Okuyama, in Cairns, Queensland in September 1997. These cases were selected because they each attracted significant media coverage and public

3 Laura Koss, (1993) 'ATSA calls for industry wide safety summit', *Hotel and Motel Management*, vol 208, no 18, pp 1, 54.

4 'Coping with crisis', *PATA Travel News*, September 1996, pp 6–8.

5 'Good image counts with Japanese', *PATA Travel News*, September 1996, p 16.

6 Ginger Smith (1999) 'Toward a United States policy on traveller safety and security: 1980–2000', *Journal of Travel Research*, vol 38, no 10, pp 62–65.

7 'Anticipating the unpredictable: The dicey game of travel risk'. *New York Times*, 7 March 1999, p 1, 4.

attention at the time.⁸ Certainly, the Port Arthur murders received far greater, and more sustained, national and international attention than the Okuyama murder. Nonetheless, the latter was covered extensively in the Japanese press and the local Cairns press, as well as receiving media coverage throughout Australia at the time. In addition, as I will demonstrate, industry stakeholders identified each case as the cause of an actual or potential tourism crisis. In Port Arthur, this crisis was primarily constituted by a dramatic decrease in Australian tourists to Port Arthur and Tasmania as a whole. In Cairns, a *potential* crisis was said to lie with a possible downturn in tourist numbers from Japan: in 1995–96, 77% of the 600,000 Japanese tourists who visited Australia went to Queensland.⁹ Together, these cases offer comparative examples of how a tourism crisis precipitated by extreme violence is defined and responded to by the tourism industry in different parts of Australia and in relation to different kinds of markets (as we will see, however, the responses were comparable).

The study asked two primary questions in relation to these cases. First, did the industry define each case as the cause of a tourism crisis or a potential tourism crisis? If so, my second question was double-barrelled: what was the nature of the industry's response to this crisis and what does this tell us about how the industry defined 'the problem' at the heart of the crisis? As indicated above, a crisis itself is defined as a downturn in tourism numbers caused by the erosion of a destination's reputation for safety. The study was concerned with whether the actual solution to this downturn was traced to the question of violence or the question of image.

In order to respond to these questions, the study undertook a basic content analysis of two main fields of media, trade publications and mainstream newspapers. Mainstream newspapers were defined as the daily and weekend newspapers in the town/region where the crime took place (*The Cairns Post* and *The Mercury*), one major daily and weekend newspaper from another state (*The Sydney Morning Herald*), and the major daily and weekend national newspaper (*The Australian*). Trade publications were defined as newsletters and journals aimed at those who are employed or operate businesses in the tourism industry. These included *Hotel and Motel Management*, *PATA Travel News* (*Pacific and Asia Travel Association*) and *Travel Trade*. Both fields were searched for items that discussed either case in relation to the question of tourism. The search period covered the 18 months following the commission of each crime. In both cases, this timeframe included the trial and/or sentencing of the perpetrators. Whilst the Okuyama case received considerable and widespread mainstream media attention regarding its possible impact on the tourism industry, this was not so for the Port Arthur case. Here, discussions of the relationship between the massacre and tourism were largely restricted to *The Mercury* and various trade publications (a deliberate part of the industry's strategy). In the following section, I address the above questions by selecting examples from this body of material in relation to each case.

The limitations of this sample must be acknowledged. As an exploratory study, it was not feasible to examine documents first hand or interview industry representatives (which would have provided a more composite picture).¹⁰ In addition, there is a complex, and far

8 This made it possible to identify and isolate the tourism industry's response using a simple analysis of media coverage (as both cases received considerable coverage). In order to unearth the industry's response to a crisis generated by a long-standing crime problem, such as the problem that has been said to exist on the Gold Coast, it would have been necessary to undertake considerable document and interview analysis.

9 'Tourist's murder alarms Japanese', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 October 1997, p 4.

10 My attempts to elicit further insights on these matters from industry representatives have, to date, proven less than fruitful. This may require face-to-face interviews as part of a more extensive study.

from neutral, relationship between the tourism industry and media coverage of industry statements and activities (Schlesinger & Tumber 1994). For example, the industry may seek to actively use the media to manipulate its own image as well as the image of a given tourism site. Thus, an analysis of media can ever only provide a partial and filtered account of the issues under consideration here.

Nonetheless, the print media does provide a readily accessible source of information that is suitable for an exploratory study of this nature. In particular, industry players use trade journals and newsletters to communicate with each other. Unlike mainstream newspapers, they are designed to provide an avenue for discussion and debate *within* the industry, with little need to be overly concerned about the effects of such discussion upon the general public who is unlikely to read such publications. Trade publications thus provide some insight into the ways in which industry representatives define tourism crises and how they talk about the kind of responses that are needed. For their part, the coverage of industry matters in mainstream newspapers point to the kinds of messages that the tourism industry seeks to send to the general public as potential tourists; that is, the ways in which the industry may seek to manipulate or shape the image of a given tourist destination. This study, then, is not a media analysis per se. Rather, it uses the print media as a means of accessing industry concerns, comments and conduct.¹¹ This seems apt, given that it is largely, although not exclusively, through the media that the touring public learn about the dangers associated with a given tourist location and, hence, it is largely through the media that a tourism crisis is engendered and, ultimately, resolved.

