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Instructional Note

A Team Assessment Task for Sustainable Tourism: Review of a Media Report

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Abstract

The aim of using a Media Report as a teaching assessment task is to motivate students to focus on issues that can impact on the Tourism industry. Selected media reports are an ideal source for critical analysis of media influences on viewers, the tourism industry and tourists themselves. Students work in groups and evaluate a pertinent Media Reports using a framework to assist in the critical analysis of their Media Report. Besides increasing students' awareness of non-travel media influences, in a visually stimulating manner, this approach enhances student learning within a team environment. This task encourages students to learn and develop team skills as well as critical analytical skills.

Key words: *Team work, Sustainable Tourism, Media Reports.*

Introduction

The media is arguably a major source of information for society and has the potential to exert a significant influence on the behaviour of tourists. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of creating an awareness of tourism destinations this in turn may have adverse effects on the environment and sustainable tourism (Swarbrooke, 1999, 135). There is evidence to suggest that television documentaries can influence the behaviour of viewers in regards to their perception of a region or country and may also contribute to pro-environmental behaviour (Holbert, Kwak & Shah 2003).

Given the limited number of controversial and in-depth media reports that are appropriate for this type of analysis, certain television programs and documentary makers were scrutinised over time to collect suitable source material. The assessment task was then designed to develop critical thinking on the part of students through the systematic analysis of a media report with substance. This rich media source is stimulating to view and discuss and this form of active learning tends to enhance the learning process (Freeman 2003). Empirical research also suggests that group work can encourage the development of team working skills (Smith 2005) and can provide support for deeper comprehension of the issues covered within a course (Sims 2006) and facing the community.

Overview of Learning Objectives

Students are required to work in a team in order to develop and demonstrate teamwork, organisational and networking skills and to accept and delegate responsibility. The Review of a Media Report is aimed at clarifying the role the media plays in "raising awareness of issues relating to sustainable tourism" (Swarbrooke, 1999, p135). It also helps appreciate potential limitations of media reports (Hall & Seery) and develop healthy scepticism. A good example of a media report with substance is "Gorillas in Our Midst" which was aired by SBS TV on the award-winning program Dateline, in March 2007. Such programs provide ample opportunity for students to develop a greater awareness of the influence of the media (Hartley, 2002). They also facilitate evaluation of the use of experts, visual and sound effects, and how the economic, socio-cultural and environmental issues are addressed and how the question of sustainability in the tourism industry is covered, if at all.

Swarbrooke (1999) suggested that relevant media could be divided into two basic categories, travel media and non-travel media. The problems with either form of media reporting are basically that they may provide an over-simplistic or superficial coverage. This assessment task encourages students to identify the strengths and shortcomings of the media report that they are evaluating. To this extent, there are a number of negative aspects to media reports that they should be able to identify and explain. Swarbrooke (1999) provides a list of issues pertaining to both travel media and non-travel media and these issues provide a basis for determining what should be addressed in the student evaluation. Briefly, these issues according to Swarbrooke (1999) may be summarised as:

Travel Media:

- Tourists encouraged to visit places off the beaten track which have negative impact on new areas;
- May promote destinations which have oppressive governments;
- Focus on trips paid for by companies and are likely not to be objective (conflict of interest);
- May ignore the view of the host community;
- May lead to a saturation of tourists beyond capacity to cope.

Non-travel Media:

- Reports on civil unrest can result in loss of money and jobs for the host community;
- Increasing demand for destinations with fragile ecosystems is counter productive;
- Espousing tourists rights without acknowledging responsibilities;
- Increased demand can result in a burden on the local environment and infrastructure.

Implementation Guidelines

Selected media reports are allocated to a small team in each tutorial class for review in either Week 6, 9 or 12 and made available through the Library at the start of the semester. Each team usually views theirs several times. They are then marked on their written review and also their oral presentation. A group mark is usually given to the whole team for their oral presentation, on the basis of their demonstrated teamwork, oral presentation skills, quality and use of AV materials and the management and facilitation of tutorial discussion. Discussion by both the presenters and the class is usually so animated and enthusiastic that it often goes over the 20 minutes allocated. An oral presentation gives the rest of the class the opportunity to view the same media report in the tutorial class and participate in a discussion led by a group of fellow students who have studied the media report in depth. Each team is also required to submit their joint Review of their Media Report (of up to 1500 words) and attach a diary summary page showing each individual's contribution. The table must list each team member, as well as the tasks each undertook and indicate how long each task took. This requirement puts students on notice that they are expected to make a noticeable contribution, or risk having to justify to the tutor why they don't deserve a lower mark for their lesser contribution.

The Media Report Overview

Students are provided with a marking criteria guideline which in conjunction with the instructions in the course outline, is useful as a framework for their review.

Required

1) A group review of a media report which considers the significant role the media plays in "raising awareness of issues relating to sustainable tourism" (Swarbrooke, 1999, p135).

