



UNIVERSITY  
OF TASMANIA

# **Travel Journalism, Cosmopolitan Concern and the Place-Branded Environment**

by

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The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes of human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University.

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## **Abstract**

The physical environment is a mainstay of the international tourism industry and a component of many place brands. It is also a global asset and, increasingly, a source of conflict and concern. Drawing on a case study of United States and British travel journalism about Australia's island state of Tasmania, this thesis asks how cosmopolitan concern and place branding interact in the production of travel journalism about tourist destinations experiencing environmental conflict. Rather than concentrating on production in the newsroom, however, its primary interest is what happens in the field. By interviewing travel journalists and actors who have sought to have their messages publicised in overseas newspaper and magazine articles about Tasmania as a holiday destination, the case study weaves together internalist and externalist perspectives. Combining these with textual analyses of travel journalism and other documents, it explores both professional cultures and the evolution and circulation of cosmopolitan and place-branded discourses and frames.

Much international travel journalism mediates commercial tourism for consumers, but it also produces and reflects local identity on the cosmopolitan public stage. The travel media's reliance on the tourism industry for content and advertising makes it susceptible to reputation management via place branding. This is because government tourism office staff and the sources they recommend are often key contacts for its journalists, whether or not they accept free travel and accommodation. But as this case study reveals, some transnational travel journalists demonstrate cosmopolitan predispositions that can lead them to be reflexive about the way they represent places, and to draw on broader networks for information and opinion.

This thesis finds that place branding shapes consumerist cosmopolitan discourses in ways that appeal to transnational travel journalists and are consistent with the commercial constraints of the travel media, thereby contributing to the circulation abroad of representations that depoliticise landscapes contested in the news media. Associated with this, travel journalists reporting on nature-based destinations sometimes build narrative strength by mediating forms of cosmopolitan concern for the environment that are consistent with place branding. This, in turn, positions readers as members of imagined cosmopolitan communities, enhances the journalist's cultural capital and functions textually to frame destinations, the tourism industry and the travel media as environmentally responsible. If governments lose control over nature-based brands during periods of environmental conflict, however, travel media institutions may see value to their own brands in calling places to account. This presents travel journalists and sources with interest-group sympathies an opportunity to contribute alternative, politically charged meanings and symbols to international flows of cosmopolitan concern.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

...the magazine isn't called Tourism + Leisure, and there is a way in which they also understand that no-one wants to regard themselves as a tourist.

*Stephen Metcalf 2009,  
pers. comm., 26 June*

...the travel editor might start getting a bit baffled as to why I'm supposed to be writing a travel article when I've gone on a sort-of eco rant...

*Jamie Doward 2009,  
pers. comm, 26 August*

...we have the largest newspaper in the world on the Internet, so if you put something in the *New York Times* it gets very widely read.

*Sharon Otterman 2009,  
pers. comm., 20 June*

In November 2000, the biggest newspaper in Australia's island state of Tasmania heralded the coming of a new era for the local economy by recording a raft of recent accolades. Centre stage were awards in high-profile international travel magazines and newspaper travel supplements – most notably the United States publications *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Travel + Leisure*, the *Chicago Tribune* and *Outside* and, in Britain, the *Independent* newspaper (Rose 2000, p. 5; Stevenson 2000, p. 2). Among the tourism drawcards singled out for mention in the foreign travel press were the natural attractions of Wineglass Bay, Freycinet National Park, Cradle Mountain and the Huon River. Seven years later, the *Mercury* lauded the state government's tourism office, Tourism Tasmania, for providing free accommodation and transport for travel journalists (Stedman 2007, p. 13) in

its continuing efforts to promote the state. “Strict eligibility criteria apply to ensure assistance is only offered to outlets wanting to paint Tasmania in a favourable light,” the *Mercury* reported. “That means those wanting to write about old-growth logging or bring the pulp mill debate to the world have to pay their own way” (Stedman 2007, p. 13). The Hobart-based *Mercury*, which at this time had a circulation of approximately 53,000 in a state of half a million people, was the most politically influential of the island’s three major newspapers (Lester 2007). Its passing reference to environmental conflict hinted at rising awareness that Tasmania’s place branding as “natural” was being questioned nationally and internationally. In the years since the *Mercury* had shouted “World-beating, multi-award winning Tasmania could just about be the best damn spot in the known universe” (Rose 2000: 5), its unstated but unmistakable characterisation of the international travel media had metamorphosed from “infallible judges of excellence” to “potential allies of unpatriotic environmental activists”.

When cities, regions and countries adopt place branding, they invite the world to judge them. When they make the environment the heart of their brand, they invoke countless associations, loyalties, expectations, myths, claims and counterclaims about the environment everywhere. In attempting to brand nature, they allow nature to brand them in return. When New Zealand attaches the label “100% Pure” to scenes of fjords and glaciers, when Alaska stamps an image of a polar bear and her cub next to the words “Made in Alaska”, when Switzerland tells its visitors to “get natural” and Tasmania calls itself “your natural state” an “ethics of care” (Szerszynski and Urry 2002, p. 480) is as readily to hand as any expectation of holiday magic or product purity. Place branding particularises

physical space but universalises promises in order to penetrate world markets. In so doing, it situates environmental assets within a global discourse. In the tourism sector, a version of that discourse resides in the texts of overseas travel journalists who visit a country, region or city to report their impressions to their readers back home. That discourse may be consumerist, aesthetic or political, but it is always cosmopolitan. This is because place branding is both local and global. To borrow a distinction between the national and cosmopolitan made by Ulrich Beck (2006), place-branded environments are not *either* theirs *or* ours, but *both* theirs *and* ours. Sometimes a global audience will encounter the travel journalists' stories on the internet; occasionally the articles will cycle back to the destination's own publics this way, or via the local news media, confirming or challenging government representations of local identity and claims of international approbation. Yet despite the possibility of travel journalism influencing local, national and transnational environmental debates, there has been little empirical research into the part played by place branding and cosmopolitanism in the genre's production.

## **1.1 Gaps in Existing Research**

When I began conducting broad research into international travel journalism and cosmopolitanism in 2008, I found only a small body of scholarly literature on the genre. There was some discussion of government tourism office hosting programs (Mackellar and Fenton 2000; Seligman 1990; Dore and Crouch 2003) and the merits or otherwise of "freebies" (Seligman 1990; Simon 1988) in marketing and public relations journals. Accounts of travel journalists' views of free travel and accommodation appeared in journals of journalism practice

(Gillespie 1988; Moss 2008; Weir Alderson 1988), and in this regard Jeremy Weir Alderson (1988) briefly drew attention to the genre's neglect of the social, economic or political problems of destinations. Some embryonic content analyses and interviews were conducted as early as 1976 in the United States (Wood 1977) and 1986 in Britain, the latter revealing that travel editors considered "knocking pieces" generally out of place (Seaton n.d., p. 11). However, only since the turn of the century has there been any sustained academic interest in the genre. This is largely due to a seminal article by Elfriede Fürsich and Anandam Kavoori published in 2001, which argued that travel journalism deserved greater attention for what it could reveal about "the ideological dimensions of tourism and transcultural encounters, as well as the ongoing dynamics of media globalization" (2001, p. 150). A number of authors soon took up their challenge. A study of travel journalism about Portugal in United States newspapers published in 2004 found little evidence that travel journalists interacted with locals and concluded, in effect, that monopolisation of them by the tourism industry during their visits meant that "readers are provided with representations that serve to reconfirm their own values and beliefs based on marketing strategies aimed at creating an interesting destination and culture for [in this case] Americans to visit" (Almeida Santos 2004, p.132). In 2005 Marcella Daye found an apparent "inability to construct a discourse of difference" (2005, p. 23) in British travel articles about the Caribbean. And in 2006, Stamou and Paraskevopoulos, applying critical discourse analysis to a sample of travel journalism texts in a Greek travel magazine, found the magazine failed to integrate environmental and economic discourses in articles about protected areas, resulting in a dualist rather than a dual representation overall,

and one in which the environmental discourse dominated. More recently, Folker Hanusch (2010) and McGaurr (2010) have also argued in separate articles for greater academic interest in the genre, and further empirical research has been conducted (Cocking, 2009; Hanusch 2011, 2012a, 2012b; McGaurr 2012). For example, Hanusch (2011) and Candeeda Hill-James (2006) have conducted content analyses of Australian travel journalism representations of foreign places, finding, respectively, few interviews with locals other than those in the tourism industry and little discussion of political issues in destinations. Hanusch (2012a, 2012b) has also surveyed Australian travel journalists and found they believe they have strong ethical standards. Hanusch's and Hill-James' quantitative findings have some relevance to my own area of interest. However, the specific role of place branding and cosmopolitan concern in travel journalism about places experiencing environmental conflict remains underexplored. In the following section I explain why I believe this is an academic oversight that needs to be addressed.

## **1.2 Rationale**

As participants in a global tourism industry, travel journalists are important players in one of the world's largest international marketplaces. This gives them the opportunity to influence the fortunes of the destinations they visit. Tourism's global business volume equals or surpasses that of oil, food and automobiles, making it a major sector of global commerce (UN World Tourism Organization n.d.b). At the same time, tourism is promoted by the United Nations World Tourism Organization as "closely linked to development" and a "key driver for socio-economic progress" (UN World Tourism Organization n.d.b). In places

with few other economic resources, the tourism industry's job-creation potential and ability to build local pride through affirmative discourses in its products and publicity attract public goodwill and support for government destination promotion. This has led to assertions that tourism is "a refreshingly simple and honest business" (Anholt 2010, p. 89) whose communications have an automatic legitimacy:

Publics are generally dismissive of direct communications from national governments or boards and their agencies, and...are unsure how to react to them. Communications from tourist boards, on the other hand, are seen as a legitimate representation of the country to the global audience (Anholt 2007, p. 88).

However, when tourism offices are government agencies, as is so often the case, their communications are government communications funded by public money. This, together with travel journalism's "tacit allegiance" (Fürsich and Kavoori 2001, p. 154) to a travel industry in which these same government tourism offices are important players (Dore and Crouch 2003), means the genre has the potential to become a powerful public relations tool for government policies as well as tourism operators. In today's global tourism market, much of that potential derives from the fashion for place branding.

Place branding has been a practice of many governments at least since the mid-1990s (Anholt 2010) and continues to be popular, as evidenced by the launch in 2004 of the journal *Place Branding* (now *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*), the annual publication of the *International Place Branding Yearbook* (Go and Govers 2010; 2011) and the production of books such as

*Place Branding* (Govers and Go 2009), promoted as “a practical but comprehensive model that guides practitioners, students and researchers in the application of place branding” (Govers and Go 2009, inside front dust jacket). For tourism scholars Robert Govers and Frank Go (2009), place branding attempts to “build a coherent product offering (which includes tourism, trade, temporary employment and investment opportunities), communicated in the right way in order to guarantee the emotion-laden place experience that consumers are seeking” (Govers and Go 2009, p. 17). Although others differentiate “destination branding” from “place branding” when referring specifically to tourism, Govers and Go are comfortable using the term “place branding” in both contexts – a practice that I follow in this thesis for tourist destinations that have adopted place branding.

It is, however, important to distinguish between *brands* and *place branding*. Sociologist Celia Lury argues that a brand is an intangible but not immaterial object with margins of indeterminacy (Lury 2004): “the properties of the brand cannot be reduced to the strategies of individual actors” (Lury 2004, p. 51). Place branding exponent Simon Anholt (2010), who addresses much of his advice to governments and the public sector, equates place brands with strong or weak reputations. In place-branding literature aimed at tourism marketers, however, the brand is more likely to be defined as a discursive asset. Govers and Go (2009), for example, describe a place brand as “a representation of identity, building a favourable internal (with those who deliver the experience) and external (with visitors) image” (Govers and Go 2009, p. 17). By defining place brands as positive, Govers and Go imply that negative elements of a place’s identity can somehow be excised or rendered impotent in the process of

representation. Thus, while theirs would not be an acceptable definition of a place brand by Anholt's measure, for my purposes it affords a useful way of understanding the practice of place branding *in tourism public relations* – that is, as an attempt to manage representations of place so that only positive ones circulate or gain a foothold in local and global imaginaries. To this extent, place branding is characterised by the deployment of discursive strategies, which Anabela Carvalho describes as goal-oriented discursive interventions:

Discursive strategies are forms of discursive manipulation of reality by social actors, including journalists, in order to achieve an effect or goal. Here, manipulation does not have the sense of an illegitimate alteration of a certain reality (cf. van Dijk, 2006). Rather, I use the term to mean, simply, a discursive intervention. This intervention and the procured aim can be more or less conscious. (Carvalho 2008, p. 169)

The main discursive strategy Carvalho identifies is framing, which – importantly in terms of the celebratory, subjective genre of travel journalism – can involve the exclusion as well as the inclusion of information and opinions (Carvalho 2008, p. 169). Framing also entails composition – “the arrangement of these elements in order to produce a certain meaning” (Carvalho 2008, p. 169).

Place branding is not only a matter of deploying discursive strategies. Like all branding, it also directs and informs public relations practice and manages staff (see Lury 2004). Hosting travel journalists is one way in which tourism public relations practitioners (PRPs) help the destination gain access to the travel media. However, just as the discursive strategies of place branding are not entirely the creation of government tourism offices, they also are not the sole

preserve of tourism hosting programs. This is one reason why place branding rather than hosting alone should be a focus of research into travel journalism, cosmopolitanism and environmental conflict. A second reason is that place branding – which is not confined to tourism but for which tourism is the most powerful “booster rocket” (Anholt 2007, p. 88) – is a political as well as a commercial and cultural project.

According to Anholt, “[p]lace branding is the consequence of a realisation that public opinion is an essential component of achieving a political end. It is, one might say, a necessary consequence of democracy and the globalisation of the media” (Anholt 2004, p. 9). External communication is only a small part of his transformative equation. Through public policy and innovation as well as internal communication, place branding is intended to shape local identity in ways that ensure it deserves the better reputation its external communications attempt to secure (Anholt 2010; van Ham 2008). In applying the brand metaphor to nations, Anholt refers to its ability to differentiate the nation from its international competitors while simultaneously creating a “spirit of benign nationalism... notwithstanding its cultural, social, ethnic, linguistic, economic, political, territorial and historical divisions” (Anholt, 2007, p. 16). Although in practice governments spend large sums of public money projecting a place image to foreign publics through marketing communications and public relations, Anholt now prefers to call place branding “competitive identity” and argues that it should no longer be considered “some form of marketing discipline” but rather “a new approach to statecraft, to economic development and international relations” (2010, p. 8). In this respect he acknowledges that in the wrong hands it could be used irresponsibly (2010, p.

30). However, he prefers to focus on place branding's potential to "promote a much fuller and richer understanding of humanity and its populations and cultures" (2010, p. 30) – an ambition that hints at contemporary ideas of cosmopolitanism as promoting "an ability to make one's way into other cultures" (Hannerz 2006, p. 6).

Swedish anthropologist Ulf Hannerz's (2006) approach to cosmopolitanism has explanatory appeal in relation to the interaction of travel journalism, place branding and cosmopolitan concern. He describes cosmopolitanism as having two faces: the happy face of cultural cosmopolitanism associated with an openness to distant cultures evident, for example, in an aesthetic and intellectual appreciation of their food, literature and music, and the worried face of political cosmopolitanism that attempts to deal with concerns such as environmental degradation, species extinction, humanitarian crises, human rights abuses and climate change. Cultural and political cosmopolitanism do not necessarily coexist in individuals or groups: it may be possible for a person to be perfectly satisfied with their level of intercultural connoisseurship without ever feeling the need to participate in, or contribute to, a transnational civic or humanitarian project (Hannerz, 2004a; see Urry, 2002; Calhoun, 2002a). In some cases, such cultural cosmopolitanism may be nothing more than a "soft" version "packaged for consumer tastes" (Calhoun 2002a, p. 888) – something Calhoun describes as "consumerist cosmopolitanism" (2002a, p. 889). Nevertheless, sociologists Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry (2002, 2006) entertain the possibility of an intertwining of cultural and political cosmopolitanism arising from "banal globalism" – that is, from the public's everyday encounters with representations

of global connectedness in a world of globalised media. According to these authors (2006), banal globalism has the capacity to animate both global tourism and the environment movement. Banal globalism is similar to what Hannerz (2006) and sociologist Ulrich Beck (2006, 2011) describe as banal cosmopolitanism, which for Hannerz (2006) is an awareness of diversity resulting from work or recreational travel, cross-border friendships and kinship, encounters with immigrants and refugees, and other lived encounters that at their most positive can lead one to feel “at home in the world” (2004b, 2006).

Hannerz sees cosmopolitan value in the more narrative forms of international journalism: comparing hard news and features, he attributes to features an ability to convey a broader variety of sentiments, provide a closer approximation of the complexity of distant others, and make those others, their locations and their situations more “durable” (2004b, p. 33). Szerszynski and Urry (2002) see television and radio as allowing local populations to inhabit the wider world from afar through their incidental mediation of everyday global narratives and images, including brands. Their findings are supported by Alexa Robertson’s (2010) investigation of national television’s contribution to the cosmopolitan imagination. Focussing on public service news broadcasting in a variety of countries, she demonstrates that it is not only global broadcasters that can foster cosmopolitanism. In addition to revealing differences between countries in the ways they mediate cosmopolitanism, she finds that television news enables viewers to engage with distant others – to know, remember and identify with them and, potentially, to cultivate cosmopolitan outlooks. In its empirical breadth her work moves beyond that of Lilie Chouliaraki (2006), whose normative analysis of the televisual broadcast of suffering finds the

motivation for social solidarity and action in one particular form of television news, which she calls emergency news:

Emergency news entails a specific proposal of action at a distance that incorporates the question of “Why?” in its representations of suffering, and uses global voices of authority to turn distant suffering into a cause for action. As a consequence, emergency news has the potential to introduce the option of social solidarity to the public life of spectators – an option that can make a concrete difference to the suffers’ lives. (Chouliaraki 2006, p. 197)

Robertson (2010) explains how political cosmopolitanism depends upon cultural cosmopolitanism to advance the emergence of global citizenship:

Political and cultural understandings of cosmopolitanism coincide in the notion of citizenship. In the political version, citizenship has to do with the right to belong and with the obligation to keep informed about matters of concern to the wider community. In the cultural version, it has to do with the right to information and to develop the competence to deal with that information – to understand – and with an obligation to use that information and understanding in a way that promotes solidarity with others, even if they are distant or different. Seen from a cultural perspective, these rights and obligations are not just connected to information. They have to do with images, visuality and meaning as well – if not more so. (Robertson 2010, p. 8)

This means that the media can and often do contribute to the emergence of global environmental citizenship – a sense of environmental rights and obligations – without concerning themselves with specific political conflicts. Szerszynski, for example, writes of a moral environmental citizenship acquired

through the comparisons made possible by imaginative travel via the media “whereby the local becomes experienced in a different way, one in which a certain abstraction informs the very perceptions of the particular – an abstraction that makes possible the critical judgement necessary to citizenship” (2006, pp. 86-87). Beck, by contrast with Robertson and Szerszynski, is more interested in the catalysing contribution that the media can make to cosmopolitanisation by unveiling global risks, which he considers to be among humanity’s most pressing concerns. He believes that reports of global risks in a cosmopolitan public sphere shock people out of their complacency (Beck 2011, p. 1350). In certain circumstances, the realisation that risks transcend national borders results in the emergence, “more or less involuntarily”, of “a pressure to cooperate” (Beck 2011, p. 1353) even with people one may not want to have anything to do with.<sup>1</sup> This, Beck believes, can lead to the formation of imagined communities<sup>2</sup> of global risks and associated interdependencies, and a cosmopolitan “politicization and establishment of norms” (Beck 2011, p. 1353). To put it another way, cosmopolitanisation in Beck’s (2011) world view begins not with empathy but with risks revealed and the self-interested need for action recognised. As Beck (2011) explains, it is a progression from the real to the normative rather than the other way around.

### **1.3 Aim and Scope**

This thesis asks how cosmopolitan concern and place branding interact in the production of international travel journalism about places experiencing

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<sup>1</sup> In other circumstances this may lead to renationalisation (Beck 2006, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> This is a reference to Benedict Anderson’s (1991) conception of nations as imagined communities – that is, imagined rather than actual because face-to-face interaction with all other citizens is impossible. See Chapter 4.

environmental conflict. This is important for a number of reasons, some of which have already been discussed. Firstly, the Earth is a shared but multi-territorial global resource that travel media exploit and so have a vested interest in helping to preserve for their readers to explore and appreciate. A study of the ways in which travel journalists and travel media institutions balance their relationships with tourist destinations and their responsibilities to their readers, and the outcomes of these negotiations in their published texts and the wider public sphere, is overdue. Such a study promises insights into banal cosmopolitanism and the media's role in the emergence of imagined communities of global risks. Secondly, prevailing assumptions that tourism communications are commercially penetrating but politically benign (Anholt 2007) require scrutiny in an era in which they are being deployed in local, regional and national reputation management under the umbrella of place branding. When tourism is a significant industry in a destination, its good health is vital to the standard of living of local citizens but its economic promise gives it power and influence that are no less deserving of critical attention for being charismatic and celebratory. Thirdly, the outcome of attempts by governments to shape local identity as well as international reputation through place branding can be influenced by the way local media reflect the external reception of the brand back to local publics. Because international travel journalism has the potential to function as a form of feedback to governments and publics, it is important to understand both how that feedback is determined and how it circulates in the local public sphere. Finally, a preoccupation with the potential for hosting programs and information subsidies to lead to biased reporting of commercial tourism products appears to have deflected attention from the possibility of

government tourism public relations having political objectives or consequences beyond the promotion or defence of tourism. The possibility that an absence of mediation of environmental conflict might be the outcome of strategic political action rather than simply a characteristic of the genre does not appear to have been considered.

In taking a cosmopolitan approach to this question, I am not attempting empirically to evaluate the reception of cosmopolitan concern by publics who read travel journalism , or to engage in theoretical discussion of what Nancy Fraser describes as the *normative legitimacy* and *political efficacy*” (2007, p. 7, original emphasis) of global public opinion. Rather, through a detailed review of practical and theoretical literature informed by insights drawn from my own qualitative case study, I seek to better understand how, in whose interests and against what odds discourses of cosmopolitanism and place branding may influence the way travel journalists represent place and environmental conflict. Within this, my primary interest is not the traditional arena of journalism production studies – the newsroom – but the place travel journalists do most of their research – the tourist destination. In adopting this focus, however, I take account of Cottle’s rendering of media production’s complexity:

There is much more to “media production”, of course, than the professional incorporation of surrounding cultural discourses. Neither can “production” usefully be confined, as theorized in structuralist accounts, to the “production” of meanings within “texts” and systems of signification, or processes of identity formation “produced” exclusively within/through contending narratives and discourses. That said, “production” is not hermetically sealed behind institutional walls nor confined to organizational decision making and professional routines, and nor is it simply the (unmediated) expression of market forces. “Production”

involves all of these forces in dynamic combination and much else besides.

(Cottle 2000, p. 16)

## **1.4 Associated Theoretical Interests**

### **1.4.1 The Public Sphere**

In view of the scope of my research outlined above, it will be helpful at this point briefly to introduce notions of the public sphere, publicity and the relationship between the media and its sources that inform the following chapters. In the above section, I often refer to “publics”, which United States sociologist Craig Calhoun describes as “self-organizing fields of discourse in which participation is not based primarily on personal connections and is always in principle open to strangers” (2002b, p. 162). This raises the question of why I have chosen to research travel journalism in terms of cosmopolitan theory rather than public-sphere theory. My answer is that a discussion of the former in respect of journalism will necessarily encompass discussion of the latter. The public sphere, as conceived of by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), is a metaphorical space in which individuals come together as equals to engage in rational-critical debate about their common affairs. Although Habermas was at the time primarily concerned with national public spheres, considerable debate about the possibility and/or emergence of transnational public spheres has been conducted in the light of globalisation (see, for example, Calhoun 2002b; Fraser 2007; Köhler 1998). Many of these debates have been concerned with questions of governance and legitimacy, but Calhoun has also considered the associated need for social solidarity derived in part from “engagement in shared projects of imagining a

better future” (2002b, p. 171). Within this, he has questioned Habermas’s identification of voluntary public life entirely with rational-critical debate, arguing that the former is also “a process involving modes of cultural creativity and communication not the less valuable for being incompletely rational” (2002b, p. 155). To take this into account, a cosmopolitan public sphere would need to be “a global realm of cultural creativity as well as rational discourse, and a realm of mutual engagement” (Calhoun 2002b, p. 171).

As noted earlier, Beck (2011) argues that the mediation of global risks may be an impetus for the emergence of cosmopolitan imagined communities, here recasting Benedict Anderson’s (1991) thesis that the printing press made it possible for citizens to imagine themselves as members of a community comprising other citizens they would never meet. In terms of what environmental and humanitarian interest groups might expect as members of such a community, Martin Köhler envisages a cosmopolitan public sphere within which those who are not the citizens of the society that is the object of concern can exert influence:

The specific novelty of the cosmopolitan public sphere is that it envisages the possibility for interest aggregation across different groups of people and states. Directly, through financial support, or indirectly, as a result of easier international contacts, state actors may choose to side with civil society actors in other states to obtain changes in the policies in the latter. Likewise, civil society actors may choose to side with other states in order to obtain changes in their own state’s policies. (Köhler 1998, p. 233)

Today, many of these actors are non-government organisations, and Köhler is interested in formal mechanisms for including their views in global politics. However this neglects the intersections between activism and what Habermas (1989) describes as the refeudalisation of the public sphere in response to the promotion of consumption associated with the rise of corporate capitalism, with its emphasis on public displays of status and tendency towards “affirmative rather than critical discourse” (Knight 2010, p. 176).

Graham Knight argues that refeudalisation began as groups excluded from the Bourgeois public sphere such as women and the working class started to gain access: “The public sphere was not only transformed into an arena of economic or corporate promotionalism, it was also opened up to new political issues, problems, and perspectives in the form of collective action” (2010, pp. 176-7). In his theorisation of rational-critical debate devoid of domination and leading to consensus, Habermas’s metaphorical public sphere is utopian not only because it cannot easily accommodate spectacle but also, in Bent Flyvbjerg’s (2001) view, because it leaves little space for context or conflict:

This is not to reject the importance of the public sphere as a bulwark of freedom. Nor is it to deny that Habermas’s work has value... It must be said, however, that forms of public life that are practical, committed, and ready for conflict provide a superior paradigm of democratic citizen virtue than do forms of public life that are discursive, detached, and consensus-dependent. For those who see things this way, in order to enable the public sphere to make a serious contribution to genuine democratic participation, one would have to tie it back to precisely what it cannot accept in Habermas’s interpretations: Foucault’s focus on conflict, power and partisanship. (Flyvbjerg 2001, p. 109)

Habermas never fully resolves the tension between his democratic aims and his concern about the public sphere's expansion into the realm of popular culture.

As Libby Lester cautions:

Today's public sphere may not be the space where a rational public achieves consensus only through deliberative discussion but rather a space where public involvement is achieved via a yet largely undescribed combination of communicative acts, including deliberative discussion, but also spectacle, entertainment, symbols, affect, image. Nevertheless, Habermas's concerns about refeudalisation and staged publicness cannot be rejected just yet. We must look across history before we can understand how voices, particularly those of alternatives and the non-elite, can achieve sustained involvement in public debate. (2007, p. 24)

#### **1.4.2 Source–Media Relations**

As public debate has become competitive rather than cooperative, Habermas's distinction between communicative and strategic action has broken down (Knight 2010, p. 180). Through textual analysis Fairclough (2003) shows how texts that appear to be communicative action providing knowledge can actually be strategic action aimed at achieving specific results by way, for example, of covert evaluation. Fairclough offers promotion as a concrete example of the way in which what appears to be communicative action can in fact be strategic. Again using textual analysis, he demonstrates Wernick's understanding of contemporary "promotional culture" (Wernick 1991 in Fairclough 2003) by showing how traditional sources of information from what Hall et al. (1978) would describe as accredited sources (university publications, company annual reports etc.) often simultaneously promote by representing, advocating and

anticipating the desired outcome in what appear to be factual statements. As Fairclough observes of this blurring of fact and prediction, “We can connect this to what Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001) have identified as one significant feature of the texts of capitalism: their ‘performative power’ in bringing into being what they purport to (merely) describe” (2003, p. 113).

Knight identifies branding as strategic promotional action. In the promotional public sphere, branding functions as a short-hand, affective way to “re-anchor identity and manage uncertainty while pursuing comparative advantage and competitive success”, and also provides “a way to associate with an imagined community of like-minded people” (Knight 2010, p. 182). When activists target a brand, they challenge the validity of corporate promotional strategies, exposing hypocrisy as well as the damaging practices at issue, although increasingly they find themselves forced to adopt branding strategies themselves in the contest for the identity-dependent, belief-driven credibility so often necessary to achieve media access (Knight 2010). Many political cosmopolitans and Habermas share a faith in the ability of the right sort of democratic procedures, constitutions and institutions to ensure freedom. Foucault, by contrast, believes no institutional arrangements can guarantee freedom and it is, therefore, imperative to continually challenge those that exist (Flyvbjerg 2001). For Foucault, “[r]esistance, struggle, and conflict, in contrast to consensus, are...the most solid bases for the practice of freedom” (Flyvbjerg 2001, p. 102).

In order to be a useful theoretical tool for research about struggles for publicity in times of environmental conflict, the public sphere as it is understood in this thesis must allow for strategic action and the possibility that consensus

may not be its only objective or outcome. For example, Knight's argument in regard to the promotional public sphere (see above) is aligned in part with empirical studies of journalists and sources confirming that governments and corporations enjoy a considerable but not unassailable advantage in the public sphere. In the 1970s, powerful, often institutionalised groups were identified as having a primary role in the definition of issues and representations of social problems in the media, and alternative voices were considered largely ineffective in any attempt they might make to influence debate in a meaningful and lasting way (Hall et al 1978; Molotch and Lester 1974). Hall et al. argued that the media were usually not primary definers of social problems but rather transmitted the definitions of the powerful as a result of their quest for "objective", "authoritative" information from "accredited" sources, thereby assuming the role of secondary definers. Although the requirement for journalistic balance often ensured that alternative views were heard, Hall et al. concluded that, having already determined the nature of the issue, primary definers were largely free to set the terms of debate (Hall et al. 1978, p. 58). Empirical studies conducted around the same time by pluralists confirmed that elite sources did indeed enjoy considerable advantage over non-elite sources but argued that accounts of dominance failed to pay due attention to source negotiations and conflict prior to media access (Schlesinger 1990). Over time researchers increasingly discussed the interaction of powerful sources with the media as strategic political action (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989; Schlesinger 1990; Miller 1994), in some cases finding circumstances in which non-institutional sources could successfully challenge the definitional advantages of elite sources (Anderson 1997; Davis 2002; Lester 2007; Miller 2004; Wolfsfeld 1997). Of particular

interest in terms of this thesis is Gadi Wolfsfeld's (1997) political contest model, which has also been influential in Lester's (2007) study of the media and environmental conflict in Tasmania. Wolfsfeld describes source battles for media access and meaning in news journalism as parts of larger political struggles in which the media fall into categories on a continuum of influence, from those who align themselves closely with the most powerful antagonists in the conflict, to those who champion their opponents (Wolfsfeld, 1997, p. 69). In this model, sources compete for media attention on the basis of their status; control over resources and the flow of information (including the provision of information subsidies); ability to stage events or produce exceptional behaviour; and control over the political environment. Wolfsfeld's research and the other more recent empirical studies noted above demonstrate a comprehensive and nuanced appreciation of the role of source-media relations in the production of news but have largely neglected issues that arise in soft journalism, where the dominance of elite sources as a result of advertising and "pressures to increase audiences through the creation of populist and apolitical 'newszak'" (Davis 2002, p. 7; see also comments on the refeudalisation of the public sphere above) seems to be taken for granted. This is surprising, because empirical research has already shown how hallmarks of popular culture such as spectacle and celebrity have been harnessed by non-elite sources to attract news media attention and have also produced media scepticism (Hutchins and Lester 2006; Lester 2006, 2007; Lester and Hutchins 2009). The question of whether source strategies might contribute to what, after all, may sometimes be only ostensibly apolitical outcomes in soft journalism is, to my knowledge, rarely asked, much less answered, and examples of the mediation of political conflict in such genres go

largely unremarked and unexplained. Addressing these silences in scholarly journalism research requires empirical work that attends just as closely as empirical studies of more-serious journalism to the actions of conscious agents and the role of “invisible” public relations (see Davis 2002, p. 13).

### **1.4.3 The Network Society**

One thing that has surprised me in my research is how many articles about Tasmania in publications with very high circulations – some from as long ago as 2000 – are still available online. These are feature-length articles about a small island of just 500,000 people 17,000 kilometres from the two markets in which the articles are published. In view of the opportunities information technology offers to those wishing to exploit the informational capital (Arvidsson 2006) brands deliver as new media objects (Lury 2004) and explore the marketing possibilities offered by virtual reality, it is perhaps not surprising that the network society theories of Manuel Castells (1996) have received attention from scholars of place branding. However, whereas Govers and Go (2009) are concerned with where place identity may be located in an increasingly globalised and virtual world, my interest is primarily in the implications for antagonists in environmental conflicts of searchable content on newspaper and travel magazine websites.

According to Castells, in the network society culture and power are, in significant ways, becoming detached from geographical space via the operation of the networked technologies that today underpin the globalised space of flows. The space of flows is defined as “the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows” (1996, p. 412), wherein “domination is not purely structural [but] is enacted...by social actors” (1996, p. 415). The space of

places, by contrast, is where most people live: “A place is a locale whose form, function and meaning are self-contained within the boundaries of physical contiguity” (Castells 1996, p. 423). Govers and Go (2009) believe that in the network society the images that place-branding actors project are in greater danger than they once were of becoming victims of power struggles, but their interest is primarily in what this means for tourism rather than for the public sphere. Whereas Govers and Go argue that “there is a desire within the cultural community and public sector to project imagery that represents an authentic identity of place, whereas commercial actors are keen to stage authenticity” (2009, p. 9; I discuss staged authenticity (MacCannell 1999) in Chapter 4), I am interested in pressures on the public sector as part of government to construct an identity purged of environmental conflict. Although the “structural logic” of the network society is towards decentred networks largely unfettered by national boundaries (Hutchins 2004), destinations (Govers and Go 2009) and location-based environment movements (Hutchins and Lester 2006) seek, respectively and in varying degrees, to commodify or protect place by engaging with global flows. In considering regional media as a site that not only resists the domination of these flows but also reaffirms local identity, Brett Hutchins has noted that the “interface between the space of flows and the space of places is not about consistency; it is about unpredictable outcomes, decentred power relations and culture in the act of becoming” (2004, p. 588). Thus, in this thesis I am alert to the fact that travel journalism, like local/regional news, operates at the interface of places and flows, speaking of distant places to its own local, regional or national audiences via transnational flows, and that this might produce unpredictable outcomes.

## 1.5 Case Study Methods

The empirical work conducted for this thesis takes the form of a qualitative case study of the production of United States and British travel journalism about Tasmania (see following section for background details of the subject of the case study). Although case studies can be criticised for their particularity, there is opportunity for theory building within the case (Geertz 1973), and also for generalisation beyond the case through the falsification of propositions (Flyvbjerg 2001). More importantly in terms of journalism research, qualitative studies of media production such as the one I propose can contribute to a “conceptual shift in research from ‘routine’ to ‘practice’” (Cottle 2007, p. 10):

This shift of approach helps, then, to move beyond the static and generalising view of news entertained by studies in the recent past and helps to bridge the theoretical divide between political economy, cultural studies and organisational studies approaches to news (Berkowitz 1997; Schudson 2000). Markets, culture and production practices all interpenetrate and are actively negotiated in the moment of production”. (Cottle 2007, p. 10)

Like Wolfsfeld (1997), Anderson (1997), Davis (2002), Lester (2007) and many other scholars with an interest in source–media relations, I have employed the ethnographic technique of long interviews. All but one of the 37 interviews, 11 of which were with British or United States travel journalists, was conducted in 2009. Before, during and after conducting them I was also engaged in an iterative process of textual and contextual analysis. The textual analysis of interview transcripts, travel journalism and a wide range of other documents such as government strategies and annual reports, marketing material, web pages

and news journalism followed the approach developed by Carvalho (2008, see above and Chapter 5) in some respects – particularly in the identification of discursive strategies such as framing. Combining this with a contextual analysis informed by many of the same texts (interview transcripts, government documents, newspaper articles etc), and drawing in a limited way on elements of analytic autoethnography to account for my own professional experience (see Chapter 5), I created thick descriptions (Geertz 1973) of the production and, on occasion, subsequent careers of selected articles. Thus, the primary aim of my textual analysis is ethnographic, in the sense that it has three important characteristics, as outlined by Clifford Geertz: “It is interpretive; what it is interpretive of is the flow of social discourse; and the interpreting involved consists in trying to rescue the “said” of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms” (1973, p. 20). As Geertz continues, “The aim of thick description is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts” (1973, p. 28). By directing thick description’s cultural analysis towards “political, economic and stratificatory realities” (1973, p. 30), I have attempted to unpick and explain some of the complex interrelationships between travel journalism, cosmopolitanism, place branding and environmental conflict that might otherwise have gone unremarked.

Unlike Wolfsfeld, Anderson, Davis and Lester, I have not included original quantitative analysis in my thesis. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods to relate micro-level findings to macro outcomes (Davis 2002) is popular in contemporary journalism research and yields valuable insights. However, compared to news coverage of particular issues, the number of travel journalism features about any international destination in a single

newspaper or magazine is small, calling into question the validity of conclusions that could be drawn by counting categories of content. Furthermore, Folker Hanusch (2010, 2011, 2012a) has already conducted surveys of travel journalists and quantitative research into Australian travel journalism about multiple destinations that has yielded considerable data (see above). In addition, Candeeda Hill-James (2006) has produced a content analysis of international travel journalism as part of her creative industries masters thesis (see above). Taking these considerations into account, I decided that the best contribution I could make to the field would be to focus my attention on detailed qualitative analysis of the kind I have described (see also Chapter 5).

I have chosen to study newspapers and magazines rather than television in part because travel programs and other non-fiction entertainment on television have been studied by Fürsich (2002a, 2002b, 2003), while Chouliaraki (2006), Cottle and Rai (2008), Robertson (2010), Szerszynski and Toogood (2000), Szerszynski and Urry (2002, 2006) and Szerszynski, Urry and Myers (2000) have all conducted empirical research into television and cosmopolitanism. Inevitably, my interviews have yielded data on a variety of issues that are relevant to my aim but time and space restrictions have made it impossible for me to investigate in detail. I have not looked systematically at differences in British and United States journalism cultures and professional practices. I also do not attempt a separate comprehensive evaluation of the place of travel blogs in the genre. These were a feature of the travel media environment in the period of the case study, particularly towards the end of the decade, but will be discussed only to the extent that they are relevant to the examples presented. As mentioned above, I was able to find the majority of the travel journalism features analysed

by searching online – a fact that initially influenced my choice of articles by making the collection process and subsequent task of tracing and contacting their authors feasible. However, the publications I was able to search online were also among the most appropriate publications for my purpose, so I do not believe that this has created methodological concerns. In addition, I have included articles from a number of publications that did not make their articles so freely available online. More details of my research methods are provided in Chapter 5.

## **1.6 Background to the Case Study**

Tasmania – originally called Van Diemen’s Land – is Australia’s smallest state, a temperate island about the size of Ireland 240 kilometres off the continent’s south-eastern corner separated from the mainland by a rough stretch of ocean called Bass Strait. It is reasonably decentralised but most of its 500,000 residents live in one of two population centres – the capital, Hobart, on the Derwent River close to the south-eastern coast, and Launceston, on the Tamar River close to the mid-north coast. The island’s Aboriginal inhabitants arrived between 35,000 and 40,000 years ago. In the 1800s they suffered terribly at the hands of the British, who established Hobart – Australia’s second-oldest city – as a penal settlement in 1804. Despite massacres, introduced disease and forced removal of children from their parents, a small Aboriginal community of mixed heritage survived and today actively promotes its culture and political interests. Nevertheless, a myth of total Tasmanian Aboriginal annihilation – originating partly out of recognition of white Tasmanian culpability and expressions of remorse – has been incorporated into its mediated identity (see Chapter 8).

