

**Crisis Communication and Recovery for the Tourism Industry:
Lessons from the 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak in the United Kingdom**

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Abstract

As the number of disasters and crises affecting the tourism industry increases, it is becoming necessary to understand the nature of these disasters and how to manage and limit the impacts of such incidents. This paper defines crises and disasters before discussing the area of crisis communication management and crisis communication in the tourism industry. The paper then applies the foot and mouth disease (FMD) which occurred in the United Kingdom to crisis communication theory at a national level (by examining the response of the British Tourist Authority) and at a local level (by examining the response of a District Council). The response was limited in part because of a lack of preparedness, but also due to the nature of the foot and mouth outbreak, and the speed and severity of international media coverage. Action was taken in the emergency phase of the crisis and was reactive involving inconsistency in developing key messages to stakeholders, partly due to confusion and a lack of information at the national level. Recovery marketing was also limited due to the length of time of the disease outbreak. This paper provides lessons for destinations and organisations are discussed which may help develop crisis communication strategies for tourism organisations.

Keywords: Tourism, Disaster, Crisis, Communication, United Kingdom, Foot and Mouth

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Introduction

In February 2001, the first case of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) was confirmed in the UK since an outbreak of the disease in 1967. A total of 2030 cases of the disease were identified and a total of over 4 million animals were culled during the crisis with worldwide media broadcasts showing burning carcasses of culled animals. The English Tourism Council (ETC) predicted that losses to English tourism in 2001 would be £5bn, while in 2002 and 2003 reductions would total £2.5bn and £1bn respectively (ETC, 2001a). On January 15th 2002 government officials announced that the disease had finally been defeated after 11 months of battling the outbreak. Despite the end of the disease, the outbreak has deeply affected the farming and tourism industry and raised questions concerning government policy toward the farming and tourism industry. Questions have been specifically raised concerning the responsiveness and preparedness of the tourism industry for the FMD and the ability of tourist promotion agencies to reduce the negative media coverage due to slow response time. Although the outbreak was not expected, Faulkner (2001) notes there are an increasing number of disasters and crises which affect the tourism industry, ranging from natural to human influenced disasters. This has been made most evident since the events of September 11th 2001, which dramatically impacted upon the tourism industry illustrating the need to understand and effectively manage such incidents, with crisis communication an important part of this management.

Faulkner (2001) argues that there is a lack of research on disaster phenomena in the tourism industry, on the impacts of such events on both the industry and specific

organisations, and the responses of the tourism industry to disasters. Yet Lee and Harrald (1999:184) note that crisis management, disaster recovery, and organisational continuity are important competencies for managers in both the public and private sector. This paper aims to address these deficiencies as well as to consider FMD in the light of crisis communication, as it appears that communication is an important aspect of effectively and efficiently dealing with crisis situations. An examination of the management of the FMD and the crisis communication strategies employed may assist other destinations and organisations in developing crisis management and crisis communication strategies to deal with unforeseen events. First a discussion of crisis management definitions and crisis communication theory takes place prior to discussion of crisis communication specifically for the tourism industry. Then the paper outlines the research methods and research findings related to crisis communication and the FMD outbreak in the UK.

Crisis and Disaster Definitions

A number of authors have attempted to define a crisis to help improve their understanding of this phenomenon. Pauchant and Mitroff (1992:15) believe that a crisis is a “disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core.” Selbst (1978 in Faulkner 2001:136) defines a crisis as “any action or failure to act that interferes with an organisation’s ongoing functions, the acceptable attainment of its objectives, its viability or survival, or that has a detrimental personal effect as perceived by the majority of its employees, clients or constituents.” Selbst focus on perceptions implies that if an organisation’s publics or stakeholders perceive a crisis, a real crisis could evolve from

this misconception, illustrating that perception management is a key activity in managing crises.

Faulkner (2001) considers the principal distinction between what can be termed a 'crisis' and a 'disaster' to be the extent to which the situation is attributable to the organisation itself, or can be described as originating outside the organisation. Thus, a 'crisis' describes a situation "where the root cause of an event is, to some extent, self-inflicted through such problems as inept management structures and practices or a failure to adapt to change", while a "disaster can be defined as "where an enterprise...is confronted with sudden unpredictable catastrophic changes over which it has little control" (Faulkner, 2001:136).