Anticipating a Crisis: Port Arthur and Cairns

The random killing of 35 men, women and children by a single gunman at Port Arthur in Tasmania on 28 April 1996 is perhaps the most tragic episode of violence to take place within Australian borders in recent history. Whilst the incident understandably generated, and continues to generate, extensive public debate, a proportion of this commentary focused on the impact of the killings upon the popular tourist location of Port Arthur and Tasmania as a whole.¹² Not only were the tourist venues at Port Arthur closed for approximately one month after the homicides but, from the very beginning, there was a strong concern that visitors would be reluctant to holiday in a place that had so recently been the site of carnage. This concern is apparent in the breathtaking speed with which the Australian Tourist Commission (ATC) acted to reduce 'possible international fallout'. According to Jon Hutchison, ATC's managing director: '*The day after* the tragedy we called a meeting of all state and territory tourism commissions and all the major industry representative bodies and organisations during which time it was agreed that we would adopt a unified approach.'¹³ Acting with equal speed, Tourism Tasmania implemented a long-standing crisis contingency plan that identified the management of media relations as a priority (Beirman 2003). Within two days a strategy had been formulated 'detailing what the message would be, how it would be delivered and who would deliver it'.¹⁴ This rapid and broad-ranging

11 Thus the accuracy of the information in this study is dependent upon the accuracy with which these issues are reported in the media.

12 An advertising feature in the *Tasman Peninsula* begins with a plea to help rebuild Tasmania in the wake of the Port Arthur tragedy. See 'Trip to the Peninsula: Support needed for historic place', *The Sunday Tasmanian*, May 26 1996, p 63. See also: 'Rebuilding a role: Tourism operation copes with Port Arthur tragedy', *The Saturday Mercury*, 4 May 1996, p 37; 'Pall over state tourist icon', *The Mercury*, 29 April 1996, p 45.

13 'Port Arthur strategy wins', *PATA Travel News*, September 1996, p 10. Emphasis added.

14 'How Australia limited the Port Arthur fallout', *Travel Trade*, 19 June 1996, p 24.

response signals the ATC's belief that the murders were likely to have a devastating effect upon tourism numbers in the area and would engender a serious tourism crisis. In short, the industry's response in relation to the Port Arthur situation was readily characterised as 'crisis management'.¹⁵

It is not difficult to see how a mass murder of this kind could be said to precipitate a tourism crisis. It is perhaps less clear how the murder of a sole tourist in Cairns in September of the following year could also be seen to engender similar, if less acute, concern about the potential for a tourism crisis. The explanation lies primarily in the nature of the market most likely to react to the crime itself.

Michiko Okuyama was travelling and working in Australia from Japan. She was last seen alive on 20 September 1997 in a Cairns suburb. Her body was found several days later. She had been beaten to death, rolled four kilometres in a rubbish bin and dumped in a swamp.¹⁶ On 8 October, less than three weeks after her disappearance, a 16-year-old male appeared in the Cairns Children's Court in connection with her death. He was convicted of her murder in September 1998.¹⁷ Michiko Okuyama's murder received considerable media coverage in Japan.¹⁸ For example, Japan's largest selling daily newspaper warned that 'unwholesome Australian men could kill a Japanese woman with a single blow' and that 'Australian "yobbos" were sexually harassing Japanese women tourists on the streets of Cairns'.¹⁹ It was this kind of coverage that was the focus of concern among Australian tourism bodies, businesses and politicians. Approximately two weeks after Okuyama's body was found, and the day before the perpetrator appeared in the Cairns Children's Court, the new Federal Tourism Minister, Andrew Thomson, who had not yet been sworn in following a ministerial reshuffle, travelled to Cairns to hold a press conference. In some contrast to Port Arthur, where the crisis ultimately arose from the domestic market's reluctance to visit, here the concern was primarily about the potential for a crisis in the Japanese market. This was highlighted by a number of commentators. For example, a spokesman for Nippon Television was reported to say, 'People are very interested in this because the young people ... think of your country as being very secure.'²⁰ In a similar vein, Noboru Kageyama, head of the Japan Travel Bureau Australia, added that the case 'might have an impact on the future Japanese market', but that much would depend on 'the tack the Japanese media took in portraying the matter'.²¹ Thus, the purpose of the Minister's conference was to make a public statement to the Japanese people and press that Cairns was a safe place to visit. Mr Thomson made a particular appeal to Japanese journalists, who were in Cairns to cover the murder, not to 'overreact' in their coverage.²² The Australian Tourist Commission used this opportunity to announce that it was about to embark on a Japanese advertising campaign that would promote Australia as a safe and friendly holiday destination.²³

15 Ibid.

16 'Japanese woman abducted and killed in Cairns', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 October 1997, p 3.