Although Tasmania's dramatic and beautiful landscape has attracted tourists from mainland Australia since the 19th century, the island has struggled economically, and traditionally relied on agriculture and extractive industries such as mining and forestry for export income. Its population remains on average poor and undereducated by Australian standards, despite a thriving arts sector and notable achievements in the physical sciences. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century extensive dam construction created cheap hydro-electric power that attracted heavy industries. However, in the early 1970s proposals by the state government's Hydro Electric Commission (HEC) to inundate a unique body of water in the remote and mountainous south-west of the island called Lake Pedder led to the formation of the first Green political party in the world. Environmental activism did not save Lake Pedder, but a decade later an intense and protracted campaign by the Wilderness Society to protect the wild Franklin River from damming, led by a medical doctor named Bob Brown, brought widespread media attention to the vast tracts of wilderness through which the river flowed. During a blockade of associated dam works on the state's west coast in the summer of 1982-83, Brown and 1271 others were jailed for their activism (Lester and Hutchins 2009). Also during the campaign, the river and huge tracts of surrounding national park were inscribed on the World Heritage List. When, in 1983, this listing provided the basis for a High Court judgement preventing the HEC from proceeding with the dam, the state government turned its attention from fighting the environment movement to helping the tourism industry take advantage of the publicity the campaign had generated for the island's wilderness (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2006; Evers Consulting Services Pty Ltd, 1984; Tideman 1988). Ecotourism was encouraged, and a small number

of regulated commercial tourism operations were permitted in national parks for the first time. In 1989 Brown – by then a state parliamentarian heading the Tasmanian Greens – successfully advocated doubling the size of the World Heritage Area. However, even as wilderness and the island's other natural attractions became the cornerstone of the state's tourism brand (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2006), fierce battles over the fate of its forests began commanding media attention locally, nationally and internationally. Those battles continued throughout the first decade of the 2000s, occasionally drawing the attention of international travel journalists. Until recently, Brown was the most prominent voice in Australian environmental politics, sitting in state parliament until 1993 and leading the Australian Greens as a senator in the Australian parliament from 1996 until 2012.

Meanwhile, in the 1990s a visiting journalist program (VJP) conducted by the Tasmanian government's tourism office brought national and international travel journalists to the state to experience its natural attractions first hand and in 1995 Tasmania adopted the logo "Discover your natural state" for all its interstate marketing (Tasmanian Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, 1995, p. 8). A focus on place branding that began in Tourism Tasmania was formalised in 1999 with the establishment of a joint government and industry Brand Tasmania Council with its own VJP targeting news journalists, including foreign correspondents. Among the industries that were part of Brand Tasmania were tourism and forestry. The government business enterprise Forestry Tasmania manages just under 40 per cent of the state's forests, of which it says approximately half can be harvested (Forestry Tasmania, n.d.), while Tourism Tasmania is required by the *Tourism Tasmania Act 1996* to

“market Tasmania as a desirable tourist destination”. For much of the first decade of the 2000s the “essence” of Tasmania’s place brand was “Tasmania is natural” (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2006). Tourism Tasmania and Brand Tasmania had a range of slogans and logos between 2000 and 2010. Nevertheless, late into the decade “Australia’s natural state” was still appearing on websites and brochures Tourism Tasmania produced for its overseas markets (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2006; see, for example, Tourism Tasmania 2008, and Tourism Tasmania North America 2008) and on many vehicle number plates on Tasmanian roads. Even following the launch of a new overarching place brand in 2009, nature and purity remained crucial identifying features of Tasmania’s marketing and public relations communications, and “natural beauty” continued to be listed first among its “brand attributes” (Brand Tasmania 2009b).

Tourism Tasmania’s VJP has been a powerful tool by which the government has sought to gain media endorsement for framing of Tasmania as “natural”. In the 1990s wilderness and/or nature were repeatedly identified as the state’s biggest tourism asset (see Chapter 6), and further interstate research conducted in 2010 found “the greatest trigger to influence intention to visit Tasmania was [still] Wilderness” (Tourism Tasmania 2011a, p. 6). Although international visitors make up only around 15 per cent of Tasmania’s total visitation, in the first decade of the 2000s Tourism Tasmania was funded by the government to maintain representatives in Germany, England, the United States, Canada, Japan and Singapore. Successive Tourism Tasmania annual reports record that the VJP has enjoyed considerable success over many years in

attracting travel journalists writing for prestigious travel publications in Britain, the United States and many other countries.

Throughout the period of my case study, Tasmania was governed by the Australian Labor Party. The other major party in the state was the Liberal Party. Both had been in favour of the Franklin dam proposal in the 1980s and were supporters of the forestry industry during the case study. Following an election in March 2010 the Labor Party retained power only with the support of the Greens, who gained Cabinet positions for the first time in Australian history. Although Tasmanian tourism thrived for much of the case study period, the global financial crisis and a high Australian dollar have caused it to struggle in recent years. Meanwhile, following a collapse in demand from Tasmania's biggest woodchip market, Japan, forestry has become dramatically less competitive than it was in its heyday, and since the 2010 election the industry has been engaged in government sponsored talks with the environment movement aimed at resolving the state's "forest wars". In September 2012, the state's biggest timber company, Gunns Ltd, which had been operating in Tasmania since 1875, and since 2005 had been planning to build a controversial 1.9 AUD pulp mill in the wine-tourism region of the Tamar Valley, went into receivership, never having secured the "social licence" it belatedly came to recognise was necessary to attract the financial backing it required to proceed (see Neales 2010).

During the case study, Tasmania's most heavily marketed tourism attributes in addition to its natural environment were cultural heritage, food and wine. Tourism Tasmania also worked to improve the state's reputation with gay and lesbian tourists, collaborating closely with a community leader who in 1997

had seen homosexuality decriminalised in the state after a nine-year local, national and international campaign involving the United Nations and Amnesty International. In late 2008, Tasmania's natural attraction of the Bay of Fires was named one of international guide-book company Lonely Planet's top destinations in the world for 2009. In 2012, the same company made Hobart the only Australian place in its list of the Top 10 cities in the world, in large part as a result of the popularity of a multimillion-dollar private gallery, the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), that had opened in 2011 and had soon become the state's most popular individual tourism attraction, gaining valuable attention from travel journalists in Australia and overseas, and increasing the emphasis on culture in Tasmania's branding.

## **1.7 Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis proper opens in Part 1 with a literature review and a detailed presentation of my arguments and case-study methods, before moving in Part 2 to the case study. The structure of the case study was largely dictated by the mix of travel journalists who agreed to be interviewed and the articles they produced. The opening case study chapter is a combination of historical background and analysis. The chapter contributes important context for the interpretation to follow. For this reason, in addition to consulting historical documents I draw here on some of my interview transcripts to aid my understanding. In each subsequent chapter, I consider individual journalists' production of articles primarily in relation to the interests of a specific category of actor: authority, travel media institution or challenger. In Part 3 I present my conclusions.

### **1.7.1 Chapter Breakdown**

In *Chapter 2* I explore the history and character of travel journalism and the genre's relationship with public relations. In so doing, I do not engage with international travel journalism in particular, or with the cosmopolitan public sphere: these are addressed in Chapter 4. Rather, I situate travel journalism within broad debates about journalism's role in the public sphere, and the challenges to this posed by public relations and the increase in soft journalism. This leads to a description of government tourism office public relations and associated programs for assisting travel journalists financially or in kind. Such practices, I argue, privilege government representations of places in travel journalism. Even so, I contend that a preoccupation with the potential for hosting programs and information subsidies to lead to biased reporting of commercial tourism products has deflected attention from the possibility of government tourism public relations having political objectives or consequences beyond the promotion or defence of tourism.

In *Chapter 3* I describe how place branding harnesses but also transcends traditional links between government tourism offices and travel media institutions. I describe discursive strategies, routine tourism public relations promotional practices such as hosting, and the relationship between place branding and the environment in more detail. I also consider the extent to which governments exert political power over tourism and the potential for travel journalists to provide market feedback to policymakers by implicating the brand.

In *Chapter 4* I survey a range of approaches to cosmopolitanism relevant to tourism, journalism, travel journalism and the environment. I start by outlining theoretical debates about the possibility of an intertwining of cultural and

political cosmopolitanism and the potential or otherwise for tourism to contribute. Next I consider theoretical arguments that assign a role in cosmopolitanisation to the mass media. The following two sections attempt to understand travel journalism's apparent failure, on the whole, to mediate distant cultures with cosmopolitan density, while subsequent sections consider the possibility that such a failure would not necessarily preclude the mediation of cosmopolitical concern for the environment.

In *Chapter 5* I describe in detail why and how I have combined the ethnographic technique of long, semi-structured interviews with elements of analytic autoethnography and Carvalho's approach to textual analysis to produce thick descriptions. In addition, I provide information about how I selected my interview subjects and sample texts.

In *Chapter 6*, I introduce the case study by explaining how environmental struggle in the 1970s and 1980s brought national and transnational publicity to Tasmania's natural environment that resulted in wilderness becoming the foundation of the island's branding when the initial dispute was resolved. In the years that followed, successful destination branding led to the introduction of place branding aimed at projecting an image of Tasmania as natural that functioned as both a public relations practice and a set of discursive strategies during subsequent environmental conflicts. In this chapter I introduce the discourse of accessible nature, in which brand-aligned environmental cosmopolitan concern is deployed in the interests of place branding.

In *Chapter 7* I turn my attention to the ways in which governments respond when their place branding is challenged by environment movements. Here, I demonstrate how government tourism offices can "regulate the flow of

information to the press” by maintaining control over “the logistic and geographic environment” (Wolfsfeld 1997, p. 27), relying on branding to regulate staff and exploiting blurred boundaries in the production of marketing supplements. The chapter also demonstrates, however, that a combination of elite networks, place branding and journalistic agency can silence political conflict in international travel journalism even when travel journalists do not receive financial assistance from government tourism offices. The chapter concludes with a glimpse of how this kind of travel journalism contributes to the circulation of place-branded frames in the local media. In this chapter I also introduce the competing frame of “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”, which promotes the place-branded tourism attribute considered to be threatened and encourages travel in order to experience and appreciate its global value, but acknowledges environmental conflict and advocates extended protection.

In *Chapter 8* my focus is on ways in which the indeterminacy of a travel publication’s own brand can sometimes lead to its seeing advantages in accommodating “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”. In the relationship between the media and antagonists in political conflicts, “[p]ower is a question of relative dependence: who needs whom more at the time of the transaction” (Wolfsfeld 1997, p. 14). A travel publication’s brand may benefit from editorial content containing “constructive” criticism of a destination’s policies if, from a media-branding perspective, it is presented as being in the best interests of readers and – in the long run – the destination itself. This chapter also considers how travel media brands can benefit from their own association with the brands of tourism products that are responsive to place-branded cosmopolitan concern.

In *Chapter 9* I focus on situations in which political movements or activists, and sometimes also elite travel journalism sources with challenger sympathies, come together with travel journalists to promote cosmopolitan concern. The chapter draws attention to strategies and tactics of environment movements, the scope and limits of journalistic agency, and the role of rationality and affect – particularly the strategic effectiveness of deploying celebrity and the voices of passionate locals in a frame of “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”.

In *Chapter 10* I present my conclusion.



## **PART 1: LITERATURE REVIEW AND APPROACH**



## Chapter 2: Travel Journalism

We are not qualified, as travel journalists, to take a political or an economic stand. The bottom line is that travel articles are selling tools. They should make people want to go to those places.

*Helga Loverseed,  
Chairman Canadian Chapter of the Society of American Travel Writers,  
in Gillespie 1988*

I don't write about food, I don't write about hotels, I don't write about restaurants... I don't write about any of that nonsense. It doesn't interest me and I have to say I don't think it's very good for the planet, to be frank.

*Mark Jenkins 2009,  
Former Outside magazine columnist,  
pers. comm., 20 March*

### 2.1 Introduction

Some travel publications – particularly a number of high-profile magazines and large metropolitan newspapers in the United States – do not allow their writers to accept free travel or accommodation, and examples of articles produced without such assistance, including one by Mark Jenkins (whose quote appears above), are an important part of my case study. However, many United States publications do still accept hosted visits, while in the British travel press they appear to be the norm even among London newspapers. In these circumstances, tourism offices and tourism operators attempt to gain publicity they consider more credible than advertising by hosting travel journalists in order to capitalise on traditional associations between journalism and objectivity while simultaneously working to manage these hosted writers' access to information and sources (see Section 2.7). When hosted writers produce brand-aligned texts,

there is a strategic advantage to the tourism industry for those writers to be regarded as journalists by their readers. For the writers who accept such assistance from government tourism offices or tourism operators, the moniker “journalist” – whether deployed explicitly or merely implied by their publication in the editorial sections of newspapers and magazines – can also serve as a bulwark against assumptions that bias will be an inevitable consequence of “freebies”. Even if the word “journalist” has come to be attached to certain sorts of travel writing almost by accident, it is laden with meanings that tourism public relations routinely exploit.

In this chapter I briefly explore the historical foundations of the links between the tourism industry and travel writing for newspapers and magazines, before settling upon a definition of travel journalism that draws on attributes of both narrative travel writing and journalism but does not overlook links between the tourism industry and the travel media. I then consider broader debates about government media management and the influence of public relations on hard journalism in order to contextualise the symbiotic relationship between the tourism industry and travel media, before looking more closely at the role of government tourism offices in attracting travel journalists to destinations. I conclude the chapter by observing that the possibility of hosting and information subsidies being turned to a government’s political advantage has, to date, been obscured in scholarly journalism studies by a preoccupation with their potential to lead to biased reporting of commercial tourism products or inadequate cultural mediation.

## **2.2 A Brief History of Travel Texts in Newspapers and Magazines**

Despite a large body of academic research into writing about travel, until recently anything consistently described as travel journalism has received relatively little consideration in its own right (Fürsich and Kavoori 2001, pp. 149-150; Steward 2005, p. 40). Since 2000, Elfriede Fürsich (2012), Fürsich and Anandam Kavoori (2001), Folker Hanusch (2010) and Lyn McGaurr (2010) have argued for greater academic interest in such writing, and a small number of empirical studies have been published (Almeida Santos 2004; Cocking, 2009; Daye 2005; Hanusch 2011, 2012a, 2012b; McGaurr 2012; Stamou and Paraskevopoulos 2006; see also Fürsich 2002a, 200b, 2003). Nevertheless, research for this thesis has failed to locate a definitive history or definition of the genre. Much of the historical information that does exist is anecdotal or scattered among post-colonial analyses of the much broader field of travel writing.

One source that provides some information on the origins of travel journalism – a history of tourism representation by Jill Steward (2005) – focuses on the role of the periodical press in the creation of a “culture of travel” (2005, p. 39). Steward traces the rise of travel texts in Britain back to the expansion of the press in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the previous two centuries, she writes, foreign travel for pleasure had largely taken the form of the grand tour, memoirs of which had frequently appeared in the 18<sup>th</sup> century press. Macnaghton and Urry describe how, prior to the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, nature was considered inhospitable but the “increasing hegemony of vision in European societies and its ability to organise the other senses produced a transformation of nature as it was turned into spectacle” (1998, p. 113). In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, overseas travel became more accessible to the middle class, and these tourists also began to offer their

accounts to the press for publication. Thomas Cook's package tours began in 1841, and the railway introduced the spectacle of "swiftly passing countryside" (Macnaughton and Urry 1998, p. 113). By the 1830s and 1840s, "the press provided an arena in which different kinds of tourists were able to defend and promote the particular tastes and preferences of the social circles they represented" (Steward 2005, p. 41).

Professional travel writers emerged in Britain following the repeal of newspaper taxes in 1855. With the associated increase in the number of newspapers and periodicals in circulation, some individuals found they could now live largely on the proceeds of a range of travel texts, exploiting a "fluidity of boundaries" between different writing styles and forms of print media to move comfortably between them (Steward 2005, pp. 40, 41). From the 1880s onwards, Steward notes, "[e]ditors began to find travel features were useful not just as 'fillers' but as a means of articulating and representing the interests, experiences and aspirations of their particular readers" (2005, p. 42). Established journalists who had published accounts of their own travels abroad would sometimes be sent overseas by their newspapers as "special correspondents", where they would report home on "tourists and their habits" (Steward 2005, p. 42). By the 1890s women adventurers had joined their ranks (Steward 2005, pp. 47-48).

Newspapers were far from the only market for travel articles. Unfortunately, as discussed in more detail later in this section, Steward does not define her terms, use her terms consistently or write chronologically, which makes it difficult to know what differentiates travel journalism from travel writing in her own analysis. However, it seems clear from her work that the rise of tourism as an industry drove much of the market for travel texts in newspapers

and magazines, establishing at least as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century what would become an abiding correlation between the two:

The growth of the travel press was bound up with the expansion of the tourist industry... [A]dvertisements for travel and travel goods positioned readers as potential travellers... A number of writers began to specialise in the production of travel literature, anticipating the appearance of the modern travel journalist as they helped readers to choose from the many new foreign resorts and spas by identifying the kind of society they attracted, their principal attractions and the range of health and spa facilities they offered... The press... chronicled the presence and habits of the celebrities of British high society and their “sets” at play in their favourite foreign resorts, and made tourist travel into yet another form of conspicuous consumption through which the socially ambitious sought to improve their position. (Steward 2005, p. 47)

Steward’s history ends at 1914. Details of the subsequent growth of travel writing in newspapers and magazines are sketchy, but we do know that by the mid-1900s, professional travel writers were prolific enough to begin forming societies with reasonably strict requirements for entry: the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) began in 1957, the British Guild of Travel Writers (BGTW) in 1960 and the Australian Society of Travel Writers (ASTW) in 1976. While contemporary research that mentions travel texts in newspapers refers to a flourishing in recent decades (Fürsich and Kavoori 2001), one American study indicates that it was already thriving in some big United States newspapers in the 1970s. In 1976, the SATW collected a week’s worth of travel pages from 200 United States newspapers and surveyed the papers’ managing editors and/or travel editors, before analysing the travel copy in 135 of the publications

(reported in Wood 1977). The study found that 85 of the newspapers had a travel editor and that travel supplements were a significant feature of many of the papers with the largest circulations. Additionally, interviews with travel editors of six major British newspaper travel pages undertaken in 1986 and 1987 indicate that travel sections of the day across the Atlantic provided a balance of travel news, literary travel writing and consumer information (Seaton n.d., p. 32).

In their 2001 article advocating increasing academic attention to travel journalism, Fürsich and Kavoori noted that there had been “an exponential growth in travel journalism” (2001, p. 153), which they attributed to an average 7 per cent per annum global growth in tourism arrivals over the preceding 40 years (2001, p. 151). Structural changes in the newspaper industry were also likely to have contributed to such a growth: throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, newspapers increased their page numbers and supplements to compete with the entertainment value of television and to respond to other forms of intense media competition (Davis 2002, pp. 33-35; Lewis et al. 2008, p. 11). Travel sections no doubt benefited from this. In the years following the terrorist attack on New York’s World Trade Center in 2001, however, conditions in the tourism industry were challenging (UN World Tourism Organization 2008) and media sources were providing anecdotal evidence that travel journalism was no longer booming (Brown, R. 2002). Tourism expanded dramatically between 2004 and 2007 (UN World Tourism Organization 2008), before declining again during the global economic downturn and rebounding in 2010 (UN World Tourism Organization 2011). Presumably these later rises and falls in tourism have been reflected in media interest in travel over the same period. The

pressures of new media on business models (Pew Research Center Project for Excellence in Journalism 2008a, 2008b) may independently also have brought about a reduction in the number of newspaper pages devoted to lifestyle journalism, including travel journalism.

In recent years, there have been calls for travel journalists to critique the global tourism industry as well as provide celebratory information for pleasure-seeking potential travellers (Becker 2008; Hill-James 2006). Former war correspondent, foreign affairs editor and *New York Times* Washington correspondent Elizabeth Becker (2008) has challenged travel journalists to investigate and report reflexively and honestly on the impact of tourism on destinations they cover, while in her creative industries master's thesis 2008 Candeeda Hill-James developed a framework for travel journalists to better service the needs of citizens in "the public tourism sphere" (2006, p. i) – particularly their need to be informed about security risks in destinations they might visit. In both instances, however, the evidence presented provides more support for a view that, in practice, travel media function as participants in the global tourism industry. For example, in her content analysis of travel journalism about international destinations published in newspapers in Brisbane, Australia, Hill-James found that only 9 per cent included "political understanding" (2006, p. 167). Moreover, while she argued in favour of travel journalism giving political context, her associated acknowledgement of the ability of government tourism offices to influence travel journalists to ignore political conflict assumed this was related to their desire to protect the tourism industry and did not consider whether it might also stem in part from overt or perceived pressure to

bolster or protect the destination's international reputation for other political purposes.

## 2.3 Blurred Boundaries

The blurring of boundaries Steward (2005) reveals in her historical overview of what she herself describes in her title as travel journalism may be partly responsible for a lack of clarity that persists to this day. Despite citing travel pieces in the *Daily Telegraph*, the *New York Times*, the *Belgravia*, the *Westminster Gazette* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Steward observes that the terms travel writing, travel narrative, travel literature and travel journalism have often been used interchangeably (2005, p. 40) and goes on to do the same. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, for their part, occasionally expand the boundaries of travel writing to include “more information-oriented travelogues and guidebooks” (2000, p. 2), though the framing of their discussion acknowledges perceived distinctions in status:

Is it too cynical to suggest that many of today's travel writers are motivated less by the universal imperative of cultural inquiry than they are by the far more urgent need for another commission? Travel writing still remains lucrative for only a handful of recognized writers; many others ply a more moderate trade in largely part-time journalism. (Holland and Huggan 2000, p. 3)

One of the defining characteristics of travel *writing* as a genre seems to be that it is an autobiographical account of a real journey taken by the author (Holland and Huggan 2000). However Holland and Huggan observe that “the genre has a long history – a license – of entertaining fraud. The ambiguity surrounding travel

narratives – the uncertainty, at given moments, of whether the writer is telling the truth – is part of their appeal” (2000, p. 7). As other scholars have found, a definition of travel journalism fashioned from existing understandings of journalism and travel writing must grapple with the place of subjectivity, entertainment and public relations influence in the genre.

In 2001 Fürsich and Kavoori argued that travel journalism was then an “underexplored” field of study deserving greater attention for what it could reveal about “the ideological dimensions of tourism and transcultural encounters, as well as the ongoing dynamics of media globalization” (150). Yet despite entitling their article “Mapping a critical framework for the study of travel journalism”, they confined their concern with definitions to “journalism” alone. While concurring with John Hartley that journalism’s most important textual feature is that it “counts as true” (Hartley 1996, p. 35), they explicitly refused to limit the scope of their subject by reference to job description, medium or intention. Such an ecumenical approach causes some confusion for journalism and communications scholars needing to distinguish other categories of travel media from travel journalism. For example, while Fürsich and Kavoori note that “travel journalism functions much like international news to provide both information and cultural frames for ‘others’ ” (2001, p. 153), in a later article Fürsich (2002b) suggests the same for the television travel programs *Lonely Planet*, *Rough Guide* and *Travelers*, which she describes as nonfiction entertainment. Perhaps this would not be a problem, given that the very broad parameters for identifying travel journalism set by Fürsich and Kavoori (2001) could encompass nonfiction entertainment, had not Fürsich elsewhere described nonfiction entertainment as “situated between traditional journalistic values and

entertainment” (2003, p. 131). Yet if, as Fürsich believes, hard foreign news is being neglected by editors because audiences are losing interest (2002b, p. 205; cf. Project for Excellence in Journalism 2008a), and if Fürsich and Kavoori are right in their assumption that travel journalism functions like foreign news to the extent that it provides representations of “the other” (2001, p. 153), any definition of travel journalism should, presumably, incorporate traditional journalistic values that are regularly challenged by the practices of tourism industry and government tourism public relations practitioners (PRPs). Such an appreciation seems to have motivated Fürsich’s decision (2003), noted earlier, to sometimes distinguish nonfiction entertainment from travel journalism. As she acknowledges, “[t]he ingredients that establish a loyal brand following for factual media content normally are traditional journalistic values such as credibility, integrity and trustworthiness” (2003, p. 139). Her research reveals that television travel programs and other nonfiction entertainment can appear to incorporate these values and still ignore social, political and economic problems in host destinations. This she attributes to media organisations’ perceived need to market nonfiction entertainment globally as high quality but celebratory and noncontroversial in order to attract international and multinational broadcasters and advertisers (2002b, 2003). In so doing, she challenges both the adequacy of post-colonial scholarship’s historical perspective on travel writing (2002b) and the media’s attempts to position nonfiction entertainment in the public sphere by branding it as aligned with journalism’s public-interest ideals (2003). However, her findings of depoliticised discourses in television travel programs are not universal, and she explains the exceptions with reference to Costera Meijer’s concept of “public quality” (Meijer in Fürsich 2012, p. 18), which can entail the

inclusion of ordinary voices to convey a sense of common experience across borders: “Not travel journalism per se (as lifestyle genre) but the selective use of specific professional strategies, narrative elements and aesthetic decisions can explain if content accomplishes public quality” (Fürsich 2012, p. 21).

Brian McNair divides the purposes of journalism into three areas – surveillance, participation in the public sphere, and “recreational and cultural” (2005, p. 28):

- “Surveillance” refers to journalism’s watchdog role – its fourth-estate function of scrutinising governments and institutions in order to alert citizens to abuses of power.
- “Participation in the public sphere” relates to journalism’s ability to furnish citizens with information they need to participate effectively in democratic society and to a view of the collective mass media as a site for informed discussion and debate.
- “Recreational and cultural” encompasses a plethora of categories often described as entertainment , lifestyle or soft journalism.

The three purposes of journalism can be separate or overlap, but McNair finds there is often tension between the first two and the third (2005, p. 28). In the opening paragraph of her investigation of news as a construction of reality, Gaye Tuchman defines the news as telling readers what they “want to know, need to know, and should know” (Tuchman 1978, p. 1). While Tuchman here is referring to news journalism, these qualities might also be expected of travel journalism. Travel material in what purports to be journalism perhaps does not need to be as

timely as traditional news, but it has the potential to give aspiring travellers the information they need to know and should know about a destination they might want to visit. In so doing, it would be presenting the public with the useful, factual information McNair believes journalism prides itself on providing:

In agreeing to pay [the price of a newspaper] we are purchasing what we believe to be a reliable account of the real beyond our immediate experience, mediated through the professional skills of the journalist and the resources of the journalistic organisation. Journalism can be defined, in this sense, as *mediated reality*... The journalist, like the novelist and the historian in their different ways, tells stories, but the former's stories are presented to potential audiences as factual, rather than fictional, artistic, or scientific... To have value as information, journalism has to be accepted as *true*, or at least an acceptable approximation of the truth. (McNair 2005, p. 30, original emphasis)

Thus, a reasonable definition of travel journalism might include travel writing's defining characteristic of the autobiographical account but would necessarily depart from definitions of travel writing that allow for entertaining fabrication. Excluding fabrication, however, is no guarantee of incontestable truthfulness. Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel describe journalists' pursuit of "a practical or functional form of truth" as "a process – or continuing journey toward understanding – which begins with the first-day stories and builds over time" (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001, p. 43). For these authors, journalism is not only about "getting the facts right" but about giving context by making those facts coherent (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001, p. 41) – an account that implicitly acknowledges, as does Fürsich's (2002b, 2003), that it is possible to be factual without being complete.

According to Chris Moss – a British freelance travel writer and editor, book author and contributor to the travel sections of the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Guardian*, and to *Condé Nast Traveller* magazine – the very best travel stories in newspapers and magazines are “a model of journalism” (2008, pp. 38-39):

They entertain, they educate (occasionally), they illuminate. The main contemporary issues – the environment, the cultural impact of travel, the economics of the tourist dollar, the horrors of globetrotting and the terror of airport and airplane – should all command space among the upbeat copy on boutique hotels, delicious food, beautiful landscapes and unique cultures. (2008, pp. 38-39)

Yet Moss’s reason for writing an article for the *British Journalism Review* about his experiences as a travel writer is that he believes the comprehensive travel journalism he describes above is not valued by editors and not being given sufficient space (2008, p. 39).

Fürsich (2003) contends that genres that systematically ignore the social, economic or political problems of destinations (as another travel writer, Jeremy Weir Alderson (1988), suggests is the case for newspaper and magazine travel writing (cf. Seaton n.d.)) do not qualify as journalism. In this she demonstrates an understanding of journalism that pays tribute to Hartley’s observation that “[t]he most important component of its system is the creation of readers as publics, and the connection of these readerships to other systems, such as those of politics, economics and social control” (Hartley 1996, p. 35).

## **2.4 The Ubiquity of Free Travel and Accommodation**

While the credibility of newspaper and magazine travel authors would not survive long if their reports proved to be inaccurate or unreliable in regard to easily verifiable information that tourists might use to make travel decisions, their reliance on hosted itineraries and/or complimentary travel, accommodation, meals and activities from government tourism offices and tourism operators brings into question their ability to be detached and independent. The strong growth in travel journalism in the second half of last century noted above is unlikely to have been possible without the support of tourism public relations. The often-prohibitive expense of travelling to a destination to report on it has resulted in the evolution of comprehensive national, regional and tourism-operator programs “to entice media to visit a destination and maximise the publicity that can be gained” (Mackellar and Fenton 2000, p. 255). Government and corporate support of travel journalism was freely discussed in academic journalism research as long ago as the 1970s (Wood 1977), though not always acknowledged in newspapers themselves (Wood 1977, p. 763). By 1989, visiting journalist programs (VJP) offering hosted visits (also called media familiarisations, “famils” or “freebies”) were a routine part of the activities of tourism organisations marketing destinations (Gladwell and Wolff 1989, cited in Dore and Crouch 2003, p. 140), and in 2003, survey responses from 10 national tourism organisations were reported as rating such programs as the most important part of their publicity and public relations arsenal (Dore and Crouch 2003, p. 142). VJP tours offered by government tourism organisations often take the form of all-expenses-paid hosted tours of a destination provided to selected media representatives (Dore and Crouch 2003; Mackellar and Fenton 2000). The

media representatives may travel singly or in groups and will often be accompanied by a guide (Mackellar and Fenton 2000). “[A]lthough industry participants in the programme contribute in-kind support/costs,” write Lynne Dore and Geoffrey Crouch, “the NTO [national tourism organisation] normally maintains firm control on the overall management and operation of the programme as the central point of control” (2003, p. 145). The stated intention of the tourism organisations that influence, subsidise or entirely fund so much of the research for travel reviews published in newspapers and magazines is to gain favourable coverage of a destination or product (Dore and Crouch 2003; Mackellar and Fenton 2000; Tourism Tasmania 2011c). Writing in 1988, Weir Alderson concluded that “most travel writing simply dishonours our free press” (1988, p. 28) – an assessment based on his first-hand knowledge of the extent to which travel writers or their editors feel beholden to those PRPs. Too often, he believes, writers comply, or are forced by their editors to comply, even when the writers’ experience of a destination or tourism product has been unfavourable (1988). This assessment is partially supported by AV Seaton, whose interviews with British newspaper travel editors in the 1980s revealed that they considered “knocking pieces” generally out of place in travel sections of newspapers, though they usually claimed this was for editorial reasons (n.d., p. 11).

So deeply entrenched is the travel “freebie” that publications claiming they operate without recourse to free or subsidised travel may even be criticised or contradicted by tourism public relations staff. In 1990, for example, United States tourism PRP Mac Seligman published an article in *The Public Relations Journal* on travel writers’ expenses, in response to what he described as “increasingly strident editorial policies” about subsidised travel (1990, p. 27).

The ostensible trend against subsidised travel in some United States publications to which Seligman was referring can be traced back to the launch of the United States edition of *Condé Nast Traveler* in 1989, promising no free or subsidised travel by its writers. Sarah Miller, the editor of the British edition of the magazine (launched in 1997), says it has never “knowingly published something that is the result of a group press trip” (Millar in Keating 2007). A former travel editor of the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, Tom Swick, says *Condé Nast*’s policy brought about “a major shift in the US” that influenced a number of United States newspapers, including his own, to follow suit (Swick 2008). It is notable, therefore, that a 2000 report in the *Journal of Vacation Marketing* by Jo Mackellar and Jan Fenton – the latter of whom was, at the time, corporate communications coordinator at what was then the Australian Tourist Commission (ATC, now Tourism Australia) –appears to include details of free travel provided to *Condé Nast* writers:

*Condé Nast Traveler* is regarded as a highly prized magazine for businesses and destinations to feature in... For an individual hotel or resort property, to try to entice one of their journalists to visit Australia is nigh on impossible. However, the ATC has been successful in bringing their journalists to Australia, by coordinating their visits to encompass a number of different destinations, hotels and attractions. A single full-page advertisement in *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine reportedly costs about US\$50,000. However, for the cost of a complimentary room and meals, a hotel can access the space in the more valuable and credible editorial area. Consequently, working with the VJP [visiting journalist program] can be very cost effective. (Mackellar and Fenton 2000, p. 263)

While Seligman quotes claims by the *Seattle Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and, once again, *Condé Nast Traveler* that their publications have policies against subsidised travel, he does not believe such bans apply to freelance travel writers: “[S]ome newspapers, while professing to enforce a strict policy against subsidized travel for staff members, either quietly or unknowingly accept and publish articles written by freelancers whose travels were underwritten in whole or in part by the subjects of their stories” (1990, pp. 27-30). Seligman believes that the freelance writers on whom newspapers depend for most of their travel articles could not survive without free travel (1990, pp. 27-30), while travel editors interviewed by Seaton said freelancers were more vulnerable to public relations influence than staff journalists because of their low pay and reliance on all-expenses-paid visits (n.d., p. 11). Reflecting on being pressured by PRPs to provide positive reviews, freelance travel writer Moss alludes to his financial insecurity and willingness to accept assistance: “When there is company, it often takes the form of unbearable PRs and government underlings, all of whom expect you to “sell” their ordinary (or worse) hotel, island, resort or package. At no time does anyone tell you what is covered by your invitation, so you spend most of the evening fretting. Will this wine be paid for? Is my room really free?” (2008, p. 38). Moss’s observation that freelance journalists are poorly paid is borne out by two more-recent studies: citing a 2006 International Federation of Journalists survey of 41 member organisations in 38 countries and a 2002 British survey of journalists by the Journalism Training Forum, Stephen Cushion states that “non-permanent journalists are on the increase primarily because editors can pay them considerably less than permanent employees” (2007, p. 124). According to

occasional travel writer Ramona Koval, “[i]n Australia [travel-industry-funded trips] are almost the only way you will find someone going anywhere for a newspaper” (2008).

Given that “freebies” are commonplace, it is not surprising that one academic field in which travel journalism (as distinct from travel literature) is occasionally given close attention is tourism studies. Sometimes this interest relates to a tourism academic’s cross-disciplinary expertise and research practice, as in the case of Carla Almeida Santos, who has a PhD in mass communications and employs frame analysis in her study of the representation in United States newspapers of Portugal as a tourist destination (2004, p. 122). Alternatively, any single focus on travel media in tourism studies may be associated with attempts to evaluate publicity strategies and educate tourism PRPs (for example, Dore and Crouch 2003; Mackellar and Fenton 2000). As Fürsich and Kavoori note, “[l]ocated in the fields of marketing and advertising/public relations, these studies are aimed at maximizing financial returns by handling the various publics in an effective way” (2001, p. 152). Tourism PRPs are not always the only sources attempting to influence the reporting of tourist destinations, but their structural ties to travel journalism give them an extremely high level of access to travel journalists. As Fürsich and Kavoori go on to observe, acceptance of, or reliance on, free or subsidised travel “places many travel writers in a difficult position between major interest groups” (2001, p. 154). However, as indicated by the *Sydney Morning Herald*’s reporting of the widespread acceptance of “freebies” by its own journalists from a range of beats (Lagan 1999), acceptance of hosted travel apparently does not, of itself, disqualify travel writers from being considered journalists by their colleagues.

In recent years, journalism scholar Folker Hanusch (2011, 2012a, 2012b) has compiled empirical evidence that tests practitioner anecdotes and the scholarly conclusions drawn from text analyses of small samples of travel journalism. His quantitative findings indicate “the most important role perceptions relate to providing true accounts, discovering new and unique travel experiences, as well as providing specific as well as interesting and entertaining information for audiences” (2012a, p. 674). Hanusch writes that “the Critic role, usually associated most with ‘hard news’, is not regarded highly by travel journalists at all” (2012a, p. 683). He finds that those with formal journalism training are less likely to consider that free travel and gifts will influence their writing, and despite agreement among respondents that free trips should always be disclosed, those who have been in the business for some time do not see disclosure as particularly important and have faith in their ability to make ethical decisions according to the situation. In addition, most feel that “travel journalists should always tell the truth about an experience, even if it means upsetting the travel sponsor” (2012a, p. 683). Yet, as Hanusch points out, content analyses have shown that travel journalism is “suspiciously devoid” of any negative issues” (2012a, p. 683). Additional analysis by Hanusch (2012b) of travel journalists’ perceptions of public relations have led him to reiterate that the more financially secure travel journalists are and the stronger their background in mainstream journalism, the more confident they are likely to be of their ability to remain independent of public relations; conversely, he concludes that “[t]hose who do not have such a background and work as freelancers, which goes hand in hand with a relatively low income...are more likely to be critical of PR and wary of its influence. This may be compounded by the fact that this group travels the

most, and is likely to be exposed to additional PR efforts on their trips” (2012b, p. 73). Hanusch’s ability to make such comparisons is influenced by his inclusion in his survey of staff journalists who were largely desk-bound, compiling content from secondary sources rather than their own travel experience. Nevertheless, his results indicate that the ways in which PRPs working for elite sources seek to exert influence over travel journalists, the reasons for their successes and failures, and the motivations of those travel journalists who adopt the role of the critic warrant further attention.

## **2.5 A Working Definition**

While fully acknowledging the many qualifications and ambiguities canvassed so far in this chapter, this research project requires a working definition of travel journalism to establish the boundaries of its enquiry. For the purposes of this thesis, then, travel journalism will be defined as by-lined accounts by freelance or staff magazine or newspaper writers who have visited destinations and distributed their accounts to potential tourists through the mass media in print and also sometimes online. By employing the term by-lined accounts, the definition links the journalistic imperative of counting as true (Hartley, 1996) to travel writing’s attribute of the autobiographical account (Holland and Huggan, 2000) rather than to the journalistic ambition of objectivity (McNair, 2005). Importantly in terms of the discussion of cosmopolitanism in the Chapter 4, although the travel journalist creates a text for consumption by potential tourists, it may be read by anyone who can gain access, from other kinds of travellers to people with an interest in the destination that is unrelated to travel. Furthermore, distribution through the mass media means the actual audience for travel

journalism in our online era can be boundless in space and time. Online distribution also means that a feature that might have appeared in a generalist printed newspaper weekend magazine can be given a more explicitly tourism-oriented purpose in its online life by being included in lists of previously published articles under the banner of the newspaper's destination travel guide. That is, the article will appear with a "travel" URL and banner when visitors to the website search for the name of the destination. Thus, the definition has practical value in that it acknowledges the structural links between the travel media and the tourism industry. Restricting the definition to articles in newspapers and magazines (including online) excludes documentaries, while the stipulation that the travel journalist must have visited the destination makes it more likely that the texts will be lengthy, if only to justify the travel and time invested in the visit by those concerned. The definition also avoids the confusion that would result from categorising texts according to an author's self-perception, employment status or other occupations and interests, and accommodates specialists or experts in related fields who might write occasional travel features.