Crisis Management and Control

Lee and Harrald (1999:184) state that "natural disasters can disrupt the supply and distribution chains for even the best prepared businesses...service businesses are increasingly vulnerable to electrical, communication and other critical infrastructure failures." Kash and Darling (1998:179) agree, and claim that it is no longer a case 'if' a business will face a crisis; it is rather a question of 'when', 'what type' and 'how prepared' the organisation is to deal with it. Both statements illustrate that although organisations are able to design pre-crisis strategies to help with crisis management they are often unable to prevent a crisis from occurring. However, the real challenge is to recognise crises in a timely fashion and implement coping strategies to limit their damage (Darling *et al.*, 1996). Authors such as Burnett (1998) and Kash and Darling (1998) note that decisions undertaken before a crisis occurs will enable more effective management

of the crisis, rather than organisations being managed by the crisis and making hasty and ineffective decisions. Proactive planning through the use of strategic planning and issues management will help reduce risk, time wastage, poor resource management and reduce the impacts of those that do arise (Heath, 1998).

Coombs (1999) notes, all crises are different and crisis managers need to tailor responses to individual crises rather than try to plan for every individual situation. Heath (1998:272) agrees and states that “no crisis has exactly the same form, the same time limitations, the same demand for resources...or the same temporal, social and economic threats.” In addition crises are indefinite, numerous, unexpected and unpredictable (Parsons, 1996; Williams *et al.* 1998). Authors such as Kash and Darling (1998) believe that although crisis management is a requirement for organisations, and although business leaders recognise this, many do not undertake productive steps to address crisis situations.

Other crisis management research has focussed on the stages of crises to assist in understanding crisis phenomenon and assist in proactive and strategic management of crises (see Richardson, 1994; 1995). Fink (1986) and Roberts (1994) both developed slightly different models to explain the lifecycle of crises (see table 1). Faulkner (2001) developed the first tourism specific disaster management framework and subsequently applied this framework to the Katherine Floods in Australia (see Faulkner & Vikulov, 2001).

Although understanding the nature of crises are important, understanding how to manage crises are more critical. In particular, managing communication and perceptions through a crisis communication strategy can limit the negative media coverage and manage perceptions both during a crisis or disaster and at the recovery/resolution stage. Crisis communication and marketing is important to provide information to key publics and to help tourism destinations limit the impact of a crisis as well as help them recover from incidents by safeguarding the destination image and reputation which is of immense value to tourism destinations. The development of crisis communication and marketing strategies by organisations is therefore a critical competency for tourism managers.

Crisis Communication and Crisis Marketing

Crisis management literature emphasises the need to have a detailed communication strategy as the media can encourage the flow and the intensity of a crisis or even turn an incident into a crisis (Keown-McMullan, 1997). Barton (1994) believes that a strategic crisis plan can help limit the damage from a crisis and allow an organisation to concentrate on dealing with the crisis at hand. Marra (1998:461) notes that poor communication strategies can often make the crisis worse as a deluge of questions is often asked from a wide range of stakeholders including reporters, employees, stockholders, government officials and public residents. The initial response is important and table 2 illustrates five main considerations for responding to crises.

Responding quickly to demands of the media and publics is important as the media have deadlines to work to and are looking for quick sources of information. If the crisis team does not fill the void, someone else will (Coombs, 1999). Zerman (1995:25) agrees stating that “the mass media has the power to make a break a business.” Sensationalist media coverage of the 1980 Mt St Helens disaster and the 1985 East Kootenay forest fires were noted as contributing to confusion during the emergency phase as the media were blamed for misleading public opinion concerning the severity of the disasters. This also impacted upon the long term recovery phase for the destination (see Murphey and Bayley, 1989). However, difficulties have been noted in managing the media as it is unlikely that there will be a time delay between the start of any crisis and media coverage (Ashcroft, 1997).

Crisis communication is mainly concerned with providing correct and consistent information to the public and enhancing the image of the organisation or industry sector faced with a crisis. An emphasis on communication and public relations is required to limit harm to an organisation in an emergency that could ultimately create irreparable damage. Co-operation with the media is considered vital because the media provides information to the public (Berry, 1999), illustrating the need to keep the media briefed frequently so misinformation is reduced. Regular two-way communication is the best way of developing a favourable relationship with publics (Coombs, 1999:134).