17 'Youth guilty of murdering Japanese backpacker', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 September 1998, p 4.

18 'Tourist hunt steps up', 25 September 1997, p 3; 'Death in a strange land', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 October 1997, p 1.

19 'Tourist's murder alarms Japanese', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 October 1997, pp 1, 4.

20 'Tourist's murder alarms Japanese', 'Tourist killing: move to calm Japanese fears', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 October 1997, pp 1, 4.

21 'Minister allays safety concern', *The Cairns Post*, 8 October 1997, p 3.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

Although this case involved only a single murder, in stark contrast to Port Arthur, the industry's initial response makes it clear that this single incidence of extreme violence was also believed to be capable of engendering a tourism crisis in the 'sensitive' Japanese market and, possibly, a crisis that would extend beyond far north Queensland to Australia as a whole (a possibility brought home by the involvement of the Federal tourism minister). This concern was apparent not only in the local area but was also picked up and reported across the nation. For example, on 8 October 1997, *The Sydney Morning Herald* ran two stories about the 'alarm' and 'fear' that media coverage of the murder was arousing in Japan.²⁴ Just several days later this image was contradicted in another item in the same paper. Here, it was reported that although the murder had 'devastated a community built on tourism', there had been no over-reaction in Japan; indeed, the murder was said to have made the news precisely because Australia is seen as a safe holiday destination.²⁵ Nonetheless, all of these articles were driven by the central concern that Okuyama's murder had *the potential* to precipitate a crisis. Indeed, this was made explicit in a fourth article entitled 'How Japan reacted'. This item discussed the possibility of an anti-Australian backlash among Japanese tourists and the anxiety this was producing within tourism bodies. Interestingly, this potential backlash was also linked to the rise of the One Nation Party.²⁶ Indeed, in a rather perverse debate over twelve months later, David Oldfield, spokesman for One Nation Party, asserted that the downturn in Queensland tourism had more to do with the murder of Michiko Okuyama than with the rise of the One Nation Party.²⁷

Both the Okuyama murder in Cairns and the massacre in Port Arthur generated a rapid response from the tourism industry at both the local and national level. These responses anticipated that each incident was likely to have a serious negative effect on that particular destination's reputation for safety and thereby engender a downturn in the tourist economy in the area. In other words, each case was believed to have the potential to generate a tourism crisis. In relation to the Okuyama murder, the potential for this crisis was believed to lie in the Japanese market rather than the more robust domestic, North American or European markets. Not only had the victim come from Japan but part of the attraction of Australia for Japanese tourists was believed to lie in its image as a safe holiday destination (as filtered by the Japanese media). Despite David Oldfield's self-serving comments, the extent to which the murder of Michiko Okuyama did produce a tourism crisis in the Japanese market is far from clear and appears to have been minimal. For instance, twelve months after her death, Andrew Thomson commented that the speedy arrest and conviction of Okuyama's killer helped to contain the damage.²⁸

Port Arthur and Tasmania, however, were a different story. Initially, the ATC also sought to reassure the foreign market, especially the Asian market. This was seen to be important in light of the fact that two Malaysian tourists were among the victims and some observers had reported that Martin Bryant, the perpetrator, had made racist comments about Japanese tourists.²⁹ In the early weeks following the massacre, a number of items appeared in *The Mercury* examining the extent to which the massacre had, or had not, produced a downturn in tourism.³⁰ By 13 May (15 days after the massacre) concerns were expressed

24 'Tourist's murder alarms Japanese', 'Tourist killing: move to calm Japanese fears', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 October 1997, pp 1, 4.

25 'Death in a strange land', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 October 1997, News Review, pp 1, 37.

26 'How Japan reacted', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 October 1997, News Review, p 37.

27 'Feud over state image', *The Cairns Post*, 2 October 1998, p 5.

28 'Quick Justice "saved city image"', *The Cairns Post*, 26 September 1998, p 3.