The definition employs the word "tourist" rather than "traveller". It does so to make the link between the travel media and the tourism industry explicit. In support of this judgement I refer to a list of definitions provided by the UN World Tourism Organization, where "*tourism industries*" include products for which "[t]ourism expenditure on the product should represent a significant share of the supply of the product in the economy" (UN World Tourism Organization n.d.c). In the same glossary the UN World Tourism Organization also makes a distinction between travel and tourism:

*Travel* refers to the activity of travellers. A traveller is someone who moves between different geographic locations, for any purpose and any duration. The visitor is a particular type of traveller and consequently tourism is a subset of travel. (UN World Tourism Organization n.d.c)

*A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound)* is classified as a *tourist (or overnight visitor)*, if his/her *trip* includes an overnight stay. (UN World Tourism Organization n.d.c)

To the extent that tourists and potential tourists represent a significant share of the travel media's audience and because, as Chris Rojek (1997) notes, tourism sites are socially constructed in part through printed texts, in this thesis I regard the travel media as part of the tourism industry.

## **2.6 Journalism and Public Relations: Cooperation or Contestation?**

Later in this chapter I consider the journalistic consequences of the close association between the travel media and government tourism offices. First, however, I will give a brief overview of the broader relationship between PRPs and journalists, with a particular focus on government public relations. This is important because government tourism offices are part of the machinery of government: professional public relations practices, corporate knowledge and ministerial interest do not stop at the tourism office's door.

Media commentators and public relations practitioners tell a similar story about today's newspaper newsrooms (Beecher 2005; Burton 2007; Davies 2008; Lewis et al. 2008; White and Hobsbawm 2007): newspaper journalists in many Western countries are under extreme pressure; competition from online sources,

citizen journalists and television is leading newspaper executives to cut staff and adjust their content mix in an effort to find a business model that can ensure their long-term survival; the result is individual journalists who often must work in any combination of print, online, video, audio and photography and who have less time for initiating stories, pursuing sources and checking facts. In such a stressful environment, the temptation to use readymade copy provided by public relations practitioners is often irresistible. Lewis et al. describe how this apparent rise in the use of public relations material by journalists, together with the increase in their workloads and changes in work practices, has been perceived by some as changing the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners to one of exchange rather than conflict:

The relationship between journalists and PRs, which has typically been characterised as essentially in conflict, has recently been recast as a “trading” or “exchange” relationship in which under-resourced journalists, working in under-staffed newsrooms, increasingly rely on PR sources for editorial copy while offering access to editorial columns for PR messages in return (Gans 1978, Jones 2006). (Lewis et al. 2008, p. 5)

In listing similarities between today’s journalism practice and the practice of public relations, Jon White and Julia Hobsbawm question any assumption that journalists are morally superior to PRPs. Contending that “both can play the role of gatekeeper, keeping the other out” and that “propaganda plays its part on both sides” (2007, p. 284), the authors write that journalists’ “[s]election and interpretation are guided not by a primary interest in truth, but rather by an understanding of what readers want to read or media owners will

expect to see as ‘the line’” (2007, p. 287). PRPs are, they write, arguably more honest than journalists because they acknowledge their biases (2007, p. 288). Essentially, these authors attribute to PRPs who adhere to industry codes of conduct a role in “serving the public interest and contributing to informed decision making in a democratic society” (Public Relations Society of America, in White and Hobsbawm 2007) equivalent to that of journalists. Venturing into more theoretical territory, they also present their own assessment of how “[s]ocial reality is socially constructed” (2007, p. 286) by citizens through individuals’ consideration of information from an array of sources: “Others [those other than journalists], such as public relations practitioners, can also prepare information offering a view of social reality, which can be offered through new media for consideration [by the public] in the search for social truth” (2007, p. 286). This pluralist defence of public relations ignores the considerable body of research conducted over many years into the ways in which elite sources, and particularly public institutions, achieve their public relations aims. As noted in Chapter 1, at least since the 1970s pluralists, like Marxists, have generally found that elite sources enjoy considerable *advantage* over non-elites in their access to journalists and their ability to have their messages delivered in terms they as sources consider accurate (see, for example, Curran, Gurevitch & Woollacott 1982; Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989; Gans 1979; Hall et al. 1978; Schlesinger 1990). As Michael Schudson notes, “[o]ne study after another agrees that the center of news generation is the link between reporter and official” (2005, p. 181). As the public relations industry has matured, however, interest groups have increased their own public relations expertise and, correspondingly, their access to the media (Davis 2002, p. 176). Thus, regardless

of how much journalists' use of public relations material might be increasing, and despite the advantages enjoyed by elite sources, institutional PRPs are not *assured* of gaining coverage in today's news media that meets their desired outcomes (Davis 2002). Be that as it may, White and Hobsbawm argue that because journalists rely so heavily on PRPs for content they should consider them equal partners in the business of providing information to the public (2007, p. 290).

Although Davis finds that both journalists and PRPs believe journalists are still in control of the news agenda (Davis 2002, p. 31), “[n]ews predominantly starts with source supply rather than media investigation, and PR is far more part of news production than journalists have hitherto admitted” (Davis 2002, p. 32). Davis's thesis is that not all types of elite sources automatically have the same advantages in all categories of journalism. While he sees government sources enjoying huge advantages in news reporting because of their power, influence and ability to provide expert or otherwise authoritative comment (2002, p. 175), he finds the relationship between the media and elite sources less straightforward in the corporate sector. Using case studies of financial sector public relations, Davis reveals that corporate elites, unlike governments, have little “media affinity” with mainstream news journalists but considerable affinity and media capital in specialist news sectors – in this case business news. In fact, Davis finds that “the advantages of large corporate elites in business news...appear far greater than for political elites in mainstream news” (2002, p. 175). Far from encouraging support for Hobsbawm's call for stronger ties between journalists and PRPs, Davis's finding that business journalism is, in many respects, “captured” by “elite discourse networks” (2002,

p. 175) raises serious concerns about ubiquitous public relations. Lewis et al. (2008) have found a large disparity between the media success of businesses and that of nongovernment organisations, while Davis's interviews with journalists have led him to estimate that up to 50 per cent of public relations activity in Britain blocks journalists' access to information (2002, p. 179). "[T]he liberal description of fourth estate media, based on an image of independent, autonomous journalists seeking out news, has been severely undermined" (2002, p. 173), he writes. "[T]he dividing line between public relations, advertising and entertainment will thus become increasingly blurred" (Davis 2002, p. 173). Davis's findings are of particular relevance to tourism public relations because they suggest that a government tourism office enjoys the double advantage of being both an elite government and, by association,<sup>3</sup> an elite industry source in its relationship with travel journalists and travel publishers.

To a familiarity with a mix of government and industry public relations advantages and practices, scholars with an interest in travel journalism in destinations with contested environments must add an awareness of strategies developed by governments to manage the media in times of political conflict. In military conflicts, a common way governments restrict journalists' access to information is by insisting that they travel with authorised personnel. Discussing news management techniques adopted by the United States and Britain in conflicts following the Vietnam War, Lewis et al. describe the use of "minders" or "escorts" to "keep reporters under constant supervision" (2006, p. 8):

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<sup>3</sup> Industry representatives often sit on government tourism office boards and government tourism offices often "partner" with commercial tourism operators, travel agents and transport corporations in their marketing.

The system has ensured that the ability of journalists to do their jobs depends heavily on their individual minder. Minders have had the power to provide information or withhold it; to escort journalists to where the action is or, by contrast, to restrict them to locations where nothing is happening; to interpret ground rules in whatever way they see fit; and to help journalists get their stories back, or to hinder or even block them. (Lewis et al. 2006, pp. 8-9)

A more recent trend is to embed journalists with troops. In 2003, the United Kingdom and United States reduced their level of censorship in favour of embedding journalists with frontline troops in the hope that the “largely complicit” (Lewis et al. 2006, p. 69) coverage they produced would foster public sympathy for troops, support for the war and tolerance of any mistakes. From the perspective of the Pentagon, “embedding is a mutually beneficial system that gives the journalists what they need (access, stories) whilst enabling the military to get their point of view across” (Lewis et al. 2006, pp. 3-4). Its success in Iraq in 2003 was achieved by “putting a human face on combat operations” (Lewis et al. 2006, p. 37), facilitating a huge volume of dramatic embedded coverage overall, and ensuring there were no gaps in embedded content throughout the 24 hour news cycle that news editors might have been tempted to fill with material less sympathetic to the coalition (Lewis et al. 2006). Such strategies and tactics can severely limit the ability of challengers to gain access to the media, but the obstacles are not insurmountable. Wolfsfeld’s extensive 1997 study of the role of the media in a variety of Middle East conflicts found that the media did not always transmit elite framing of conflicts and sometimes even helped construct meaning themselves (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993; Wolfsfeld 1997): the extent to which the more powerful antagonist in a conflict had power over the media

depended in large part on its power over the political environment and the ability of challengers to mobilise support from within the ranks of the elite (Wolfsfeld 1997).

It is also important to note that today challengers in all kinds of conflicts are increasingly putting new media to work tactically to gain the attention of media that traditionally privilege the messages of elites (Garcia and Lovink 1997; Lester and Hutchins 2009; Lovink 2005; Meikle 2002). Events such as the Arab Spring have also highlighted the opportunities offered by new media in “coalescing broad-based, non-hierarchical political movements and coordinating and channelling their demographic weight into real democratic power” and “alerting international news media to growing opposition and dissent events” (Cottle 2011, p. 298). In both new and traditional media, symbols mobilised by social movements through protest, imagery, rhetoric or celebrity (Lester 2006, 2007) can be a potent force in battles for social change, but they must be used with discretion or risk being discredited by a cynical media or simply ignored by a bored public (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988; Lester 2006, 2007). In a genre such as travel journalism, where the advantages enjoyed by government and industry would initially appear to be overwhelming, evidence of the successful deployment of media strategies and tactics by antagonists on both sides of a conflict has the potential to reveal aspects of the interaction between journalists and sources hitherto overlooked by journalism scholars.

## **2.7 Government Public Relations and Travel Journalism**

In her history of public relations in Australia, Clara Zawawi draws an historical distinction between the news role of the press and the entertainment role of

television and radio (2000, p. 31). Today, this distinction is less obvious. Largely in response to competition from television and the Internet, in recent decades newspapers have provided far more entertainment/lifestyle content than they once did (Cowley, cited in Conley and Lamble 2006, p. 29): “Understaffing means the public relations industry has ‘invisible desks’ in some Australian newsrooms – particularly lifestyle sections which often produce little more than thinly disguised ‘advertorial’” (Conley and Lamble 2006, p. 215). As we have seen, one realm of entertainment/lifestyle content that relies so heavily on both government and corporate public relations support that it might appear to have entered into the kind of partnership described earlier by White and Hobsbawm is travel journalism. While it is widely suspected that much government public relations activity remains invisible in the hard news it influences (Lewis et al. 2008), little consideration has been given to the existence, if any, of covert government public relations influence on entertainment and lifestyle coverage – sectors of journalism Angela McRobbie notes have traditionally relied heavily on *corporate* public relations (2000). In travel journalism, however, governments play perhaps an even larger role in tourism public relations, particularly in terms of promoting the destination in its entirety, whether as a country, a region or a city (see following chapter).

Government tourism organisations make no secret of the fact that their VJPs are designed to achieve positive coverage of their destinations<sup>4</sup> by providing journalists with various combinations of logistical support, information subsidies, free accommodation, free travel and guiding services, and that these programs are linked to marketing and public relations efforts in

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<sup>4</sup> This is at odds with a comment by United States tourism PRP Mac Seligman that “we must reassure journalists who accept offers of travel arrangements that all we truly want is objective coverage. If the coverage includes describing the ‘warts’, so be it” (1990: 5).

international tourism markets. As described by Mackellar and Fenton's 2000 case study of the VJPs run by the ATC, journalists initially targeted by that organisation's in-market PRPs were those whose audiences were most similar to people likely to travel to Australia (2000, p. 261). In 1998–99, the ATC hosted 1,500 international print and television "journalists". By the ATC's own reckoning, the value of the publicity generated was more than one billion Australian dollars, calculated by multiplying the cost of buying advertising of an equivalent length or duration by three, based on a belief that journalists' copy is three times as effective as advertising (Mackellar and Fenton 2000, p. 263; cf. Barwise and Styler (2003) for an interesting counterargument to the assumption of such a multiplier effect). The ATC's successor, Tourism Australia, hosts between 800 and 1,000 international media representatives from around 30 countries annually (Tourism Australia 2012) and in 2009 introduced a scheme to host "new media opinion leaders, such as bloggers with extremely high traffic and an audience who is often spread across several of our markets" (Tourism Australia 2009).

VJPs are inundated with requests for assistance from middle ranking and lower ranking national media, but now that, as Dore and Crouch note, these programs have become "critically important elements" of the destination promotion strategies of government tourism organisations around the world (2003, p. 140), competition among them for the most powerful international travel journalists and publications is fierce. National and regional government tourism organisations work hard to devise itineraries that meet their own objectives and the needs of journalists and tourism operators. As a result, the experiences of international travel journalists hosted by government tourism

offices are far removed from those of most tourists: not only are the tourism operators they visit usually vetted by government tourism PRPs to ensure they offer a high-quality product, but these operators have an established relationship with the government tourism office and are forewarned that they will be hosting a visiting journalist who will be writing about the destination and may include comment on their product (Dore and Crouch 2003; Mackellar and Fenton 2000). Yet for all the resources at their disposal, some destination marketing organisations question the value of VJPs because they cannot control the content of the final article (Dore and Crouch 2003, p. 140). This suggests that government tourism PRPs have an intuitive understanding of the negativity effect. This is a finding in the “impression formulation literature” that those who are uncommitted to a product (such as, I would suggest, readers of travel journalism who have never visited the destination being reviewed) place far more weight on negative information than positive information about a product, using it “diagnostically” in their purchasing decisions (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant and Unnava 2000). Dore and Crouch downplay this possibility of negative coverage with the reassurance that hosted journalists are unlikely to “bite the hand that feeds them” (2003, p. 148), but there appears to be more strategy involved than merely the anticipation of a quid pro quo. Marketing studies, including place branding literature (see Chapter 3), refer to journalists and other opinion-makers as agents and categorise promotion as “autonomous” (such as independent reviews), “covert induced” (such as positive editorial coverage arising from a hosted visit) and “induced” (such as advertising) (Gartner 1993, pp. 200-201; Govers and Go 2009). Rather than clear demarcations between these categories, there is a continuum, with positive “covert induced” image formation considered

the most valuable public relations outcome after positive “autonomous” image formation. All the while that VJPs seek to gain publicity that is more credible than advertising by capitalising on traditional associations between journalism and objectivity, they also work to restrict the flow of information to hosted visiting journalists by managing their itineraries and assigning them trained guides full-time during their visits. Itineraries and guides are designed to ensure visiting journalists see the best destinations have to offer, but the converse is also true, in that they tend to avoid experiences government tourism offices believe do not showcase the destination to its best advantage. Comparisons with media management in times of military conflict are – purely in terms of illustrating government public relations practices and objectives – hard to ignore:

The most favourable situation from the authority's point of view is to have the conflict scene in an area that is as isolated as possible. This puts journalists at a serious disadvantage not only because they have to invest a good deal of ingenuity and resources into gaining access, but their lack of knowledge of the area increases their dependence on official sources. The worst case scenario for authorities, on the other hand, is a fight that takes place close to home in an area such as a major city, such as London, which is impossible to seal off from the press... There have been countless studies that emphasize the normative aspects of government “censorship” during wars and far too little about the situational circumstances that either enhance or diminish the ability of authorities to control the flow of information... I take as given that authorities prefer to have a monopoly on the information available to journalists and that journalists would like to break that monopoly. The question, then, is not so much whether governments should restrict information in the midst of a conflict but whether they can. (Wolfsfeld 1997, p. 28)

In addition to establishing relationships whereby PRPs and guides can attempt strategically to influence the discourses and framing of travel journalists (see Chapter 3), VJPs may be viewed as a way of incorporating travel journalists into the networks of government tourism organisations, and of media institutions establishing connections with a range of networks within destinations, including government tourism organisations. Actor-network theory offers one way of understanding such networks. ANT (Latour 2005) “conceptualises both humans and nonhumans as actors, studies connection-making as coterminous with meaning-making, and represents networks from a participant’s viewpoint” (Saito 2011, p. 128). Nick Couldry argues that “ANT can be an important part of the panoply of media theory” (2004, p. 6), notably as a way of analysing “how particular people are ‘systematically overaccessed’ in the production of media narratives, while others by the same token are systematically underaccessed” (2004, p. 9). One of its limitations, however, as Couldry (2004) notes has been argued by Roger Silverstone, is that “the existence of networks does not explain, or even address, agents’ *interpretations* of those networks and their resulting possibilities for action” (Couldry 2004, p. 3, original emphasis) following a network’s establishment. Scholars have traditionally sought evidence of public relations influence through content analyses revealing the presence of public relations material in journalism texts (Lewis et al. 2008; Macnamara, cited in Johnston 2000; Zawawi 1994). As Davis notes, however, results of such content analyses vary wildly precisely because the covert nature of so much public relations means that “the ability to determine what is news and what is PR in any single publication is virtually impossible” (2002, p. 26).

## 2.8 Conclusion

It would be a mistake to believe that the ubiquity of hosted travel means tourism public relations is transparent. Theories and ethnographic studies of source–media relations in news journalism such as those noted in Chapter 1 provide important insights into the way meanings are negotiated, contested and mediated – insights that can be applied to the study of travel journalists’ reporting on destinations where environmental conflict is rife. But a study of travel journalism directed only at uncovering the influence of hosting on the production of travel journalism would fail to account for examples in which travel journalists who have not been hosted also ignore environmental conflict in their texts. Place branding has the potential to be a more productive field of inquiry than VJPs per se because it is a comprehensive approach to public relations that simultaneously directs practice (including the public relations practice of those managing VJPs), integrates disparate sectors of the economy, activates networks and deploys discursive strategies to shape meanings in places, markets and the media. This is the subject of the following chapter.

## Chapter 3: Brands and Place Branding

[M]uch international journalism is simply a process of rehearsing, playing with, sometimes examining and very occasionally challenging those national brand images. A lot of journalism is basically a matter of endlessly redeploying such clichés.

*Simon Anholt 2010, p. 142*

I was pretty much determined to stay there until I found something that I thought was really worth telling people about. So I'm a very methodical person, so I just started looking at everything, waiting for the spark to hit me when I would finally get like, "Okay, I understand now why this is such a cool place."

*Sharon Otterman 2009,  
pers. comm., 20 June*

### 3.1 Introduction

Place branding was extremely popular in the first decade of the 2000s – the period covered by my own case study (see Part 2). By 2009, up to 82 per cent of destination marketing organisations had brand strategies, of which 40 per cent moved beyond destination branding into some form of place branding by using the brand for more than tourism promotion (percentages: WTO and ETC 2009 in Morgan, Pritchard & Pride 2011a, p. 8). For example, Japan has been described as experiencing a “place branding boom” (Jones et al. 2009), while among the innumerable case studies of place branding practice that have become available in recent years are those of Finland (Hakala, Lemmetyinen & Gnoth 2010), Chennai in India (Little 2010), Nigeria (Adebola, Talabi & Lamidi 2012), Dubai (Govers and Go 2009) and Chechnya (Wills and Moore 2008). Place branding’s practice, benefit, scope, function, objectives, ambitions, dangers and foibles are

discussed in the disciplines of tourism and marketing and, less frequently, in geography and international relations. Although I will refer to some academic debates that have arisen in these disciplines, I also wish to use this chapter to describe place branding practice, in this regard drawing primarily on the works of Anholt (2004, 2007, 2010)<sup>5</sup> and Govers and Go (2009). Anholt's writings on the subject are aimed at persuading governments of the merits of place branding and informing them of how to go about it, while Govers and Go's 2009 manual *Place Branding*, which carries Anholt's endorsement on its back cover, is primarily aimed at the tourism sector. According to Anholt's website, he has advised more than 40 countries on "questions of national identity and reputation, public diplomacy, trade, tourism, cultural and educational relations, export and foreign investment promotion" (Anholt 2009). He has been a member of the British Foreign Office Public Diplomacy Board and for many years edited the journal he launched in 2004 as *Place Branding* and later renamed *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, which combines practice-based accounts with articles that are more academically oriented. Govers and Go are European academics who specialise in tourism management and produce an annual *Place Branding Year Book* (2010, 2011). In 2012 Govers was appointed associate editor of *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*.

I begin the chapter by explaining how the terminology of place branding leaves it open to misunderstanding and misapplication. This leads into a discussion of sociological brand theory that offers insights into some aspects of place branding. From here, I return to a more detailed discussion of the attributes of place branding that distinguish it from corporate branding and tourism-only

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<sup>5</sup> As I explain below, Anholt (2007) now often uses the term "competitive identity" for what he previously described as "nation branding" (one level of place branding).

branding but also make it vulnerable to political pressure. Using New Zealand's "100% Pure" campaign as an example, I then consider the ways in which environments can be branded, before focussing on the uses of branding in broader government media management. Finally, I explain place branding itself as a public relations practice and a set of discursive strategies intended to secure access to travel journalism and control over meanings in both the space of places and the space of flows (Castells 1996).

### **3.2 What is Place Branding?**

In the discipline of marketing, a distinction is made between place branding (Anholt, 2004, 2007, 2010, Go and Govers, 2010; Govers and Go 2009; Kotler and Gertner 2002) and branding purely for tourism purposes, which is described as destination branding. However, because destination branding contributes so much to place branding's success (Anholt 2007; Govers and Go 2011) and the two need to be aligned for the latter to achieve its potential, destination branding is often subsumed in the discussion of place branding (see, for example, Govers and Go 2009). Even today in marketing texts, after a decade and a half of marketing discourse on the subject, "[t]he very terms 'destination,' 'competitiveness,' 'authenticity,' creativity,' and 'place brand' are slippery, elusive, contested, and often misunderstood" (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride 2011a, p. 5). At its most comprehensive, place branding is synonymous with what Anholt also refers to as "competitive identity" (2007, 2010) – a "synthesis of brand management with public diplomacy and with trade, investment, tourism and export promotion" (2007, p. 3). In this thesis my interest is in the implications for travel journalism of making destination branding part of a larger

branding project. For this reason, I use the term “place branding” to refer to the branding of places for tourism purposes where that branding is aligned with what might elsewhere be described as public diplomacy, place reputation management, place reputation “stewardship” (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride 2011a, p. 5), competitive identity or place-of-origin product branding. If it becomes necessary to distinguish between different components of place branding, the context should make my meaning clear.

Anholt’s writings in relation to the role of communication in place branding are characterised by frequent struggles with his own terminology and claims that his strategies have been misapplied by many governments. He explains that no government can own a place brand (2010, p. 5), and that the term “brand”, when applied to places, is merely “a metaphor for how countries can compete more effectively” (2007, p. 23). He writes that place branding is about policy not communication, and contends that public opinion, not marketing, is what really brands countries and, in so doing, reduces them to stereotypes. “Governments,” he writes “need to help the world understand the real, complex, rich, diverse nature of their people and landscapes, their history and heritage, their products and their resources: to *prevent* them from becoming mere brands” (2010, p. 3; original emphasis). While he states that national reputations cannot be constructed but can only be earned (2010, p. 6), the process he describes for earning a good reputation is one in which social construction plays an important role. Governments are advised to collaborate with business and civil society to agree upon a national narrative – “the ‘story’ of who the nation is, where it is going and how it is going to get there – which honestly reflects the skills, the genius and the will of the people”, after which it

should prove through its actions, policies and products “the country’s right to the reputation its people and government desire to acquire” (2010, p. 7). Govers and Go (2009), for their part, argue that place branding operates by using experience and communication to bridge the gap between a place’s identity and the way it is perceived in external markets. As noted in Chapter 1, they define a place brand as “a representation of identity, building a favourable internal (with those who deliver the experience) and external (with visitors) image” (Govers and Go 2009, p. 17). In this sense, they differ from Anholt (2010), who does not define place brands as necessarily positive, because he equates them with reputation.

In one of his later works (2010) Anholt criticises the many countries and cities that, in response to his 1996 coining of the term “nation branding”, chose simply to adopt marketing campaigns to try to improve their reputations without changing their behaviour and policies. In the hands of governments and their marketing teams in the 2000s, he writes, place brands were, indeed, all too often reduced to advertising, logos and slogans. Therefore, while I acknowledge that place branding should have many characteristics that distinguish it from product branding, *in practice* there has been sufficient overlap (see van Ham 2002, 2008) to warrant a brief consideration of theories of product branding before looking more closely at place branding.

### **3.3 Brand Production and Consumption**

Contemporary branding operates in a consumer environment characterised by reflexive consumers who form relationships with brands they believe to be authentic, using them as “ingredients” rather than “blueprints” with which to

construct their own identities and meanings (Holt 2002, p. 83). As sociologist Adam Arvidsson explains:

It is only when consumers let brands be part of their lives, when brands initiate “enduring relationships” with consumers or become “living ideas that can transform people’s lives” (Grant, 1999: 379) that brand identity – the context of action that the brand represents – becomes a real use-value that people are prepared to pay extra for. (Arvidsson 2006, p. 82)

In the highly mediatised consumer environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, brand management has moved beyond “putting public communication to work under managed forms, by providing a context where it can evolve in a particular direction” (Arvidsson 2006, p. 67). Today it also positions ostensibly sovereign consumers – consumers whose reflexivity, sometimes expressed through creative resistance to brands, can nevertheless be commodified (Holt 2002) – as active participants in the evolution not only of their own identities but also of the brand’s (Holt 2002). A brand’s identity is born out of the brand’s memory (Lash and Lury 2007) through a process of product differentiation and brand integration (Lury 2004). This process is fundamental to the establishment of the brand’s value, which resides in the extent to which it can differentiate itself from other brands (Lash and Lury 2007, p. 5). However, in many industries the nature of that differentiation has shifted over time (Arvidsson 2006; Holt 2002; Lury 2004; Lash and Lury 2007): according to contemporary destination marketers tourists, for example, are “increasingly seeking lifestyle fulfilment and experience rather than recognizing differentiation in the more tangible elements

of the destination product such as accommodation and attractions” (Morgan and Pritchard 2004, p. 60).

In focusing on brands in her analysis of the economic and social implications of contemporary uses of information, image and media, Lury (2004) conceptualises the brand as a new media object (Manovich 2001 in Lury 2004). Such an approach is possible because brands act as an interface that is a site of interactivity facilitating dynamic, two-way but asymmetrical and selective communication between producers and consumers and also separating them from each other (Lury 2004, pp. 8-9, 131-33). Because in Lury’s model elements of the brand are self-organising, the brand itself is considered to be greater than the sum of the purposive actions or activities of marketers, designers and consumers (2004, p. 51). Using the example of brand extensions, whereby the kinds of products available under the brand are extended to attract new kinds of customers, Lury argues that it is the relations between products – “specific system effects” – as much as the actions of any individual or team in the production process that enable a new category of product to leverage off the success of the brand to forge enduring emotional bonds with customers (2004, pp. 61-62, 87). This is especially common in lifestyle brands (2004, pp. 61-62), of which tourism is a prime example. In this sense, the brand is a complex intangible object or “artefact of an economy” that manages relations between products or services to produce nonlinear effects without necessarily leading to more equitable relations between producers and consumers (2004, p. 73). Brands, thus, blur the distinction between production and consumption (Lash and Lury 2007; Arvidsson 2006; Lury 2004), at least in part because they are informational capital derived from the networked labour of those very consumers

who engage with the brand to create their own identities and meanings (Arvidsson 2006). While the brand simultaneously delivers information to customers and extracts information from customers to be used in marketing, design, production and distribution, it can also severely limit the ability of customers to interact with it (Lury 2004, p. 137). In other words, the *interactivity* that brand managers encourage as a source of information about consumers does not necessarily result in consumers having equitable *interaction* with producers (Aronczyk and Powers 2010; Lury 2004). As Arvidsson explains, the informational capital of brands depends on consumers producing a “common sociality” that can be appropriated, then filtered and polished before being redeployed (2006, p. 94):

Brands evolve with the activity of the social, but in programmed ways, so that the qualities that they represent stay compatible. Brand management is thus about a reflexive filtering of the productivity of the multitude and its re-insertion into the social as a polished quality. Incompatible expressions of that productivity, expressions that makes (sic) reality enter unfiltered, like people who want to have the word “sweatshop” on their Nike sneakers, are censored. (Arvidsson 2006, p. 130)

There are ways in which dissatisfied consumers and staff can challenge producers’ ability to use the brand to shield themselves from their environment. Through leaks, protests, consumer organisations and consumer magazines they can, in effect, assert their right to interaction with the brand rather than settle for interactivity. Arvidsson (2006) and Lury (2004) point to the success of the anti-branding movement in subverting attempts by brand managers to direct

consumer preferences from below by “programming” the “freedom” of consumers so that it develops in a particular direction (Arvidsson 2006, p. 74). Nevertheless, Lury is pessimistic about the ability of the brand to function as more than “an object of contemporary capitalism” (2004, p. 163). Central to her argument is a tension she perceives between the brand’s potential to be open and its tendency to be closed, depending on its degree of indeterminacy and the willingness or otherwise of brand managers to act on all of the information they receive (2004, p. 162).

By “trying out” destinations on behalf of potential visitors and then mediating their experiences, travel journalists, like tourists and other travellers, consume the brand and help (re)produce it. My argument in this chapter is that in their capacity as both consumer–producers and consumer–mediators of destination brands, travel journalists are ideally placed to “talk back” (Lury 2004) to place-branding practitioners, policymakers and governments during their visits and through the travel journalism they produce.

### **3.4 Place Branding, Tourism and Public Diplomacy**

Anholt advocates place branding as a means of liberating places – particularly developing countries – from the economic impediment of a poor reputation (Anholt 2004). Although he warns against an entirely literal interpretation of the term “branding” when applied to something as multifaceted and dynamic as a country, region or city (Anholt 2010; see also Blichfeldt 2005), he encourages countries to maintain “a stream of innovative and eye-catching products, services, policies and initiatives in every sector” (Anholt 2010, p. 7; cf. Blichfeldt 2005) and, as noted earlier in this chapter, advises governments to

agree upon a national narrative that encompasses them all. In his 2010 publication *Places*, he argues that place branding is not about communication but about policy and “communicative acts” (“symbolic actions”) or “communicative substance”. This, however, seems to me to be a specious distinction. The following quote demonstrates the extent to which communication is central to Anholt’s model, in which public diplomacy – which at the very least is “the presentation and representation of *government* policy to other publics” (Anholt 2010, p. 94, original emphasis) – is in his view either a subset of, or in the process of becoming fused with, place branding/competitive identity:

Public diplomacy needs to be as fast-moving, as demotic and as compelling as the most popular of popular culture, and a campaigning mentality becomes the order of the day... One is no long [sic] queuing politely with other government officials for the measured attention of a minister or ambassador, so much as fighting for seconds of the public’s attention against ‘Big Brother’, iTunes and Second Life. (Anholt 2010, p. 120)

Anholt devotes a chapter in *Places* (2010) to the media. In addressing the subject of negative media coverage he advises countries not to try to avoid the issue in question but not to be dominated by it either. A reputation based on a complex identity, he believes, will be better able to withstand negative publicity related to one specific issue than a reputation for a small number of attributes. Nevertheless, he recommends having a national media centre that plans and coordinates visits by journalists to ensure that “proper information, hospitality, access and resources are provided” and to help “coordinate the messaging of the country’s major communicators (tourist board, investment promotion agency,

main exporters, Ministry of Foreign Affairs etc)” (2010, p. 133). Journalists, as he represents them, are willing allies in the hands of astute public relations practitioners (PRPs):

The good news is that journalists are, always and forever, short of good content, and will act as a highly effective (and highly cost-effective) conduit for reputation if only one can provide them with the quantity, consistent quality and professionalism that they require. (Anholt 2010, p. 143)

As noted in Chapter 1, Anholt sees tourism’s communications as having a legitimacy that makes the sector the most powerful place branding “booster rocket” (2007, p. 88). Yet the very importance attributed to tourism by place branding is evidence that tourism also “reflects and reinforces social, cultural and economic divisions rooted outside the tourism experience itself” (Morgan and Pritchard 1998, p. 6). As noted by Morgan, Pritchard & Pride as recently as 2011, there is still very little academic knowledge about how vested interests intersect in place branding, particularly when those interests conflict (2011b, p. 354) – something the present study will go some way to addressing. Tourism as an industry is described as “politically weak” because its business base is fragmented and includes many small commercial operators and public institutions (such as national parks) that may not be motivated solely or largely by economics (Ryan and Zahra 2004). This has led, on occasion, to high levels of government funding for tourism organisations, governments wielding political power in tourism politics, and direct political interference (Ryan and Zahra 2004). Anholt contends that place branding will only succeed if its communications are honest, ethical and founded on policymaking that

incorporates serious consideration of “market feedback” from public diplomacy (2007, p. 14) – implicit acknowledgement that the integrity of a place’s brand will inevitably be challenged from time to time by stakeholders acting in their own interests rather than the interests of the broader community. Govers and Go point to the obvious implications of this for local identity and local politics:

It raises questions about decision-making processes and power struggles at the local level, as it needs to be determined where and how place identity should be positioned in the global flows of images dominated by the media, and who should be responsible. As Castells (1996, p. 476) argues, in the network society “image-making is power-making”. (Govers and Go 2009, p. 7)

When governments take “a wider perspective of a tourism strategy beyond issues of promotion, and also an extended view of who are the stakeholders within tourism” (Ryan and Zahra 2004) – as Chris Ryan and Anne Zahra have found they do in New Zealand and I would argue is the case whenever tourism is folded into place branding – there seems little reason to assume that tourism’s communications will always be agnostic in a party-political sense.

Geographers Irena Ateljevic and Stephen Doorne (2002) see the power, ideology and discourses of place in terms of hegemony. In recent years, Ateljevic has approached the study of tourism from the perspective of “worldmaking” – a concept in critical tourism studies that theorises and investigates the way tourism can be used positively by groups and communities

to advance new visions or negatively to silence unwanted interpretations of place:<sup>6</sup>

WORLDMAKING... is the creative – and often “false” or “faux” imaginative processes and projective promotional activities – which management agencies and other mediating bodies engage in to purposely (or otherwise unconsciously) privilege particular dominant/favoured representations of people/places/pasts within a given or assumed region, area, or “world”, over and above other actual or potential representations of those subjects. (Hollinshead 2007, in Hollinshead, Ateljevic and Ali 2009, p. 430)

Margaret Byrne Swain considers worldmaking to be complementary to a hopeful cosmopolitanism that sees tourism at its most progressive offering opportunities “to transform differences into equity” (Byrne Swain 2009, p. 505) – an assessment that resonates with the rhetoric of place branding. In the view of international relations scholar Peter van Ham, however, place branding warrants the critical attention of others in his discipline because it is more than “rhetorical window-dressing and intellectual tap-dancing” (van Ham 2002, p. 252):

It implies a shift in political paradigms, a shift from the modern world of geopolitics and power to the postmodern world of images and influence. If this trend continues, it will have a pronounced impact on the nature of international politics. (van Ham 2002, p. 252)

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<sup>6</sup> This approach to “worldmaking” is distinct from the political philosophy interest in world-making (see, for example, Karagiannis and Wagner 2007), although both draw on the work of 20<sup>th</sup> century American philosopher of art and science Nelson Goodman.

For van Ham, what distinguishes place branding from historical forms of image management in international relations is its “mediagenic creation of emotional ties between the citizen-cum-consumer and the (place) brand” (2008, p. 134).

### **3.5 Place Branding and the Environment**

Landscape and wildlife are also mediagenic and a source of strong emotional ties between places, residents and visitors, but they are often contested, even if already protected. When branding is proposed for publicly owned places such as national parks, the goals are likely to be some combination of establishing recognition and identity, “attracting and educating various stakeholders, building trust and relationships, and offering diverse programs” (Gross et al. 2009, p. 276). In one place-branding analysis of the United States and Canadian national parks systems, for example, the problems the researchers defined and attempted to resolve were associated with multiple stakeholders, objectives and jurisdictions. While their analysis recognised the complexity of different use-values and perspectives, and particularly those of people other than tourists, the solution proposed was communication and marketing, including “‘soft power diplomacy’, reaching out to their various stakeholders with appropriate messages and through relevant media” (Gross et al. 2009, p. 287). The objective of such communication appears to be the discursive integration of environmental and economic sustainability (see also Stamanou and Paraskevopoulos (2006), who espouse a similar objective for communication about Greek national parks in the course of their discourse analysis of travel journalism) – integration that increases the marketing advantages that can be derived from landscape.

One important way that national parks can gain the kind of international recognition that gives them immense power as tourism public relations tools is through inscription on the World Heritage List, which was inaugurated in 1978 and now contains many hundreds of physical and cultural sites (Ryan and Silvano 2009). Established as a conservation measure by the United Nations, the list has become “a coveted brand and seal of approval” that attracts a constant stream of nominations of natural sites from governments around the world (Ryan and Silvano 2009, p. 291). Independently, or in combination with a place’s existing reputation for natural attractions, World Heritage endorsement of natural phenomena or landscapes as being of global significance contributes not only to their preservation but also to their commodification and – building on successful tourism publicity – to their governments’ ability to transform landscapes into branding messages that attribute natural qualities or purity to innumerable products and cultural characteristics. In New Zealand, where the place branding campaign “100 % Pure New Zealand” has enjoyed outstanding success in its own terms for more than a decade, it has been argued that landscape, nature and “greenness” are a “powerful identity ‘myth’” (Ryan 2002, p. 68) that disguises or ignores historical and contemporary environmental mismanagement (Dürr 2007; Ryan 2002): “Both national identity and international reputation are intertwined, and constitute and reproduce each other. Therefore, the ‘100% Pure’ representation also plays a role in constructing New Zealand’s identity at home, just as it does work abroad” (Dürr 2007, p. 6).

Another physical quality that can contribute to a place’s ability to market itself as exotic and environmentally responsible is the “*island factor*” (Reitsma and Little 2010, original emphasis). In Abu Dhabi, the state-owned tourism

company is creating a Desert Islands ecotourism resort encompassing a cluster of small islands, wildlife sanctuaries and marine reserves. The aim is to capitalise on western stereotypes of isolated islands as places of enchantment, natural beauty and solitude to become “the UAE’s symbol of sustainability to the world” (Reitsma and Little 2010, p. 80). Similarly, in New Zealand the “100% Pure” campaign has turned the country’s isolation into an asset by constructing its islands as untouched by population pressures and distant from the polluting effects of northern-hemisphere industrialisation (Dürr 2007).

### **3.6 Place Branding and the Media**

Marketing literature about place branding tends to discuss the media in traditional media-management terms (see, for example, Govers and Go 2009). As noted in the previous chapter, positive coverage by independent journalists – who are described as “autonomous” agents – is highly valued by place marketers because it is considered more credible than “overt induced image formation” such as advertising (Gartner 1993). Negative autonomous news coverage is seen to undermine positive messages from induced agents (Schatz and Kolmer 2010). Travel journalists who have been successfully influenced by place marketers through, for example, hosted visits that are not declared in their published texts are described as “covert induced” agents (Gartner 1993, pp. 200-201). These terms appear even in the most contemporary place branding manuals: according to Govers and Go, for example, “covert induced agents are becoming increasingly important [in place branding], and the nature of many previously autonomous agents have [sic] been changed to become covert induced agents” (Govers and Go 2009, p. 188) – an assessment that correlates with evidence of

the increase in journalists' reliance on public relations discussed in Chapter 2.

Such terminology does place branding no favours. Offering an alternative to Anholt's view that public diplomacy should be subsumed in place branding or, at the very least, fused with it (see above), van Ham considers that "the theory and practice of place branding is part of a wider discourse that involves propaganda at one end of the spectrum, and public diplomacy at the other" (2008, p. 135). Public diplomacy, he writes, is "the strategy of appealing to the core values of foreign audiences by using new techniques that are frequently directly derived from commercial practice" (2008, p. 135). Public diplomacy differs from traditional diplomacy in that it is government communication aimed at foreign publics rather than at foreign governments and their diplomats. The difference between place branding and public diplomacy, according to van Ham (2008), is that the latter is not concerned with shaping local identity. However, they both in principle rely on the power of attraction rather than coercion: "For both place branding and public diplomacy, a key element is to build personal and institutional relationships and dialogue with foreign audiences by focusing on *values*, setting them apart from classical diplomacy, which primarily deals with *issues* (van Ham 2008, p. 135, original emphasis). Issues, therefore – the kinds of issues that result in political conflict, for example – are likely to be problematic for place-branding managers. Yet there are high-profile examples of branding becoming intermeshed with public diplomacy in government issues management. In an attempt to influence the way the Muslim world viewed the United States immediately after the World Trade Center was attacked in 2001 a public relations expert in branding was appointed United States Undersecretary of Public Diplomacy (Lewis et al. 2006, p. 25; van Ham 2002, 2008). And in the

lead-up to the 2003 Iraq war “what once would have been the distinct agendas of military/media strategy (truth), image control abroad (selective selling and branding), and psychological operations (manipulation of truth for reasons of national security)” became blurred both institutionally and discursively in the United States and the United Kingdom (Lewis et al. 2006, p. 26).