Consistency of response is also noted as a key element in crisis communication. The ability to provide a consistent message to all stakeholders will build credibility and preserve the image of an organisation instead of tarnishing reputations through providing

inconsistent messages (Coombs, 1999). Barton (1994) believes that many issues are overlooked by crisis managers regarding crisis communication, namely to focus on identifying the audience, developing goals for communicating effectively and creating strong positive messages.

Marketing and advertising is also noted as an important part of crisis communication, especially during the long term recovery stage of a crisis or disaster. As Heath (1998:26) notes “crisis management is as much about dealing with human perceptions about the crisis as it is about physically resolving the crisis situation.” This suggests that crisis communication is an essential part of managing crises and disasters and will be an important consideration for the tourism industry.

Crisis Communication in the Tourism Industry

Despite the susceptibility of the tourism industry to external and internal crises and disasters, and the importance of destination image and marketing, little research has been undertaken concerning crisis communication for the tourism industry. As Beeton (2001:422) notes:

crises occur at all levels of tourism operations with varying degrees of severity, from much publicised environmental economic and political disasters through to internally generated crisis such as accidents and sudden illness.

Crises can impact negatively upon destination image, especially if it is dramatised or distorted through rumours. Henderson (1999:108) states that “National Tourist Organisations with their responsibility for general destination marketing, research and development have an important role to play in the process of travel and tourism crisis management, representing and acting on behalf of the industry as a whole.” This quote emphasises the importance of a national tourist organisation in responding to crises, implementing crisis communication strategies and designing recovery marketing campaigns. However, Henderson (1999) found that in the case of the Asian Economic Crisis, the Singapore Tourist Board implemented reactive strategies which took time to implement reducing their effectiveness.

Soñmez *et al* (1999) noted the importance for marketers to have a prepared crisis communication and marketing plan, as the cost of this will be far less than the costs associated with a downturn in visitor confidence and visitation due to a slow response. Soñmez *et al.* (1999) suggest several ways to improve crisis communication for tourism crisis management including the preparation of a task force involving the private and public sector including a PR team, recovery marketing team, information coordination team and a finance and fund raising team.

The development of Fiji’s Tourism Action Group (TAG) during the military coups illustrates the advantages of forming such as group. Fiji’s tourist industry responded faster than expected because of the implementation of a task force combined with target marketing to restore confidence. As Soñmez *et al.* (1999:8) note “it is imperative for

destinations to augment their crisis management plans with marketing efforts, to recover lost tourism by rebuilding a positive image.”

Research Methods

Research was carried out to examine the effectiveness of the crisis communication of the British Tourist Authority at the national level and an unnamed District Council at the local level in England. This research was carried out by two separate yet linked research projects that explored similar themes concerning crisis communication specifically associated with the FMD in the United Kingdom.

Secondary and Primary Research Strategy

Throughout both pieces of research, the researchers undertook thorough secondary data analysis of press releases, newspaper articles, position statements and relevant marketing documents and policies related to the FMD and the organisations under study. Primary research was carried out in both pieces of research through the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews to supplement the secondary data collected. All interviews were undertaken in January and February 2002 and the following outlines the procedures undertaken for each project.

In the study at the national level, tourism representatives were selected judgementally from the British Tourist Authority (BTA) and key industry sector groups that represent the national interests of tourism and hospitality businesses. These representatives were interviewed for between 45 minutes and an hour and a half, and a tape recorder was used

to record the interviews for later transcription. All were interviewed concerning the response of the British Tourist Authority to the crisis and their effectiveness in implementing crisis communication strategies. Although the BTA was the focus of the study, in order to avoid bias other tourism organisations were selected on the basis of their ability to judge the effectiveness of BTA's crisis marketing and communication strategy. Representatives from the various industry organisations were elite interviews at the managerial or CEO level and were well informed and had a high level of expertise and knowledge. Something which Saunders *et al.* (2000) note is important in undertaking a judgmental sample selection. Confidentiality was provided to all respondents and therefore no respondents are identified in this paper. From the literature several themes were investigated within the interviews and corresponded with Coombs (1999) themes for responding to crises through communication. The researcher classified the data into emerging themes based upon Coombs (1999) classification and transcribed, read and re-read the transcriptions before placing comments into themes which are discussed in the results below.