29 'Port Arthur strategy wins', *PATA Travel News*, September 1996, p 10.

that business had not picked up as quickly as hoped. However, this appeared to have more to do with a significant decrease in Australian tourists to the island than a decline in international tourists. For example, there was a 40% decrease in independent domestic travellers to Tasmania in the eight weeks following the massacre (50% of Tasmania's market is normally made up of independent domestic travellers).³¹ This prompted a contingent of Tasmanian politicians, including the Premier and representatives of tourism bodies, to embark on a seven-day trip to the mainland to 'ask people to come back to Port Arthur and Tasmania for their holidays'.³² Yet, despite heavy and optimistic promotion of the re-opening of the Port Arthur site about a week later,³³ the loss of tourism business in Tasmania had all the hallmarks of a full-blown crisis by 25 May. This is exemplified in public commentary that suggested that the Federal government's 'massacre compensation package' should include compensation not just for individuals who were directly victimised by the massacre but also for loss of income to those businesses affected.³⁴ Thus, the month of June saw Tasmania's 'largest-ever joint marketing campaign' between government and industry.³⁵

To some extent, these efforts paid off. By September 1996, some industry commentators were suggesting that the crisis might be over. For example, *PATA Travel News* reported that business, at least in international terms, was gradually returning to normal.³⁶ Yet, unlike Cairns, it is not possible to say that the crisis was averted in Port Arthur. Although international tourism was virtually unaffected and day visits recovered relatively quickly, there was a long-term and significant reduction in local overnight stays in the area (Beirman 2003). It is thus more accurate to say that the Port Arthur crisis was contained. Eventually, tourism to the region was restored to its previous levels and several years on there are indications that the massacre may have actually added a further, albeit different, facet to the traditional appeal of Port Arthur as a site of violent criminal history.³⁷

Responding to the Crisis in Port Arthur and Cairns

In light of the above, it is clear that sections of the tourism industry went into crisis management (or damage control) in the immediate aftermath of these two violent events. The crises that these cases produced, or were feared to produce, apparently demanded quick and determined responses. It is the nature of these responses that I would like to explore in this section: *how* did the industry seek to manage these crises? As indicated above, a tourism crisis is constituted by several cumulative components: an occurrence that produces a negative image of the site in the public arena (usually associated with considerable media

30 'Asian tourists to return', *The Saturday Mercury*, 4 May 1996, p 5; 'Tasmania IS a safe place to live and visit', *The Saturday Mercury*, 4 May 1996, p 19.

31 'How Australia limited the Port Arthur fallout', *Travel Trade*, 19 June 1996, p 24.

32 'Tassie's mission to the mainland begins today', *The Mercury*, 13 May, 1996, p 5.

33 'Tourists return to help boost the peninsula', *The Mercury*, 21 May 1996, p 5.

34 'Tourism fear'. *The Saturday Mercury*, 25 May 1996, pp 1, 2. This article notes a range of other factors that may also be contributing to the drop in tourism.

35 'Port Arthur strategy wins', *PATA Travel News*, September 1996, p 10; 'How Australia limited the Port Arthur fallout'. *Travel Trade*, 19 June 1996, p 24.

36 *Ibid.* The optimism of *PATA Travel News* appears to have been based upon the positive aspects of the international market rather than the local market, which was far more severely affected.

37 'Heavenly Hell', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14–15 September 2002, p Travel 3. On my visit to Port Arthur I found that both the memorial pool of tranquillity and the small informal commemorations that are scattered through the site evoked a sensitive response from visitors. There appeared to be just as much interest in these as there was in the traditional attractions of the site (despite there being nothing in the official marketing or merchandise to encourage this).

coverage of the event); a reduction in the numbers of people choosing to travel to the site; and a consequent downturn in the tourism economy in that location. The initial problem or causal event that triggers such a crisis may include crime, violence, disease, extreme poverty, natural disaster, famine, terrorism, war, and so on. When the causal event is constituted by an act/s of extreme and criminal violence in the site itself, as in the cases under examination here, the negative shadow this casts over the reputation of that site is specifically related to personal safety and security. The location becomes tainted by the violence. Fewer and fewer people see it as a comfortable or safe location in which to holiday or spend their leisure time. Such events have an aggravated chance of producing a crisis if tourists are amongst the victim/s of that violence. By examining how the industry chose to intervene in the two crises under consideration here it is possible to make some observations regarding the extent to which the actual cause of the crisis was addressed as part of the 'problem'.

From the very beginning, the industry's focus was on managing the fallout from these crimes rather than responding to the crimes themselves. This is apparent in the kinds of interventions and strategies that were employed in the wake of each incident. As I indicated earlier, within the tourism industry, successful crisis management is said to require strategies that are capable of promoting the 'subliminal message' that 'the crisis has passed' (Beirman 2003). In the context of these two cases, the industry, and those who supported it, such as journalists, sought to convey, and facilitate, the passing of the crisis by portraying the locations in question as safe and secure. More specifically, the industry endeavoured to do this by sending several fundamental, interrelated and cumulative messages to the public (some subliminal and some not so subliminal). I refer to these messages as 'isolation', 'justice' and 'business as usual'. Drawing up examples covered in the media, I will consider each of these messages and how they were used to bolster the safety image of the location (with some messages being more apparent in one site than the other).