### **3.7 Public Relations, Politics, Travel Journalism and the Brand**

Visiting journalist programs (VJPs) run by government tourism offices (see Chapter 2) enable destination brands to gain greater access to travel journalists than they otherwise might and thus gain media coverage for less than the cost of advertising. Tourism New Zealand’s description of the importance of international media to its “100% Pure” campaign is instructive:

Despite a new brand and a lot of enthusiasm, Tourism New Zealand didn’t have a lot of money. One way of making its marketing dollar go further was to attract high-quality international media to New Zealand with the aim of generating positive coverage for the country as a destination...

Tourism New Zealand worked to attract international media to events, took care of them while they were there and encouraged them to promote New Zealand as part of the event coverage.

Take the America’s Cup: an excuse to highlight images of sky and sea and outdoor experiences, and a perfect opportunity to extend the interest of visiting media beyond sailing to trout fishing in the hinterland or environmental themes. (Tourism New Zealand 2009d)

Once access to media is achieved, tourism office VJPs attempt to ensure the identity of the place that travel journalists encounter during their visit accords

with the image of the place the government tourism office has projected through its marketing. As elite travel journalism sources, government tourism PRPs are central to how tourist destinations are perceived by the media (MacKellar and Fenton 2000; Dore and Crouch 2003), yet the offices for which they work are vulnerable to party-political pressure (Morgan and Pritchard 2004; Ryan and Zahra 2004), including the “short-termism of the tourism organizations’ political masters” (Morgan and Pritchard 2004, p. 63). When government tourism public relations are tied to public diplomacy under the umbrella of place branding, there seems little reason to assume government tourism PRPs (including staff and others engaged to guide visiting journalists) will be any more likely to disentangle agendas and priorities than PRPs in other parts of the public sector.

In brand-management terms, not only must government tourism PRPs manage journalists to achieve positive publicity for the destination and deal with issues that might impact negatively on the brand (Morgan and Pritchard, 2004) but they must also “produce the identity of the organization, and at the same time produce themselves as members of the organization” (Arvidsson 2006, p. 85). According to Lury, although in today’s markets employees are often expected to see their work as a way of adding value to themselves, “the management of brands increasingly has implications for who gets hired or not, who gets promoted or not, and thus who prospers or not” (2004, p. 35). According to Lury, brands are “one of a growing number of devices to monitor and control the performance of the employee” (2004, p. 33). In its manifestation as an overarching government strategy, therefore, place branding can be expected to guide how PRPs organise itineraries, and direct and conduct tours, but also to be evident in their professional discourse – both in the public relations material they

write and in their interactions with travel journalists, colleagues, stakeholders and publics.

The mediagenic nature of place branding means that its soft power resides in large part in the appeal of its narratives to internal and external audiences (van Ham 2008). This recalls my definition in Chapter 1 of place *branding* in tourism public relations as – to recast Govers and Go’s definition of a place *brand* (2009, p. 17) – the attempt to manage representations of place so that only positive ones circulate, or gain a foothold in local and global imaginaries. An important way in which place branding attempts to manage representations is via discursive strategies (Carvalho 2008). This is evident in the material already presented in this chapter, which clearly identifies place branding as deploying discursive strategies according to Carvalho’s definition – that is, “discursive manipulation[s] of reality by social actors...in order to achieve a certain effect or goal” (Carvalho 2008, p. 169). There are potentially innumerable discursive strategies but Carvalho identifies four in particular, each of which is relevant to place branding:

- *Strategy 1: Framing*

In the light of the material presented in this chapter so far, we can extrapolate that place-branded framing (Carvalho 2008) is a discursive strategy whereby a text focuses on elements of a place’s identity that a government has agreed are part of the brand and avoids elements that are not aligned with place branding. These elements are also arranged in a way that accords with the values of the internal or external audience being addressed.

- *Strategy 2: Positioning*

Carvalho describes positioning as “a discursive strategy that involves constructing social actors into a certain relationship with others, that may, for instance, entitle them to do certain things” (2008, p. 169). Place-branded positioning may, for example, conscript tourism into the service of non-tourism sectors of the economy by constructing the non-tourism sectors as compatible with tourism, or not incompatible.

- *Strategy 3: Legitimation or Delegitimation*

Place-branded legitimation justifies and positively sanctions all sectors and products covered by place branding.

- *Strategy 4: Politicisation or Depoliticisation*

In a destination in which attributes crucial to place branding are the subject of political controversy, implementing the preceding strategies will involve politicisation and/or depoliticisation.

In Chapter 1, I began my summary of scholarly debates about source-media relations with a discussion of Hall et al.’s theory of primary definition, whereby journalists seek out institutional sources because they believe them to be authoritative and objective, and as a result these sources are able to set the terms of the debate. While later studies that took into account strategic action by elites and non-elites demonstrated that institutional sources were not entirely dominant, they confirmed that such sources did have a considerable advantage. In travel journalism, that advantage is increased by the ability of government

tourism offices in many instances to, in effect, buy editorial *access* for their destinations by hosting travel journalists (remembering that gaining access does not necessarily guarantee that a source's *meanings* will prevail – see below). However, place-branding discourses may gain access *and* be faithfully mediated in the absence of any interaction between government PRPs and travel journalists. Here critical tourism studies provides an insight into the way tourism discourses such as, I would argue, those of place branding become naturalised not only in tourism publicity material but also in the talk of individuals in the industry and – if place branding succeeds by its own measure in shaping local identity – the broader community. Specifically, “worldmaking” in critical tourism studies (see above) conceives of place as a discursive construction and expression of power in a manner that is directly applicable to the way place branding functions:

the naturalization or normalisation of meaning is an expression of “power”, and, nominally, of the power of ascendant groups who have – over time – not only classified the place or space, but standardized the “talk” and “text” in currency about it, and reciprocally “disciplined” the training of those who work in tourism to match those very categorizations (consciously recognized or not), of and about “the world”. (Hollinshead, Ateljevic and Ali 2009, p. 434)

As noted in Chapter 1, by branding places as natural, governments invite scrutiny. Tourism New Zealand's “100% Pure” campaign was considered so successful that it was still in operation 10 years after its 1999 launch and in 2005 was ranked the 21<sup>st</sup> global corporate or consumer brand in the world (Tourism New Zealand 2009a, based on calculations by Interbrand). When the campaign

encountered media criticism for contradictions between its place branding and, for example, the way it handled agricultural waste or its promotion of carbon-intensive long-haul flights (Tourism New Zealand 2009b; see Chapter 9 in Urry and Larsen 2011 for a contemporary critique of the tourism industry's environmental impact and some theoretical implications), it took measures to make its tourism industry more environmentally sustainable and used this in its marketing. According to WWF (2012), however, freshwater quality continued to decline as a result of agricultural practices. In 2009 the government tourism organisation's CEO recast the meaning of a brand promise. Instead of a brand being a guarantee, "100% Pure" was described as "something that New Zealand can aspire to in its environmental performance...a promise we believe the country can and should live up to, for New Zealanders and visitors alike" (Tourism New Zealand 2009c). In the same media release, he defended the "100% Pure" campaign's success and integrity in terms that illustrate how the affirmations so often inherent in place-branded framings lend them the suppleness and resilience they require in order to be effective when deployed within the branded destinations themselves:

The 100% Pure New Zealand campaign still provides potential visitors with an enduring message of New Zealand. The reason the campaign has been so successful is not just because it's a great catchphrase but because it's true and the people of New Zealand give it that truth. (George Hickton in Tourism New Zealand 2009c)

The "100% Pure New Zealand" example demonstrates that even place brands have a degree of the objectivity attributed to product brands by Lury

(2004) and as such are interfaces between tourism production and consumption that tend to be more closed than open. If governments do not heed Anholt's (2010) advice that communication without action is not enough to secure a place's strong external reputation, there is a risk that in times of environmental conflict place brand managers will attempt to deploy the brand as a "wall or a shield" (Lury 2004, p. 159) between the place's "true identity" (Govers and Go 2009, p. 71), and foreign markets and publics. There is a sense of this in the New Zealand tourism CEO's insistence that "100% Pure" is "true".

### **3.8 The Interface between Places and Flows**

While actor-network theory (see Chapter 2) provides a useful way of conceptualising non-humans such as brands as actors in a network, another theory of networks – Castells' influential 1996 thesis of the network society (see Chapter 1) – has been invoked by place branding scholars Govers and Go as being "of prime interest" in "the sense of local landscapes versus global ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, financiescapas, and ideoscapas" (2009, p. 57). In terms of the relationship between places and flows, Hutchins notes that it is not what separates them that is most significant but what happens where they meet:

The space of flows expresses dominant forms of social power, as represented by global managerial elites and the seemingly unstoppable march of information technology, but the important issue is what happens when these flows interact with actual places. (Hutchins 2004, p. 580-81)

Hutchins identifies regional newspapers as one site in which global flows meet actual places: regional newspapers not only speak *for* places but also speak *to* places about global flows (2004, p. 587). Thus he finds that regional newspapers are engaged in processes of enabling as well as resistance, but also that the “interface between the space of flows and the space of places is not about consistency; it is about unpredictable outcomes, decentred power relations and culture in the act of becoming” (2004, p. 588). While place branding defines itself as speaking *for* and *of* places to global and international audiences via travel journalism, it also sometimes attempts to speak *to* places ostensibly on behalf of global or international audiences via regional media mediation of positive brand reception.

Meanwhile, the environment movement occupies the space of places by choice but can assign place a value in the space of media flows (Hutchins and Lester 2006) through appeals to cosmopolitan concern:

In seeking to protect place, many environmental organizations operate and organize themselves in networked formations, helping to create widespread awareness of issues, disseminate information and coordinate actions. In other words, to generate knowledge of grassroots politics, a concerted effort must be made to engage with and move within the space of flows and, more specifically, the space of media flows. (Hutchins and Lester 2006, p. 437)

Just as place branding seeks to shape local identity as well as its global reception, so even when an environment movement seeks to use “universally understood dramatic frames”, to rally support from distant publics it must also “manage meanings of its actions within local and particular contexts” (Lester

and Cottle 2011, p. 289). When both place branding and environment movements attempt to use international travel journalism and local or regional media to publicise and manage universal and local environmental meanings, the unpredictability of outcomes is likely to be especially pronounced.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

As Tourism New Zealand chief executive George Hickton's assurance that "100% Pure New Zealand" is "true" (see above) suggests, one of the ambitions of place branding is "to find consensus – and, more importantly, inspiration and stimulation – in a...narrative that is based on a shared dream for the future rather than a shared interpretation of the past or the present" (Anholt 2010, p. 34). Attempts to achieve this are through place-based institutions and structures (both material and cultural). Among those institutions are local and regional media – "mediators and interpreters of global networks of power and information" (Hutchins 2004, p. 588). The point here is that whenever discourses in international travel journalism that endorse or challenge place branding cycle back into local or regional media reports, they have the potential to influence the course of environmental conflicts. To whatever extent it is possible to say that the geographical landscape is where place-based communities dwell (Harvey 2009, p. 250), that objects of dwelling travel (Lury 1997; see also Appadurai 1986), and that the nature-based place brand is an object (see Lury 2004), international travel journalists are implicated in the construction of the environment for publics in the destinations they review as well as for their publishers' readers. But if place branding is being promoted by its advocates as a way of reconciling places and flows (see Anholt 2007, 2010; Govers and Go

2009), it will be wise to ask whose interests this might serve. Because international travel journalists are targets of place branding, and place brands must be positioned within the space of flows, the travel journalism genre lends itself to the kind of analysis that might shed light on some of the complex processes Beck implicates in cosmopolitanisation, including the role of the media in unveiling global risks and the possibility of multiperspectival outlooks that incorporate the local, national, transnational and cosmopolitan. What might motivate travel journalists to include political discourses and frames in their texts, what forms might such comments take, and how might publishers and places respond? These are some of the questions that will be considered in the following chapter and in the case study.



## Chapter 4: Cosmopolitanism

One of the striking changes of the nineteenth and especially the twentieth centuries was the displacement of cosmopolitanism from cities to international travel and the mass media.

*Craig Calhoun 2002a, p. 890*

### 4.1 Introduction

International relations scholar van Ham (2002, 2008) alludes to a future in which countries become such successfully networked “brand states” that their physical territory becomes irrelevant. There are similarities here with Anderson (Anderson 1991, see Section 4.2) – nations are always to some extent imagined communities – but in terms of its own subject van Ham’s observation ignores the pivotal role played by tourism in place branding, and tourism’s reliance on identity and destinations with tangible territories (see Govers and Go 2009). Although Beck acknowledges that we live in an age of “liquid modernity” (Bauman 2000), he warns against stream, flow and network metaphors that fail to “thematize the degree to which...processes [of cosmopolitanisation and anti-cosmopolitanisation (see below)] are promoted or inhibited by the agency or impotence of particular groups of actors” (2006, p. 80). His argument is that although boundaries are blurring, social structures have not as yet been fully dissolved by flows, and so mobility should not entirely supersede structure and community as a focus of academic enquiry (2006, p. 80). In Beck’s view there is not so much a privileged, mobile, cosmopolitan space of flows and a dominated non-cosmopolitan space of places but an interpenetration of the local, national and global (Holton 2009, p. 53). And this is just one way in which his view of

cosmopolitanism is multiperspectival. As discussed in Chapter 1, Beck (2006), Hannerz (2006) and others (for example, Szerszynski and Urry 2002, 2006) also theorise an intertwining of cultural and political cosmopolitanism. One of the dimensions of cultural cosmopolitanism is “consumerist cosmopolitanism” (Calhoun 2002a, p. 889, see below), and this is the dimension that might be expected to be most comfortably exploited by place branding and travel media. Consumerist cosmopolitanism is well suited both to places and to flows. Whether it can facilitate or accommodate political cosmopolitanism in travel journalism will, I hope, become clear in the case study. Meanwhile, in this chapter I set the stage for such an investigation by introducing these three forms of cosmopolitanism – cultural, consumerist and political – and examining the role of journalism in Beck’s cosmopolitan project. I then consider travel journalism’s apparent failure to mediate cultural diversity with cosmopolitan density before arguing that this does not necessarily mean that it cannot play a role in unveiling environmental threats and mediating cosmopolitan concern in ways that can be meaningful for readers.

## **4.2 The Many Faces of Cosmopolitanism**

Hannerz’s worried face of political cosmopolitanism and happy face of cultural cosmopolitanism (2006, see Chapter 1) are useful metaphors, particularly in the context of tourism and travel journalism. For example, they capture something of the distinction Robertson makes between transnational democratic projects and theories of citizenship that transcend the nation-state on the one hand, and the “discourses and everyday practices” that celebrate and sustain diversity while building the solidarity that can help bring such projects into being on the other

(2010, p. 6). In reality, however, such a range of positive and negative connotations are attached to the term “cosmopolitan” today (Holton 2009) that it is not always possible to categorise a particular form as exclusively either cultural or political, just as it can be difficult sometimes to separate consumerist cosmopolitanism from the forces that might be harnessed to bring about a more just and humane world.

In the early pages of *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Beck (2006) outlines a dialectical “cosmopolitanisation” that is both universal and particular. Cosmopolitanisation, as he envisages it, is a non-linear process whereby the side-effects of global trade and global risks coerce individuals into interdependencies and transnational communication. While normative cosmopolitanism is concerned with providing political answers to “a self-destructive civilization” (Beck 2006, p. 131), the cosmopolitan outlook is a reflexive response to observing cosmopolitanisation in the form of “de- and re-nationalization, de- and re-ethnicization, and de- and re-localization in society and politics” (Beck 2006, p. 94). On one side of this equation are features of the reflexive cosmopolitan outlook that might be considered benefits of international travel and transnational media: empathy for distant others, recognition of cultural differences, and an appreciation of the way “local, national, ethnic, religious and cosmopolitan cultures *and* traditions” interact (Beck 2006, p. 7, original emphasis).

Cosmopolitan theories that acknowledge the strength of non-global commitments and loyalties have resurfaced relatively recently. As Bruce Robbins notes, during the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century cosmopolitanism was more often criticised as incompatible with nationalism for promoting a footloose

detachment from the responsibilities of citizenship (1998, p. 1). Robert Holton, for example, describes “frequent travelers” (Calhoun 2002a) such as those concerned for the wellbeing of humanity and/or in favour of world citizenship as contributing to a normative intellectual cosmopolitanism that might still conceivably extend to “a disdain for the national, local and parochial, as a less desirable and exciting way of life, with narrow horizons and small-minded prejudices” (2009, p. 9). Yet as an Enlightenment ethic advocating “a universal humanism that transcends regional particularities” (Cheah 1998, p. 22), cosmopolitanism predated the nation-state, and at least as conceived of by Emanuel Kant, its aims of reforming absolutist state rule were similar to those of 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist movements (Cheah 1998, pp. 24-25).

While contemporary cosmopolitanism is often differentiated from globalisation as encompassing features other than the economic, it has a long association with international commerce. According to Craig Calhoun, it was originally “a project of empires, of long-distance trade, and of cities” (2002a, p. 871-872). In the great trading hubs of the Ottoman empire it manifested itself as a tolerance of cultural diversity that helped facilitate the exchange of goods (Calhoun 2002a, p. 872). In Kant’s writings, international commerce was considered an historical fact of cosmopolitanism and a force for harmony between states (Cheah 1998, p. 23): trade and a “universal culture comprising the fine arts and sciences” (Cheah 1998, p. 23), Kant believed, would contribute to a world in which individuals and states co-existed “in an external relationship of mutual influences” (Kant 1795 cited in Cheah 1998, p. 23).

With so many historical inter-relationships between cosmopolitanism and commerce, it is little wonder that the distinctions between cosmopolitanisation

and globalisation are sometimes blurred. Hiro Saito argues that in sociology globalisation and cosmopolitanisation essentially refer to the same thing: “growing flows of economic, political, social, and cultural activities across national borders and corresponding transformations of institutions and practices inside nation-states” (2011, p. 126). Calhoun, however, accuses theorists writing in the 1990s of failing to disentangle cosmopolitanism from neo-liberal capitalism (2002a, p. 892). Implicit in his complaint is an acceptance he shares with Beck (2006) and Hannerz (2004b) that globalisation is generally understood as a top-down economic trend towards a free global market. Stephen Gill goes so far as to argue that globalisation has as its aim the establishment of a “market civilisation” which is associated with perspectives that are “ahistorical, economistic, materialistic, ‘me-oriented’, short-termist and ecologically myopic” and whose “coordination is achieved by a combination of market discipline and political power” (1995, p. 399). Cosmopolitanisation as described by Calhoun, Beck and Hannerz, by contrast, today refers to those processes that may lead to broader, sometimes bottom-up cultural, social and political attitudes and responses to a world in which time and space are, to use David Harvey’s (1989) term, “compressed”.

As noted in earlier chapters, centuries before live international television broadcasts and household Internet access, advances in technology were already enabling information and debate to cross geographical, political and cultural boundaries. The printing press was central to the rise of a public sphere whose ideals reflected aspects of cosmopolitanism (Calhoun 2002a; Cheah 1998). In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), Habermas not only exhibits a “Kantian orientation” (Calhoun 1992, p. 1) but also “prefigures

Benedict Anderson's concept of 'print capitalism'" (Calhoun 1992, p. 8) in the extent to which he acknowledges the importance of advances in printing to facilitating rational-critical debate beyond face-to-face contact and expanding markets beyond local communities (Calhoun 1992; Robbins 1998). Linking advances in communications technology with cosmopolitanism may initially seem at odds with Anderson's thesis in *Imagined Communities* (Anderson 1991) that the vernacular of early newspapers provided readers of the day with a sense of shared culture that fostered an enduring *nationalism*. Yet as Bruce Robbins points out, there seems little reason why media cannot also facilitate *transnational* connections:

If people can get as emotional as Anderson says they do about relations with fellow nationals they never see face-to-face, then now that print-capitalism has become electronic- and digital-capitalism, and now that this system is so clearly transnational, it would be strange if people did not get emotional in much the same way, if not necessarily to the same degree, about others who are not fellow nationals, people bound to them by some transnational sort of fellowship. (Robbins 1998, p. 7)

It is not only globalisation that is charged with being a top-down process. Accusations of elitism have been levelled at those who distinguish cosmopolitans from other social types largely on the basis of active cultural competence (see Szerszynski and Urry 2002, p. 469). Such cosmopolitans may appear self-indulgent if their attitude "does not involve using those cultural experiences from somewhere else to effect change, except at some private level" (Hannerz 1996, p. 61). Calhoun goes further, drawing a distinction between a

cultural cosmopolitanism that might promote cosmopolitan citizenship through symbols and meanings (see Robertson 2010) and a cultural cosmopolitanism that is merely aesthetic and, as he describes it, “consumerist” (Calhoun 2002a, p. 889):

Food, tourism, music, literature, and clothes are all easy faces of cosmopolitanism. They are indeed broadening, literally after a fashion, but they are not hard tests for the relationship between local solidarity and international civil society. (Calhoun 2002a, p. 889)

Conversely, travel does not of itself guarantee that individuals will acquire cultural competence: as noted by Urry (2002), Calhoun (2002a), and Woodward, Skribis and Bean (2008), it is all too easy to travel internationally and inhabit an environment of material and cultural sameness. “Aided by the frequent-flyer lounges (and their extensions in ‘international standard’ hotels),” writes Calhoun, “contemporary cosmopolitans meet others of different backgrounds in spaces that retain familiarity” (2002a, p. 888). By Hannerz’s measure, the “soft” cosmopolitans Calhoun criticises here are not cosmopolitans at all. But even if an individual travelling internationally “surrenders” to cultures as “package deals” rather than mastering only those aspects that suit his or her own perspective, “the surrender is of course only conditional...All the time he [or she] knows where the exit is” (Hannerz 1996, p. 104).

Groups like Ethical Traveler in the United States (established in 2002) and Tourism Concern in the United Kingdom (established in 1988) are playing a part in raising awareness of, respectively, political issues of concern in tourist destinations, and exploitative or destructive tourism practices. Nevertheless,

scholars are sceptical of claims that tourists generally are prepared to take political action in respect of destinations they have visited (Bianchi 2006; Higgins-Desbiolles 2006, p. 1201; Urry 1995). Although the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN World Tourism Organization) pays tribute to the potential for tourism to have positive social and cultural effects, its focus is overwhelmingly on tourism's economic benefits to communities. To this end it promotes "responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism" (UN World Tourism Organization n.d.a) as a "key driver for socio-economic progress" (UN World Tourism Organization n.d.b), claiming that tourism represents "one of the main income sources for many developing countries" (UN World Tourism Organization n.d.b). Today the citizens of non-western countries are also travelling internationally much more themselves: between 1990 and 2004, outbound tourism from Asia and the Pacific increased by close to 150 per cent, and tourism from Africa almost doubled (UN World Tourism Organization 2005). Yet while appreciating developing countries' need for foreign currency, Freya Higgins-Desbiolles (2006) criticises a pervasive preoccupation with tourism as an industry for its narrowness of vision and for shifting the focus of governments away from tourism's potential as a transformative social force with the ability to foster cosmopolitan awareness.

If cosmopolitanism is "a characteristic within and of individuals" (Szerszynski and Urry 2002, p. 468), many theorists would agree that cosmopolitans must demonstrate, at the very least:

a cultural disposition involving an intellectual and aesthetic stance of "openness" towards peoples, places and experiences from different cultures, especially those from different "nations"...Cosmopolitanism involves the search for, and

delight in, the contrasts between societies rather than a longing for superiority or for uniformity. (Szerzynski and Urry 2002, p. 468)

This egalitarian description comes at a cost, however, for it is notoriously difficult to identify empirically a single group that exhibits such a cosmopolitan predisposition (Woodward, Skrbis and Bean 2008, p. 223). Furthermore, it is far from evident that even the kind of cosmopolitanism described by either Szerzynski and Urry or Hannerz fosters enduring personal commitment to other cultures. Indeed, Manuel Castells uses the term “cosmopolitans” to label elites pursuing their own interests in the network society’s space of flows (1996, p. 415). There is, however, an alternative view – or mechanism, perhaps. Szerzynski and Urry acknowledge the possibility of an intertwining of cultural and political cosmopolitanism arising from “banal globalism” (Szerzynski and Urry 2002, p. 477) – that is, from the public’s everyday encounters with the world from afar via images and narratives of connectedness in the mass media. Hannerz, for his part, describes the lived experience of diversity arising from people’s day-to-day encounters with migrants and refugees as a form of “banal cosmopolitanism” that may promote a sense of being “at home in the world” (2006, p. 14). Combined with an “ethics of care”, it is possible that this is also contributing to the formation of a “cosmopolitan civil society” (Szerzynski and Urry 2002, p. 477-478) and, by accommodating both the global and the local, helping to transform the public sphere into a “cosmopolitan public stage” for the “visual and narrative ‘staging’ of contemporary life” (Szerzynski and Urry 2002, p. 478). Hannerz holds out hope for a form of bottom-up cosmopolitics resulting from “having a similar range of experiences out there, of others and of oneself, personally or vicariously, as one has closer at hand, in a local

community or in a nation” (2006, p. 26). In his view, cosmopolitans have an important role whether or not their pursuit of cultural diversity is self-indulgent, for they provide coherence to a world of distinct cultures, and their advocacy of cultural diversity contributes to its preservation (1996, p. 111). And while access to a more globalised culture can empower groups marginalised or otherwise disadvantaged by dominant traditions (Jeong and Almeida Santos 2004), the preservation of cultural diversity can help maintain “a reserve of improvements and alternatives to what is at any one time immediately available in one’s own culture, and of solutions to its problems” (Hannerz 1996, p. 62). With a deeper knowledge of other cultures there might also arise a civil cosmopolitan compassion and concern (Hannerz 2004, p. 20-23).

Another argument Hannez canvasses for preserving cultural diversity is the benefits of different cultures occupying different ecological niches (1996, pp. 58-60). Conceivably, in an atmosphere of cultural openness, solutions to environmental problems encountered by one culture might stem from knowledge of another culture’s relationship with its environment. Marcella Daye also sees links between culture and environment, citing Stephen Bourassa when she points out that landscape is “one form through which cultural groups seek to create and preserve their identities” (Bourassa, 1991, in Daye, 2005, p. 24). In the opinion of Phil Macnaghten and John Urry, many tourists have a highly nuanced appreciation of the cultural dimensions of nature and the difference between pristine and damaged environments. “Elaborately entangled and fundamentally bound up with social practices and their characteristic modes of cultural representation” (1998, p. 30) as it is, nature is intimately connected with tourism, not only because tourist destinations are “places” but because pleasure-

seeking tourists pursuing “the natural” in a range of destinations acquire the cultural capital to distinguish aesthetically between the natural and the damaged, and to demand satisfaction as consumers of nature (see Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). Thus, as “nature and culture dissolve into one another” the terminology changes and we begin to talk instead of the “environment” – “a particular way of representing space as sets of observable and measurable dimensions and forces” (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998, p. 30). Szerszynski and Urry find that a capacity for the “aesthetic judgement” of landscape produced by mobility seems to be “feed[ing] into and animat[ing] global tourism as well as the environment movement and notions of cosmopolitanism” (2006, p. 127), although they express their concern that this might result in each place losing its uniqueness and becoming merely “a particular combination of abstract characteristics, which mark it out as similar or different, as more or less scenic or characterful than other places” (2006, p. 126). Holton also sees what might be described as an affective cosmopolitics already evident in modern environmentalism, “which has arisen as a response to environmental challenges that cannot be resolved on a national basis within single countries, and which draws emotional power from images of Planet Earth under imminent threat of ecological crisis” (2009, p. 5).

The kind of cosmopolitics Hannerz envisions need not go so far as advocating the construction of a world society but does emphasise “that human beings are not only to be seen as a labor force or as consumers” (Hannerz 2004, p. 21). Thus, in Hannerz’s view, cosmopolitanism from below might turn out to be as much about learning that one can at least cope with multiculturalism as about “delighting” in that cultural diversity (Hannerz 2006). In Beck’s view, if the incidental or forced “mixing” with other cultures that results from the cross-

border flows of capital, labour and commodities associated with globalisation is “passively or unwillingly suffered” it is merely “*deformed*” cosmopolitanism (2006, p. 20, original emphasis). Non-deformed cosmopolitanism emerging out of the reflexive cosmopolitan outlook, by contrast, is chosen rather than suffered: “A non-deformed cosmopolitanism...results from a sense of partaking in the great human experiment in civilization – with one’s own language and cultural symbols and the means to counter global threats – and hence of making a contribution to world culture” (2006, p. 21). Cosmopolitanism, thus conceived, is neither an alternative to nationalism nor a utopian vision but a pragmatic response (Smith 2008, p. 258). “In a world of global crises and dangers produced by civilization,” Beck writes, “the old differentiations between internal and external, national and international, us and them, lose their validity and a new cosmopolitan realism becomes essential to survival” (2006, p. 14). This “world risk society” to which Beck (2009) refers is the result of “bad” connections in the form of threats generated by globalisation “that can make or break cosmopolitanism by testing the limit of openness to foreign others and cultures” generated by aesthetic and ethical cosmopolitanism (Saito 2011, p. 139). In view of this and the many references noted above to an environmental component of cosmopolitanism, it seems reasonable to follow the lead of Ian Woodward, Zlatko Skrbis and Clive Bean and include among dispositions considered to be cosmopolitan “feelings toward the link between globalization and...global environmental protection” (2008, p. 214).

### 4.3 Cosmopolitanism and Journalism

Vital to the emergence of the cosmopolitan outlook, from Beck's perspective, are media that both represent and service the cultural needs of transnationals (Beck 2006): "the framework of the nation is not overcome. But the foundations of the industries and cultures of the mass media have changed dramatically and concomitantly all kinds of transnational connections and confrontations have emerged" (Beck 2006, pp. 6-7). Beck believes that, because transnationals are both native and non-native (Beck 2006, p. 65), media attention to their presence can help populations overcome "us and them" dichotomies (2006, p. 63) by conceptualising difference in terms of "both/and" rather than "either/or" (Beck 2006, p. 62) – both German and Jewish, for example. "What is new," he contends, "is not forced mixing but awareness of it, its self-conscious political affirmation, its reflection and recognition before a global public via the mass media" (Beck 2006, p. 21). Beck includes tourists in his definition of transnationals (2006, p. 90) and asks whether they and other transnationals such as migrants and members of nongovernment organisations are merely tolerated by local communities or may ultimately be encouraged to participate in local politics, thereby contributing to a culture of openness (2006, pp.90-91). Perhaps most tantalisingly of all, from the perspective of tourism stakeholders, he asks whether there might actually be marketing advantages to localities in being represented as politically cosmopolitan.

Could one in this sense even say that the extension of local politics by transnational subpolitics, in particular the cooperation with non-governmental organizations, entails an enrichment of city politics because it fosters global connections and is an effective global advertisement? (Beck 2006, p. 91)

In addition to servicing the cultural needs of transnationals and bringing attention to their presence, it is possible that some sectors of the media may themselves be considered transnational cultures. Hannerz includes journalism among the occupational cultures he describes as such, thereby attributing to some of its practitioners privileged access to the meanings of cultures other than their own and an associated role as cultural mediators:

These cultures become transnational both as the individuals involved make quick forays from a home base to many other places – for a few hours or days in a week, for a few weeks here and there in a year – and as they shift their bases for longer periods within their lives...The real significance of the growth of the transnational cultures, however, is often not the new cultural experience that they themselves can offer people – for it is frequently rather restricted in scope – but their mediating possibilities. The transnational cultures are bridgeheads for entry into other territorial cultures. Instead of remaining within them, one can use the mobility connected with them to make contact with the meanings of other rounds of life and gradually incorporate this experience into one's personal perspective. (1996, pp. 107-08)

Here, then, is scope for something more than banal cosmopolitanism, whereby journalists make their contribution by mediating diverse cultures and global threats with greater depth and competence than may be inherent in the more consumer-oriented global vernacular. In *Cosmopolitan Vision* (2006) Beck invests the media with a key role in facilitating social reflexivity by unveiling manufactured global hazards and risks (hazards and risks that are unintended by-products of industrialisation, such as anthropogenic climate change), explaining their causes and connecting dispersed publics affected by them. “The more

ubiquitous the threat as represented in the mass media,” he writes, “the greater the political power to explode borders generated by the perception of risk” (2006, p. 35).

There are, of course, counterarguments to Beck’s faith in media coverage to contribute to cosmopolitanisation, including a lack of evidence that there is a connection between journalistic representations of political, social or environmental problems and public action (especially sustained action) related to those problems. Research (Livingstone and Markham 2008, p. 367) indicates that news consumption and news engagement, while positively influencing an individual’s propensity to vote, make virtually no difference to the likelihood that he or she will take any other action on a matter of concern (cf. Cottle and Lester 2011). Compassion fatigue is an acknowledged risk of saturation coverage of human misery (Moeller 1999), while dramatic reports of conflict in distant lands or global environmental threats can provoke an anxious withdrawal into nationalism and isolationism (Beck 2006; Bourdieu 1998, p. 8; Hannerz 2004b, p. 29). Harvey (2009) finds that in response to the globalisation of trade, communications and threats, “[p]olitical struggles have been displaced from the fixed territorialities of the absolute to unstable relational realms that cannot easily be controlled, patrolled, and disciplined. Deterritorialization and reterritorialization within the global economy have resulted” (2009, p. 275). Indeed two additional indicators of Beck’s own dialectical cosmopolitanisation are recognition of “the cosmopolitan conflict character” and a “compulsion to redraw old boundaries” (2006, p. 7) – tendencies elsewhere described as “anti-cosmopolitanism” (Woodward, Skrbis and Bean 2008, p. 210).

Beck acknowledges that media representations of the side-effects of industrialisation and globalisation may result in a backlash against cosmopolitanism, but he also believes that representations demonstrating cosmopolitan values present opportunities for “cosmopolitan pioneers” to “exploit the growing perception of global risks in their efforts to promote more extensive...cooperation and integration” (Smith 2008, p. 257). In contrast to those who engage in lengthy debate about the mass media’s capacity for cultural homogenisation, in *Cosmopolitan Vision* Beck draws attention to the media’s pluralist potential. As such, he differs from those who see plurality resulting from postmodern attributes of the mass media (for example, Mowforth and Munt 1998, p. 27): for Beck, postmodern culture is only a shallow imitation of the cosmopolitan outlook because, as montage, it cannot adequately accommodate the historical depth and specificity of different cultures (2006, p. 29). Here he appears to be challenging journalists to do more than merely extend global connectedness through the “brands, icons and narratives” (Szerszynski and Urry 2006, p. 477) so characteristic of banal globalism. Hannerz seems to agree, noting that some foreign correspondents believe that more portrayals of everyday life in the communities to which they are assigned can help counter the possibility of an anti-cosmopolitan backlash to media representations of distant conflict, trauma and catastrophe (Hannerz 2004b, p. 29). In arguing in favour of foreign correspondents writing features to complement their news reports, he warns against trivialising other cultures:

Do the correspondents merely have a license to take on a wider range of topics – or is it an obligation? If it is the former, we can perhaps expect no more than a rather spotty, in large part opportunistic, probably infotainment-oriented view of

societies elsewhere, as a complement to hard news. But if we should measure news media foreign reporting against the higher standard of cultivating cosmopolitanism, making audiences feel more realistically at home in the world, it becomes a more noteworthy matter when we identify biases, gaps, and misrepresentations. We should then consider how such weaknesses may have come to be built into the structure of reporting. (2004b, pp. 36-37)

Though Hannerz here is referring to news journalists reporting on distant cultures, it seems reasonable to ask the converse – that is, whether travel journalists might not be expected to avoid “biases, gaps and misrepresentations” in their reporting of relevant political issues in tourist destinations. Whatever else might motivate travel journalists to take up this challenge, engagement with “place” is likely to be central.

#### **4.4 Cosmopolitanism and Travel Journalists**

Tourism public relations practitioners and travel journalists are cultural mediators who help shape the consumption patterns of tourists by positioning knowledge about, and experience of, distant places as a sign of social distinction:

[A] Bourdieuan perspective suggests that cosmopolitan tastes and knowledge serve as symbolic capital in competitive elite games of distinction. Although largely a matter of an intellectually and aesthetically oriented cosmopolitanism, this might also have a political dimension, drawing on wider horizons and more extended networks” (Hannerz 2004a, p. 74).

Leisure and tourism...have become important arenas within which groups and individuals increasingly attempt to construct their identities by articulating

consumption preferences and lifestyle practices that signal their taste and position in society (Bourdieu 1984; Rojeck 1999; Urry 1990). Since ever-changing flows of commodities give the illusion of unrestricted access to them, knowledge about certain styles of consumption – cultural and educational capital – becomes important in re-establishing social differentiation and individual identity. These trends have been widely associated with an emerging new middle class of “cultural producers” who play important roles in shaping the culture of consumption (such as marketers, advertisers, public relations representatives, radio and TV producers, magazine journalists). (Ateljevic and Doorne 2002, p. 663)

Cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) is that form of power derived from one’s habitus, whereby upbringing, education and professional experience imbue one with certain “predispositions, assumptions, judgements and behaviours” that, though not unchangeable, tend to shape the practices and experiences that follow throughout one’s life (Benson and Neveu 2005, p. 3). Cultural capital is distinct from economic capital but valued within one’s workplace and among one’s colleagues. For international travel journalists, an aesthetic appreciation of distant cultures and the ability to be, or appear to be, “at home in the world” (Hannerz 2004b, 2006) might reasonably be considered a form of cultural capital bestowing status among peers and credibility with readers. It is surprising, therefore, that to date there is little scholarly evidence that travel journalism makes a significant contribution to cross-cultural understanding. In fact, in academia travel journalism is more likely to be accused of misrepresenting distant cultures. Such misrepresentations are often attributed to journalists’ tendency to portray host cultures in terms of reader expectations rather than in their actual context. In a qualitative study of United States newspaper travel

journalists' representations of Portugal, for example, Almeida Santos finds no reported communication with "ordinary" Portuguese (2004, p. 132) and concludes that the frames of the articles are "anchored in the socio-cultural paradigm of the writer and reader" (2004, p. 135). This romanticised view, she concludes, provides tourists with enchanting but irrelevant representations that simply bind host cultures to tourists' expectations (2004, p. 135). Ben Cocking finds that European travel journalism about the Middle East perpetuates the outdated preconceptions of the writers' audiences about the host culture (2009). And Richard Voase (2006) believes travel journalists' failure to interact with "ordinary locals" may be responsible for instances in which they overstate cultural interest as their search for novelty leads them to write articles conveying a misleadingly heightened sense of a destination's cultural diversity. Yet in British travel articles about the Caribbean, Marcella Daye, by contrast, finds an apparent "inability to construct a discourse of difference" (2005, p. 23). Far from indicating cultural competence, this array of journalistic confusion may be an example of cultural *incompetence* (Voase 2006). Unsurprisingly, however, such a judgement does not accord with travel journalists' self-perceptions: a recent survey by Folker Hanusch found that Australian travel journalists regard "the inclusion of locals in stories as much more important than ethnocentric approaches" (2012a, p. 675). In addition, despite travel journalists giving cultural mediation a low priority, Hanusch's survey results suggest that the more time they spend travelling, the greater the importance they are likely to attach to their role as cultural mediators. Nevertheless, Hanusch's related content analysis (2011) supports the conclusions of Almeida Santos and Cocking, finding few quotes from locals and little engagement with local culture.

