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**Exercises**

## EXERCISES

The media is often saying that the public has a right to know. True, but who's to decide what the public should know and in what shape or form. Discuss the pros and cons of this, focussing on problems that have been created and what options there can be.

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AIDS is becoming a major industry issue. How should it be handled? Look at instances in which tourism industries have been hurt by the AIDS campaign. Examine the 'myths' that surround the spread of AIDS. How much is attributable to public ignorance. If media is responsible for damaging tourism industries by writing about AIDS, what about the role of the media in promoting public awareness and education about the dangers of AIDS? How can you do one without the other?

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Environmental problems are gathering steam worldwide. Some people feel the travel and tourism industry is one of the culprits. Is this true? What has led to this image? What can be done about it? What is the role of the media.

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Your company has launched a new product. How can it be presented in a way that is different from others? Hint : If it's a new product, you must have done something "new" to distinguish it from the others. Focus on that aspect.

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Interview your general manager/marketing director once a month. Pretend you are a journalist. Tap him for information on how the company/hotel is doing, new trends and directions. Solicit his views on international political and economic events, and their potential impact on your country. Set up a profile databank of journalists : Their background, interests, career paths. Identify ways by which you think you can help them, their publications and yourself in the process.

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Interview various people in your own company, be they bus-drivers or room-maids, about their perceptions, aspirations and problems. See how you can compile their thoughts and views into something communicable in a readable and interesting way.

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Discuss the pros and cons of news conveyance. List them in separate columns and see if the discussion participants can come up with a means that they think can best meet the interests of their readers.

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Is there a market for a good news only travel newspaper? What kind of news would it, or should it contain? Who will read it? Who will advertise in it? How can it be made both good and objective at the same time? How can journalists verify that what they are being told is actually true and that they are not being misled.

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You are asked to inspect a hotel that looks very good, has a good general manager and a reasonably good product. But it is far from town, which basically violates one of the primary facets of hotel management -- that location is everything. Yet, you've been invited there for a good time, shown around the place, given lots of information by the manager and even the lunch was good. Would you be fair to your readers and say that location is no good? Or would you forget about it?

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A young journalist comes to you and wants to check out a tip-off that your hotel is for sale. At the moment, he's the only one. The story is true but cannot be released right now due to sensitive negotiations going on. How do you handle him? These are your choices and let's look at the pros and cons of each.

Tell him you don't know anything about it. Pro : You get to keep your job.  
Con : You are dismissed as a know-nothing decoration. You haven't been of much use to him, so next time he could possibly be of little use to you.  
Translation : Your next Press release goes down the chute.

Deny it outright : Pro : You get to keep your job. Con : If the story is true, you are denounced as a liar, the worst thing that can happen to you, your credibility and reputation. The reporter will probably not only quote you but could also spread the word amongst other media that you are a liar. Your name's mud. Time to move on to other things.

Try to press him for more information to see how much he knows before confirming or denying it : Pro : You look good when you report back to your boss and tell him that this reporter is on to the story and knows such and such about it. Con : Nice try, but the reporter's going to soon figure out that what you are trying to pull off and will soon put a stop to it -- unless he's the type who likes to brag about how much he or she knows. Then, unless you can answer his questions properly and do so willingly, he's going to get mighty upset. Be prepared for future relationship problems.

Tell him that you'll check it and call back. Pro : Good approach and a nice stall for time. Con : Unless you really deliver, and fast, you got a problem. If your boss is unavailable, contact his Number Two.

Give him an off the record confirmation and ask not to be quoted : Pro : Best from his perspective. He gets his scoop and he's on top of the world. Con : Can you trust him? If he fries you, you're dead, and he's not going to get you a job in future. But if you can trust him, you're in seventh heaven, too. He's happy and you're saved.

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Examine the role of establishing credibility, consistency and reliability in image-building. Focus on the fact that images are not made overnight : The Oriental - Raffles Hotel - Singapore Airlines' 'Singapore Girl' campaign - Thai International's 'Smooth as Silk' - Marlboro Country - This is an authentic passenger statement - The world's favourite airline - Don't leave home without it - We try harder -- Moral of the story : Adopt one slogan that best reflects your corporate profile and stick with it. That's your identity; change it and you may think you are adopting something more catchier, but what you are doing is the marketing equivalent of changing your name.

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Look at the various areas of common grounds and conflicts between tourism and the media :

The media needs tourism to survive; it is one of the biggest industries in the world and a major advertiser, especially for tourism supplements.

Tourism needs the consumer and trade media to survive; to reach travel agents, buyers and sellers, the consumer market place, to keep the industry informed about what's going on.

AND YET :

Tourism would prefer to have only positive reports about itself; the media cannot do that without compromising its basic journalistic principles.

Non-governmental organisations and tourism watchdog groups need media exposure to promote awareness of cultural, environmental and social problems alleged to be resulting from mass tourism.

Tourism needs the media to disseminate information about its economic importance and earn political respect and clout to make regulatory and other changes necessary to maintain industry health and growth.

AND YET :

Unless the media reports on all these issues objectively and fairly, it is not justifying its existence. No one will read it and therefore no-one will advertise in it, in which case the industry would have no media -- no media to act as a marketing tool, a pressure group, an influencer, a lobbyist, etc.

The next section on 'Other Reading' is a presentation of selected illustrations of some of the issues covered earlier in the manual. They provide important 'other views' that will balance off any 'opinionisation' that may be present in the rest of the manual.

The section consists of speeches, illustrations, advertisements, articles and presentations made at the PATA/AMIC Asian Tourism Communicators Workshop.

They are deliberately arranged in a random order. This is to allow you to do some searching and mental research to put them 'in place'.

After all, information does not always come to you packaged in the manner you want them.