Isolation

Isolation marketing is a strategy used to separate the 'trouble spot from the remainder of the destination, which is depicted as safe and attractive to visit' (Beirman 2003:34). If the 'trouble spot' has arisen because of a single violent event then the same effect can be achieved by highlighting the random nature of the event in question. For example, in response to the murder of Michiko Okuyama, Andrew Thomson, the Federal Tourism Minister, called upon the Japanese media not to overreact. He suggested that this was the (almost inevitable) random murder of only one individual among the thousands who visit the area every day: 'with the large number of Japanese visitors, it's bound to happen sooner or later, but Cairns is [not] some kind of frightful place.'³⁸ By highlighting the unusual nature of the murder, Thomson's aim was to characterise Cairns, and indeed Australia, as a place that is normally safe to visit: 'I'd like to stress ... my determination to make sure that Australia is known as a very safe place to visit now and ever more.'³⁹ John Morse, managing director of the ATC at the time, was more direct. He drew upon the random nature of the murder to characterise it as an unusual or rare occurrence: 'It was an isolated event and could have happened anywhere but it happened in Cairns.'⁴⁰ The assertion that it 'could have happened anywhere' functions to distance the murder from the site of Cairns itself, as if the place where the murder took place is simply a matter of chance.

38 'Minister allays safety concern', *The Cairns Post*, 8 October 1997, p 3.

39 *Ibid.*

40 *Ibid.*

In relation to Port Arthur, the 'isolation' message was sent early when the ATC sought to reassure the foreign market that these kinds of incidents were rare in Australia.⁴¹ Tasmanian journalists, such as Michael Lester, assisted the industry in this task by forcefully and emotionally reminding the domestic market of Tasmania's reputation for safety. In a column that appeared approximately a week after the massacre, entitled 'Tasmania IS a safe place to live and visit', Lester reassures his readers that despite the violent image of Tasmania that has recently been broadcast around the world, Tasmanians know that the state is 'a paradise compared to some parts of Australia and the world'.⁴² For Lester, the 'task ahead will be to channel the unity, the outpouring of grief, sympathy and compassion into proving to the world that the Port Arthur Massacre was a horrible aberration — not the real Tasmania'.⁴³ Lester's strategy is not just to isolate the violence as abnormal in Tasmanian terms but also to distinguish Tasmania itself from other supposedly more violent parts of Australia: a task assisted by the geographically isolated nature of Tasmania as an island. Moreover, it is interesting to note that on the first day that Port Arthur officially re-opened to the public, actress Lorraine Bayley was among those who visited the site. Although it appears that she did this in a personal capacity, her presence was heavily promoted in the press.⁴⁴ Her image as the traditional and caring mother during times of extreme turmoil (World War II) has been well cemented in the (older) Australian psyche via her role in the 1970s television drama *The Sullivans*. Who better than Bayley to 'channel ... the outpouring of grief, sympathy and compassion' into 'proving' that Port Arthur was a safe place (arguably, Bayley's sheer presence assisted to induce feelings of security and comfort amongst the Australian public)?

These modes of crisis management focused upon publicly characterising both crimes as one-off incidents, abnormal or out-of-character eruptions, in otherwise peaceful environments. The suggestion is that these sites have a pre-existing or normal way of being and that personal safety is an integral component of this normality. In other words, Cairns and Port Arthur are *usually* safe places to visit. Such messages can only work if the locations did indeed have such a reputation. In both of these cases it was not difficult to convey this message as neither mass murder nor the killings of young Japanese tourists are common events in Australia.

Justice

In terms of 'justice' for Michiko Okuyama, little needed to be done to convey the message that formal justice had been dispensed. The young man who killed her appeared in court less than three weeks after her body was found and he was convicted within 12 months. Andrew Thomson and journalists used the opportunity to publicly assert that this speedy dispensation of justice was important in containing the damage in the Japanese market. In an item in *The Cairns Post* entitled 'Quick Justice "saved city image"', Thomson is quoted as saying: 'I have seen in Japan — when I lived there — just how frenzied they can become over incidents like this'. He suggests that the speedy arrest and conviction of the perpetrator helped contain the damage by minimising bad publicity: 'This is something that many other countries would not be able to do'.⁴⁵ Thomson implies that things could have been much worse but that Australia's ability to deliver efficient retribution has been able to allay the

41 'Port Arthur strategy wins', *PATA Travel News*, September 1996, p 10; 'How Australia limited the Port Arthur fallout', *Travel Trade*, 19 June 1996, p 24.

42 'Tasmania IS a safe place to live and visit'. *The Saturday Mercury*, 4 May 1996, p 19.

43 *Ibid.*

44 'Tourists return to help boost the peninsula'. *The Mercury*, 21 May 1996, p 5.