For marketers, cosmopolitans who conform to Calhoun's description of "consumerist" (see Section 4.2) do not *necessarily* have a desire to enter into other cultures to the extent of acquiring cultural competence; consumerist cosmopolitans are of interest to marketers as a distinctive demographic simply because they are likely to be more sophisticated, independent, objective and, therefore, demanding consumers (Cannon and Yaprak 2002). It is possible that, compared to foreign correspondents (Hannerz 2004), travel journalists generally do not spend enough time in individual distant destinations to acquire the predispositions associated with the thickest forms of cultural cosmopolitanism. This does not, however, preclude them from having cosmopolitical predispositions. Calhoun considers political cosmopolitanism elitist and "thin" (2002a, p. 879), but when it is exercised in association with the consumerist cosmopolitanism one would expect to find in much tourism and travel journalism, it may still be capable of producing unexpected outcomes at the intersection between places and flows. Moreover, Beck (2011) suggests that the addition of knowledge of global risks acquired via media reports may be the initiating force that leads to a thickening of cosmopolitics (see Section 4.6).

#### **4.5 The Tourist Gaze and Staged Authenticity**

A distinction John Urry (2002) makes between the romantic and collective tourist gazes might offer some insights into the dearth of travel journalism demonstrating cultural competence. Urry attributes any desire among tourists for authenticity in their tourism experiences primarily to those pursuing the romantic tourist gaze (1995, p. 140). As the alternative to the collective tourist gaze, its emphasis is on "solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with

the object of the gaze” (Urry 2002, p. 43). Urry links such a predilection for solitary consumption of tourism objects to Bourdieu’s discussion of good taste (2002, pp. 43, 79-81). Consistent with a concept of aesthetic cosmopolitanism from above, Urry perceives those who value the romantic gaze to be middle-class proselytisers who undermine their own solitude as more and more tourists seek the experiences they praise so highly (2002, p. 44). Even when the romantic tourist gaze is that of a flaneur and the search for authenticity is taken as far as the “dark, seamy corners” of crowded cities (Urry 2002, p. 127), he considers the objective of the traveller to be observation not interaction (Urry 2002, p. 126).

In contrast with the romantic tourist gaze is MacCannell’s concept of “staged authenticity” – a response to tourists’ desire to find authenticity by going behind the scenes of tourism offerings (1999). These back regions of tourism attractions and destinations are, necessarily, contrived so as to protect the locals being observed from too much intrusion. As such, they may satisfy the tourist’s yearning for an intimate experience of difference (1999) but do not necessarily engender cultural competence:

The defining characteristic of tourists is that they purposefully cross lines of moral difference in order to experience that difference. Perforce, the nature of the tourist experience will be to *witness* difference. Tourist *participation* tends to be minimalist and highly stylized, with exchanges restricted both by the tourist’s limited range of local social competencies and by local desire to maintain distance. When tourists leave their own cultures, the condition of their social functioning qua tourist is that they must be protected from any consequences of failure to understand the difference that attracted them. (MacCannell 2011, p. 228, original emphasis)

An additional explanation for the frequent failure of travel journalists to mediate distant cultures with cosmopolitan density, therefore, may be that however high their cultural capital – however much they may believe themselves to be culturally competent enough and sufficiently “at home in the world” (Hannerz, 2004b, 2006) to contribute reliably to a discourse of cultural diversity – they may rarely do more than witness cultural difference on behalf of their readers. Here MacCannell’s (2011) idea of a reflexive “second [tourist] gaze” offers an insight. MacCannell suggests that although, in his view, tourists seek out difference without necessarily entering into meaningful cultural exchanges with locals, they may shift their point of view to something more reflexive:

The second gaze is aware that something is being concealed, that there is something missing from every picture, look or glance...The second gaze turns back onto the gazing subject ethical responsibility for constructing its own existence. It refuses to leave this construction to the corporation, the state, and the apparatus of tourism representation. (MacCannell 2011, p. 210)

In MacCannell’s analysis, the second gaze “looks for the unexpected, not the extraordinary” (2011, p. 210). One such “unexpected” might be the unexpectedly familiar – evidence that those in distant lands are facing the same problems as the travel journalist’s readers at home. Thus, while a “polygamy of place” (Beck 2006, p. 43) “intimately connected with consumption” (Beck 2006, p. 41) may lead to cosmopolitanism being worn as a badge of elite consumerism (via the consumption of foreign movies, food, travel etc.), it could conceivably also make travel journalism a forum for the mediation not only of concerns of global significance but also of more localised concerns in instances where distant

audiences are grappling with similar issues. In such circumstances, either a common environmental threat or a common type of threat might create bonds between distant publics via the mediation of travel journalists even when their representations of foreign cultures lack cultural density. During times of environmental risk or conflict in tourist destinations, travel journalists with high cultural or symbolic capital might sometimes be prepared to look beyond the constructions of destinations projected by “the corporation, the state, and the apparatus of tourism representation” (MacCannell 2011, p. 210) and self-reflexively enter the debate (see discussion of Beck’s aspirations for transnationals above).

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

By considering consumerist cosmopolitanism as a distinct form of cultural cosmopolitanism this chapter has presented a view of travel journalists and travel journalism that can be positioned within Beck’s explanation of cosmopolitanisation. If travel journalists spend only small amounts of time in most of the destinations they cover, their lived experience of those distant cultures may be closer to what Hannerz (2006) describes as banal cosmopolitanism than cultural competence, and their texts – at the very least those in newspapers or freely available on the internet – may contribute to a banal globalism that equips their readers with the kind of abstraction that Szerszynski (2006) believes can give rise to “the possibility of an enlarged form of citizenship” (2006, p. 86). However, by reflexively mediating environmental risks for their own national, regional or local audiences of wholly or partly consumerist cosmopolitans, cosmopolitical travel journalists’ more telling

contribution may be to a process of cosmopolitanisation whereby it becomes increasingly apparent to publics that, regardless of whether they wish to engage deeply with distant cultures, “the global other is in our midst. Everybody is connected and confronted with everybody – even if global risks afflict different countries, states and cultures differently” (Beck 2011, p. 1348). In this scenario, the willingness and/or ability of travel journalists to include cosmopolitical discourses and frames in their texts will depend on their level of cultural or symbolic capital, their personal political beliefs and the decisions of sub-editors and publishers. Importantly, however, the strategic actions of elite and non-elite sources – including place branding and responses to place branding – are also likely to be influential.

Beck’s argument in favour of the concept of imagined communities of global risks is a catastrophic view in which media reveal the “dependency (power) and interdependency (mutual dependency)” of risk communities by covering crises in real time for multiple publics (2011, p. 1351). In my view, the “community-shaping power of global risks” (Beck 2011, p. 1352) is, nevertheless, inherent in travel journalism that exposes what Beck describes as “distant decisions” that may cause “collateral damage” (Beck 2011, p. 1352) by – again, in my view – contributing to a worldwide accumulation of environmental degradation via specific instances of, for example, deforestation or species extinction. Such travel journalism may help initiate a “thickening” of political cosmopolitanism in a similar manner to news reports of global risks:

The “bonds” that characterize cosmopolitan communities should not, therefore, be misunderstood as the fleeting lightness of fluid human interests, unable to bear any strain – “thin cosmopolitanism,” so to speak. They are based, rather,

on the combination of particular national and individual interests with the materiality of causal chains of effect They establish a link between the most fundamental interests of nations (and individuals) and the new, unbounded spaces and duties of a responsibility for the survival of all. The community-initiating power of risk depends on realism and not simply on sympathy, regret, and pity for the suffering of others – that is what is meant by “thick cosmopolitanism.” (Beck 2011, p. 1352)



## Chapter 5: Case Study Methods and Approach

Studies of news production and related professional practices provide in-depth understanding of the nature of journalism in contemporary societies... Major theories of media and society periodically need to be exposed to these more grounded findings because they encourage a more qualified stance to some of the circulating claims and generalisations...

*Simon Cottle 2007, p. 1*

### 5.1 Introduction

This thesis considers the interaction between cosmopolitanism, place branding and environmental conflict in international travel journalism – a study I believe will be significantly strengthened by the insights derived from a qualitative case study of the production of United States and British travel journalism about Tasmania. In the chapters so far, I have referred to textual analysis as a way of revealing how place branding influences travel journalism through discursive strategies, but Norman Fairclough (2003) argues that in social research textual analysis can only ever be a valuable adjunct to other forms of analysis. As John Dryzek observes in his study of geopolitical environmental discourses, there is more than discourse to environmental affairs: problems are constructed but pollution is real; policy can override environmental discourses even when they become dominant; and the powerful can constrain discourses considered unfavourable by, for example, sponsoring alternative discourses cloaked in the language of environmentalism (1997, pp. 10-11). Fairclough (2003) recommends using text analysis within a broader ethnographic approach, and scholars of source–media relations have already found this effective (see, for example,

Anderson 1997; Lester 2007). This is because even text analysis directed at source documents as well as journalism articles cannot fully inform us of source strategies, as Alison Anderson explains:

The analysis of media discourse can tell us a great deal about the ideological construction of news. For example, it can reveal the ideologically based perspectives of journalists through unveiling the ways in which particular categories are given prominence and the ways in which news reports are structured...[but] however revealing such analyses of media content may be, they do not tell us anything about how agendas are formulated in the first place...Recently, however, there has been growing recognition of the need to supplement a media-based assessment of source activity with observational analysis, or interviews with source representatives themselves, in order fully to assess their success or failure in influencing agendas. (Anderson 1997, p. 37)

Hill-James' (2006) detailed content analysis of 318 international travel journalism articles derived from a six-month sample of travel supplements in three Brisbane newspapers has already established that destination politics rarely find their way into international travel journalism, at least when that travel journalism is published in Australia – a finding that strongly accords with the way travel journalism was represented to me by the public relations practitioners I interviewed for my case study. My own study attempts to understand the contribution of place branding and cosmopolitan concern to this outcome. I am interested in how discourses and frames that appear in travel journalism evolve, how some source frames (see Section 5.3.2) available for mediation come to be excluded from travel journalism texts and how those frames that do find expression in them are used strategically by sources and the travel media. But I

am also interested in what this tells us about power relations in society. Until now travel journalism has been largely overlooked as a site of political struggle simply because overtly political frames so rarely appear in its texts. Scholars have failed to consider both the possibility that strategic source action has contributed to this silence and also the political advantage to governments engaged in environmental conflict of place images that are celebratory and serene. “[S]ocial agents texture texts” (Fairclough 2003, p. 23): actors who produce and advance frames have “their own ‘causal powers’ which are not reducible to the causal powers of social structures and practices” (Fairclough 2003, p. 23). However, in order to understand how discourses and frames come to be, and come to be used strategically, we must consider them in the context of what Fairclough defines as the other elements of the social practices of which they are a part: action and interaction, social relations, people and the material world (2003, p. 25).

In the remainder of this chapter I discuss the methods I use in my empirical research and my research design. Rather than restate information provided in the corresponding section of Chapter 1 (Section 1.4), I will list my research questions and then explain in detail:

- why I have chosen to take a qualitative approach;
- the particular elements of text analysis (Bell 1991; Carvalho 2008; Fairclough 2003; Fowler 1991), qualitative interviews (Rubin and Rubin 1995) and analytic autoethnography (Anderson 2006a, 2006b) my research approach combines to create thick descriptions (Geertz 1973, see below); and

- my research design.

## 5.2 Research Questions

The previous chapters have raised a variety of questions whose answers will contribute to addressing the aim of this thesis, which is to consider how cosmopolitan concern and place branding interact in the production of travel journalism about places experiencing environmental conflict:

1. How might cosmopolitan predispositions influence the way transnational travel journalists mediate nature-based destinations experiencing environmental conflict?
2. Can cosmopolitical travel journalism challenge the definitional advantages of authorities in “natural” destinations experiencing environmental conflict?
3. What forms might cosmopolitan concern take in international travel journalism about such destinations?
4. How might sources influence the likelihood that cosmopolitan concern for place-branded environments will be incorporated in, or excluded from, travel journalism features?
5. How has the introduction of online publishing of printed travel journalism affected its ability to contribute to the public sphere?
6. How do travel journalism and news journalism interact in the coverage of place-branded environments in destinations experiencing environmental conflict?

### 5.3 A Qualitative Approach

For Clifford Geertz – the most notable exponent of thick description – man is “an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun” (1973, p. 5). These webs are culture, the analysis of which Geertz considers to be an interpretive search for meaning (1973, p. 5) that entails “sorting out the structures of signification” (1973, p. 9). Unlike positivist journalism research, which attempts to establish cause and effect by revealing social “facts” through quantitative methods such as content analysis, qualitative research is concerned with understanding how people make sense of the world, and how the means by which they express and convey their meanings can contribute to the construction of social reality (Deacon et al. 1999). As Geertz explains in regard to anthropological ethnography:

[w]hat the ethnographer is in fact faced with...is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render. (Geertz 1973, p. 10)

Importantly, qualitative research does not attempt to produce “undebatable conclusions” (Ellis and Bochner 2000) or produce theory that is “a final account of the nature of reality” (Ezzy 2002, p. 30). The task of interpretative research, according to Geertz, is “guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape” (1973, p. 20). Within this, for Geertz, theory “provide[s] a vocabulary in which what symbolic action has to say about itself – that is, about the role of culture in

human life – can be expressed” (1973, p. 27). Positivists often criticise qualitative research for failing to be generalisable, predictive or representative, but Geertz sees this as its strength: “What generality it contrives to achieve grows out of the delicacy of its distinctions, not the sweep of its abstractions” (1973, p. 25). Along these lines, Danish geographer Bent Flyvbjerg argues that too much import is placed on generalisation and too little on the value of well-chosen examples (2001, p. 77).

Thick description is a particular form of ethnography that attempts accurately to represent actors’ meanings by exploring the social context in which those meanings are negotiated (Anderson 1997, p. 191). When interpretive research of this kind is used by sociologists, it is concerned to gain knowledge of the complexities of social practice, including those aspects that are not on public display, by “gradually allowing the case narrative to unfold from the diverse, complex, and sometimes conflicting stories that people, documents, and other evidence tell them” (Flyvbjerg 2001, p. 86). My primary tool for eliciting these stories is long interviews. These interviews strive for and contribute to thick description; they are a means by which to collect and analyse first-hand experiences (Rubin and Rubin 1995) in context, so that the more correct meaning might be drawn from a multiplicity of possible meanings.

Geertz considers culture to be an “acted document”, and the question he asks about actions is “not what their ontological status is... [but] what their import is: what it is...that, in their occurrence and through their agency, is getting said” (1973, p. 10). He argues that behaviour cannot be extricated from a symbolic system – that we come to understand symbols through events: “Social actions are comments on more than themselves... [W]here an interpretation

comes from does not determine where it can be impelled to go. Small facts speak to large issues” (Geertz 1973, p. 23). Flyvbjerg argues this makes thick description especially well suited to a phronetic approach to social research – “analysis and interpretation of the status of values and interests in society aimed at social commentary and social action, i.e. praxis” (Flyvbjerg 2001, p. 60). Of significance to my approach here is not so much phronesis of itself but Flyvbjerg’s faith in the ability of thick descriptions to intermesh structure and agency: “Actors and their practices are analysed in relation to structures and structures in terms of agency” (2001, p. 137).

Although case studies are not always qualitative, Robert Stake considers that “for a qualitative research community, case study concentrates on experiential knowledge of the case and close attention to the influence of its social, political and other contexts” (2005, p. 444). Case studies generate “concrete, practical and context-driven knowledge” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 70) and help develop “a nuanced view of reality, including the view that human behaviour cannot be meaningfully understood as simply a set of rule-governed acts found at the lowest levels of the learning process, and in much theory” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 72). The thick descriptions in my case study are created by combining interviews with elements of text analysis and analytic autoethnography to clarify and complement the advantages of each method but also to compensate for what each is less suited to contribute to the whole. I deal with each of these methods individually below.

### **5.3.1 Interviews**

In discussing ethnography, Anderson points out that, “[i]n its strict sense, an ethnographic study requires the researcher to become involved in a community

over a relatively long period of time” (Anderson 1997, p. 190). In advocating an ethnographic approach (including interviews with sources and journalists) as the best method for understanding journalism text production, Erjavec (2004) stresses its ability to provide:

knowledge about the different moments of social practice: its material aspect (e.g. location arrangements in space), its social relationships and processes, as well as the beliefs, values and desires of its participants. Ethnography...provides an invaluable context for assessing the articulatory process in the practice and the specific function of discourse in it. (2004, p. 556)

Although participant observation is the mainstay of newsroom ethnography (see, for example, Gans 1979 and Tuchman 1978), my project does not include this method. This is partly due to practical considerations outlined below; it is also, however, acknowledgement of criticisms of ethnographies that focus too closely on newsroom activity at the expense of other locations for newswork. As noted by Barbie Zelizer:

Few, if any, news organizations operate with the same degree of dependence on “classic” newsrooms that they displayed in earlier decades, and decisions taken at a far more diverse set of venues – in the field, internet or telephone exchanges, social gatherings, publishing conventions – should not be left out of the picture. (Zelizer 2004 p. 68)

My interest in journalism production is primarily not the newsroom but the time the journalist spends in the destination he or she is covering. Interviews are an efficient way of gathering information on interactions between sources and

journalists from participants when they come from a variety of locations (including, in this instance, foreign countries), the period of the case study is protracted, and the time available for the study is limited. By interviewing travel journalists *and* a range of actors who have sought to have their messages publicised in newspaper and magazine articles about Tasmania as a holiday destination in a decade characterised by extended periods of environmental controversy, I have been able to combine “internalist” (analysis of media practices and practitioners) and “externalist” (analysis of source practices and practitioners) approaches (Schlesinger 1990) in my investigation. This, in turn, has increased the extent to which I have been able to immerse myself in the professional cultures and issues concerned. Such a strategy proved valuable to Lester in her analysis of media coverage of the campaign to save the Franklin River (2007).

Of secondary interest – particularly in terms of my focus on the influence of public relations on travel journalism – is Erjavec’s contention that ethnography is suitable for the study of a concept she defines as “interpractice”, in which practices from one occupation influence or are incorporated into the practice of another:

For example, in the process of news discourse production, the news producer (journalist, editor) decides on and produces the news. If an advertiser who orders and pays for news writing makes a decision in the news producer’s place, interpractice occurs: a hybrid practice consisting of journalistic/editorial and advertising practice. By contrast, in the process of interpretation, interpractice occurs when the reader believes that he/she is reading the news whereas in reality he/she is reading advertisements. (2004, p. 557)

In addition to attending to discursive strategies (see Chapter 1), meanings and symbols in the interview transcripts, I have used the interviews to help me understand the processes of text production – in this case the journalist's fieldwork – that text analysis infers from texts but sometimes cannot establish for certain (see following section, and Erjavec 2004, p. 556 quoted above).

Another reason I settled upon interviews as the best method for gathering information about events and access to actors' strategies and meanings directly was that my own experience as a public relations practitioner (PRP) for Tourism Tasmania and as a journalist (see Section 5.3.3) led me to suspect that my presence as an observer of delicate, often market-oriented and sometimes politically charged relationships between PRPs in the workplace, or between journalists and PRPs, might inhibit their conversations with each other and influence their behaviour. In addition, to the extent to which participants were willing to discuss such matters I hoped to gain an insight into public relations and journalism practices in the field that might not be visible to the other party or an observer such as myself. Finally, I wanted to be able to ask participants to explain in their own words their motives, actions and values in relation to specific issues, if they were comfortable to do so – something that is often not possible when events are unfolding at a rapid pace during participant observation. In the words of Grant McCracken:

[the long interview] gives us access to individuals without violating their privacy or testing their patience. It allows us to capture the data needed for penetrating qualitative analysis without participant observation, unobtrusive observation, or prolonged contact. It allows us, in other words, to achieve crucial qualitative objectives within a manageable methodological context. (1988, p. 11)

Details of my approach to gathering interview material are provided in Section 5.4.

### 5.3.2 Text Analysis

Among the concerns of this case study is to better understand how actors (individuals and institutions) make meaning and to identify and trace the extent to which actors contribute to the social construction of place. For these purposes, I have adapted the approach to text analysis advocated by Carvalho (2005; 2008) – an approach to which discursive strategies (see chapters 1 and 3) are central. As Carvalho (2008) notes, the advantage of analysing discursive strategies is that it provides insight into the link between “source strategies” (Anderson 1997; Lester 2007) and media representations. Because of the importance of distinguishing source strategies from journalists’ strategies in the analysis of discursive strategies, Carvalho (2008) advocates attempting to trace the evolution of the discourse by examining source documents, and quotes and indirect speech in the published journalism text. To this list, my case study adds interviews with sources and journalists.

One of the most important discursive strategies Carvalho identifies is framing (Entman 1993; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993; Hilgartner and Bosk 1988; McCombs and Ghanem 2003). In so doing, she draws on Entman’s concept of framing as a *perspective* (Carvalho 2000):

To frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described. (Entman 1993, p. 52, original emphasis)

Framing is both fundamental to Carvalho's approach to the analysis of discursive strategies and an element of discourse that Carla Almeida Santos identifies as being of central importance to the mediation of tourism by travel journalists:

In their constant quest to provide readers with unique, exciting, and undiscovered destinations, authors, working as cultural brokers (Dann 1996), depend on established frames. That is, they do not constantly create new representations but rather fall on previously established organizing narratives...One of the ways to identify the dominant frames of reference tourists carry is by identifying the representational dynamics used within tourism discourse. (Almeida Santos 2004, p. 123)

Carvalho (2008) prefers to think of framing as an action rather than conceiving of frames as separate fixed entities in the way Almeida Santos does. For Carvalho, one cannot talk about "reality" without including, excluding and arranging "facts", judgements and opinions to create meaning (2008, p. 169). Thus framing for her is an active process inherent in the construction of all texts. William Gamson and Andre Modigliani (1989) argue that media frames are part of social discourse. They refer to Todd Gitlin's observation that, "largely unspoken and unacknowledged, [media frames] organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports" (1980, p. 7). As they go on to say, "This frame typically implies a range of positions, rather than any single one, allowing for a degree of controversy among those who share a common frame" (1989, p. 3). According to this conception, media frames are "a central organizing idea, suggesting what is at issue" (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1992, p. 118). Such a definition, however, has

much in common with the way some scholars use the term “discourse”. For example, Dryzek describes a discourse as follows:

A discourse is a shared way of apprehending the world. Embedded in language, it enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts. Each discourse rests on assumptions, judgements, and contentions that provide the basic terms for analysis, debates, agreements and disagreements... (Dryzek 1997, p. 8)

Carvalho (2008) appears comfortable with Dryzek’s use of “discourse” in his categorisation of environmental discourses. However, I still find the term “frame” (as distinct from “framing”) useful. Although it may not always be possible or advisable to make a firm distinction between a discourse and a frame, in this case study I will often use the term “frame” when referring to aspects of discourse that have been shaped or created as the result of the discursive strategy of framing. However, I also appreciate that there will be instances in which framing of itself does not (re)produce a durable frame.

Importantly, while Carvalho’s method of analysing discursive strategies focuses on framing, positioning, legitimation and politicisation (see Chapter 3), it also attends to a range of traditional elements of critical discourse analysis such as ideological standpoints, layout, structure, grammar, language, and the discursive construction of actors and objects – the last of which are similar to themes or topics with the added characteristic of “constituting” rather than simply referring to “the realities at stake” (Carvalho 2008, p. 167). Carvalho’s analysis of language is less linguistic than, for example, Roger Fowler’s (1991) in that hers is restricted to “concepts, vocabulary/lexical choices and style”

(Carvalho 2008, p. 168), while her view of ideology is broader than Fairclough's (1995), in that she considers it to be realised discursively in the text through language and discursive strategies implicitly as well as explicitly (Carvalho 2008, p. 170). In relation to traditional critical discourse analysis's neglect of the movement of discourse over time, Carvalho is careful to distinguish between the degree of chronology inherent in intertextuality – the process in which one text builds on, or incorporates elements of, earlier texts (Fairclough 2005) – and an historical approach to discourse:

Besides tracing the history of public issues (the sequence of texts appearing in the media and the evolution of their meaning), a time-sensitive discourse analysis also means considering the particular context of a given period, from specific events and developments related to the issue under examination to wider aspects of the social environment. (2008, p. 164)

Finally, Carvalho stresses the importance of appreciating the effects of discourse on social and political issues linked to but outside the text (2008, p. 165). One such effect is discourse institutionalisation – “the transformation of institutional structures and/or practices in a way that embodies a certain discourse. Although the process of discourse institutionalization may result from, and originate in certain texts, it usually also has an extra-textual dimension” (2008, p. 165). Details of my approach to my own text analysis are provided in Section 5.4.

### **5.3.3 Analytic Autoethnography**

In classical anthropological texts – which, coincidentally, Mary Louise Pratt (1986) argues grew out of the genre of travel writing – it was not uncommon for personal narrative and objective description to be intertwined (1986, pp. 27-28).

As anthropology became professionalised and practitioners sought to distinguish it from travel writing and journalism, these personal narratives in ethnography became discursive representations of expert authority (Atkinson 1990, p. 27). As Pratt observes, they cultivated a fiction that it was possible to render other cultures exactly as they were, “not filtered through our own values and interpretive schema” (1986, p. 27). When former journalist Robert Park introduced ethnography to the Chicago school of sociology in 1914, he drew on his own knowledge of the city in his studies of urban cultures (Atkinson 1990). In the years that followed, many Chicago students studied groups with whom they had long-standing connections, sometimes by way of employment in the same workplaces (Anderson 2006a). These scholars occasionally appended “confessional tales” (Van Maanen 1988 in Anderson 2006a) to their work but they were generally not reflexive (Anderson 2006a). Although in the 1960s and 1970s a number of sociologists experimented with autoethnography that was self-observational and analytical, the term was later appropriated by scholars who began recounting their own experiences using literary techniques (Anderson 2006a). Exponents of this *evocative* autoethnography Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner reject any notion that the purpose of their scholarship should be to “abstract or explain” (2000, p. 744):

*Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations.* (2000, p. 739, original emphasis)

According to Leon Anderson, evocative autoethnography has remained “largely marginalised in mainstream social science venues” (Anderson 2006a, p. 377). However, Anderson himself advocates a realist form of autoethnography in which researchers who are part of the community being studied, either by chance or design, are “involved in the construction of meaning and values in the social worlds they investigate” and are reflexively aware of the effects of their participation (Anderson 2006a, p. 384). Anderson describes such autoethnography as *analytic* because it “point[s] to a broad set of data-transcending practices that are directed toward theoretical development, refinement, and extension” (Anderson 2006a, p. 387).

As I have not approached my research through participant observation, it is not autoethnographic in the way Anderson (2006a) conceives of it. However, I have found it necessary to incorporate elements of his approach retrospectively to account for my past employment by Tasmania’s government tourism office, Tourism Tasmania. While working in corporate communications from mid-2002 until November 2007, I contributed to the production of some of the documents that I refer to as part of this study; attended brand workshops with government employees, tourism operators and public relations consultants; drafted media releases for successive tourism ministers; wrote copy for Tourism Tasmania’s corporate and holiday websites; and met or was a work colleague of some people I have interviewed for the case study (though none of the United States or British travel journalists). From November 2007 until March 2008 I was a manager in the Visiting Journalist Program (VJP), in which capacity I reported to the head of Destination Promotion, interviewee Ruth Dowty, and met Tourism Tasmania’s public relations consultants from Europe, Britain, North America and Asia. In

March 2008 I resigned to take up a PhD scholarship, although I subsequently undertook small amounts of Tourism Tasmania contract work unrelated to the VJP. In addition, it is relevant that, prior to working for Tourism Tasmania, I had worked in-house and freelance for the guidebook company Lonely Planet as an editor and had been the sole updating author of the second edition of its *Tasmania* guide, published in 1999. I had no contact with the VJP while writing for Lonely Planet and accepted no “freebies” during my research for the *Tasmania* guide. I would not then have been categorised as a travel journalist according to the definition I have adopted for this thesis, but in my youth I had been a trainee current affairs television reporter at the Australian Broadcasting Commission’s Hobart office during the early years of the Franklin dam campaign, and after gaining a Bachelor of Arts had briefly worked as a journalist for what was then the News Ltd national women’s magazine *New Idea*. I grew up in a family with strong national and Tasmanian Labor Party sympathies and connections (the Labor Party was in government in Tasmania throughout the decade of the case study), I was at one time on the board of the Tasmanian branch of Amnesty International and I have small ‘g’ green sympathies, but I have never belonged to a political party or been an environmental activist.

I have not used my own experiences at Tourism Tasmania or Lonely Planet as data in this case study. Nevertheless, I think it is important to acknowledge that working for Tourism Tasmania afforded me a valuable insight into the world of government tourism public relations and corporate communications, while updating Lonely Planet’s *Tasmania* guide gave me an appreciation of what is involved in researching and writing about a tourist destination for a commercial publisher and an audience of potential tourists. In

respect of my work for Tourism Tasmania, an advantage has been that I have been able to draw on my own knowledge as one reference when triangulating details provided by interviewees. In addition, my exposure to current affairs news culture informed my engagement with the journalists I interviewed – particularly those who had written news as well as travel articles.

There are, of course, disadvantages to having “witness[ed] the messy business of cultural manufacture” (Deacon et. al. 1999, p. 261) first hand prior to undertaking my case study. For example, I am aware that I may be accused of having sacrificed academic distance by choosing a subject closely related to some of my past occupations. In the words of Deacon et al.:

[i]f we become too drawn into the view of the world constructed by those we are studying, it may be that we lose distance and analytical detachment. It becomes impossible to arrive at any explanation of the experiences and motives of those we observe other than those they themselves express. Some would argue that this is a good thing, since it allows the “subjects to speak”, rather than the researcher speaking on their behalf. However, it is seen by many as a problem which restricts the analytical capacity of the researcher and produces descriptions rather than explanations. (Deacon et al. 1999, p. 256)

Deacon et al.’s comments quoted here refer to participant observation, but they are also relevant to associations formed between work colleagues. I readily acknowledge that it would be impossible to purge myself of all residual subjectivity resulting from my past experiences. Instead, I have put it reflexively to work, in the spirit of analytic autoethnography. In so doing, I believe I have remained appropriately and sufficiently detached while pursuing my research for the results to be academically valid, in part because, to the extent that they do

correspond, the occupations I refer to above range across separate categories of case-study interviewee. Indeed, the observations of Deacon et al. add weight to my argument for interviewing both journalists and their sources: not only did this ensure I avoided a media-centric approach (Schlesinger 1990) but it also helped me set the responses of interviewees more firmly in their social context. My own professional experiences, in turn, increased my confidence in my ability to grasp their actual rather than potential meanings and strengthened my claims to achieving thick description by facilitating a more nuanced interpretation of the data. In other words, far from resulting in descriptions rather than explanations, my past experiences have, I believe, improved the quality of my explanations.

## **5.4 Research Design**

As mentioned above, my approach to creating thick descriptions relied on a combination of research methods. In this section I describe how I applied the various methods I employed in the case study.

I began my thesis in March 2008 but because the period of my case study was early 2000 until early 2010, I understood from the outset that data collection would be an iterative process that would continue for the first two years of my candidature. During 2008 I wrote my initial literature review and applied for ethics approval, which was duly granted. Also at this time I conducted extensive searches of major British and United States newspaper and travel magazine websites for travel features about Tasmania published during the case study period. Britain and the United States were chosen because they were Tasmania's largest overseas tourism markets and also because the texts were in English. Aware from my own experience and my reading that Tourism Tasmania targeted

large circulation or high-end newspapers and magazines in major cities when promoting the state to international markets, and also that only very large publications that did not allow travel journalists to accept hosted visits could afford to cover such a distant destination, the websites I selected included, in Britain, the *Times*, the *Independent*, the *Telegraph* and the combined site for the *Guardian* and the *Observer*, and, in the United States, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *LA Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. After referring to a media website (Tourism Tasmania n.d.d) that Tourism Tasmania operated throughout the case study period but no longer maintains, and to a web page on which it records travel media accolades (Tourism Tasmania 2009), I also searched the websites of *Travel + Leisure*, *Outdoor*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *National Geographic Adventure* and *Condé Nast Traveler /Traveller* (the last of which appears to restrict online access to many of its older editorial features in both its United States and British editions). In addition, though I had not met or corresponded with either of them at this point, I was aware from my own Tourism Tasmania experience that Jeff Greenwald would be publishing an article in the United States magazine *Islands* and Paul Miles would be publishing an article in London's *Financial Times* as a result of hosted visits that had already been planned when I began working in the VJP in November 2007, so I consulted those website as well. I was fortunate that at this time pay walls on newspaper and travel magazine websites were unusual and I was able to download many articles of interest. As more articles came to my attention in the course of my interviewing and further research, however, I sometimes relied on interviewees to provide me with photocopies or sought them through library search and retrieval services. I also sought photocopies in addition to online

versions of articles if I felt the online version might not contain all the information I needed (for example if I needed to double-check information that might have appeared in sidebars). Initially gathering articles online also helped me conceptualise how travel journalism today positions places in the space of flows.

The most difficult part of establishing a sample of travel journalists to approach for interviews was making contact with them in the first place. Although I would eventually interview a number of public relations practitioners with connections to Tourism Tasmania, my research was entirely independent of that organisation and I preferred to find contact details for journalists myself rather than be assisted by Tourism Tasmania. Some travel journalists had websites of their own (Miles and Greenwald, for example); others I attempted to contact via their publishers or, in the case of some who were more celebrated, their agents. In the course of the case study, I attempted to contact 22 travel journalists who had published travel features about Tasmania in British or United States newspapers or magazines. I succeeded in interviewing 11 of these individuals (see Appendix 1), seven of whom had been published in the United States and four of whom had been published in Britain. Two other travel journalists originally agreed to be interviewed but did not respond to subsequent emails or were repeatedly unavailable at times they had agreed to be interviewed. After making every effort within the bounds of politeness to establish or reschedule interviews, I took this lack of response or repeated unavailability to be tacit notification that they had changed their minds and no longer wished to participate.

I compiled three samples of journalism texts about Tasmania for closer consideration, paying particular attention to headlines, leads, word choice, framing and other discursive strategies, actors, objects, and institutional and other source presence but with a primary focus on representations, symbols and meanings associated with the natural environment (in relation to both cosmopolitan concern and branding):

- The first sample is the 16 travel journalism articles written by the 11 interviewed travel journalists (see Appendix 3). A marketing supplement by James Fair and an article ranking 115 places written by Jonathan Tourtellot are not travel journalism by my definition. For this reason, they appear in the main reference list (as do all the travel journalism articles consulted for my research) but are not repeated in this sample. One of the articles that does appear in this sample (Greenwald 2010) was published after I interviewed its author: this is because I had contacted the journalist about an earlier article only to learn that he was in the process of researching another. My understanding from my own experience, research and interviews with public relations practitioners is that articles including criticisms of Tasmania's forestry practices are over-represented in this sample. This was not my intention. However, it does not diminish the value of the sample for the purposes of this case study. The fact that political criticism is unusual in travel journalism is acknowledged throughout the thesis.
- The second sample comprises 11 travel journalism articles about the Bay of Fires (see Appendix 4), which Lonely Planet listed in late 2008 as one

of its top destinations in the world for 2009. This sample includes three articles (Fair 2000, Chipperfield 2000 and Curwen 2010) that are also part of the first sample (see Appendix 3), one of which, by Thomas Curwen, was published after the Lonely Planet accolade. Curwen was the last of my interviewees. Unlike all of the other interviewees, who were interviewed face to face or by phone via Skype, this author was only prepared to answer written questions and only to answer them in writing.

- A third sample comprises seven articles that appeared in the *New York Times* in the case study period (see Appendix 5) and were included in the newspaper's online "Tasmania" travel guide. The web pages containing this list of previously published articles about Tasmania could be reached in two clicks from a web page the newspaper created called "The 44 Places to Go in 2009" (Sherwood and Williams 2009), which featured Tasmania at number 40 (see Chapter 7), or by following links directly from the newspaper's homepage. The list was still accessible through both avenues in November 2012 and no further articles had been added by that time. The first of these articles (Otterman 2007) is by one of the interviewed travel journalists and, thus, also appears in the first sample (see Appendix 3), while the last (Spindler 2001) is about the Bay of Fires and so also forms part of the second sample (see Appendix 4). Two of the articles – one an annotated list of tourism products (Kaye 2005), the other a book review (Woodward 2005) – do not qualify as travel journalism according to my definition but appear in this sample because the sample is intended to illustrate the breadth of material a reader would encounter

if he or she consulted the *New York Times* for information about Tasmania as a tourist destination.

I also consulted a wide range of other travel articles about Tasmania, as well as Tourism Tasmania marketing copy, a variety of news articles about the island published in Tasmanian, Australian and British newspapers, and many other documents (see below). These appear in the main list of references.

In addition to the interviews with the 11 travel journalists noted above, I conducted 27 interviews with then current or former Tourism Tasmania PRPs or other staff, tourism operators or their representatives, and a variety of other relevant individuals, including one representative of Forestry Tasmania and one representative of an environmental group. My principal objective in the interviews was to encourage the participants to talk openly and in a relaxed manner about their work and their involvement (if they had been involved as a journalist, PRP, tourism operator or other source) in the production of specific articles. If they had not been directly involved or did not want to talk about specific articles and seemed comfortable to range more widely, I encouraged them to discuss issues related to Tasmania's identity or brand and various kinds of cosmopolitanism (recognising that discussions of such issues could occur with or without reference to these specific terms) in the context of the destination and international travel journalism. I was interested in finding out how the interviewees thought about travel journalism and public relations, but also about their own professional practice. The recording of my conversation with one of the non-institutional interviewees was difficult to hear because of ambient noise and also proved to be somewhat tangential to my research interests. For these

reasons I did not transcribe it or use it in my research. In addition, three interviewees elected to remain anonymous and do not appear in the appendix: if cited in the case study they are referred to by interview date and their relevant experience. Thus, Appendix 2 contains the names of 23 interviewees not included in Appendix 1.

Interviewees who could be categorised as having had more than one role related to the project either concurrently or consecutively were encouraged to draw on all such career experience during the interview. For example, the Swiss-Australian vice-president (and former president) of the Foreign Correspondents' Association (Australia & South Pacific) at the time, Urs Walterlin, also provided information and a point of comparison in relation to his own experiences as a foreign correspondent writing news and travel articles about Tasmania for publication in Germany (another of Tourism Tasmania's target markets) and Switzerland and on his own tourism website; and Gabi Mocatta, whom I interviewed about her former role as a PRP for Tourism Tasmania, also commented on her work as a freelance travel journalist and guidebook writer. Mocatta has written about Tasmania for national and international magazines and is the author of a piece about the Bay of Fires (Mocatta 2008) that appeared in Lonely Planet's *Best in Travel 2009* (Lonely Planet 2008, see above). In 2012 she became a PhD candidate at the University of Tasmania.

Prospective interviewees were emailed an information sheet and consent form. Interviews were conducted in person or by telephone (except in the case of Curwen, who participated by email), transcribed and the transcriptions emailed to the interviewees. Consent was gained either in writing or (in the case of telephone interviews for which the consent form had not been returned by the

interviewee in time for the interview) verbally during the recording of the interview. Interviewees were given the opportunity to make changes to the transcript or withdraw from the project at that time. No interviewees withdrew following the interviews, and of the relatively small number who amended their transcript, most made only minor changes, such as amending grammar or spelling, or clarifying information. A small number asked for some information to be deleted. All interviewees were offered anonymity but, as mentioned, only three chose this option.

Interview lengths ranged from approximately 30 minutes to around two hours, depending on how much time the interviewee could make available. A number of named sources appeared in a range of articles, in which case some of their answers were general rather than specific. In addition, as anonymous interviewees would not have been able to refer to specific articles without potentially revealing their own identity to associates or acquaintances, they too tended to speak generally rather than specifically. Where necessary, information provided was triangulated using secondary sources, other interview transcripts and/or my own experience. Information given off the record sometimes provided additional reassurance in regard to accuracy and/or appropriate interpretation. In situations in which interviewees' accounts contradicted each other and accuracy could not be established without compromising individuals, the precise details of the specific anomalies have not been disclosed in my written discussions.