In the study at the District Council level tourism representatives were selected judgementally from the District Council and also included 5 representatives from the accommodation industry, local tourism attraction and visitor group, the National Trust, and an individual operator. They were interviewed for between 45 minutes and an hour and a half while Faulkner's (2001) disaster response grid and disaster framework were used as a guide to the semi-structured interviews. The representative of the District Council was interviewed first and then industry representatives were interviewed. Similar

to the national level study the researcher tape-recorded and transcribed the interviews and placed them into themes based on Faulkner's (2001) tourism disaster framework model and relating them to crisis communication theory and literature where applicable.

Potential Limitations and Bias

Although relevant industry and government representatives were interviewed concerning crisis communication strategies implemented by the BTA and the District Council, these representatives do not represent the views of industry who do not belong to these organisations or who do not share their view. The BTA and the District Council avoided answering some questions directly in relation to its activities. Although other organisations were able to examine the role of the BTA and District Council, as Alreck and Settle (1997) note, affinity bias may exist as some of these representatives have a close working relationship with the organisations under study. Some respondents may have been concerned that their comments would make their way back to these organisations, despite assurances of confidentiality.

Interviewer bias is possible but was reduced through the use in both instances of semi-structured techniques and a set of themes developed from the literature which were used to structure the interview. Researchers did not make any personal opinions during the interviews and used a similar tone of voice and dress throughout, which have been noted to minimise interviewer bias (Saunders *et al.*, 2000).

Results and Discussion

Due to space constraints not all results can be presented in this paper. The following section first outlines the development of a crisis response strategy, before discussing respondents response time, the consistency of crisis communication strategies, access to information, and finally, the implementation of recovery marketing strategies. Where applicable the results are compared and contrasted with literature and theory discussed earlier in the paper.

Crisis Response Strategy

At the national level tourism industry representatives believed that the BTA failed to react sufficiently and effectively, as they did not appear to have a crisis management strategy in place prior to the outbreak. Nevertheless, the BTA stressed that they did have a “fairly basic crisis management strategy in place” although the British Hospitality Association believed that it was too little too late (Cotton, 2001). Having an established and formal crisis communication strategy may have reduced the response time and developed quicker communication channels to facilitate the distribution of information and the reduction in inconsistent messages (discussed later). The BTA excused the insufficiency by explaining that the intensity of the FMD could not be forecast. Nevertheless, they acknowledged that the FMD has taught them “how to have an even better crisis response strategy (in the future).”

Similar findings were discovered at the local level with the District Council noting that “there was something on file from the previous foot and mouth outbreak but not

much...there was only a rumour that there was one (a disaster plan) lying around.”

Although they did have one regarding foot and mouth it was last examined briefly after the 1967 outbreak. Furthermore, from industry representatives interviewed none had a crisis plan in place for their own business before the outbreak. Perhaps more surprisingly the tourism industry seemed to have learnt little from their experience at the local level. According to one representative “I don’t know whether people would have (a plan) in the future because I think that people felt that it has happened once and couldn’t happen again.” Only two people expressed an interest in developing a crisis management plan in the future, because crises are seen as infrequent and that little can be done to alter their impacts. The only contingency considered was setting aside money and resources to deal with unforeseen events. However, crisis management theory suggests that established plans can limit the severity of crises and disasters through proactive contingency planning (Kash and Darling, 1998; Heath, 1998).

Response Time in the Emergency Phase

Because of a combination of a delay in identifying foot and mouth, a disbelief of the severity of such a crisis and a lack of proactive planning, there was a delay in reacting to the crisis by the tourism industry at both a national and local level. Both the BTA and industry at the national and local level only accepted the implications of the outbreak at the emergency phase and reacted only due to negative publicity. The BTA in their media releases noted this in a statement issued by the head of EU Affairs in Brussels which stated “in dealing with the Belgian media, the current tactics are more reactive than proactive” (BTA 2001a). Although in the personal interview the BTA insisted that they

reacted within the first three days of the outbreak it was not until 28 March (one month later) that a BTA board meeting took place to co-ordinate communications and prepare a recovery plan for England. Industry representatives at the national level agreed that the response of the tourism sector generally had been slow and the power and effect of the media had been under-evaluated. However, the response of the BTA was to attempt to market and improve the image of the UK to target markets but this process was hampered by the ongoing outbreak and continued spread of the disease throughout the UK.