45 'Quick Justice "saved city image"', *The Cairns Post*, 26 September 1998, p 3.

concerns of the Japanese market that such a crime might go unpunished. Whilst the tourism industry has little direct control over the dispensation of criminal punishment in such cases (and is not capable of creating this message on its own), it did not hesitate to promote formal justice as a means of satisfying the Japanese public's supposed demand for retribution. Thomson's message is that in Australia such crimes are taken seriously and will be punished: other tourist locations might not be able to provide this level of justice. Significantly, the opening of a garden memorial dedicated to Michiko Okuyama appeared to be timed to coincide with the conviction of her murderer; the two were certainly linked in the local press.⁴⁶ Arguably, this timing assisted in sending the message that the dispensation of justice makes it possible for the site to heal and recover from the violence.

Formal justice was also dispensed in Port Arthur seven months after the massacre. Upon pleading guilty to 35 counts of murder, Martin Bryant received a sentence of 35 life terms with no parole.⁴⁷ In the meantime, however, the industry sought to capitalise on the national gun control debate that emerged just days after the massacre. Indeed, it was the gun debate that literally took the massacre off the front pages of the nation's newspapers, with dozens and dozens of items appearing over the next few months.⁴⁸ Although the ATC was working intensely behind the scenes, their public approach was deliberately low key. They gave few interviews and allowed only 3 people to make official comment: tourism minister John Moore, ATC managing Director Jon Hutchison and the Prime Minister John Howard.⁴⁹ The strategy was as follows: 'Besides emphasising the one-off nature of the incident, the Commission decided its best option was to shift media attention away from tourism and onto the gun-control issue as fast as possible.'⁵⁰ The industry sought to discourage any public discussion of a possible tourism crisis. Although they saw the gun control debate as a means of directing attention elsewhere, this public debate also served a more specific function for the industry. Arguments in favour of gun control were primarily directed towards the question of violence prevention, suggesting that if access to firearms could be restricted then other mass murders might be avoided in the future. As this debate gained momentum it gave the impression that the nation was moving on, possibly learning, from this tragedy. Although formal justice was inevitably metered out to Martin Bryant, the gun control debate held out the promise of a much broader form of justice by focusing attention on the future possibilities for harm minimisation rather than looking backwards at the tragedy itself and the punishment of the offender. By eventually eclipsing the massacre in the public domain, such a strategy offered the potential for a greater sense of closure than the dispensation of formal justice. It is not surprising that the industry sought to bolster this optimistic and forward-looking message by not sending any conflicting or diverting messages of its own.⁵¹

46 'Victim's parents wish for peace', *The Cairns Post*, 26 September 1993, p 3.

47 'Why Bryant changed plea', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 November 1996, p 9.

48 For example the following items appeared during May 1996: 'In the firing line -- tighter laws on guns', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 April 1996, p 15; 'PM takes on gun lobby', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May 1996, p 1; 'Exposed: gun lobby's backers' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 May 1996, p 1; 'PM's final plea on guns', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 May 1996, p 1; 'Howard and the hard work ahead', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 May 1996, p 1. Some of the running banners used during this time included: 'The Gun Summit', 'Port Arthur: The Gun Debate', and 'Port Arthur Gun Control'.

49 'How Australia limited the Port Arthur fallout', *Travel Trade*, 19 June 1996, p 24.

50 *Ibid.*

51 Arguably, this approach also suited the Prime Minister's political agenda: 'Gun laws and the ballot box factor', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 May 1996, p 15; 'PM firm against gun law dissent', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 May 1996, p 1; 'Out of tragedy the PM gains in stature', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 May 1996, p 13.

Business as Usual

In facilitating a sense of closure, messages that justice had been, or would be, done assisted in conveying the further message that it was 'business as usual' at the sites in question. In Cairns, one of the means via which this 'business as usual' message was conveyed was through the erection of the memorial to Michiko Okuyama 12 months after her death. The presence of Okuyama's parents at the opening suggested that they had forgiven the city of Cairns for their daughter's murder and indeed Mr Okuyama stated: 'From this day on, we want to step forward and sincerely wish Cairns continued prosperity, peace and happiness. It's a place where people can come and sit. It shows that something positive has come from this tragedy.'⁵²

If Okuyama's parents can move on with their lives and recognise the positives that have come from their tragedy, then, by implication, other Japanese people might also be able to once again see Cairns as a 'peaceful' place. Such a message can only aid in the area's 'prosperity'. Similarly, in Port Arthur the massacre was marked by the erection of a memorial garden, a reflection pool and a large cross bearing the names of the victims.⁵³ In both cases, such memorials emphasise the tranquillity and peacefulness of the locations: images that are incompatible with violence and aggression.