During the period of the case study, to use Wolfsfeld's (1997) terminology, the main authority in the environmental conflict was the pro-forestry government, and the main challengers were members of an environment movement made up of a wide variety of groups, some of which concerned

themselves with a broad range of issues and conflicts while others formed in response to specific battles. Tasmania's government tourism office, Tourism Tasmania, is described in the *Tourism Tasmania Act 1996* as a government *authority*. However, when I refer to "authorities" in the case study I am using the word in Wolfsfeld's (1997) sense – that is, to refer to the more powerful antagonists in a political conflict – in this case usually the Tasmanian government, of which I consider Tourism Tasmania a part because it is "an instrumentality of the Crown" and its board is responsible to the Minister for Tourism (*Tourism Tasmania Act 1996*).

In my introduction to this chapter I discussed in some detail the need for discourses to be considered in their social, political and economic contexts. In order to understand how discourses and frames contribute to the way the media represent places experiencing political conflict, it is necessary to examine the discursive strategies of social actors "in a variety of arenas and channels 'before' and 'after' journalistic texts" (Carvalho 2008, p. 161). In my case study this has been achieved through interviews and the analysis of texts other than travel journalism. These documents include government and tourism organisation reports, research documents and strategies, government media releases, advertisements, websites and local, national and international news reports. These texts are especially relevant to chapter 6, in which I trace the evolution of a Tasmanian discourse of accessible nature.

For a detailed chapter breakdown, please refer to Chapter 1.



## **PART 2: CASE STUDY**



## Chapter 6: The Place-Branded Discourse

Tasmania was re-defined as a destination for an intelligent audience that sought hands-on, physically active vacation experiences. A holiday for thinkers and doers promising the unexpected in a natural environment.

*Tourism Tasmania 1997*

### 6.1 Introduction

In order to understand how place branding and cosmopolitan concern interacted in travel journalism about Tasmania in the first decade of the 2000s it is necessary to understand how the state's place branding evolved. This chapter considers how framing Tasmania's wilderness as accessible functioned as a discursive strategy during the state's forestry conflicts of the 1990s. The chapter traces the evolution of the discourse of Tasmanian tourism as the business first of accessible scenery, then accessible wilderness and, finally, accessible nature. It describes how attempts to harness the symbolic power of "wilderness" following the success of the campaign to save the Franklin River from flooding found the government struggling to reconcile the nuances and constraints of that term with its traditional understanding of tourism. By representing tourism in World Heritage Areas and national parks as promoting environmental protection, then subsuming "wilderness" in a discourse of accessible nature that also embraced state forests using a frame I call "compatible sectors", the government constructed wilderness, ecotourism and recreational forestry as complementary people-centred projects. Such manoeuvring cast the government's tourism and forestry agencies as colleagues in concern for the environment rather than adversaries in the fight for its protection. Over the long run, however, Tourism

Tasmania's marketing undermined the whole-of-government approach it was obliged to pursue by simultaneously capitalising on the marketing advantages of "wilderness" in the interests of its industry stakeholders. Thus, even as Tourism Tasmania and Forestry Tasmania were bound by place branding, they were divided by wilderness. In the following decade, Tourism Tasmania's reluctance to relinquish the marketing advantages of "wilderness" would contribute to that symbol's continuing salience and political power.

## **6.2 The Business of Accessible Scenery**

The discourse of accessible scenery evolved from the earliest days of government intervention in the Tasmanian tourism industry, as evidenced by the career of Evelyn Emmett (Emmett n.d.). Sometimes referred to as the "Father of Tasmanian Tourism" (Walker 2005a, p. 119), Emmett was from 1914 the inaugural Director of the Tasmanian Government Tourist and Information Bureau (the Tourist Bureau)<sup>7</sup> (Walker 2005b). In this capacity, the attribute that Emmett singled out as attracting international visitors to Tasmania from as early as the 1870s was the island's scenic beauty, which he described in reverential terms (Emmett n.d.). Shortly after the Tourist Bureau began operation, Emmett was also made an inaugural member of the Scenery Preservation Board (a predecessor of today's Parks and Wildlife Service), which was established in 1915 to protect the "flora and tourism-value scenery" of the state's first parks (Crossley 2009, p. 3). By 1920 tourism had become a motivating concern of the Board (Quarmby 2006), and in 1929 Emmett began promoting the tourism advantages of bushwalking and alluding to the publicity value of walking-club

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<sup>7</sup> The name of the Tasmanian government's tourism organisation changed repeatedly throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which accounts for the variety of names that appear in this chapter.

magazines (Emmett n.d.). Indeed, for a time “the Hobart Walking Club’s Tasmanian Tramp...was published with financial assistance from the Tourism Bureau in recognition...of the assistance outdoor recreational groups provided in promoting the interests of the Tourism Bureau” (Quarmby 2006, p. 126).

Despite his pioneering zeal for “penetration to the unexplored portions” (Emmett n.d.) of the island, Emmett was not an especially strong advocate of tourist roads in protected areas. A keen bushwalker himself (Emmett 1952), he believed that people missed the beauty of parks when they drove through in cars (Quarmby 2006, p. 104), and in 1944 he opposed the construction of a road linking Lake St Clair and Cradle Mountain, the latter of which had been an interest of his for many years (Quarmby 2006). In 1921 he had joined environmentalist Gustav Weindorfer in lobbying for protection of the mountain and was among a Hobart Walking Club group that made the first “reconnaissance trip” to establish walking tracks through what was by then the Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair Scenic Reserve (Quarmby 2006, p. 106) and would later form part of Tasmania’s Wilderness World Heritage Area. Although Emmett had retired as Director of Tourism in 1941, his successful opposition to the link road in 1944 as a member of the National Park Board (a subsidiary of the Scenery Preservation Board) reflected what was at that time a longstanding alignment of interests between the Tourism Bureau and bushwalkers:

Potential conflicts of interest between tourism and bushwalking were not conspicuous in the early twentieth century, when views of development within national parks held by tourism interests were consistent with those of bushwalkers, and the two interest groups continued to work together furthering

their shared interest in extending and preserving Tasmania's scenic reserves.  
(Quarmby 2006, p. 126)

Emmett's career-long support for the expansion of national parks and reserves in recognition of their tourism potential did, however, leave him open to criticism from the founder of the National Park Association, William Crooke, who felt he had too little concern for their conservation value (Quarmby 2006). Emmett's willingness in 1922 to tolerate a form of reservation for Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair that allowed moderate hunting, logging and mining, for example, had helped facilitate amendments to the *Scenery Preservation Act* that had made it “more elastic” (Quarmby 2006, pp. 104-105). Indeed, during the same period in which the Hobart Walking Club had been granted representation on the National Park Board (the late 1930s), the Scenery Preservation Board had welcomed representatives from the forestry industry and the state-government-owned Hydro Electric Commission (HEC), resulting in conservation concerns sometimes being subordinated to industrial development (Quarmby 2006). In 1955 the Hobart Walking Club, fearful of hydro-electric development on the Gordon River that threatened a unique lake in the state's south-west, successfully lobbied for the creation of Lake Pedder National Park, but bushwalkers subsequently visiting the park observed persistent HEC activity (Quarmby 2006). By 1961 it was clear that the HEC was still investigating the area, and in 1962 a range of groups, including the Hobart Walking Club, formed the South-West Committee to fight hydro-electric development in the region (Quarmby 2006). An important figure in the campaign to save the lake was HEC employee and wilderness photographer Olegas Truchanas, whose role as a public servant made it difficult for him to protest openly against the dam proposal but who

raised community awareness of the lake's value by presenting slide shows of his photographs to large audiences in Hobart (Angus 1975). Although the long campaign to protect Lake Pedder was a lesson in protest and media relations for Tasmania's nascent environment movement and resulted in the formation of what is widely regarded as the world's first Green party in 1972, the lake was inundated the same year.

### **6.3 Accessible Wilderness: Harnessing the PR Power of Protection**

In December 1980, as concern mounted about HEC plans to flood the remote Franklin River in the state's south-west with another dam on the Gordon River, the Department of Tourism produced a marketing strategy for the following five years (Department of Tourism 1980). Although the department at this time was not concerned so much with making tourism pay a return to the community as with simply helping it become self-sustaining (Department of Tourism 1980), it tied its recommendations in the report to existing objectives that qualified support for protection and preservation of the natural environment upon which the industry depended by linking it to government policy:

OBJECTIVES: (Extracted from Tasmanian Tourism Strategy Plan)...

4. To develop a tourism industry that is compatible with the Tasmanian socio-economic life-style, and with the Government policy in relation to the protection and preservation of the State's natural and man-made heritage. (Department of Tourism 1980, Appendix C, parenthetical text part of original document)

As Lester notes in her study of media and environmental conflict in Tasmania, “Words like ‘wilderness’ and ‘nature’, alongside others like ‘progress’ and ‘development’, produce meanings and understandings that shape fundamental decision-making and actions” (2007, p 29). The above extract sets many of the discursive parameters of the government’s future tourism–environment politics by relating protection to non-specific state government judgements and policies that would soon facilitate the framing of “wilderness” as a tourism commodity.

In 1983 the High Court of Australia ruled that the Australian government had the power to prevent the Tasmanian government from damming the Franklin River. The judgement invoked a normative cosmopolitan discourse that explicitly framed “vital habitats” of “regional ecosystems” in terms of global and institutionalised “intense concern about the conservation of the world’s resources” and “support for the concept of the ‘Common Heritage of Mankind’” (Murphy 1983 in Palmer and Robb 2004, p. 30).<sup>8</sup> Within months of the judgement, the Tasmanian government commissioned a study into the tourism potential of the state’s south-west that, among other things, was directed to find ways to expose tourists to Tasmania’s wilderness (Evers Consulting 1984, Appendix 2, p. 1). The government moved so quickly because it was keen to take advantage of the attention that news reporting of the Franklin River campaign had brought to Tasmania’s wilderness:

Wilderness does represent an opportunity to increase visitation, extend duration of stay and head more towards genuine destination tourism. It does so because of the publicity which has surrounded it over the past decade and because, as we have said, that which is available – and potentially accessible – is genuinely

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<sup>8</sup> In Australia’s federal system, the Commonwealth government can override state government decisions in some instances. Where a dispute arises, it is resolved by the High Court of Australia.

unique. The spectacular gorges, rapids, rainforest, high country, beaches, rivers and so on are of immense potential appeal to tourists. (Evers Consulting 2004, p. 53)

The *South West Tasmania Tourism Study: Main Report* (1984) (the Evers report) was prepared by Evers Consulting, which was led by Nick Evers, a former Head of the Tasmanian Premier's Department (1975-82) who would later become Tasmania's Minister for Tourism (1988-89). A 2009 study commissioned by the Australian Greens political party (Crossley 2009) concluded that it was the 1984 Evers report that opened the way for contemporary discussion of commercial tourism development within Tasmania's national parks. However, while the Evers report was indeed a catalyst, it was marginally more tentative than the Greens' study suggests. In its section headed "Wilderness", the Evers report acknowledged the advance collateral publicity for tourism in Tasmania's south-west that had been generated by media reports of the Franklin dam campaign but also the vulnerability of wilderness, which, in accordance with the discourse of tourism as business, was itself now referred to as a "product":

The challenge here is the extremely delicate one of seeking to devise strategies that will expand the market without destroying or diminishing the quality of the very product which will attract visitors. Not all of that which is available is – or could, or should – be readily accessible and some of that which is accessible is extremely vulnerable. (Evers Consulting 2004, p. 53)

Echoing the terminology of the 1980 tourism report referred to earlier in this section by writing of their need to consider "the two principal elements of the product – the natural and the man-made" (Evers Consulting 1984, p. 52), the

Evers report's authors demonstrated their awareness of the social constructedness of "wilderness":

For purposes of editorial convenience, the natural element will be described here as the "wilderness" experience, notwithstanding the fact that "wilderness" is essentially a state of mind and means different things to different people (e.g. many people already describe the opportunity to see wilderness as a highlight of their visit to Tasmania when, in fact, what they have seen would bear no relationship to wilderness as defined by Kirkpatrick and others). (Evers Consulting 1984, p. 52, parenthetical text part of original document)

In 1985 the government called for tenders for a private operator to construct and run commercial huts on the Overland Track (Crossley 2009, p. 35) – an existing public walking trail of up to six days through the centre of the Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The tender was won by Sydney architect Ken Latona and Sydney town planner Joan Masterman. The two had already worked together on reports into the siting and design of buildings in fragile environments in mainland Australia, and from the outset Masterman had no illusions about the controversial nature of their Tasmanian enterprise, which she recalls was opposed by the Wilderness Society (Masterman, J 2009, pers. comm., 3 August), the NGO that had come to such prominence during the Franklin dam campaign. However, Masterman also appreciated the transformative public relations legacy of the national and international news coverage that had been generated by the 1982 blockade by environmentalists of HEC dam construction work associated with the proposed Franklin dam and the achievement of World Heritage status

for the contiguous Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair, Franklin–Gordon Wild Rivers and Southwest national parks, the last of which included the now-submerged Lake Pedder:

It was quite controversial – to allow a commercial operation in a very precious national park that has just become a World Heritage Area... And also the fact that it was a time of very intense interest in the environment because Lake Pedder had been flooded, and then there was the whole Franklin dam issue. So suddenly Tasmania, having been always described – certainly on the mainland – as a place of old churches and ye olde England and bridges etc. – suddenly a whole different image of the state emerged, with the wild rivers and the World Heritage Area and the fact that it had unbelievable national parks. (Masterman, J 2009, pers. comm., 3 August)

Latona, like Emmett before him, described his initial response to Tasmania's landscape in reverential terms (Latona 1994a). However, by prefacing his discussion of his venture into Tasmanian tourism with the observation that the landscape had already been much modified, and that such modification had been unsympathetic to the natural environment, he positioned himself as educator and mentor rather than a developer:

When I first came to Tasmania in the late 70's I was swamped by the landscape. National Estate documentation, heritage studies and management plans drew me in deeper, only to realise the insignificance of these totems against the power of the natural environment of this place. And yet the more you looked the more you saw that the landscape where modified (as in many parts) was done without an understanding of what I like to call the rhythm of this

landscape – because this land is alive and beats with a strong slow pulse.

(Latona 1994a, p. 32)

The establishment of the Cradle Huts ecotourism operation was a profound change in the use of national parks and the source of deep conflict in the Tasmanian community: “Critics recalled national parks’ democratic origins and argued that the prospect of huts located on public land being locked against other walkers was ‘disgraceful’” (Quarmby 2006, p. 280). In Latona’s commentary on his reasoning, however, the discourse of Tasmanian tourism as the business of accessible wilderness was expressed in the philosophically cathartic and commercially penetrating rhetoric of reverse equity:

When the chance came unexpectedly in 1985 to immerse myself in a place still largely untouched, I was nervous. As part of Tasmania’s World Heritage Area, how could anybody “design” for this place... Fortunately the terms “sustainability” and “eco-tourism” had not been popularised or commercialised (so I was not able to hide behind the terms) and I was only able to justify my decision to proceed on the basis that these four small walkers huts would provide “equity of access” for people without the skills, endurance or confidence to experience by immersion the immenseness and importance of this place.

(Latona 1994a, p. 32)

## **6.4 Accessible Wilderness and Travel Journalism**

Cradle Huts began operation in December 1987. Six months later Latona and Masterman won the Tasmanian Tourism Award for “the operator best promoting Tasmania’s natural attributes” (*Mercury* 1988, p. 4) for their \$795 six day, five night catered treks. Yet although Tourism Tasmania had an embryonic Visiting

Journalist Program (VJP) that was as already a valuable conduit for bringing tourism operators in contact with travel journalists, these were early days in the tourism business for Latona and Masterman, who were as yet unaware of the its existence (Masterman, J 2010, pers. comm., 1 February 2010). It is no surprise, therefore, that travel journalism about Cradle Mountain at the time often did not mention Cradle Huts, particularly as one well-established high-capacity accommodation provider – Cradle Mountain Lodge – was already successfully exploiting the public relations power of “wilderness” and “World Heritage” from just outside the boundaries of the park.

In 1988, the first full year of Cradle Huts’ operation in the World Heritage Area, the Tasmanian Minister for Tourism, Geoff Pearsall, announced a \$1 million tourism marketing campaign to attract “GUPPIES” – green urban professional people (Fisher 1988). According to consultancy firm IBIS and Minister Pearsall, the “greenie backpackers” (Fisher 1988, p. 3) of the Franklin dam campaign had grown up, settled down, got a job and started consuming. As local newspaper the *Mercury* reported:

It has often been said that greenie backpackers come to the state bringing a \$10 bill and a clean shirt – and change neither. Now they are the people Mr Pearsall wants to come to see the wilderness. He said they will stay at expensive hotels, will pay for a flight over the wilderness and generally spend copiously on anything that takes their fancy. (Fisher 1988, p. 3)

A few months later, the director of Tourism Tasmania, Gordon Dean, was reported as saying he did not see a contradiction between development and wilderness (Tideman 1988, p. 21), as “all levels of the community would have

‘controlled access’ to the areas without destroying the environment”. Such semantic manoeuvring was an unavoidable consequence of attempts to market accessible wilderness. In 1990, the Tourism Department published a quarterly research bulletin predicting that the 1990s would be “a decade of thoughtful restraint” characterised not by “anti-development” but by “anti-waste” (Joyce 1990). The report identified a visitor type called the “anti-tourist” – “an individual who tends to avoid the traditional tourist venues and activities...rather than one who is against tourism ‘per se’” (Joyce 1990). It then speculated that holiday-makers might be entering a period in which the established visitor categories of “pioneer” (adventurer) and “indulger” (one seeking relaxation and pampering) would combine, resulting in holiday choices that were part outdoor experience, part luxury (Joyce 1990). If so, Cradle Huts, which included hot showers, candlelit dinners and freshly baked bread as well as comfortable accommodation (Whelan 1993) could be seen as an example of combined holiday experiences at the “pioneer” end of the “anti-tourist” spectrum.

In 1993, in a 26-page colour feature in the glossy magazine *Australian Geographic*, Howard Whelan described walking the Overland Track with Cradle Huts as part of a small group including the magazine’s founder and high-profile businessman Dick Smith. While the journalist clearly revelled in the luxury of a light pack and “prestige” (Whelan 1993, p. 39) accommodation, he also described the extremely challenging weather and deep bogs the group endured (Whelan 1993). A discussion of the Evers report was presented as background and justification for a commercial tourism operation within the park, and absolution for taking the “softer option” (Whelan 1993, p. 39) was provided by a couple of independent walkers encountered along the way: “When I asked what

they thought about private huts operating within a World Heritage area, Andrew shrugged and said, ‘It doesn’t worry me. You never see the huts, and some of the fees probably go to National Parks’ (Whelan 1993, p. 45). In a brief quote from Smith – a businessman, adventurer and former Australian of the Year – the article also alluded to debates about logging of old-growth forests in Tasmania:

“The world has changed a lot in the past 28 years and so have I,” he said. “The last time I came through here old growth forests weren’t an issue, but now they’re highly publicised. Back then I took the forests for granted; now I don’t. I can’t get over the magnificent stringybarks and the huge yellowgums. Some must have been over 40 metres high!” (Whelan 1993, p. 53)

Although this feature was published in the January–March 1993 issue of *Australian Geographic*, Whelan and Smith had taken the walk in November–December 1991 (Whelan 1993, p. 36), when an uneasy parliamentary accord between the Labor Party and the Tasmanian Greens was breaking down over logging access to the state’s native forests. Whelan’s piece did not touch on these matters overtly, but the inclusion of Smith’s comments can be seen as reflecting a determination by some travel journalists and publishers of the day to acknowledge contemporary political concerns in their articles, even if only obliquely.

The *Australian Geographic* article was an outstanding public relations success for Latona and Masterman, bringing into question presumptions that political commentary in a travel article will discourage potential visitors. If bookings for Cradle Huts are an indication, neither the descriptions of rough weather and bogs nor Smith’s moment of reflection on logging in old-growth

forests detracted from the article's positive reception by its audience. Indeed Masterman credits travel journalism generally, and Whelan's article in particular, with making their business viable:

[I]t was the journalists who got us on the map, and a lot of them were overseas journalists... I think the first year we had 87 people, the next year I think there was a pilots' strike and I think we had 200 guests, the next year we had 290 or something, and then the fourth season Dick Smith, when the *Australian Geographic* was really a very popular magazine, he came through and did a 26-page article on us, and we just took off after that. And that was just brilliant.

(Masterman, J 2009, pers. comm., 3 August)

## 6.5 Strategic PR

Cradle Huts had shown the public relations power of the kind of "anti-tourism" recommended by Joyce – the combination of accessible wilderness and varying degrees of luxury at the "pioneer" end of the spectrum. By enlisting the support of Australian identity Dick Smith in publicising Cradle Huts, Latona and Masterman had ensured their product benefited from the public relations power of his celebrity, though it was also politicised by association with his comments about old-growth logging. Yet despite being in the vanguard of attempts to capitalise on the south-west wilderness's World Heritage listing and the High Court decision to protect the Franklin River, the government tourism office had initially been slow to learn the lesson of Cradle Huts' public relations appeal. Whelan's story in *Australian Geographic* had been the result of an acquaintance between Masterman's husband and Dick Smith (Masterman, J 2010, pers. comm., 1 February) and as such bore few of the hallmarks of the kind of trip the

government tourism office would generally have organised for overseas travel journalists in the late 1980s and early 1990s: the tourism department at this time was mostly reactive in its support for international travel journalists and favoured fairly standard tourism operations 1990s (as described by Nicholls, D. 2009, pers. comm., 9 March).

Such an approach reflected a VJP that, by default, focussed its international public relations on publicising familiar products rather than developing media story angles aligned with the state tourism department's strategic objectives. Tasmania's international tourism VJP at this time was still largely dependent on the Australian Tourist Commission (ATC). In 1993, however, Delia Nicholls was recruited to introduce a more strategic approach. Although an Australian by birth, she had trained and worked as a journalist in the United States and was confident of her international media connections. No longer would the international component of the tourism department's VJP simply respond to requests for hosted visits initiated by the ATC or journalists themselves. Henceforth, in combination with on-ground marketing and public relations representatives in key overseas markets, the VJP would actively pursue international personalities and trend-setting travel journalists who could provide coverage in the kind of high-circulation, high-end publications whose readers would respond to what would become known as Tasmania's tourism brand attributes, the most significant of which were its natural attractions. Such influential writers would be unlikely to come to Tasmania of their own accord but would have to be wooed, sometimes over a number of years, as Nicholls explained:

We felt that we didn't have the funds to do...the international advertising... And even domestically it was seen that the type of person that came to Tasmania and in general people who travel internationally respond very well to editorial coverage – that's where they get a lot of their information. And so I was brought in to set up a more strategic visiting journalist program where you have to take a risk to some extent, that you are going to invite a journalist down here or woo a journalist to come down here and you are going to try and meet their needs for their story and meet your own needs and meet the needs of the industry to promote the state and get a positive story. (Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March)

## **6.6 Accessible Nature: Putting People in the Picture**

Only when Tasmania won the right to host the 1994 World Congress on Adventure Travel and Ecotourism did it realise that it lacked sufficient supporting material to capitalise on the event's associated publicity and effectively promote the state's own ecotourism offerings to delegates, attendant media and potential ecotourists (Tourism in Natural Areas Project Team 1993). In response, in 1993 it established a Tourism in Natural Areas Project Team. Its aim was to “develop a collection of images that [would] accurately portray one of the State's primary marketing advantages – its ‘Accessible Natural Environment’” (Tourism in Natural Areas Project Team 1993, n.p.).

In November, one year before the congress, the team presented the first of its reports. Although debates about what constitutes ecotourism have ranged across widely varying conceptions of the term (Scace 1999), it is generally understood to describe tourism practices that help – to a greater or lesser degree – “protect ecological and cultural resources of tourism sites, provide local

economic opportunity and give travellers a greater environmental awareness” (Fallon and Kriwoken 2003, p. 289). The report by the tourism department’s Tourism in Natural Areas Project Team, however, resisted any temptation to define the term – perhaps fearing that if it did define it, it would be expected to regulate ecotourism operators accordingly. Rather, the team adopted the position that the “experience” was “determined by the individual” (Tourism in Natural Areas Project Team 1993). The most notable recommendation of the report from the perspective of this thesis was that the department should henceforth include people in most shots targeted at the ecotourism and adventure travel markets. This would ensure that the accessibility of Tasmanian’s natural environment would be immediately evident to those viewing the images:

As the experience is determined by the individual, it is important for people to be a feature of ecotourism and adventure travel images. Not only should the images be seen to be relevant to the target market, the environment should be perceived as being accessible. People or human structures convey “accessibility”. (Tourism in Natural Areas Project Team 1993)

**People** – Should be used in most shots. While they may not be used in all “inspirational/spiritual’ images, their presence is an automatic indicator of **accessibility and deliverability**. **Real people** (non-advertising stereotypes) should be actively participating in the scene, and must fit the profile of our target markets (ethnicity, age, appearances). Inappropriate dress and body size should be avoided. **People** in our images should not be seen to be doing anything that is environmentally irresponsible. Their activity should be in harmony with the surroundings. (Tourism in Natural Areas Project Team 1993, original emphasis)

As a marketing strategy for the business of tourism, the document made no apologies for attempting to commodify Tasmania's natural environment, function as the gatekeeper of ideal ecotourist and adventure-tourist non-stereotypes, and generally shape the messages of travel journalists, who it stated "need[ed] to understand and represent our product correctly to different markets" (Tourism in Natural Areas Project Team 1993). Moreover, the team recommended that the tourism agency ensure "**all images are acceptable to the government agency responsible for administering the locations**" (Tourism in Natural Areas Project Team 1993, original emphasis) and attached in an appendix a note from the Forestry Commission that included among five experiences it considered to be special to state forests "[o]pportunities to learn about issues relating to forests and their management, including contentious areas that people have heard about in the media" (Tourism in Natural Areas Project Team 1993, Appendix B). Here, more than seven years before Forestry Tasmania (the Forestry Commission's successor) opened its first large-scale commercial tourism operation, the Tasmanian government's tourism agency was identifying it as a tourism stakeholder. The following year, Forestry Tasmania was a key participant in the World Congress on Adventure Travel and Ecotourism, providing numerous tours into its forests for delegates (sometimes guided by non-forestry tourism operators but usually in conjunction with a representative from Forestry Tasmania) and describing itself in the official conference field-trip guide as "responsible for the efficient management of the State forests, with the primary objective of optimising the economic returns from wood production activities and the benefits to the community of non wood values" (Australian Tourist Commission, Department of Tourism, Sport and

Recreation Tasmania & the Adventure Travel Society Inc. 1994, pp. 5, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 23, 24, 29). State forests were also a venue for two field trips conducted by the Wilderness Society. In these instances, the quoted description of Forestry Tasmania's function accompanied other details of the activity offered (Australian Tourist Commission, Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation Tasmania & the Adventure Travel Society Inc. 1994:, pp.12, 17).

The four-day congress, which was attended by 540 delegates, 9 per cent of whom were from the media (Busch 1994), may be considered a critical discourse moment in Tasmanian tourism public relations – a period that involved “specific happenings, which may challenge the ‘established’ discursive positions” (Carvalho 2008, p. 166). At the congress, “ecotourism” was strategically deployed in government discourse as both a right of commercial access to wilderness and a badge of honour for Forestry Tasmania (see Hodgman 1994 and Groom in Mercury 1994e), which was promoting the recreational and adventure tourism opportunities available in its forest reserves. Early in the proceedings, Tasmania's Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Peter Hodgman, delivered a speech that exemplified this change (Hodgman 1994, p. 13-14). Accessible wilderness was still a catchcry (“We have a duty and responsibility to manage these [wilderness] areas and make it accessible...” ) and framing I call “the ecotourism solution” was clear (for example, “It is through understanding and appreciation that these places will be preserved, which is the power of ecotourism”; see also reference to ecological modernisation below) (Hodgman 1994, p. 13). However, nature rather than wilderness was the dominant terminology, state forests were explicitly referenced as potential ecotourism venues, and, notably, there was an overt appeal to an imagined

consumerist cosmopolitan community (“We are part of a global community and tourism has no boundaries”) (Hodgman 1994, p. 13).

New discourses emerge through a combination of existing discourses (Fairclough 2003, p. 127). Following the 1983 High Court decision to protect the Franklin River, the discourse of accessible wilderness had emerged as a combination of the discourses of accessible scenery, transformative wilderness and reverse egalitarianism. Now a discourse promoting tourism in state forests was joined to the discourse of accessible wilderness in a discourse of accessible nature. On the afternoon of the opening day of the congress, however, high-profile Tasmanian environmentalist Bob Brown delivered a paper that attacked Forestry Tasmania as having “now drawn the sheepskin of ecotourism around its shoulders” (Brown, B. 1994, p. 12; see Chapter 1, Section 1.6, for an introduction to Brown). The theme of the congress was “Discovering the great outdoors: The road to our sustainable future”. It is unclear whether Tasmania’s tourism department had any input into the choice of theme, but shortly before the event the government had announced that it was proceeding with the construction of a road through an area of temperate rainforest on the west coast (Brown, B. 1994; Mercury 1994b, 1994d) that Brown had christened the Tarkine in honour of its original Aboriginal inhabitants (Buchman 2008, p. 117). In his speech at the conference, Brown called for a halt to road construction, and the following day the Wilderness Society staged a protest outside the congress venue calling for ecotourism operators to join forces in campaigning against logging (Mercury 1994d). On the closing night of the congress, 300 delegates signed a petition to the Australian prime minister asking him to halt logging in Tasmania’s high-conservation-value forests (Mercury 1994b).

In the introduction to the published collected speeches of the congress, written by Richard Busch, the editor of the conference's US co-sponsor *National Geographic Traveler* magazine, Brown's speech was described as "one of the most stirring presentations of the entire congress" (Busch 1994, p. 1). Busch reported Brown's criticism of the Tasmanian government for permitting old-growth logging and attempting to justify "roads through pristine areas for the stated purpose of encouraging ecotourism" (Busch 1994, p. 1). The implication was that this travel journalist had rejected a government's attempts to use ecotourism to frame forestry and tourism as compatible ("compatible sectors" framing). The accessible nature discourse in Tasmania's whole-of-government context included elements of cosmopolitan concern for the environment exclusive of concern about the state's forestry practices, which in turn were framed as environmentally sustainable and delivering community benefits in addition to revenue, such as managed reserves for recreation and adventure pursuits. Stamou and Paraskevopoulos (2006) write that nature-based tourism encompasses but is not confined to ecotourism, where ecotourism is consistent with what Maarten Hajer (1995) describes as ecological modernisation because rather than protecting nature by banning activity it protects it by generating money that contributes to its management and builds local support for conservation projects. Brown's discourse was more closely aligned with what Dryzek describes as green rationalism, which accommodates activism and political conflict. In addition to Green party politics, green rationalism acknowledges that:

[p]olitical pressure can be exerted at a distance upon the state. Here, social movements have at their disposal a number of instruments. They include the

rhetical ability to change the terms of policy debate; creation of fear of political instability; the production of ideas; and the embarrassment of governments.  
(Dryzek 1997, p. 189)

At the World Congress, Brown's discourse also included elements of what Dryzek describes as ecological romanticism in its passion, appeals to the emotions and attribution of agency to nature:

Ecotourism, like being Green, like being in love with this planet Earth, is not an easy concept in this age of materialism. But it is a vital, ethical concept. Our task is to foster it, to protect it from those who would corrupt its meaning, and to enjoy it as a term which accords the Earth the respect which we human beings owe to it and to ourselves. (Brown, B. 1994, p. 12)

For Brown, "genuine ecotourism" led the way towards humans regulating themselves to ensure the landscape was not "progressively distressed or destroyed by tourism" (Brown, B. 1994, p. 12). Thus, he was opposed to some commercial tourism ventures that sought access to protected areas. Whereas the government tended to commodify cosmopolitan concern, Brown's ecotourism discourse politicised it.

In local news the representation of events at the congress was different from that of *National Geographic Traveler's* Busch. Although the *Mercury* included reports of the protest and the petition, it balanced the former on the same page with a separate short interview with Forestry Tasmania's managing director headlined "Forestry Tasmania 'ally of green tourism'" (Mercury 1994c). A month after the congress, the *Mercury* praised the Tasmanian organisers of the event but its text delegitimised the congress and, by extension, cosmopolitical

concern for the state's unprotected environment by republishing criticisms of the congress's internationally based management that the newspaper said had already appeared in a front-page article in Australia's tourism industry magazine *Travel Trade*, which had described it as "the shadowy Coloradobased [sic.] Adventure Travel Society" (Mercury 1994a).

## 6.7 From Wild to Mild

Also featured among the field trips offered to delegates at the World Congress on Adventure Travel and Ecotourism was a second enterprise by Latona<sup>9</sup> and Masterman (Australian Tourist Commission, Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation Tasmania & the Adventure Travel Society Inc. 1994, p. 2) incorporating a walk through a national park – one that was more accessible than Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair. The Freycinet Peninsula, on the island's east coast, boasted tranquil, often-sunny weather, far-less-rugged topography than the Overland Track, fascinating Aboriginal and French-seafaring history, and one of the most postcard-perfect beaches in the world, Wineglass Bay. Just outside the park, the pair had built three small structures of such visually appealing and environmentally sympathetic design that Masterman would ultimately choose this, the Friendly Beaches Lodge and Freycinet Experience Walk, as the tourism product she would retain and continue operating when her business partnership with Latona ended a few years later.

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<sup>9</sup> Latona also addressed the congress (Latona 1994b), briefly noting early opposition to his ventures from conservationists and mentioning a comment by Brown labelling Cradle Huts "death huts" on the basis that the public would be denied access in times of life-threatening weather conditions" (Latona 1994b: 71). This, together with the demonstration outside the conference venue mentioned in the previous section, suggests that at the time of the congress there was hostility or wariness between Latona and conservationists.

Tourism Tasmania's international public relations practitioner (PRP) at the time, Nicholls, had no doubt that Latona and Masterman's determination to create and maintain ecotourism experiences she felt respected the environment and promoted sustainable tourism practice was genuine, impressive and valuable. On her appointment to Tourism Tasmania, she had recognised the attraction of natural experiences that could so expertly pamper international travel journalists body, soul and conscience. It was the beginning of an informal public relations partnership between a government agency and tourism entrepreneurs that would create an enduring international profile for Tasmania as a sustainable tourist destination:

I think Tasmania wouldn't have an ecotourism industry – and still doesn't really have that much of a legitimate set of tourism products that are eco-friendly – without Ken Latona and Joan Masterman. They were the people who really set us on that track, apart from the national parks. In 1994, Ken and Joan had already been in business maybe six or eight years by the time we had that ecotourism conference where I think this state really, really recognised that it needed to go down that ecotourism marketing angle, but without Ken and Joan's product we wouldn't have had any credibility in that market because they were the only two who had really done the hard yards. They had really... And he was very generous with the [Visiting Journalist] Program. He always gave us free media visits. He gave free for staff to give them an understanding of his product, he gave freely to the journalists, he never, ever quibbled about that. He took helicopters sometimes without charging us; he was incredibly generous – the most generous of any of them. (Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March)

Yet even as Masterman's own businesses benefited from their relationship with wilderness, she would come to feel that the term "wilderness

lodge” was being degraded by tourism operations that were neither as intimate nor as environmentally scrupulous as Cradle Huts, or Friendly Beaches Lodge and Freycinet Experience Walk (Masterman, J 2009, pers. comm., 3 August). The struggle among interest groups for ownership of the meaning and stories of wilderness, the complexities associated with the deployment of the word in marketing, public relations, news and travel journalism, the discursive strategies of a government determined to present forestry and ecotourism as compatible, and the spread of ecotourism from the windy, rainy western mountains to the sunny, sandy eastern beaches had seen “wilderness” increasingly give way to “nature” in Tasmanian public relations discourse. Yet even as this transition proceeded, wilderness would continue to appear in Tasmanian government tourism marketing, retaining its power to promote by suffusing the island’s tourism and state-of-origin branding with marketable clean, green cachet.

## **6.8 Nature as Brand**

In the month of the World Congress on Adventure Travel and Ecotourism, the Tasmanian tourism department commissioned the “largest ever qualitative consumer research” among interstate Australians (Tasmanian Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation 1995, p. 8). According to the department, this research established the island’s “unique and breathtaking natural beauty set within a clean, green environment” and its “diversity of landscapes offering nature-based experience (including wildlife) which are within easy reach” to be its strongest competitive advantages (Tasmanian Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation 1995, p. 8). Then, in 1995, the tourism department released *Strategies for Growth*, a report that, among many other things, launched its new

positioning – the logo of a stylised Tasmanian tiger emerging through grass at the edge of a stream and the slogan “TASMANIA Discover your natural state” (Tasmanian Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation 1995, p. 8).

Reviewing this two years later, Tourism Tasmania comfortably accommodated the logo as a symbol of wilderness within its discourse of accessible nature:

Tasmania was re-defined as a destination for an intelligent audience that sought hands-on, physically active vacation experiences. A holiday for thinkers and doers promising the unexpected in a natural environment.

Ian Kidd’s design depicting the thylacine [(Tasmanian tiger)] in a wilderness environment is a symbol of this experience, expressing discovery, surprise, intrigue, the unexpected, tranquillity and natural [sic.]. (Tourism Tasmania 1997, p. 12)

Such an analysis ignored the fact that the Tasmanian tiger is extinct. Instead, the animal was invoked as evidence of the quality of Tasmania’s wilderness – a wilderness so remote that it might still harbour creatures not verifiably observed for more than 60 years. The logo was soon adopted by the entire Tasmanian public sector, yet for all its visual and emotional appeal, the balance it struck between the promotion of access and the promise of purity was as precarious as it was commercially tantalising.

In 1997, the joint government and industry strategy *Tourism 21* used the expression “brand Tasmania” in the context of what it referred to as “a ‘whole-of-industry’ and ‘whole-of-government’ commitment and support for Tasmania as the brand and destination” (Tasmanian Government, Tourism Tasmania & Tourism Council Australia (Tasmanian Branch) n.d., p. 22). And the ordering

here of “brand” before “destination” is indicative of a shift in emphasis from tourism being an end in itself to tourism being what Anholt describes as the most powerful “booster rocket” for the place’s brand (see Chapter 3). The document went on to say that “[t]he state needs to use the Government’s and businesses’ interstate and international connections to promote the brand” (Tasmanian Government, Tourism Tasmania & Tourism Council Australia (Tasmanian Branch) n.d., p. 22). That brand was described as reflecting the state’s strengths as “a natural, beautiful island with wilderness, heritage and quality wine and food,” but the “competitive strength” that the document said was to be “constantly reinforced” was its “natural quality” (Tasmanian Government, Tourism Tasmania & Tourism Council Australia (Tasmanian Branch) n.d., p. 23), which the government would later explain referred not just to the physical environment but to products, individuals and communities (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2006). By 1999 – the year a joint government and industry Brand Tasmania Council would come into operation – “100 per cent of all export ready tourism product [was] to be committed to Brand Tasmania” (Tasmanian Government, Tourism Tasmania & Tourism Council Australia (Tasmanian Branch) n.d., p. 25).