At the local level, the majority of respondents did not believe the implications of the outbreak until the emergency phase. According to one respondent “we knew what was going on, but we were trying not to think about it.” Furthermore, another respondent described decision making as “mainly stabbing in the dark.” This slow response could be because the initial outbreaks were in other districts and there seemed to be confusion about the potential impacts and what should be done about them. Little communication was occurring between decision makers at the national level and the local level. A lack of knowledge of the disease and its implications meant that footpaths and attractions were closed and the District Council sought advice over what to do as they did not want to put tourism businesses at risk. This decision making was further complicated by mixed messages at the national level by government over whether the countryside was closed or actually open for business, illustrating that consistency in responding to the crisis and communicating positive messages to key audience groups was lacking.

Inconsistency of Responses

This inconsistency of messages sent out by tourism organisations and other government agencies involved in handling the disease impacted upon the dissemination of facts and figures concerning the disease, but more importantly confused potential tourists' and the tourism industry. Coombs (1999) suggests that consistency is important to avoid speculation and confusion. In the case of the FMD both were evident at the national and local level. The international market confused the outbreak with the BSE disease and some had the perception that it was deadly to humans. The domestic public was unsure whether they should try and help rural economies by visiting such areas or whether they could best help by staying home and not spreading the disease. This statement is supported by market research conducted by the English Tourism Council (2001b) that showed consumers were still confused in June 2001, several months after the outbreak. Contradicting statements were being published and this was even more confusing by the fact that many areas were totally unaffected by the disease. The BTA representative interviewed noted that there was no united approach and that different messages and statements were provided by different tourism and hospitality organisations.

Another potential problem which resulted in inconsistency in messages was the encroaching deadline for the government to announce a general election. The government held a strong lead over political rivals in the polls and had made little secret of its desire to face a spring election. However, the images of burning cows saturating news coverage meant an early election was impossible unless the disease could be eradicated without risking the rural vote that was heavily influenced by the farmers. Yet,

the crisis/disaster conflict reflects the multi-sectoral nature of industry in rural areas, and there was disagreement over how the emergency stage should be handled and whether vaccination would be a better strategy than burning animals. This debate was held during the emergency phase of the outbreak which suggests that decisions may not have been made with thorough consideration for their impacts. It was the policy of slaughter and burn that ensured a negative media coverage and images, severely damaging the tourism industry.

Inconsistency also occurred at the local level according to respondents. The District Council felt that in hindsight a more consistent approach was required. The Council stated “we were all calling for consistency at the same time, but the situation was moving so fast that no one seemed to be able to do it. I received 145 e-mails during this period, a lot of these were policy documents, technical specifications and general advice that would change day by day and area by area.” This lack of consistency was not the fault of the District Council but their inability to answer queries created an information void and created what one respondent termed a “knee jerk response.” The combination of resources between the District Council (local level) and the County Council (regional level) also caused inconsistency and contradictory advice. As the District Council respondent noted, “the County Council had put notices and signposts at the local level which stated that most footpaths in the County are closed, which was not effective when at the local level we were trying to encourage people to come to the area.” It was not until after April 2001 and the immediate phase of the crisis that co-ordination between the two bodies led to more consistency, but by then rumour and confusion had a damaging effect.

One of the major reasons for this lack of consistency according to local level respondents was a lack of access to relevant information.

Access to Information

The BTA felt that the media was very intense for the first three months and at times their reporting was hostile, sometimes neutral but rarely friendly leading to misinformation (BTA 2001b). The BTA set up an Immediate Action Group (IAG) consisting of internal BTA staff from a range of departments to help implement strategies regarding the outbreak. The BTA also implemented a number of other measures to provide better access to information and provide consistent and positive messages which are outlined in table 3.

Initially access to information was difficult due to uncertainty and slow response of the national government. Although the development of communication channels was created by the BTA as information and policy was developed, many industry operators were simply unable to access some of the information due to a lack of e-mail and Internet facilities. For instance, in the South East of England only 60% of Tourist Information Centres had e-mail facilities and prior to the outbreak only six out of ten Regional Tourist Boards had web sites (DCMS 2001). The web site however, was useful for providing information to potential overseas visitors.