However, conveying the message that Port Arthur had returned to its earlier state of safety was always going to be more difficult than it was in Cairns. The industry made some early attempts. Just six days after the killings *The Saturday Mercury* ran another story in addition to Michael Lester's on the tourism issue. Optimistically entitled 'Asian tourists to return', this item described a new contract between a Tasmanian bus company and a major Malaysian tour wholesaler. The marketing manager of the bus company is quoted as saying that the new contract confirms that the 'initial scare in South East Asia has been averted.'⁵⁴ However, it was not until a month after the massacre, when the site was reopened, that normal tourism activities were even able to begin to resume at Port Arthur. Publicising the reopening of Port Arthur provided not just the opportunity to advise the public of a return to normal tourism activities but also to imply that 'business as usual' meant 'safety as usual'. Tourists did not just stay away from Port Arthur because it was closed -- as revealed by the slow pick-up in trade after it reopened -- they also stayed away because of the tarnished safety image of the place itself (whether this was due to concerns about their own safety or a hesitancy to visit a site that had proved so devastatingly unsafe for the victims of the massacre is another matter). Thus, the ATC again sought to minimise the extent to which the site was associated with the massacre in the public arena: '[T]here was little change to the content or scheduling of Asian and European advertising campaigns to reinforce the message that it was business as usual.'⁵⁵ This approach was possible with the international market (as opposed to the domestic market) where the massacre understandably received less media attention. Ultimately, a completely new marketing campaign was developed to assist in the recovery of both Port Arthur and Tasmania as a whole. This late 1996 campaign sought to create the image of a fresh, green, clean, peaceful and natural tourist experience (Beirman 2003).

Thus, the messages of 'business as usual' played an important role in creating the much wider impression of a return to the safety of pre-massacre days ('we are in the business of safe tourism and we are now able to guarantee this again'). In Port Arthur, this message was

52 'Victim's parents wish for peace'. *The Cairns Post*, 26 September 1998, p 3.

53 'Heavenly Hell', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14–15 September 2002, p Travel 3.

54 'Asian tourists to return'. *The Saturday Mercury*, 4 May 1996, p 5.

55 'How Australia limited the Port Arthur fallout'. *Travel Trade*, 19 June 1996, p 24.

assisted by the fortuitous presence of celebrities with a trustworthy and wholesome image such as Bayley at the re-opening of the site. It was also assisted by public displays of unity. Such displays are, according to Beirman (2003), another key component in managing a tourism crisis. In referring to the industry meeting that was held the day after the Port Arthur massacre, Jon Hutchison stated that all bodies agreed to adopt a unified approach. This strategy was reinforced in subsequent press releases. Michael Lester picked up on it by suggesting that outpourings of grief and sympathy were not the only responses to the massacre. There were also going to be outpourings of 'unity' that could be 'channelled' in meaningful ways. For Lester, this was a unity of Tasmanians, individuals and organisations from all walks of life. For the ATC, it was a unity amongst industry players and signalled that the industry was acting together to ameliorate the situation. Certainly, in practical terms, a unified response was likely to offer a more effective and extensive intervention than a disjointed one. However, this level of co-operation and negotiation had the added advantage of implying that conflict (perhaps violence?) had no part in the normal ways of this community. In other words, the public display of a unified front was reassuring because it suggested that everyone was putting aside their differences and working together to resolve the crisis and thereby bring about a return to (safe) normality.

In sum, if the industry was able to code these sites as originally, or ordinarily, safe (the first message), if there was some form of closure to the problem that was tarnishing the site's image (message two), and if it was feasible to give the impression that business at the site had returned to normal (the third message), then it was possible to convey the overall message that the site itself had returned to normal. In other words, the desired effect of these individual messages was the cumulative message that the crisis was resolved and the site was safe again, because safety was its usual state.

In the final and concluding section in this article, I return to the definition of a crisis within the tourism industry and consider what it is that the industry actually seeks to resolve when it manages a crisis through these kinds of messages: the problem of violence or the problem of image?

Conclusion: Managing the Problem

When the tourism industry seeks to manage a crisis it seeks to alter perceptions among the travelling public. Certainly, in the examples given above, industry interventions highlighted the pre-crisis safety image of the site and sought to rekindle this reputation by publicising the various avenues through which the area had recovered and returned to normal. In a revealing trade journal interview several months after the Port Arthur massacre, Jon Hutchison describes the ATC's approach to the crisis. He is quoted as saying: 'We also wanted to give the clear view that we were concerned about the humanitarian aspects of the tragedy.'⁵⁶ Perhaps it is simply unfortunate wording, but Hutchison emphasises the need for the ATC to give the right *impression* — that they cared about the humanitarian, and not just the economic, aspects of the murders — rather than actually *being* concerned about these humanitarian issues. This distinction — between human damage and economic damage — is important in understanding the tourism's industry's response to such a crisis. The above examples suggest that when a popular tourist location has its safety reputation threatened or tarnished through media attention to acts of extreme violence, the industry's response is to focus on the image of that location. Media searches undertaken for this study unearthed no reports of industry representatives responding to the actual problem believed to cause the crisis in question — the acts of violence — in the 18 month period following

56 Ibid.

either case. In short, to return to the question that I posed in the beginning of this article, the tourism industry sought to manage, not the problem of violence itself ('killings and bashings') and its human impact but, rather, the problem of image and its economic impact.