Also in 1997, Tourism Tasmania recommended an extension of its branding under the banner of Brand Tasmania in one of its own publications, including the state’s forest industries in the purview:

In more global terms, Tasmania’s unique point-of-difference stems from the same set of attributes which underpin our tourism industry. Our position in the Southern Ocean which is the basis of our unique natural features also provides us with a largely unpolluted and disease free environment and the basis for our

developing and increasingly globally competitive agriculture, aquaculture and forest based industries. (Tourism Tasmania 1997, p. 18)

Invoking the brand essence “Tasmania is natural” (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2006), the Tasmanian government in the early 2000s promoted accessible nature, embraced the forestry industry and sought to distinguish the state’s exports in global markets as the products of a “clean environment”, “clean air”, “clean soil”, “clean communities”, “clean oceans”, “pure waters” and “clean, green solutions” (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2006). In a summary of the evolution of Tasmania’s brand published in 2006, the government paid tribute to a strictly delineated “succession of conservation debates, starting with the decision to flood Lake Pedder and stopping the damming of the Franklin River” for putting “Tasmania and its environment firmly on the international stage” (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2006). In the years since the government had embraced the state’s wilderness, World Heritage listing and the natural advantages of remote islandness had enveloped the destination in a marketable aura of purity. Thus, despite the discursive shift to accessible nature documented earlier in this chapter, “wilderness” continued to feature in Tourism Tasmania’s marketing and public relations. A prime example is the back cover of a major marketing brochure for the North American market produced in December 2008 and entitled *Discover Tasmania: Australia’s natural state*. The A4 colour advertisement features a man lying alone in a forest wilderness. The copy – typical of Tourism Tasmania advertisements at the time in its reliance on a pun – attempts to establish a relationship between Tasmania and potential visitors by contrasting wilderness and solitude with social media in an appeal to the romantic tourist gaze:

In Tasmania my space isn't a website. HERE your space is waiting for you around every corner. From untamed wilderness, to rich living history to fiery rock landscaped coastline, Tasmania offers so many spaces to inspire your travel desires. You can walk miles through breathtaking scenery then arrive at your very own majestic haven.... While you are surrounded by such unspoilt wilderness, there are plenty of opportunities to spoil yourself... (Tourism Tasmania North America 2008, back cover, original emphasis)

But just as the tourism industry and government had capitalised on the publicity the environment movement had brought to Tasmania's wilderness during the Franklin dam campaign, so the environment movement in the first decade of the 2000s would find ways to gain access to the media for its own messages by taking advantage of recognition for wilderness and other natural attractions maintained internationally to a considerable degree by Tourism Tasmania's marketing.

## **6.9 Conclusion**

Prior to the 1983 High Court decision to protect the Franklin River, tourism was largely in the business of choosing places for visitors to gaze upon. Early in the century, tourism was a motivating concern of the Scenery Preservation Board, whose proposals for reserves "were submitted to government departments such as Mines, Forestry and later the Hydro-Electric Commission for approval" (Castles 2006). But Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area was a very different matter. Its inscription on the World Heritage List in 1982 not only created the conditions by which the High Court could prevent hydroelectric

development within its boundaries; it also fundamentally changed the relationship between Tasmanian tourism and “nature”. The term “nature” can encompass both “scenery” and “wilderness”, but it is impossible to disentangle the Wilderness World Heritage Area’s use-value to tourism from UNESCO’s evaluation of the region as remote (see Lester 2007) and thereby largely removed from what Urry (2002) refers to as the collective tourist gaze.

There are two reasons that Tasmanian tourism was originally able to appropriate the term “wilderness” for a multitude of commercial purposes outside the WHA that many would argue have nothing to do with the word “wilderness”. Firstly, World Heritage listing gave these claims a convoluted marketing credibility (see Ryan and Silvano 2009 for an interesting discussion of the World Heritage List as an exercise in place branding). If concrete evidence of this is needed, it can be found in *Tourism 21*’s express recommendation that the Australian Tourist Commission’s images of Australia “need to be enhanced to not only reflect the ‘sun, surf and outback’ but also the nation’s other natural qualities and difference, including world heritage” (Tasmanian Government, Tourism Tasmania & Tourism Council Australia (Tasmanian Branch) n.d., p. 24). Secondly, the environment movement’s Franklin dam blockade gifted the industry a reserve of advance publicity that it built upon over subsequent years. By contrast, Forestry Tasmania had nothing to gain from the concept of “wilderness” except, perhaps, the ability to dilute criticism by claiming that sufficient wilderness – or the only true wilderness – was already protected (Lester 2007). Paradoxically perhaps, the government’s lexical shift from accessible wilderness to accessible nature in the mid-1990s left marginally more discursive space for the re-emergence of notions of wilderness as remote,

untrammelled, mythic, normatively charged and worthy of cosmopolitan concern. And just as the government had been able to piggy-back on the publicity the environment movement had garnered for wilderness in the 1980s, so the environment movement now had the opportunity to turn the government's branding and marketing of the environment to its own political advantage.



## Chapter 7: The Authority

I had always wanted the *San Francisco Chronicle* to come out here to Tasmania but they're very independent. They don't take sponsored travel...

*Delia Nicholls 2009,  
Former senior Tourism Tasmania international PRP,  
pers. comm., 9 March*

### 7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I focus on the way elite strategies and tactics, institutional cultures and elite networks tended to work against the mediation of Tasmania's environmental conflict by travel journalists in the first decade of this century. The chapter argues that challenges resulting from government policies and forestry activity that attracted environmental activism led to place branding becoming politically instrumental as Tourism Tasmania tried simultaneously to promote the brand and shield it from media scrutiny. However the chapter also reveals factors that could contribute to an alternative outcome. I begin the chapter with a section in which Tourism Tasmania's Visiting Journalist Program (VJP) is described as an attempt to secure control over the flow of information. I then describe a broader marketing response that relied for its effectiveness on blurred editorial boundaries between advertising and journalism. Following this, I consider networks and structures that contributed to the absence of controversy in travel journalism that did not rely on financial support from Tourism Tasmania. The indeterminacy of the brands of media publications, and travel journalists' relationship with non-elite sources will be considered in more detail in subsequent chapters.

## 7.2 Regulating the Flow of Information

Throughout the 2000s the success of the VJP in gaining coverage for Tasmania in prestigious publications was listed among the “highlights” in Tourism Tasmania’s annual reports. The tourism office was comfortable with using public funds for this purpose and in fact considered taxpayer funding a reason for framing its expectations of travel journalists in terms of cooperation rather than objectivity:

Obviously it's not our place to impinge on journalistic integrity and them pursuing a story, but particularly when we're funding a trip I think that we have to have mutual objectives about what we're trying to do. And I think for most of the journalists that we deal with they completely understand and respect that they're here as the guests of Tasmania and the Tasmanian government and the Tasmanian taxpayer money, then the agreed objectives of the story are what needs to be the focus. (Senior Tourism Tasmania PRP Ruth Dowty 2009, pers. comm., 3 June)

Although most PRPs with direct experience in Tourism Tasmania’s VJP appeared uncomfortable discussing forestry matters, in other respects their confidence in the ability of hosted visits to procure positive stories suggests that, to their knowledge, negative comment in travel journalism was genuinely rare.

...they still write opinions in articles, and not every opinion is glowing, but you'd be hard pressed to find someone that you'd host write a really damning article about you. Because 1) other people probably wouldn't host them in the future. Do you know what I mean? It sort of tends— the industry in a sense works like that, sort of thing. So they don't want to bite the hand that feeds them

essentially, because a lot of these travel writers get to travel round the world for free. (PRP 2 2009, pers. comm., 16 March)

The following quote from a PRP who early in the decade worked with travel journalists for the Tourism Tasmania VJP before moving into the Brand Tasmania VJP to work with news journalists makes it clear that she did not consider the Tourism Tasmania VJP a public relations challenge at that time. Her comments also give an insight into the image-making focus of the tourism VJP:

I got a bit bored with it, to be honest. I found it a little bit shallow, just because mainly it was about selling an image rather than much substance. So of course it was about journalists having a great time, but what you find with travel journalists is that 1) there's very little amount of journalism going into it. It's normally viewed as a bit of a jolly. I think you'd find that 99.9 per cent of travel – I'm going to call them "writers" – will write a positive story because their trip's been paid for. I'm not saying they should write a negative story but you'll always find that a positive story's written. (McGinity, M 2009, pers. comm., 23 October)

International travel journalists who participated in the VJP were far more likely than hosted domestic travel journalists to be guided by a Tourism Tasmania representative throughout their itinerary. Comprehensive, crowded itineraries and attentive VJP guides were represented by PRPs as helping ensure travel journalists had experiences of which the destination could be proud:

One of the comments always is that there's too much in each day. The thing with the international journalists is that they're not here for very long but they want to see so much, and it's quite often they think that Tasmania's small so it's hard to explain to them that you actually can't fit all of that in three days. So they

don't have a lot of spare time. No. Because often if they're an international journalist their guide's with them, and then their guide takes them out for dinner and because they're not familiar with the place, and if you think about it, if you're in a foreign city that you don't know and you head out for tea somewhere, you could end up anywhere. And, you know, while we've got them here you want to expose them to the good, the best food and wine, or the restaurants that best suit their target audience, so you either make bookings for them to do that and send them to those places either independently or with a guide. (PRP 2 2009, pers. comm., 16 March)

For many international travel journalists, this kind of attention made the job of researching the destination simple and enjoyable, and Tourism Tasmania's VJP was regularly praised by those it hosted or assisted. Comments by the *Observer's* Jamie Doward describe the kind of hospitality hosted international travel journalists received:

It was absolutely superb. We were lucky enough to have a woman [in England] who was working for an agency for the Tasmanian tourist board who escorted us there and took care of things, made sure that we flew into Melbourne and stayed overnight before flying on to Tasmania, which broke the journey up a bit. And everything was very, very well planned. The Tasmanian tourist board, as soon as we got there, had a fantastic itinerary and made sure that we really did see the whole of Tasmania – fantastic bits of Hobart and then the really remote bits as well, and got a really good taste of the island, because we sampled everything. I think, in the six days we crammed in more than I would expect to cram into a couple of weeks... This woman was unusual 'cause normally when I do a travel trip I'm on my own or with a girlfriend or something but this one was unusual in that I was part of a press crew and those can be a bit tedious. But it was fantastic, as I say, because they'd put so much thought into making sure

we weren't just hanging around, we were always moving around the island seeing the full sights and its full beauty... [O]nce we got to Tasmania the Tasmanian tourist board guy was on hand and took over as well, and he had fantastic local knowledge, obviously, having grown up on the island himself and, you know, was always with us to take us around. (Doward, J 2009, pers. comm., 26 August)

In the case of travel journalists who had an interest in “issues” rather than “experiences” (a distinction made by PRP 2 2009, pers. comm., 16 March), however, the VJP was cautious. In describing their response to such situations, PRPs often found it difficult to reconcile institutional expectations of positive coverage with their own understanding of journalistic integrity. The following quote is indicative of the ambivalence and professional anxiety about travel journalism interest in forestry matters that was evident in the talk of a number of PRPs who had worked in the tourism VJP:

PRP 2: So the ones that are interested in real issues like the devil disease, forestry, you know that that's an interest. So you know that what they're going to be writing about is more an exploratory piece. It's not just a straight travel...

RESEARCHER: And does that influence whether or not you host them?

PRP 2: It can get looked at more carefully, I would say, just because of, I guess, as the state government you're there to sell the state in a good light and you have to be aware of potential— you know, if you then hosted someone and they go out and write this damning article the buck basically comes back to your unit to say, well we've supported this person and you knew that they were going to write about this. It's not that they don't want people to write about it. It's just managing it from a state government perspective, I guess. (PRP 2 2009, pers. comm., 16 March)

If the publicity value of the publication or the individual writer was high enough for the VJP to host a journalist interested in issues as well as tourism experiences, crowded itineraries were one way of making it difficult for him or her to find time to pursue other avenues of inquiry. This was the experience of British freelance journalist Paul Miles after he alerted the VJP to his interest in a pulp mill proposed for the Tamar Valley wine tourism region prior to visiting the state to research stories for the *Financial Times* and *Condé Nast Traveller* late in 2007:

I think that because the tourism people were possibly anxious about what I might see or do I think they pretty much kept me as busy as possible in the time that I was there and there wasn't time to go to the Styx Valley. (Miles, P 2009, pers. comm., 9 March)

In such circumstances, itineraries and guides functioned as attempts to exert a form of indirect editorial control over journalists whose copy Tourism Tasmania would not see before publication, as one government wildlife expert who sometimes acted as a guide observed:

People come over to do wildlife stuff and they take 'em off on a wine and cheese tour 'cause they just don't want 'em to— they want to avoid the logging issue, you know, this confrontation. Because it's just so obvious: you go to some of the best wildlife spots and there's fuckin' log trucks everywhere. (Mooney, N 2009, pers. comm., 15 June)

### 7.2.1 Controlling Access to Sources and Frames

Authorities' efforts to control the access of the media to sources are really part of their attempts to control meanings in the public sphere (see Wolfsfeld 1997). In December 2007 national news magazine the *Bulletin* published accusations by prominent Tasmanian novelist and commentator Richard Flanagan that Tourism Tasmania was intimidating staff into refusing to put travel journalists in touch with him (Flemming 2007). For more than three years, battles between Flanagan and the Tasmanian government over forestry practices had been played out in the local, national and international news media. In March 2004, in the lead-up to an Australian election in which the forestry dispute would become an issue of intense media interest, the NGO People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals called on Britons to boycott holidays to Tasmania in protest against its logging practices. The campaign was supported by British Liberal Democrat spokesman for the environment Norman Baker, who introduced a parliamentary motion in favour of the boycott and persuaded dozens of his Westminster colleagues to sign a petition calling on Tasmania to stop old-growth logging. Foreign correspondents and local journalists wrote about the proposed boycott for the British press (Fickling 2004; Woolf 2004), and the *Guardian* published articles by Flanagan and Greg Barns, a political commentator living in Tasmania. Barns opposed the boycott on the basis that it was a distraction from pressing Tasmanian issues of high unemployment, low education levels and a raft of other social problems (Barns 2004). By contrast, in his piece entitled "Paradise lost – with napalm", Flanagan framed the issue as one of cosmopolitical concern:

[I]n an Australian election year, with the forests emerging as a major issue, [it] form[s] part of a chorus of international condemnation that shows Australians

that the forests are not just a natural resource but are globally significant wild lands. (Flanagan 2004a).

But Flanagan also articulated a more detailed thesis: “in the lineaments of the struggle in a distant island, it is possible to see a larger battle, the same battle the world over – that between truth and power” (Flanagan 2004a). The forestry conflict, he said, had created a “subtle fear” that “stifled dissent” and was “conducive to the abuse of power. To question or to comment is to invite the possibility of ostracism and unemployment” (Flanagan 2004a). In July the same year, following the death of a former premier who had also been a tourism minister extremely popular with the tourism industry, Flanagan criticised the man’s forestry legacy in an article in a large interstate broadsheet (Flanagan 2004b). Two months after that he published a travel article in the *New York Times* that included three paragraphs on the logging of Tasmania’s native forests (Flanagan, 2004c).

In December that year, the private logging company Gunns – Forestry Tasmania’s biggest customer – sued the Wilderness Society, five of its members and others for millions of dollars in an attempt to halt activism, instigating a protracted legal battle that would make headlines for many years; and in February 2005 Gunns publicly announced its plans to build a pulp mill in the state’s premier wine-tourism region, the Tamar Valley, provoking opposition from environmentalists but also wine makers, food producers and restaurateurs, some of whom had long-standing relationships with Tourism Tasmania’s VJP (Denholm 2007; Alps, D 2009, pers. comm., 19 March; see Chapter 8). In an article Flanagan published about Gunns in May 2007 entitled “Out of control: The tragedy of Tasmania’s forests” (2007a), a version of which was published in

June that year in Britain's *Telegraph Magazine* under the title "Paradise razed" (2007b), he further developed a frame I call "warlike conflagration", which had appeared in a more limited version in 2004 in his *Guardian* commentary and *New York Times* travel piece, and also appeared in texts by the environment movement. This frame generally refers to the use of napalm to burn the forest floor after logging, and in his 2007 articles Flanagan invoked three catastrophic wars in his descriptions of continued clear-fell logging of old-growth forests in the Styx Valley (see following section): memories of devastation and human misery following the use of napalm in the Vietnam War (2007a, 2007b); "a Great War battlefield" (2007a, 2007b, p. 25), referring to World War 1; and the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War 2, called to mind by references to "mushroom clouds" (2007a) or "atomic-bomb-like mushroom clouds" (2007b, p. 25). References or allusions to specific wars were not always present in this framing,<sup>10</sup> but whereas the government business enterprise Forestry Tasmania tended to rely on scientific argument in framing forest management in the state as sensitive and sustainable, "warlike conflagration" always represented it as environmentally brutal.

Flanagan, his articles and/or the environment movement were sources of information for some overseas travel journalists, and the "warlike conflagration" frame appears in a number of the travel journalism texts discussed in chapters 8 and 9. This suggests that any attempts Tourism Tasmania made to deny Flanagan's contact details to those travel journalists actively requesting it for the purposes of reporting on the forestry issue would have been largely ineffective in

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the word "napalm" did not appear in Flanagan's 2004 *New York Times* article. I can only speculate as to the reason: it may have been in deference to American sensitivities regarding the Vietnam War or perhaps was a result of the gentle prose style and pace of the article.

limiting the circulation of this frame in their published texts because they would probably already have encountered it.

It is difficult confidently to account for the extent to which the controversy that surrounded forestry matters in Tasmania did or did not influence the interview talk of travel journalists who chose not to refer to the state's environmental controversy in their published texts. This, in turn, makes it hard to judge the effectiveness of crowded itineraries and intensive management of travel journalists' itineraries in shielding them from frames such as those circulated by Flanagan. News journalist Doward's travel article about Tasmania appeared in the *Observer* in April 2004, less than a month after an article about the proposed boycott of travel to the state appeared in his paper's sister publication the *Guardian* (Fickling 2004) and just a few days before Flanagan's *Guardian* comment was published, but he said he did not recall the issue when speaking to me in 2009. Doward had raised the subject of Flanagan himself by volunteering the information that he had read one of his novels but when I followed up on this he had nothing more to say about him. Doward also did not know that Australia's cricket captain at the time of his visit and at the time of our interview was Tasmanian, which may suggest limited general knowledge about the state despite his first-hand experience. His visit to Tasmania had been as part of a highly managed group media tour hosted by Tourism Tasmania (Doward, J 2009, pers. comm., 26 August). As a staff news journalist he only occasionally wrote travel journalism (see Section 7.4) and when commenting generally on his decisions about content he attributed them to the needs of his audience. However, his explanation of his decision not to refer in his text to another matter of cosmopolitan concern – devil facial tumour disease (see Section 7.5.1) –

reveals his understanding of “what you’re supposed to be focusing on” as a journalist writing for the *Observer*’s travel section – particularly in terms of a difference between news and travel journalism:

I could see how if I started going down that line my news editor might start— I mean the *travel* editor might start getting a bit baffled as to why I’m supposed to be writing a travel article when I’ve gone on a sort of eco rant and, you know, I’m there to do a job which is to try and explain to people why they should or should not go to Tasmania, not to do a forensic number on various diseases facing Tasmanian wildlife... you’re trying to tell people why they might want to go there or indeed in some travel pieces I’ve written why they don’t want to go there, and to share that experience. And the problem is you get so diverted by riffing on all sorts of side issues it can get just sort-of dull for the reader and you lose your perspective of what you’re supposed to be focusing on. (Doward, J 2009, pers. comm., 26 August)

Such comments suggest, firstly, that some travel journalists do not consider environmental concerns to be tourism concerns even when nature is part of a destination’s place branding and, secondly, that workplace acculturation of staff journalists plays a part in their journalistic decision-making. It is noteworthy, however, that in addition to praising its tourism products and natural environment Doward’s published article (Doward 2004) began with a discussion of the environmental threat of introduced foxes and provided quite a news-like critique of the state’s tourism industry, indicating that there was in fact some scope for journalistic agency at the *Observer*.

### 7.2.2 Regulating Staff

From 1997 to 2000 and throughout the decade of the case study the Tasmanian government and the tourism industry were signatories to a strategic business plan called *Tourism 21* (see Chapter 6), which was periodically updated. In 2004, as in 1997, a whole-of-government approach remained a cornerstone of the agreement:

Brand management will occur hand-in-hand with positioning strategies, aiming to preserve tourism core appeals through policy and alignment across whole-of-government and relevant industries. (Tasmania & Tourism Council Tasmania 2004, p. 13)

The extent to which “positioning strategies” might be capable of preserving the core appeals of nature, cultural heritage and wine and food is debatable, but in 2006 the government clarified its approach to place branding in a document intended to explain and promote the practice to the community, explicitly noting a need to align stakeholders who may be in conflict in its effort to draw lessons from brand management in enterprises:

The challenge for governments in managing image is about developing strategies that achieve the same commitment and sense of purpose in their policy making and communication as brand managers achieve in enterprises. This requires strong alignment of message across a variety of stakeholder representatives, even some that may at times be in competition or in conflict with one another (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2006, n.p.)

The cusp of the new century heralded a significant brand extension for Forestry Tasmania, which, in the space of a single financial year, adopted a tourism strategy, gained national tourism accreditation, joined the state's peak tourism industry body and confirmed its intention to expand into large-scale commercial tourism (Forestry Tasmania 2000). Its first major attraction, the Tahune Forest AirWalk near Geeveston south-west of Hobart, began operation on 1 July 2001. Just seven months earlier, however, the organisation had announced its intention to log large sections of the Styx Valley west of the capital in the next three years (Buchman 2008), the consequences of which would be played out in protests and media coverage both nationally and internationally (see, for example, previous section). Important aspects of this activism would seek to persuade potential visitors that Tasmania's forestry practices were incompatible with a tourism brand founded on wilderness and nature (see in particular, Chapter 9).

Despite a whole-of-government approach to branding, some Tourism Tasmania staff found it difficult to reconcile tourism and logging. PRPs and guides interviewed for this case study were passionate advocates for the state: they had to be in order to do their job. It also seems reasonable to extrapolate from the extent of their professed attachment to the island that it was personally as well as professionally important to them for visiting travel journalists to feel a strong connection with the destination. They generally understood the watchdog role of journalism well enough to know that environmental conflict had news value. Sometimes, however, it was impossible for them to shield journalists from evidence of forestry, as this anecdote from the VJP's senior PRP responsible for international travel journalists for much of the 1990s and the early years of the

case study period demonstrates. Nicholls' comments are especially interesting in view of criticisms of logging in Tasmania that *National Geographic Traveler* would post online in 2004 (see Chapter 8).

It's— well, you've got to have blinkers on in public relations if you think that you're going to just market tourism in Tasmania as an eco-destination and not have people start to ask questions when they start to see things that aren't reflecting that marketing position. And that's what our dilemma has always been. We can't present ourselves as an ecotourism or a green destination and have clear-fell logging along the road. I often had that experience. I remember flying a *National Geographic Traveler* journalist in a helicopter and she only had two days here and she was doing a recci to see the story ideas and we took off in the helicopter from Cambridge and headed north over towards Cradle Mountain and straight over the Styx where they were logging. And she said, "What's that?" and I told her it was— I didn't— I just in a matter-of-fact straightforward way [said] that this was logging – forestry logging – and she said, "Oh, well, we've got a lot of that in Washington State" and didn't say any more, but it was a pretty devastating sight. (Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March)

While an account of forestry that Tourism Tasmania considered neutral could be provided by guides if travel journalists persisted in asking about forestry matters (Dowty, R 2009, pers. comm., 3 June; Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March), overt or perceived pressure not to give a personal opinion critical of Tasmania's logging practices or the pulp mill to curious travel journalists appears to have caused anxiety among some staff associated with the VJP. Urs Walterlin – a Swiss–Australian correspondent for a range of European publications, former president of the Foreign Correspondents' Association

(Australia & South Pacific), occasional travel journalist and co-publisher of the German-language travel site Wombat Blog ([www.wombatmagazin.com/](http://www.wombatmagazin.com/)) – went so far as to volunteer his assessment that the atmosphere he encountered among Tourism Tasmania staff and others in the island’s tourism industry was one of fear (Walterlin, U 2009, pers. comm., 26 June). This was strong criticism from a correspondent with a deep faith in the potential of foreign journalism to contribute positively to the mediation of local identity. Like many foreign correspondents, he had been hosted by Brand Tasmania’s VJP but he had also visited the state as a guest of Tourism Tasmania. In a 2007 submission to a Senate inquiry into the nature and conduct of Australia’s public diplomacy he framed the value of independent journalism about Australia in the foreign media as vital to public diplomacy and (in effect, though he did not use the term) place branding:

Australia is a country dependent on exporting not only goods and services but – for the purpose of attracting tourists – also an image, a lifestyle, indeed a whole way of life... It is foreign news agencies and journalists that predominately shape the views overseas audiences form of Australia. It is they who report on the reality of life, politics and business – unhindered by the constraints of being public servants or being otherwise dependent on the government. (Walterlin 2007)

Walterlin’s observation in 2009 that “the Tourism Tasmania people, they’re all very nice people but they are very scared people” (Walterlin, U 2009, pers. comm., 26 June) correlated closely with Flanagan’s claims of staff feeling intimidated, while Walterlin’s articles for the European press sometimes drew

attention to the state's environmental conflicts. From a public diplomacy perspective, his opinions had the potential to diminish not only Tasmania's standing in the international community but the reputation of Australia as a whole.

Concerns about the career risks of speaking out against forestry policies and practices sit uneasily with the fact that environmental activism or public opposition to logging or the pulp mill prior to an association with Tourism Tasmania was not necessarily an impediment to being recruited by the organisation. Di Hollister had been a vocal opponent of the first controversial road through the Tarkine to be described by the government as a tourist drive (see Chapter 6) and a Green member of the Tasmanian parliament before working for Tourism Tasmania's VJP. High-profile Launceston restaurateur and occasional expert wine and food guide for the VJP Kim Seagram was appointed to the Tourism Tasmania board despite having been quoted in an article in a national newspaper (Denholm 2007) in which wine and food tourism operators voiced their opposition to the Tamar Valley pulp mill proposal. And prior to her appointment as international PRP, Gabi Mocatta had published a travel article (Mocatta 2004) researched with a small amount of support from the VJP that had been critical of forestry policies related to the Tarkine, resulting in "press conferences and god knows" (Mocatta, G 2009, pers. comm., 7 September) about the appropriateness of that government assistance in light of her published criticisms. All three had exceptional credentials and possessed the kind of passion for place considered invaluable in Tourism Tasmania public relations. Moreover, following their appointment, Hollister and Mocatta were prepared to discuss concerns with travel journalists. Hollister said she would not enter into

forestry discussions proactively but if pressed might, in her own time, give an opinion on environmental issues which she would tell journalists was personal and off the record (Hollister, D 2009, pers. comm., 24 March 2009); such action she described as a sign of “authenticity” – an implicit reference to authenticity being a noted “core value” of the government’s place branding (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2006; Tourism Tasmania, n.d.a). And Mocatta recalled discussing the forestry debate with hosted international travel journalists and said she regarded promoting the state for Tourism Tasmania as “conservation work” (Mocatta, G 2009, pers. comm., 7 September): “I thought that the more people that know about Tasmania, the more visiting journalists that we have, the less trees will be cut down. And that for me was a really fundamental thing” (Mocatta, G 2009, pers. comm., 7 September).

Government biologist Nick Mooney (now retired), who was sometimes brought on board by Tourism Tasmania as an expert wildlife guide, was critical of the VJP’s attempts to shield travel journalists from evidence of logging and said he would sometimes talk to journalists about the issues:

...I used to get many complaints and it was often the last day of the trip when the journalist had half a day free or something and they're desperate to find someone who'd talk about an issue, 'cause they'd been managed and corralled so much, so I'd end up with some frantic bloody run-around for half the day or something, or get them to stay another day and stay at my place and we'd talk about the issue in depth, and that was the origin of these – often the arse end of a trip where they just got really frustrated. That's why I probably get a pretty good run in 'em – because I've been at the end and probably present as someone who's at last someone who will talk about these issues. And because I'm not ambitious career-wise – I'm ambitious in other ways but not career wise

– I don't really care if it pisses someone off, it just doesn't matter. (Mooney, N 2009, pers. comm., 15 June)

Mooney argued that the public had a right to know what was happening in the state's publicly owned forests:

One of the problems of [speaking out] is it cuts me out of access to some of these people. Because there have been many occasions where I've been left out of a— I would be a normal part of a list of contacts and I've been left off, and it's a contentious issue and they would rather just not worry about me saying the wrong thing. 'Cause I would happily take these journalists to wherever, if I had the time – to the middle of the Forestry logging areas or whatever. And if it's being done, it's being done on public money and with public approval. Why should you not be talking about it openly, you know. In fact you're obliged to. It's your money being used. But that's not how the powers see it. (Mooney, N 2009, pers. comm., 15 June)

And like journalist Walterlin, Mooney believed VJP guides and PRPs who allowed travel journalists to see a clear-felled forest were likely to be professionally vulnerable:

They used to go – I don't know if they still do – but they used to go to incredible trouble to avoid journalists going to say the Styx or somewhere contentious like that. And I know junior sort-of minders, you know, consultants who work for Tourism that will take visiting journalists around: they'd be given an incredibly strict thing, and I can remember some of them getting into severe shit 'cause they took these people down a logging road or something. (Mooney, N 2009, pers. comm., 15 June)

As the decade progressed, Hollister was one Tourism Tasmania guide who would find herself increasingly given what she described in 2009 as “very difficult jobs where I know that people are coming and they will probably write a story on what’s happening in the forests or what’s happening with the Tarkine road or whatever, but you can’t hide this, you can’t shield it” (Hollister, D 2009, pers. comm., 24 March). Unlike Mooney, who said he never declined an interview but had little faith in travel journalism’s capacity to accurately portray complex environmental issues (Mooney, N 2009, pers. comm., 15 June), Hollister spoke in cosmopolitan terms of her belief that the genre could contribute to political change:

I guess what we can hope for is that I guess if there’s enough outrage around the world at what’s happening in our amazing places like the forests perhaps there will be more pressure on the government, and on private companies to stop logging areas that in any other country would be in a national park or World Heritage Area... I don’t know. It’s as though, um, we really have to be aware that there are people from other parts of the world who are influential writers and reviewers and commentators who are aware that while this is a most amazing area, and amazing piece of land, and amazing heart-shaped piece of land at the end of the earth which can offer probably the greatest diversity of landscape that you’ll find in such a small piece of land in the Southern Hemisphere, that— that there are issues, that there are controversial issues that are still happening here and controversial practices. Now I still believe that tourism— I won’t— I won’t— I’m not that far— I’m not that big a radical, Lyn, to say that I would not continue to do this job, ’cause I really think that I can deliver in what I do, but at the same time, you know, departments and governments must be aware that questions are being asked by people who come. (Hollister, D 2009, pers. comm., 24 March)

There is no simple conclusion to be drawn from the views and experiences of PRPs and guides working for or with the VJP. In Wolfsfeld's political contest model, elites attempting to accumulate and maintain maximum bargaining power in their dealings with the media are keenly aware of the need to control the flow of information within and from their organisation (Wolfsfeld 1997, p. 27). The manner in which Tourism Tasmania's guides were encouraged to chaperone hosted journalists in the first decade of the 2000s was in some respects similar to that of "minders" in the post-Vietnam model (Lewis et al. 2006, see Chapter 2) of military media management. Accordingly, unless travel journalists participating in the VJP were able to make their own arrangements outside the constraints of their VJP itineraries, the level of freedom and assistance afforded to any wishing to include environmental conflict in their texts and the openness with which questions about that conflict would be addressed often depended on the attitude of the guides they were assigned and the PRPs overseeing their visits. Where PRPs' and guides' personal attitudes about forestry matters were at odds with government policy, the extent to which they were prepared to voice their own views and assist journalists wishing to investigate environmental conflict was further influenced by their personal understandings of what constraints might or might not attend their public sector employment and their levels of anxiety about what repercussions might ensue. Leaks can reduce authorities' control over the political environment but so can "dissensus" among elites (Wolfsfeld 1997). Here Wolfsfeld gives as an example "different factions within a government...promoting different frames about a conflict" (1997, p. 29), which suggests that in Tasmania this kind of dissensus

would relate to different government departments. In the case of Tourism Tasmania, however, there was dissensus within a single government entity.

### **7.3 Brand-Sensitive Cosmopolitan Concern**

When individuals employed or co-opted by Tourism Tasmania assisted travel journalists with an interest in forestry disputes or made a negative personal comment about logging, they were not leaking classified information but facilitating the mediation of an affective discourse incorporating positive perceptions of the environment and negative perceptions of forestry practices that combined textually to create a frame I will henceforth describe as “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”. Far from discouraging tourism, this discursive strategy promoted tourism by praising the place-branded environment, which simultaneously increased the impact of descriptions of environmental degradation. Operating within the discourse of accessible nature, “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern” could be teamed with a variety of perspectives on how much commercial tourism development should be permitted in protected areas. However, it was less commodified, more cosmopolitical than many of the other accessible-nature frames. One of its most important attributes was that it partially reconciled competing loyalties for some authority staff members, and also for travel journalists with challenger sympathies (see chapters 8 and 9). Unlike activist calls for distant publics to boycott tourism in an attempt to bring about policy change in the destination, “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern” generally represented concern for the place-branded environment as being in the place’s long-term best interests as a tourist destination.

It might be useful for me to elaborate here on a distinction I make between the frames of “place-branded cosmopolitan concern” and “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”. “Place-branded cosmopolitan concern” celebrated ecotourism for its sustainable practices and educative function but ignored any challenges to the brand of the destination being reviewed. “Brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”, by contrast, promoted the place-branded tourism attribute that the environment movement considered to be threatened and encouraged travel in order to experience and appreciate its global value, but represented it as contested and advocated greater protection. The latter was similar to the approach taken by the Wilderness Society in developing and promoting a walking tour of the Styx Valley forest (see the following section). What the government regarded as attacking the brand was, according to “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”, defending the brand from damage that it would suffer if the contested logging practices continued. This analysis supports Lury’s thesis that although brands generally function to regulate staff (see Arvidsson 2006; Lury 2004), at moments of tension “the open-endedness of the brand can contribute to an indeterminate politics or a politics of indeterminacy” (Lury, 2004, p. 141).

#### **7.4 Blurred Editorial Boundaries**

Even when kept to the tightest schedule, resourceful hosted travel journalists could use investigative news techniques to gather evidence about forestry disputes during their funded trip for publication in their resulting travel journalism article (Fair, J 2009, pers comm., 17 March; Miles, P 2009, pers. comm., 9 March; Greenwald, J 2009, pers. comm., 6 March) or on a return visit

for publication in a separate article (Greenwald, J 2009, pers. comm., 6 March; Walterlin, U 2009, pers. comm., 26 June). When this happened, the tourism VJP could simply choose not to host the journalist for future visits to the Tasmania, as it sometimes did (Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March), but this left the negative image unchallenged. An alternative tactic was for Tourism Tasmania's marketing unit, of which the VJP was a part, to "partner" with newspapers and magazines to produce supplements promoting the state with copy written by established travel journalists. This is the course of action Tourism Tasmania took some years after the publication of a critical article by *BBC Wildlife Magazine's* James Fair in 2000. In this section I compare and contrast the production and text of Fair's 2000 travel journalism with that of the 2005 supplement.

By the turn of the century, both the Wilderness Society (Wilderness Society 2011) and Forestry Tasmania (Forestry Tasmania in Tourism in Natural Areas Project Team 1993, Appendix B) had come to recognise the value of engaging in tourism for public relations purposes. In 1999 the Wilderness Society launched its campaign for the Styx forests 90 kilometres west of Hobart by decorating a 77-metre high *Eucalyptus regnans* in the valley to create what the movement described as "the tallest Christmas tree in the world" (Wilderness Society 2011). Around the same time, it in effect became an ecotourism operator itself when it started encouraging visitors to go to the valley to see the trees it was campaigning to save (Wilderness Society 2011; see also Chapter 9). The Styx Valley and the site of Forestry Tasmania's first large-scale commercial tourism operation the Tahune Forest AirWalk were both day-trips from Hobart, but when the AirWalk opened in 2001 it would benefit from government marketing via Forestry Tasmania and Tourism Tasmania on a scale far beyond

the financial resources of the Wilderness Society. In 2000, however, when *BBC Wildlife Magazine*'s James Fair was invited to join a group tour by Tourism Tasmania's VJP, he contacted the Wilderness Society before travelling and was briefed about its concerns for the Styx (Fair, J 2009, pers comm., 17 March). Fair then decided he would visit the Styx while in Tasmania – a side-trip he organised himself but which relied on the assistance of Mooney (see above), the government wildlife biologist who had been an expert guide on his VJP tour. In addition to being a wildlife expert, Mooney was someone PRPs considered a Tasmanian "character" (see Section 7.5.1), and this made him a popular choice as a guide for journalists early in the case study. Nevertheless, Fair's appreciation that such a side-trip was not something Tourism Tasmania would have wished to support reveals a degree of reflexivity about the promotional role of travel journalism and Mooney's willingness to assist him. As he commented in 2009, "It wasn't part of my itinerary, which isn't surprising in many ways" (Fair, J 2009, pers comm., 17 March).

Among British journalists on Fair's hosted visit was the *Observer*'s Euan Ferguson (Hollister, D 2009, pers. comm., 24 March; Fair, J 2009, pers. comm., 15 April), whose extensive, effusive article containing a section on the Bay of Fires Walk (Ferguson 2000, see Chapter 8) made the cover of his newspaper's "Escape" travel section with the tagline "Is this the most perfect place on God's earth? Euan Ferguson thinks so". At the *Observer*, freebies would often be allocated to well-regarded staff writers willing to spend some of their own holidays researching travel stories (Doward, J 2009, pers. comm., 26 August) and the following comment from the newspaper's Doward links enthusiasm with the task of selling the destination to readers:

[Y]ou're trying to make someone share your enthusiasm and the spirit of the trip...so you try and share some of that sense of excitement and fervour with the readers, and plus you get a bit carried away in the writing and it becomes a bit too effusive and you miss out on a lot of points. But hopefully some of your enthusiasm may rub off on the readers and they might investigate Tasmania for themselves, having read a few paragraphs of your article. (Doward, J 2009, pers. comm., 26 August)

The Tasmanian tourism industry considered the VJP “very valuable” (Tourism Industry Council Tasmania CEO Daniel Hanna 2009, pers. comm., 26 June) in gaining coverage of its products and the destination in travel media, but Ferguson’s article revealed that the VJP could, on occasion, also deliver the government itself significant direct exposure for its framing of tourism and forestry as compatible with each other, and of forestry as compatible with Tasmania’s “natural” branding. In his text, Ferguson praised the island’s scenic attractions seen from the air but also touched on forestry matters, simultaneously publicising the impressive age of the state’s “old, old forests”, describing its logging of these forests as “the careful sustainable stuff, for the whole eco thing is huge down here”, promoting forestry roads near Cradle Mountain as providing access for tourists, and endorsing the state’s wine and food (Ferguson 2000, p. 3). Such exposure in a newspaper like the *Observer* (the *Guardian*’s Sunday sister paper, with hundreds of thousands of readers) was an outstanding return on government investment in Tourism Tasmania’s VJP, but as Fair’s quite different representation of forestry practices demonstrates, there were no *guarantees* of positive coverage even when travel journalists were wined and dined. In his piece for *BBC Wildlife Magazine*, Fair employed the same storyline of a plane

flight over forests followed by a drive along logging roads to frame the roads in the Styx Valley as disruptive to nesting eagles, the state's forestry practices as "the kiss of death for biodiversity", its logging industry as "rampant", and the government as culpable. Fair used his own first-hand experience of the forest to frame Tasmania's natural branding as flawed and employed the voice of a credentialed local – the scientist Mooney – to give credibility to his claims: "As we leave, Mooney gestures incredulously at the devastation. 'In 20 years' time, people will be appalled by this sort of destruction,' he says. 'Just like whaling today'" (Fair 2000, p. 84).