At the local level access to information was difficult and the District Council were unsure what to do and what the risks were to local farmland. As one respondent noted the

“attractions were seeking advice as they did not know how they were going to be affected” and were passed to different national organisations in search of information which was described by an industry respondent as “frustrating.” Sources of information followed a long chain of command from national government, regional tourist boards, county councils to the local level. At the local level consistent messages were created by press and media contacts as well as briefing Tourist Information Centre staff regarding what attractions and footpaths were open. However, research indicated that staff had detailed information concerning attractions, but little knowledge of footpaths which attract a number of hikers to the local region and are a major tourist asset.

Recovery Marketing Strategies

As noted earlier, tourism organisations, especially NTOs are in a position to assist with the marketing and recovery of destination image or reputation that may have been damaged through a crisis or disaster. Recovery marketing at the national level was complicated by the fact that not all regional areas were affected by the outbreak and thus wondered what all of the fuss was about. As mentioned above some areas actually improved their situation as holiday makers changed their travel patterns from rural or countryside areas to coastal resorts (Wright, 2002). Certain attractions also benefited as visitors changed from outdoor activities to indoor activities such as museums and galleries.

There were no tourism resources damaged by FMD to be repaired and the blackened image of the UK could not be repaired until the disease had been defeated, despite many

areas of the UK having never been affected by the disease. Thus, the nature of the disaster meant that there was no “turning point” when a town was re-opened, or a building restored or re-built, instead areas of the country gradually tried to persuade visitors that it was safe to visit, while other areas of the UK continued to suffer with new outbreaks of the disease. Such a scenario led to calls from some sectors of the tourism industry to proceed with advertising campaigns encouraging visitors to the countryside, while for others, such confidence-building campaigns were misplaced until the problem had universally been removed.

The English Tourism Council (ETC) was given £3.8m to promote tourism to a domestic audience in April 2001, which was spent on specific market campaigns, coupled with developing web sites to inform potential visitors of where was safe to visit. The ETC calculated that this financial aid generated 766,000 additional visits and produced a return on investment of £27 for each £1 spent (ETC, 2001c). In May, a further £12m was given to the BTA for international marketing, while no further finance was available for the ETC and the domestic market (ETC, 2001c). The BTA started planning in September 2001 to re-brand and re-image Britain through a new £5 million campaign called UK OK which was implemented in January 2002 to attract the visiting friends and relatives market. This was targeted at seven selected key markets (USA, Canada, Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland). However, industry representatives believed that it was not enough for such a large target audience. Further funding for marketing of Britain overseas was secured in April 2002 with £20m contribution from the government, £5m cash from industry and a further £15m of

collateral marketing by the campaign partners (BTA, 2002). This money will be spend on the 'Only in Britain: Only in 2002' campaign which is expected to attract an extra one million visitors in 2002 and generate £0.5b for the national economy (BTA, 2002).

At the local level recovery was undertaken from the intermediate phase of the crisis onwards as the area did not have any confirmed cases of the foot and mouth disease. A publicity campaign was implemented to attract tourists back to the local area but representatives felt that it was difficult to get the interest of the media who were more interested in "mountains of cows in Cumbria (being burned)." The recovery strategy was also limited by budget constraints and a reluctance to put large amounts of money towards a recovery strategy when the disease was not yet defeated at the national level. According to the District Council this "would have been a waste of money." The ETC helped later in the long term recovery stage by providing money for publicity campaigns and publicity work was conducted in conjunction with county councils. Recovery was quick at the local level under study, partly due to good weather and also because major competitors such as Cumbria and the South West of England were still battling the outbreak throughout the recovery phrase.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined the importance of crisis management, and in particular crisis communication for tourism organisations. Tourism is highly susceptible to external crises and disasters, yet even after the foot and mouth outbreak few lessons appear to have been learnt by some parts of the industry. At the national level a greater number of changes

have been implemented and the BTA are constantly refining their crisis management strategies and plans. The BTA did the best they could under the circumstances, yet the nature of the FMD meant that recovery marketing was considered wasteful until after the outbreak had been defeated and a lack of a crisis management and communication strategy prior to the outbreak hampered recovery.