The review must comprise:

- a title page stating the name of the course, the title of the Media Report, the students' names and ID numbers, the tutorial group's meeting time and an estimate of the number of words in the body of the report
- a logical, well argued Review (of not more than 1500 words) covering:
 1. the main sustainable tourism issues raised and the approach used
 2. the context and structure of the Media Report (eg who produced/ presented it, when, how reliable is this source, and how appropriate would it have been for the intended audience)
 3. the development of the argument including the representation of "expert" and alternative opinions, the use of images and sounds, and the juxtaposition of ideas, images and sounds
 4. a critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments used
 5. a conclusion about the effectiveness of the Media report/ video as a useful tool for "raising awareness of issues relating to sustainable tourism" (Swarbrooke, 1999, p135) and enhancing learning in this course.
- an attached diary summary table with rows describing each task undertaken and columns naming each team member and showing the number of hours they individually spent on each task.
- where appropriate, a reference list.

2) A group presentation summarising the main issues of the media report.

Assessment Criteria Guide

Criteria for marking the oral presentation of the Group Assignment is based on the following:

Presentation Assessment Guide

Content and analysis:	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Covered background thoroughly and succinctly					
Demonstrated understanding of the relevant theory and or key issues					
Quality of analysis & application of theory & practice					
Quality of concluding comments					

Presentation technique:	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Quality and use of AV materials (selection of Media Report segment)					
Use of voice, eye contact, body language					
Structure of presentation & time management skills					
Management & Facilitation of tutorial discussion					

Students are advised that the same group mark will normally be given to each team member for the two components of the assessment. The criteria for marking the written report component are presented in Appendix A as a separate item. This approach places greater attention on the specific issues that should be addressed in the review of the media report in line with the suggestions of Swarbrooke (1999, p135).

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Appendix A

Issue / Criteria / Topic	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Less than Satisfactory
<p>Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Grammar *Spelling 	<p>A very high standard of presentation. No typos or written expression errors. Shows evidence of extensive editing and revision.</p>	<p>A high standard of presentation. Only a few minor errors. Shows evidence of extensive editing and revision.</p>	<p>Some minor errors of written expression, including typographical errors. Generally well written.</p>	<p>A small number of major errors of written expression, including typographical errors. Satisfactory level only.</p>	<p>Major errors of written expression, including typographical errors. Not at a satisfactory level.</p>
<p>Context and structure of the Media Report</p>	<p>Very easy to follow - who produced/ presented it, when, how reliable it is as a source, and how appropriate would it have been for the intended audience.</p>	<p>Easy to follow - who produced/ presented it, when, how reliable it is as a source, and how appropriate would it have been for the intended audience. Only some minor problems.</p>	<p>generally clear - who produced/ presented it, when, how reliable it is as a source, and how appropriate would it have been for the intended audience. Several minor problems.</p>	<p>Not altogether clear- who produced/ presented it, when, how reliable it is as a source, and how appropriate would it have been for the intended audience. Some major problems.</p>	<p>Not clear- who produced/ presented it, when, how reliable it is as a source, and how appropriate would it have been for the intended audience. Serious major problems.</p>
<p>Development of the argument (including the representation of "expert" and alternative opinions, the use of images and sounds, and the juxtaposition of ideas, images and sounds)</p>	<p>Succinct argument and thorough rationale. Comprehensively examines all concepts "expert" and alternative opinions, the use of images and sounds, and the juxtaposition of ideas, images and sounds. Critiques, integrates and assimilates.</p>	<p>Clear argument and provides some rationale. Examines the major concepts "expert" and alternative opinions, the use of images and sounds, and the juxtaposition of ideas, images and sounds. Integrates discussion.</p>	<p>Attempts to provide an argument and rationale. Examines some concepts "expert" and alternative opinions, the use of images and sounds, and the juxtaposition of ideas, images and sounds. Describes some key issues.</p>	<p>Provides brief descriptions of issues. Omits some aspects of the "expert" and alternative opinions, the use of images and sounds, and the juxtaposition of ideas, images and sounds. Does not explain effectively.</p>	<p>Omissions and errors relating to "expert" and alternative opinions, the use of images and sounds, and the juxtaposition of ideas, images and sounds. Little or no evidence of understanding. Question not answered.</p>
<p>Critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments used in the Media Report</p>	<p>Critically reviews and analyses "Strength & Weaknesses". High quality of evidence used in an integrated and critical manner to explain and justify link. Compares and contrasts key issues. Integrates both theory and practice.</p>	<p>Analyses "Strength & Weaknesses". Evidence of an integrated and critical manner to justify link. Compares and contrasts some issues. May also include an example to help support argument.</p>	<p>Thoroughly describes the "Strength & Weaknesses". Some evidence of an integrated approach to explain and justify link. Describes some key issues.</p>	<p>Describes briefly "Strength & Weaknesses". No evidence of coherent link or steps referred to. Some steps in process may be referred to. Some omissions and errors evident.</p>	<p>Does not accurately describe "Strength & Weaknesses". Little or no evidence of understanding. Omissions and errors evident. Question not answered.</p>
<p>Conclusion on effectiveness of the Media report</p>	<p>Very logical & easy to follow the discussion. Conclusions very clear and concise on issues relating to sustainable tourism.</p>	<p>Easy to follow discussion. Conclusions reasonably clear on issues relating to sustainable tourism.</p>	<p>Minor problems. Conclusions only basic on issues relating to sustainable tourism.</p>	<p>Several minor problems. Lack of insight of issues. Conclusions vague & general – superficial.</p>	<p>Several major problems. Lack of insight of issues. Conclusions too vague & generally incomplete.</p>