In seeking to manage the crisis by manipulating the image or reputation of these locations, the industry made virtually no attempt to engage with accurate data or information about the nature of the violence that caused the crises to begin with. Instead, they focused on reviving the site's previous reputation for safety: a reputation that may or may not have been deserved. In other words, the industry managed impressions of safety and danger through strategies that were far removed from the very problem of violence they sought to downplay. Campaigns designed to change the public's opinion about the location had little to do with whether that destination actually was safe or was ever safe. This is not to suggest that locations such as Port Arthur or Cairns are less safe than any other places in Australia; they probably are not. However, only a careful analysis of crime statistics and other information could come close to telling us this. This is not the kind of analysis that appeared to interest the tourism industry in these cases. Being aware that they could reverse an economic downturn by manipulating the location's image, industry representatives had no need to consider the nature of the actual problem tarnishing that image. In effect, their response to these crises paid only minimal attention to the actual reality of violence and personal safety in these sites and more attention to managing the reputation of the sites (irrespective of whether that reputation was an accurate reflection of the risk of violence in that location).

It is, of course, not surprising that the tourism industry tends to focus, at least in the short term, on repairing the damage done to a destination's image within a marketing framework. In cases such as Port Arthur and Cairns it is not difficult to justify an industry response that only traces the problem as far back as image (rather than to the violent events themselves). It was unlikely that other tourists were going to fall victim to similar kinds of violence and clearly the industry is limited in the extent to which it can directly respond to these particular murders. It has no capacity to undertake actions of the type needed to prevent such incidents. This is the role of the criminal justice system.

Yet, one might equally argue that the surest way to convince the public that a destination is safe is to do something to ensure that it *is* safe. The huge boom in private security, conflict training and electronic surveillance at tourism businesses (Pizam 1999) makes it clear that many sectors of the industry recognise this in the context of individual businesses. Yet, as I indicated earlier, examples of industry contributions to crime control outside of individual venues are few and far between. The significance of this point becomes apparent if we consider tourism crises that are precipitated by violence and crime in general (rather than by the kinds of extreme violence that took place in Port Arthur and Cairns). Internationally, most crime-precipitated tourism crises are of this nature, being caused by long-standing and gradually escalating problems that include property crime and personal violence. Examples of locations said to be, or to have recently been, in such a crisis include New Orleans, Mexico City, Miami, New York, Rio de Janeiro and South Africa (Pizam 1999; Beirman 2003). Yet, the industry's primary and overwhelming response to this kind of tourism crisis is virtually the same as it was in relation to Port Arthur and Cairns: manipulation of the location's image so as to give the *impression* of being safe, irrespective of whether the site in question actually *is* safe (Beirman 2003; Smith 1999; Dimanche & Lepetic 1999). Recovery from a tourism crisis is thus defined as the restoration of 'market confidence' (Beirman 2003:36) rather than amelioration of the problem causing the crisis in confidence in the first place. Moreover, it has even been suggested that an ideal recovery is one where the industry has 'capitalised' as much as possible on the high profile it has inadvertently acquired through the violent events in question (Beirman 2003).

It is not impossible for the private sector of the industry to make a more direct and long-term contribution to crime prevention and tourist safety (that is, to assist in managing the problem and not just the image). There are a number of recent international examples of industry involvement in crime prevention. These include: raising money to support police organisations; distributing safety newsletters and brochures in tourist locations; funding research on crimes against tourists and safety programs among travel organisations; and, more fundamentally, the provision of financial aid from resort operators to the local communities in impoverished sites (Smith 1999; Dimanche & Lepetic 1999; Pizam 1999). Thus, a more proactive and less self-interested approach to crisis management would see the tourism industry investing more of its profit back into the communities that nourish it, especially in developing communities where state resources are already fully stretched.

As I indicated in the introduction, a tourism crisis begins with an event that causes damage to a site's safety image and ends with a downturn in the economy of that area. All too often, only a minimum of attention is directed towards the causal problem itself; just enough for the industry to come to terms with the kind of image problem they face. Unless the tourism industry actively includes violence and crime as a part of *its* problem, it will continue to intervene in ways that enable economic issues to take precedence over humanitarian issues; or, in Baird's terms, it will continue to define 'the problem' as one of 'image' rather than one of 'killings and bashings'. There are many avenues for intervention in a tourism crisis that is triggered by violence. Logically, the industry might start by thinking about how it can contribute to longer-term strategies designed to address the problem of crime at a more systematic level, thereby attempting to ensure higher levels of safety for tourists and locals at a given destination. Or, as Pizam, Tarlow & Bloom (1997) put it: 'there is a growing recognition that the prevention of violent acts against tourists is the joint responsibility of the tourism industry and the public sector' (3).

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