The absence of a crisis communication or management strategy at the local level was evident and yet it appears doubtful if one will be created at all due to the perceived uniqueness of individual disasters and crises. Yet as Kash and Darling (1998) and Beeton (2001) note all organisations and tourism organisations suffer from external or internal crises of varying magnitudes. In particular, this paper has noted that a lack of crisis management strategy combined with a slow response time, inconsistent communication strategies and poor access to information limited the effectiveness of crisis communication for the tourism industry. In particular, access to information was critical for consumers, industry and local regions. Recovery marketing has been implemented, and in the case of the local level recovery was rapid as they appear to have benefited at the expense of other regions. Yet, at the national level recovery marketing is still continuing and the success of which is yet to be evaluated. The FMD outbreak was chaotic as noted by Fink (1986). The fragmentation of the tourism industry did little to alleviate this confusion with decisions being made in the heat of the crisis, illustrating the need planning before such incidents occur.

Greater research and understanding is required in the field of crisis communication and theory to help improve the understanding of such incidents. This understanding will hopefully aid the development of suitable crisis communication models for managers to implement which can be varied depending on the scale and type of crisis or disaster encountered. Faulkner's (2001) model is a useful start, however more research is needed into disaster phenomena and crisis communication in the tourism industry. The cost of developing a crisis management strategy would be far less than the cost of not having one and a key aspect to any crisis strategy is crisis communication. It is hoped that this paper has contributed in some way to the field of crisis communication in tourism through evaluating the FMD outbreak in the UK.

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Table 1: The crisis and disaster lifecycle

| Faulkner's (2001) stages | Fink's (1986) stages | Robert's (1994) stages |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Pre-event | | <i>Pre-event:</i> where action can be taken to prevent disasters (e.g. growth management planning or plans aimed at mitigating the effects of potential disasters) |
| 2. Prodromal | <i>Prodromal stage:</i> when it becomes apparent that the crisis is inevitable | |
| 3. Emergency | <i>Acute stage:</i> the point of no return when the crisis has hit and damage limitation is the main objective | <i>Emergency phase:</i> when the effects of the disaster has been felt and action has to be taken to rescue people and property |
| 4. Intermediate | | <i>Intermediate phase:</i> when the short-term needs of the people must be dealt with –restoring utilities and essential services. The objective at this point being to restore the community to normality as quickly as possible |
| 5. Long term (recovery) | <i>Chronic stage:</i> clean-up, post-mortem, self-analysis and healing | <i>Long-term phase:</i> continuation of the previous phase, but items that could not be addressed quickly are attended to at this point (repair of damaged infrastructure, correcting environmental problems, counselling victims, reinvestment strategies, debriefings to provide input to revisions of disaster strategies) |
| 6. Resolution | <i>Resolution:</i> routine restored or new improved state | |

Source: Reprinted from Tourism Management, 22 (2), Faulkner, B., Towards a framework for tourism disaster management, page 140, Copyright (2001) with permission from Elsevier Science.

Table 2: Five Point Crisis Communication Plan

| Point | Action |
|--------------|---|
| 1. | Respond quickly. Develop two way communication with the media to provide accurate information to key stakeholders. This will reduce misinformation and help develop a consistent message. |
| 2. | Give instructing information such as <i>what</i> happened, <i>when</i> it happened, <i>where</i> it took place, and <i>how</i> it occurred. Also discussion of the precautions stakeholders should take and what corrective action is being undertaken. |
| 3. | Consistency in developing the communication plan and key messages including discouraging any unofficial spokespersons. |
| 4. | Openness and accessibility including availability of spokespersons and generating a willingness to disclose information and being honest. |
| 5. | Express sympathy to victims. |

Source: Adapted after Berry (1999) and Coombs (1999:114)

Table 3: British Tourist Authority Aim and Major Strategies to Limit Severity of the Foot and Mouth Outbreak

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <p>Aim</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To correct misleading information in their overseas markets concentrating on the ones that had been most severely hit by the crisis. |
| <p>Strategies</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They employed a global PR agency to manage the negative perceptions of Britain overseas. ▪ A new web site provided information on whether attractions and events were open and showed that by Easter 80% of attractions were actually open. ▪ The development of media bulletins and newsletters were also used to facilitate the exchange of information. |
| <p>Aim</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To assure summer holiday bookings and provide correct and consistent messages |
| <p>Strategies</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Including market research and tactical advertising to assure summer holiday bookings. ▪ An e-mail campaign to 10 million people world wide. ▪ A number of trade and press trips. |
| <p>Aim</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To re-brand and re-market Britain as a tourist destination to aid in the recovery of the tourism destination. |
| <p>Strategies</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UK OK and ‘Only in Britain: Only in 2002’ campaign |