Fair was proud of his 2000 feature critical of logging in the Styx, and viewed it as evidence of his magazine's editorial independence and good journalism:

I'd been in touch with the Wilderness Society, so I went out there [to Tasmania] and I happened to meet someone from, well he was from the Parks and Wildlife Service. You know. You know, I'd always ask people about those sorts of issues. We were talking about it and basically as a result of the conversation he said, Well, I'll take you out there if you want – if you've got a day spare. And I thought, well, that would be an interesting thing to do...he was going up there anyway, I think. He was going to investigate a wedge-tailed eagle's nest for some reason, I can't remember why. And he said, "Well, come along if you want," and I just thought, well that would be something I hadn't seen on this trip. Obviously a tourist board is keener to take you away from places like that. I think as any good self-respecting journalist would do, you just do a bit of research and it doesn't take long before, when you do it in Tasmania, things like the Franklin River come up, or Tasmania and environment, or Tasmania and wildlife. (Fair, J 2009, pers. comm., 17 March)

By his own assessment, Mooney was a strategist as well as a scientist (Mooney, N 2009, pers. comm., 15 June). As someone who was also an occasional guide for commercial wildlife operators, he appreciated the challenges they faced in making their businesses profitable and sustainable, but he believed they had the potential to contribute to a strong, rational case for conservation by giving a monetary value to wildlife (Mooney, N 2009, pers. comm., 15 June). This frame, which I call “the ecotourism solution”, can achieve contrasting discursive outcomes, depending on whether it is paired with “compatible sectors” or “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”. In the following interview extract, Mooney combines “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern” and “the ecotourism solution” to undermine the government’s frame of “compatible sectors”, all within the discourse of accessible nature: in the last few sentences of the quote he rejects any suggestion that forestry and tourism are compatible by using his own support for good ecotourism access to natural places as an argument *against* the forestry industry:

I used to go down every summer to the Antarctic guiding on the Russian ships, and [in Tasmania I worked a lot for ] Tonia Cochrane...and the Cheesemans [Ecological Group]. These are visiting specialist wildlife groups that come here from the States... And that’s just to keep an eye on the industry and what people’s expectations are and all the rest of it. And those people I’ll take to where I want to see the animals. But often those places are obliterated now by forestry. So we can’t go to a lot of the places that were incredibly convenient. ‘Cause, if you think about it, you’re actually— the government will give you a story that there are kazillions of trees in reserves, whatever, but they’re simply not accessible. So really you end up as a tourism operator competing with log trucks for the same trees, because you both need an economy of access,

mileage, good roads, all this stuff. So there is a head-on collision of values there, which in conservation terms there might be a trade-off with lots of protected areas elsewhere but it's not much good for people who want to just be there and enjoy it. The accessibility is a real issue. (Mooney, N 2009, pers. comm., 15 June)

Mooney's discourse here is an example of strategic communication through thematic interpretation (Ham, Housego & Weiler 2005), as taught to tourism operators and other tourism industry stakeholders in workshops funded by Tourism Tasmania in the early 2000s: "Simply put, a theme is a take-home message; it's the moral of the story... [T]hematic interpretation at its best... causes us to make meaning. Logically, these meanings will be extended to you, your organisation or business, and even to the state of Tasmania" (Ham, Housego & Weiler 2005, pp. 33-34). Mooney's subject is logging roads, so he uses the metaphor of a "head-on collision of values"; the purpose of logging is to provide economic returns to the state, so he relates his own ecotourism credentials and frames himself as guardian of the wildlife tourism "industry"; access to markets, infrastructure and competition are hallmarks of capitalist discourse, so he deploys these claims in support of his own case. His take-home message to me as a scholar researching travel journalism is intended to be a clear and memorable refutation of Tasmania's place-branding message that forestry and ecotourism can peacefully coexist: in Mooney's discourse forestry and ecotourism are fierce competitors for access to scarce natural resources.

Differences in the way Ferguson and Fair chose to represent the forestry issue in their 2000 texts can be explained to some extent by the audiences their publications were targeting. The *Observer's* readers were wealthy,

technologically savvy urban professionals in their 30s “starting to have kids and moving up the old property ladder and very curious about the world and interested in current affairs in the world at large” (Doward, J 2009, pers. comm., 26 August). *BBC Wildlife Magazine*, by contrast, had a longstanding interest in conservation (BBC Press Office 2003). With its “passion for wildlife” (BBC Media Centre 2011b), it was a more likely forum for the mediation of “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”. Indeed, after relating Mooney’s narrative of the homeless eagles, Fair carefully resuscitated Tasmania’s natural branding with glowing praise for a marine wildlife tourism product that had only recently begun operation but would ultimately win many accolades from international travel magazines and make donations to environmental programs including the government’s Parks and Wildlife Service. Importantly, however, connection-building and meaning-making that proved textually decisive had taken place on the ground in Tasmania because Fair shared Mooney’s interest in the good health of the ecotourism industry and faith in “the ecotourism solution”, as the following interview extract from Fair attests:

I do subscribe to the idea that in order to protect an environment or ecosystem, countries and habitat or whatever, one of the best ways you can do that is send people there who want to see wildlife – that gives people an incentive for protecting the environment. (Fair, J 2009, pers. comm., 17 March)

Five years after Fair’s initial hosted visit to Tasmania, Tourism Tasmania hosted him again, to research and write a 24-page supplement for distribution in his magazine (Fair, J 2009, pers comm., 17 March). Until late 2011 *BBC Wildlife Magazine* was published by BBC Worldwide (BBC Media Centre 2011a; BBC

Press Office 2011), a subsidiary of the government-owned British Broadcasting Corporation tasked “to maximise the value of the BBC’s assets for the benefit of the licence fee payer by creating, acquiring, developing and exploiting media content and brands around the world” (BBC Worldwide n.d.). As such, *BBC Wildlife Magazine* accepted advertising, and this meant Fair’s editorial position in 2005 was less clear cut than it had been in 2000:

When I went in 2000, as is the deal with any travel piece of that nature, you take the trip and they have no right to see the copy before it’s published or anything like that. Although they didn’t say after at all, “I wish you hadn’t written anything about the Styx Valley”, or anything like that. Whereas in 2005 there was a slightly less sort-of— It wasn’t quite as straightforward a relationship in that sense because we were being paid to produce a supplement by the tourist board. (Fair, J 2009, pers. comm., 17 March)

In 2000, Fair had not felt overt editorial pressure from Tourism Tasmania to avoid forestry issues, commenting that “they weren’t going to take me to the Styx Valley but they certainly weren’t unhappy that I went” (Fair, J 2009, pers comm., 17 March). As evidence that the organisation had been pleased with the article he produced as a result, he cited its desire for him to write the text for the magazine supplement (Fair, J 2009, pers comm., 17 March). In view of Tourism Tasmania’s expectation of positive coverage from hosted travel journalists, however, harnessing the promotional reach and reputation of *BBC Wildlife Magazine* via a supplement ensured a more predictable outcome than funding Fair for a second visit to write travel journalism. This interpretation is supported

by Fair's equivocation in regard to the level of editorial control Tourism Tasmania exerted in 2005:

I certainly talked to people about [environmental issues]. And I did a box. I mean it was more than a box, it was a substantial box in the supplement looking at the issues to do with the damming of the Franklin River and the knock-on environmental movement that sprung from that. And we looked at how that is replicated today in the campaign against logging and stuff like that. Now that was one area where I had to— they did— I can't remember exactly what it was but there were a couple of things they weren't happy about me writing, the Tasmanian tourist board. It wasn't particularly censorious but it was a little bit censorious...but they didn't stop me from putting the sort-of— you know, we drew attention to the political and environmental – call it what you like – battles of the past 20, 30 years. We did— you know, they weren't going to try and stop us from mentioning that. And we had a little sort-of battle over it, I seem to remember. (Fair, J 2009, pers. comm., 17 March)

The box to which Fair referred above was entitled “The dam busters”. While reporting that “conservationists say that some old-growth forests are still being logged” and “arguments over logging can and do carry on well into the night”, it was otherwise dismissive of Tasmania's contemporary environmental conflicts. It stated that “[p]rotection of the environment is taken seriously by politicians in Tasmania”, noted recently expanded areas of protection in the Styx Valley and the Tarkine, and quoted government figures for the total landmass and areas of native forest already protected, which it referred to as “environmental safeguards that few other countries in the world can match” (Fair 2005, p. 18).

Old-growth logging was not merely a claim by the environment movement at this time but a fact. To attribute this information only to conservationists rather than also to a government source gave the impression that it was a matter of interpretation. The remainder of the boxed text concerned itself with the Franklin dam campaign (see Chapter 6). However, in 2005 that subject was in no way controversial. Far from considering the Franklin campaign something that should be forgotten, Tourism Tasmania actively promoted cruises on the Gordon River that made this long-ago dispute an important part of their interpretation. As such, the inclusion in the supplement of this piece of history cannot be regarded as evidence of any lack of censorship by Tourism Tasmania. Fair did, however, succeed in slightly reframing Tourism Tasmania's discourse in this regard by adding that the Franklin campaign had "set a precedent for future environmental battles" (Fair 2005, p. 18).

Fair's comment in the supplement box that protection had recently been extended to parts of the Styx Valley and the Tarkine was accurate. The agreement, which provided a level of protection below that of national park, had included significant assistance to the Tasmanian forestry industry, and its authors had framed this in terms of its employment and tourism benefits, in keeping with Tasmanian government framing of a symbiosis between forestry and tourism:

The Agreement recognises that timber and tourism can co-exist to create a secure future for country towns. Tasmania aims to be the supplier of choice to the world – a place recognised for quality forest products with world-class environmental credentials. (Australian Government & Tasmanian Government 2005)

Nevertheless, there was continuing environmental controversy in the state surrounding the activities and actions of Forestry Tasmania's biggest client, Gunns Ltd., and ongoing international activism in relation to the Styx Valley (see Section 7.2.1 and chapters 8 and 9).

Supplements in newspapers and magazines were one of Tourism Tasmania's favoured tactics for maintaining or regaining control of its branding message of Tasmania as "natural", as further evidenced by a subsequent supplement in London's *Daily Telegraph* (Telegraph Create et al. 2008) subtitled "Your 16-page guide to one of the most unspoilt islands on Earth", which included articles from a number of writers who had previously participated in the VJP, including Fair. Thus, the VJP can be seen as an effective mechanism for drawing travel journalists into broader networks of promotion. For Tourism Tasmania, the *BBC Wildlife Magazine* supplement added value to Tasmania's branding by association with the brand of a magazine it described in its annual-report summary of the campaign as "one of the world's most credible wildlife publications" (Tourism Tasmania 2006, p. 20). Yet both the July 2000 travel journalism article and the October 2005 Tasmania supplement were entitled "Explorer's Guides"; and although the latter was a 24-page supplement whereas the former was part of the magazine proper, the supplement was prominently branded as *BBC Wildlife Magazine*. *BBC Wildlife Magazine* distributed 50,000 copies of the supplement to readers of its October 2005 edition and supported this with online content (Tourism Tasmania 2006, p. 20). An additional 3000 copies were downloaded from Austravel's website. In its annual report Tourism Tasmania described the supplement as brand-aligned and "Tasmania's major campaign for the United Kingdom market in 2005–2006", reporting that

Austravel's "land sales grew by 150 per cent over the campaign period" (Tourism Tasmania 2006, p. 20). Such a concerted and comprehensive marketing campaign can have left little trace of the concern for Tasmania's forests *BBC Wildlife Magazine* had published in 2000. And whatever its tourism marketing purpose, from a public sphere perspective it succeeded in circulating claims and frames that countered those of actors opposed to Tasmania's forestry practices that had gained access to the British news media in 2004 (see Section 7.2.1).

## 7.5 The Power of Elite Networks

Although on occasion the VJP proved to be a source of travel journalists and other writers who would later contribute to marketing products, its primary aim was, of course, to gain positive coverage in travel journalism, because this could be obtained at far less expense than the cost of a supplement. Hutchins and Lester note that the interests of media outlets and their workers are "more closely aligned with dominant powers existing within the space of flows...than they are [with] grassroots social movements concerned with the preservation and/or conversation of place" (2006, p. 437). This often fortified Tasmania's place brand against dissensus within government tourism organisations and the tourism industry, whether or not visiting travel journalists accepted financial assistance.

In all areas of news, reporters are required to negotiate and interpret the agendas and messages of the individuals and groups that they deal with... Those advocating or acceding to the interests of capital are more likely to be located within the privileged formation of the space of flows. In this environment,

media managers, public relations consultants, spin doctors, stage-managed events and image manipulation are an accepted reality – “part of the game” – of engagement with the media. (Hutchins and Lester 2006, p. 446)

### 7.5.1 Networks and Professional Judgement

It is a paradox perhaps indicative of the brand’s capacity for a degree of autonomy and agency (see Lury 2004) that the productivity of brand resistance from within was sometimes irresistible to those charged with filtering out incompatible expressions (see Arvidsson 2006). When the *San Francisco Chronicle*’s travel editor, John Flinn, expressed an interest in Tasmanian tigers and devils prior to a visit to the state in 2004 funded by his newspaper, Tourism Tasmania enlisted the assistance of senior government wildlife biologist Mooney (see above) as an expert guide. For many years, Mooney had been charged by the government with attempting to verify supposed sightings of the extinct thylacine (Tasmanian tiger) and had gained a marketable fillip from his reputation as a tiger hunter (e.g. Flinn 2005b). He was also a Tasmanian devil expert. In the following comment, former senior Tourism Tasmania PRP Nicholls acknowledges Mooney’s outspokenness but also his public relations appeal:

He [Mooney] has got an opinion, had an opinion. And he often got into trouble I think, with Parks and Wildlife I think, for being – not overly opinionated, but for having an opinion at all. But he’s a character, and I thought that would be the perfect person for John to travel with because he could tell him the science, he knew it all, he was funny, he was interesting, and I felt having talked to John that he would like Nick, and Nick was very happy to drive him up there. He said, “I’ll just drive him up there and take him out to Joe’s,” and that’s what he did. (Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March)

Nicholls' comment that Mooney often "got into trouble" suggests that Fair's 2000 article may have had repercussions within the bureaucracy despite his belief that Tourism Tasmania was unconcerned about his visit to the Styx Valley. However, a strong, professionally respectful relationship that developed between Flinn and Nicholls during his trip (Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March; Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March) meant she was comfortable with introducing him to Mooney.

The tourism operator mentioned above by Nicholls – Geoff "Joe" King – operated a night-time wildlife tour that often featured Tasmanian devils feeding in the wild. A fifth-generation Tasmanian cattle farmer turned conservationist, King had been schooled in wildlife tourism by Mooney and adopted early by the VJP (King, G 2009, pers. comm., 7 June; Mooney, interview, 15 June 2009; Nicholls, interview, 9 March 2009). In the period of the case study he was particularly popular as a travel journalism source for what PRPs regarded as his Tasmanian authenticity (Dowty, R 2009, pers. comm., 3 June; Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March; McGinity, M 2009, pers. comm., 23 October; Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March) and for his tourism product's value in enabling Tasmania to capitalise on international recognition of the Tasmanian devil. Since the thylacine (Tasmanian tiger) was hunted to extinction in the 1930s, the Tasmanian devil has been Tasmania's top natural predator. The marsupial is endemic to the state, having become extinct on the Australian mainland following the arrival of a more efficient predator, the dingo. The devil is also the only sizeable native Tasmanian land mammal that displays anything resembling marketable ferocity and makes a spectacle of its carnivorousness (Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts 2005): it is black with a white stripe

across its chest, is the size of a small, stocky dog, has large, fierce jaws, and screeches and fights while feeding on carcasses. During their interviews for this research, a number of Tourism Tasmania PRPs and travel journalists said they believed the Tasmanian devil was one of the few things overseas publics knew about the island. This was primarily because it was appropriated in the 1950s by the US media giant Warner Bros. (Tourism Tasmania 2007a) as the basis for a cartoon character named Taz.<sup>11</sup> A naturalistic image of the animal has been the emblem of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service since 1971 (Quarmby 2006), while a cartoon character apparently intended to be humorously cute rather than monstrosously funny in the Warner Bros style was, for many years, part of Tourism Tasmania's marketing. Of the 11 British and United States travel journalists interviewed for this case study, seven talked about the Tasmanian devil in their interviews, five mentioned the devil in at least one of their articles, and in five of those articles the word "devil" appeared in the title. Past president of the Foreign Correspondents' Association Urs Walterlin also talked about the devil in his interview and forwarded as one of two examples of his international travel journalism a piece about the animal. Considered in aggregate, these factors suggest that in the period of the case study the Tasmanian devil occupied a position of symbolic significance in the minds of international travel journalists reporting on Tasmania.

When reviewing international travel journalism about Tasmania and analysing the interviews with travel journalists hosted or referred by Tourism Tasmania, one of the tourism operators in addition to Ken Latona (see chapter 6

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<sup>11</sup> Indeed, 1939 newsreel footage in Australia's National Film and Sound Archive shows a dockside event at which the Tasmanian premier of the day, AG Ogilvie, is entrusting a crate of Tasmanian devils to a representative from Warner Bros, who he says will deliver them to the Los Angeles Zoo, where the premier hopes they will inspire people to visit Tasmania (Cinesound Movietone Productions 1939, in National Film and Sound Archives n.d.).

and 8) who emerged as particularly prominent was King. Strong links between King and Tourism Tasmania were evident in the talk of all three interviewed United States and British travel journalists who covered King's operation, and King was able to confirm that most of the travel journalists who visited him up to the time of interview had been hosted or referred to him by Tourism Tasmania (King, G 2009, pers. comm., 7 June). In 2003, when the government admitted that the endemic devil was suffering from a contagious facial tumour that threatens to make the species extinct in the wild, the importance of King's operation to the VJP increased. The Tasmanian Government and the University of Tasmania created a Tasmanian Devil Appeal to raise money for devil research and in 2005 Tourism Tasmania and the Parks and Wildlife Service, as part of a broad wildlife tourism strategy, invoked cosmopolitan concern for the devil in an effort to manage the potential damage the disease could cause to the brand (Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts 2005)<sup>12</sup>. Within another two years the tourism office would be making public references to the commercial advantage of supporting the appeal:

Following the 2007 success of G'day USA<sup>13</sup>, opportunities exist to leverage "cause marketing" (e. g. raising money to fight the Tasmanian "devil disease") activities with philanthropic organisations and develop an education style product targeting affiliate and alumni groups with an interest in nature and wildlife. (Tourism Tasmania 2007b, parenthetical example included in original text)

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<sup>12</sup> I contributed to the text of this short public document produced by Tourism Tasmania and the Parks and Wildlife Service, based on a consultants' report by Inspiring Place Pty Ltd, which was a separate and much more comprehensive document. I also attended some of the workshops that informed the consultant's report. Geoff King and Nick Mooney were part of the reference group.

<sup>13</sup> G'Day USA is an annual Australian and state government tourism and public diplomacy event in New York and Los Angeles.

Asked whether there was a potential tourism benefit to publicising devil disease, Senior Tourism Tasmania PRP Dowty spoke of some tourists being attracted to the state out of environmental concern and others visiting in pursuit of “bragging rights” for having seen a Tasmanian devil before the species became extinct (Dowty, R 2009, pers. comm., 3 June). This view was supported by Flinn, who saw the latter as a stronger motivation than the former for including the devil in his article about Tasmania (Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March). The value of the devil disease story to Tourism Tasmania’s broader marketing and public relations objectives was evident in Dowty’s discussion of her concern for the devil, as the following extract demonstrates:

What we've done as Tourism Tasmania is to really take this up as a social cause and put effort wherever we can to raise awareness with people who might be able to make a difference...and bringing it up in the Visiting Journalist Program and making journalists aware so that they're talking about it. We were really fortunate for G'Day USA 2008 that a journalist that we had been working with had a story picked up by *American Way* magazine, which is the American Airlines in-flight magazine, on the plight of the Tasmanian devil for their December in-flight and were in market in January making the big noise about Tasmania. (Dowty, R 2009, pers. comm., 3 June)

Asked what sort of experiences she would recommend for journalists visiting Tasmania to write about its devils, Dowty nominated wildlife parks (unnamed), scientific experts (those she mentioned in the course of the interview did not include Mooney) and King, whom she described as offering a “once-in-a-lifetime experience” (Dowty, R 2009, pers. comm., 3 June). King, for his part, was comfortable with Tourism Tasmania’s efforts to publicise the devil disease

(King, G 2009, pers. comm., 7 June), as was guide Hollister (Hollister, D 2009, pers. comm., 24 March), who often brought travel journalists to visit King. Her broader motivation for promoting Tasmanian tourism, however, was her belief that it provided alternative employment to extractive industries such as forestry (Hollister, D 2009, pers. comm., 24 March). Like Mooney, she saw tourism as having the potential to alter the attitudes of Tasmanians (Hollister, D 2009, pers. comm., 24 March).

King's initial ambition in offering a wildlife experience and joining the VJP – beyond its significant value in publicising his business – had been to promote his own somewhat tangential environmental message. His efforts to rehabilitate the coastal sections of his property and protect its Aboriginal hut depressions were being undermined by locals who would sometimes drive recreational vehicles across his land, and he wanted to bring a form of cosmopolitan pressure to bear on the government to stop these people's destructive pursuits:

I recognised the potential for advertising through that initially, with the Visiting Journalist Program, and then at the same time I was fighting some quite, what seemed like overwhelming environmental battles with the off-road activity that was taking place. My property goes along the coastline, and the foreshore and my property were being used by motorbikes and four-wheel-drives, and I also then realised that by exposing this place to the world, if you like, the response from the people that I was bringing here was fantastic, they loved it. And so I thought, well, one way to get that message out was to use this journalist program to expose this place to the world. So that's what I enthusiastically did – threw my support into the Visiting Journalists Program. (King, G 2009, pers. comm., 7 June)

In the complex dance of staged authenticity, concern, allure and publicity that ecotourism demands, it was important for King to position himself as disinterested in order to be able to spread his own conservation messages effectively, but in so doing he, like Mooney, contributed to the creation of a kind of an “ironic, reflexive brand persona” (Holt 2002, pp. 83-84) that VJP staff knew from experience appealed to travel journalists. The following comments from PRP Nicholls and travel journalist Flinn clearly demonstrate the nature and effectiveness of King’s public relations appeal:

[King] was smart and funny and eccentric and a passionate person and I just knew he’d make a great story. And he was willing to do it. He learned to put himself out there, because a lot of people don’t want to do that. It’s hard.  
(Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm. 9 March)

[W]hat I liked about it was that it was so uncommercial. Nick and I just drove over to Geoff's house. We had dinner with his wife and kids, and sat out on the porch and drank a couple of beers. And as it got dark we just got in his truck and just drove over to where his thing was. You wouldn't have anything like that in the States. Everything would have been—the guide would have probably had a little uniform and a badge on and you would have had to sign 18 waivers and it would have been very official. This just felt like it was just very casual. And to me it spoke somewhat to what I said earlier about it being an unaffected place compared to a lot of the rest of the world. (Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March)

As travel editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Flinn was himself influential but he also had strong affiliations with some of the elite of popular travel writing and publishing (see, for example, following quote from Flinn, J

2009, pers. comm., 2 March). Despite earlier efforts by Nicholls to entice the *Chronicle* to send a travel journalist to Tasmania (Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March), Flinn's visit had, in fact, been prompted by the personal recommendation of guide-book company Lonely Planet's co-founder Maureen Wheeler, a board member of Tourism Tasmania from February 2000 until February 2006:

I'd known Tony and Maureen for quite a while just through work and there's a big summer travel writing conference in northern California that they usually come to and I'm always at. And so we had gotten to know each other there and then when I came to Australia before going down to Tassie I stayed with them in Melbourne for a few days and anyway they're old friends and she, I think— had Maureen, I don't know how— had unofficially become the sort-of advocate for Tasmania in terms of promoting it. And I don't know how but she just basically kept talking about how wonderful it was. And convinced me I ought to go there. (Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March)

As mentioned earlier, in the course of his visit Flinn also developed a strong professional respect for Nicholls:

I deal with people like that all over the world and some are a lot better than others and she was excellent and I judge how good they are 1) by whether they listen to what I am trying to accomplish and then help me get that or if they try to say, "Okay, I've got a journalist in my clutches now. I'm going to try to steer his agenda into things I want him to do. And she wasn't like that at all. I told her the kind of things I was interested in and then she said... "If you're interested in devils you ought to talk to Nick Mooney, and I'll set up things like that for you. (Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March)

Having decided to visit the island, Flinn's overriding concern was to serve his readers' interests as expertly as possible (Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March). San Francisco has a large and affluent gay population, and Flinn was aware these readers might have heard that Tasmania had once had Draconian anti-homosexual laws. As well as writing about the Tasmanian devil he wanted to use his article to alert his gay readers to the fact that Tasmania's anti-gay laws had now changed. This change had come about following nine years of campaigning that had mobilised and deployed cosmopolitan concern locally, nationally and internationally. At the time of Flinn's visit, the person who had led that campaign, Rodney Croome, was working closely with Tourism Tasmania in a project to improve Tasmania's reputation within gay and lesbian circles. Croome sometimes guided journalists with an interest in gay matters and Nicholls arranged for him to meet Flinn and show him around Hobart (Croome, R 2009, pers. comm., 2 April; Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March; Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March). While strongly supportive of the environment movement and grateful for what he had been able to learn from the Franklin dam campaign for his own activism, in his promotion of the state since the legislative changes Croome focused on presenting a positive story of a gay-friendly Tasmania:

[I]n my public role, I only talk about gay and lesbian issues... In that regard I've got a positive story to tell. And there are plenty of people in Tasmania that are far better qualified than me to talk about the forests, and I leave that to them. That's not my public role. Just as I wouldn't expect them to turn around and say, "Our forests are being trashed, but it's great for gay people." It just wouldn't make any sense. (Croome, R 2009, pers. comm., 2 April)

Here then we see cultural and political cosmopolitanism diverging rather than converging in source struggles for publicity via travel journalism. In such circumstances, the happy face of cultural cosmopolitanism can gain ground even when there is extensive coverage of environmental conflict in the local news media, the travel journalist concerned has a news journalism background (Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March) and the journalist is travelling without financial assistance from the VJP.

Flinn was also guided during his visit by Ken Latona (re Latona, see chapters 6 and 8), who took the journalist part way along the Overland Track in Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park to one of his commercial huts, where Flinn enjoyed a hot shower and a gourmet meal. In his text, Flinn implicitly acknowledged concerns with luxury ecotourism by positioning himself as a convert: “There was a time in my headstrong youth when I looked down on this sort of backcountry decadence. I’m happy to report that with the passing of years I’ve gotten over it” (Flinn 2005a). Latona, King, Mooney and Croome were among those who featured prominently in Flinn’s article “A Devil of a Time in Tasmania” (Flinn 2005a), while Mooney was the star of a second article, “Desperately Hoping to Catch a Tasmanian Tiger by the Tail” (Flinn 2005b). Although Flinn and Mooney discussed forestry issues on their lengthy drive to King’s remote property (Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March), and although Flinn was travelling at the expense of his paper, he did not refer to Tasmania’s forestry dispute in his articles (Flinn, 2005a, 2005b). Nor did he mention King’s concerns about off-road vehicles riding along the foreshore of his property. Asked why he did not report the forestry dispute, he answered that it was not “an imminent, huge problem that would have affected an area that a tourist might

care about” but also that he felt it was “a little bit out of bounds” (Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March):

I did come across [the forestry debate]. And I was aware of it before I went there. And obviously it's a big issue in Tasmania but frankly every place in the world that has some sort of nice ecological aspect to it, it's threatened. So I didn't think the situation in Tasmania was unique enough, and the threat wasn't imminent – like, if you don't get there within a year it's all going to be gone. So in this case I left it out. Although I think I did hear from some readers who were familiar with the situation who said, “Yeah, you really should have talked about that more”...you can't include everything in a story. And if I was writing about another area that was in danger of imminent environmental destruction I think I would have made that more prominent... I had quite a bit of time with Nick Mooney because he picked me up in Hobart and drove me up to the north-west corner. So we spent a whole day in the car together. And we talked about a lot of things. And I think we did talk about that a little bit. It wasn't like he was saying, “You've got to write about this, you've got to write about this.” But again I thought it was, in the context of what I was writing about, I thought it was just a little bit out of bounds, or a little bit beyond what I had intended to write about... If it was really an imminent, huge problem that would have affected an area that a tourist might care about I might have written more about it. (Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March)

As the discourse of a travel editor who was also a former news journalist, Flinn's comments here are in keeping with a firm distinction he felt needed to be made between news journalism and travel journalism. This distinction, in his opinion, was so pronounced that it made him uncomfortable with the term “travel *journalist*”, which he felt implied considerable journalistic rigour – the “searching of, and dealing more in terms of hard-edged controversy and things

like that and also just doing more investigation” (Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March). Yet although he preferred to refer to himself as a travel *writer*, Flinn did not always avoid controversy in his texts. In a 2007 article he referred to in our discussion, for example, he wrote about a wildlife tourism venture that enabled tourists to swim with endangered manatees in Florida. Although he privileged the operator’s framing of his product as helping to increase public support for the animals’ continued protection, he did not shy away from giving the views and contact details of environmentalists’ opposed to the practice (Flinn, J 2009, pers. comm., 2 March). Thus, in the case of Flinn’s Tasmania articles, we may give some weight to the expectations and deep structural embedding of his tourism networks implied by the phrase “a little bit out of bounds” in influencing his opinion that, despite Tasmania’s “natural” branding, unprotected forests were not of interest to potential travellers and, consequently, neither were the state’s forest conflicts. Flinn’s readiness to observe that a number of readers had disagreed with his judgement (see above quote) highlights his own reflexivity about the subjectivity of travel journalism but is also of interest as evidence that there is an appetite for political comment in travel journalism among some readers.

### **7.5.2 Making a Mark**

In 2007 United States freelance journalist Sharon Otterman visited Tasmania for a week to research a travel feature for the *New York Times* and decided to write about the lifestyle of its capital, Hobart. Otterman was paid a bit over \$1,000 by the *Times* and was not permitted to accept any free transport to get to or from the destination, or any “freebies” while she was in the state – that, she said, was the newspaper’s strict policy (Otterman, S 2009, pers. comm., 20 June). But she was

visiting relatives in Australia and they were travelling to Tasmania together so she had decided to combine her holiday with freelance travel reporting. She had a strong background as a foreign news journalist but little experience in travel journalism. In her view, travel journalism was distinguished from news journalism by its celebratory style and function:

Travel writing's weird. You're not looking for the blemishes. You are looking to really write something about why a place is really great, without lying about it. But that's the point of travel writing, is you're trying to set out something for a traveller who wants to go and explore a place to really enjoy it... We have the largest newspaper in the world on the Internet, so if you put something in the *New York Times* it gets very widely read. And it presents a really weird set of issues about when you know that your reporting is going to have an impact on the place that you write about... You just have to get over the fact that you're actually going to help people – you're actually going to help the place – and not feel guilty that you didn't mention or stress the negatives, and you stressed the things that were so nice about the place. And just handle the fact that you might actually help people as a reporter, which sometimes we're not used to doing. (Otterman, S 2009, pers. comm., 20 June)

The story of the production, circulation and networked connections of Otterman's article, for which in her freelance capacity at the time she was paid so little, is a telling insight into the remarkable commercial as well as branding value of travel journalism in some of the world's most prestigious publications. One of the people the *New York Times* had "helped" even before Otterman had arrived in Hobart was Richard Crawford, co-founder and, from 2004 to 2007 inclusive, joint operator of a then-innovative accommodation venue called the

Henry Jones Art Hotel located on the Hobart waterfront in an old sandstone jam factory. Since opening in 2004 the hotel had won dozens of national and international awards, including many in high-profile international travel magazines. In her interview, Otterman noted that someone at the Henry Jones during her visit had mentioned the value of an article by Bonnie Tsui (2005), former associate editor of *Travel + Leisure*, that had appeared in the *New York Times* soon after the hotel had opened, further demonstrating her awareness of the publicity value that would accrue to Hobart when her own text was published. Here Crawford describes the commercial value – particularly in an era of online publication – of that earlier short article by Tsui entirely about his hotel:

When we first opened, I reckon after six months, I'd heard so many people say we read about you in the *New York Times*. And I thought, well this is quite irregular. I know we put a journalist up for the night from the *New York Times* and they did a full-page story which used to be in my office and I was very proud of it, cause the media content was valued at \$250,000, which we could never in our wildest dreams have bought, but to get that value meant millions of people read it. But I thought: one paper? one day? Why, six months later, people, Americans, saying, "Yeah, we saw you in the *New York Times*". Then it clicked, literally: it was online...these stories live online, forever. (Crawford, R 2009, pers. comm 17 March)

Otterman gave the Henry Jones another very generous review in the *Times*, referring to it as the “anchor of Hobart’s renaissance” and mentioning a tour of the hotel that Crawford ran at the time, which Otterman described in consumerist cosmopolitan terms as a “champagne-soaked art tour, which attracts

art-savvy travellers from Adelaide, Sydney, and Melbourne, along with a smattering of American and British guests” (Otterman 2007). While Otterman was in Hobart, she met the CEO of the Salamanca Arts Centre, who mentioned that Brian Ritchie, former bass player for the American band the Violent Femmes, had moved to Hobart from New York (Otterman, S 2009, pers. comm., 20 June). Otterman was unable to interview Ritchie in Hobart but while she was writing up her article at home she rang him and then included in her published text a small quote from him. Ritchie was not interested in raising the subject of environmental conflict with travel journalists (Ritchie, B 2009, pers. comm 20 March), believing that to take sides in the debate would compromise his ability to be “an effective cultural force” in his adopted home (Ritchie, B 2009, pers. comm 20 March). Here, describing an avant garde music festival he curated following Otterman’s visit, Ritchie’s discourse demonstrates an understanding of place branding and is also aligned with an emphasis in government publications *The Tasmanian Experience* (Tourism Tasmania 2002)<sup>14</sup> and the *Tasmania Brand Guide* (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2006) on the perceived need to combine Tasmania’s other tourism attributes with its natural attractions:

MONA FOMA, it’s a festival in its own right. It exists to entertain the public. But also it’s a branding tool for the state of Tasmania. That’s the reason why they’re [the state government] putting money into it. I mean, they’re not putting money into it because they said, “Oh, wow, we need another festival.” Or, “People need to party for that weekend.” It’s also because they know that it’s going to generate good word about Tasmania in particular targeted areas in which they feel they need the word to get out. Like, for example, sophisticated art-making

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<sup>14</sup> As a Tourism Tasmania corporate communicator I contributed to the text of the public summary of this strategy but did not help develop the strategy itself.

people and enterprises in Tasmania. Because people internationally and even on the mainland – and maybe even here – think of Tasmania as a natural wonderland but they don't understand about how much art and culture happens here. (Ritchie, B 2009, pers. comm., 20 March)

The Henry Jones Art Hotel's Crawford was equally brand-aware, having worked closely with Tourism Tasmania as a tourism operator over many years. He criticised what he suspected were uninformed environmental protests that targeted tourism, though his understanding of the brand's vulnerability was evident in his comment that, in his words, "we do go with this clean, green image, and it's good, it's important, it's right. So I suppose we are open to scrutiny" (Crawford, P 2009, pers. comm., 17 March).

Given Otterman's focus on the arts, she might also, or alternatively, have included Tasmania's internationally recognised novelist Richard Flanagan (see Section 7.2.1) in her text. A few years earlier Flanagan and other well-known Australian writers such as Peter Carey and Tim Winton had boycotted a state government literary prize worth \$40,000 in protest against Forestry Tasmania sponsorship of a biennial arts event called 10 Days on the Island. As we have seen, Flanagan in 2004 had himself published a travel article in the *New York Times* expressing a profound attachment to the island's natural environment. As a news journalist new to travel journalism Otterman was keen to differentiate her article from travel journalism about Tasmania that had already appeared in the *Times* more recently, much of which, like Flanagan's, had focussed on the island's landscape.

Otterman's inclusion of former New York resident and celebrity Ritchie also functioned discursively to establish connections between Tasmania and her

readers in North America and reassure them that they would find Hobart appealing. Although the musician featured in her article only briefly, it was widely syndicated and she attributed part of its popularity to him. The Henry Jones also paid tribute to Ritchie for the boost it received as a result. As Ritchie recalls:

[S]hortly after that article came out I dined there and at the end of the evening they said, “Mr Ritchie this meal is on us. We wanted to thank you for the article in the *New York Times*.” And I said, “Well, that’s great, but I didn’t talk about you.” “Yeah but still, we got a lot of bookings from that article. And you were part of it, so the meal’s on us.” (Ritchie, B 2009, pers. comm., 20 March)

The advantages to Tasmania of being the subject of Otterman’s article were more far-reaching, however. MONA FOMA – the festival referred to by Ritchie earlier – is the acronym of Museum of Old and New Art Festival of Music and Art, which was a joint project of the Tasmanian Government, the Salamanca Arts Centre (itself partly funded by the Tasmanian Government), Ritchie and MONA (MONA 2009; see also Bartlett 2010). From the outset the millionaire owner of MONA and Hobart’s Moorilla vineyard where it is located, David Walsh, appears to have positioned the annual festival as advance publicity for his museum’s launch. The museum’s impressive gallery, which was many years in construction, would open in conjunction with the third MONA FOMA in January 2011. The inaugural MONA FOMA had been many months away when Ritchie had been interviewed by Otterman in 2007, but the same month as that first festival was staged – January 2009 – Tasmania appeared as the only Australian destination in the *New York Times*’ “44 Places to Go in 2009”

(Sherwood and Williams 2009). When online readers clicked on the Tasmanian icon, all text on the initial Tasmanian web page was devoted to Moorilla, including a reference to MONA FOMA (Sherwood and Williams 2009). Data for this case study does not reveal how Moorilla came to be positioned as the defining Tasmanian tourism experience by the *New York Times* so long before the opening of the on-site museum that has since gained extensive national and international media exposure, but we may speculate that it was associated in some way with Ritchie's presence in Otterman's article, which itself was positioned first in a list of past *New York Times* travel features about Tasmania that could be accessed in another click from the "44 Places" online feature. By the time the "44 Places" article came out, Otterman was working full time for the *Times* as a news journalist on its foreign desk. Her understanding was that the editors had made the decisions about the "44 Places" article. It seems likely, however, that her article featuring Ritchie had helped establish some important connections between Tasmania, MONA and the *New York Times*.

Just after "44 Places" was published, Tasmania's tourism minister distributed a media release entitled "New York Times Promotes Tasmania as Top Destination" (O'Byrne 2009). The information was subsequently reported in Tasmania's capital city daily newspaper, the *Mercury* (2009). This action harks back to the uses of place branding not just to promote a place externally but also in attempts to manage public opinion internally and shape identity by providing evidence that a particular government has been able to lead a place to a strong reputation, thereby bolstering support for the government's place-branding messages. In the case of the minister's media release, the media were fulfilling the role ascribed to them by Hutchins as "mediators and interpreters of global

networks of power and information” (Hutchins 2004, p. 588) but also as mediators of the brand at the interface between the space of places and the space of flows (see Chapter 3).

By cooperating to support Tasmania’s place branding, MONA and Tasmania had gained access to one of the biggest newspaper websites in the world. And although Otterman had not been part of Tourism Tasmania’s VJP, her article was the forerunner of a cascade of public relations activity and international publicity, the close inspection of which highlights how intensively networked are government tourism offices, private tourism businesses and the travel media. In 2012, for example, Hobart was the only Australian city to be listed among Lonely Planet’s top 10 cities for 2013, and MONA was given much of the credit (AAP 2012, Martin 2012; Platt 2012). On the same day as the accolade became public, the Tasmanian premier and the Tasmanian tourism minister jointly announced government funding for another annual festival “led by MONA” to be called “Dark MOFO” (Giddings and Bacon 2012). In addition, the following day Tourism Tasmania sent tourism operators links to an online marketing toolkit it said “Tourism Tasmania and Lonely Planet have compiled” (Tourism Tasmania 2012), containing images branded with a Lonely Planet logo, website graphics, a media release template and a public relations guide. The public relations guide (Tourism Tasmania n.d.c), sporting both Lonely Planet and Tourism Tasmania logos, provided “suggested write-up” text for electronic direct mail and e-newsletters promoting Lonely Planet as “the world’s most trusted travel publisher” and including MONA among the city’s attractions (Tourism Tasmania n.d.c, pp. 2-3). The guide ended by inviting tourism operators to join Tourism Tasmania’s Visiting Journalist Program.

Government framing since Otterman's article was published has not gone entirely unchallenged in the *New York Times*' travel section, however. This is because Otterman's belief in what constituted an acceptable travel journalism article was not borne out by the items in the list of past *New York Times* travel articles accessible via links from the "44 Places" web page. Among the articles published in the period of the case study that appeared below Otterman's in this list was Richard Flanagan's travel article, which was listed seventh, included significant criticism of Tasmania's forestry practices, and deployed the "warlike conflagration" framing of clear-fell logging (see Section 7.2.1). The list also featured a lengthy piece of travel journalism by Darcy Frey published in the *Times* in 2006, which was listed second and contrasted the friendliness of Tasmanians with the reality of environmental conflict:

...much of the state's charm lies in its disorienting contradictions, the still-exposed seams of transition between centuries of isolation and a decade of "rediscovery." Indeed, just beneath Tasmania's amiable surface lies a furious debate over the island's future, particularly of its fierce but fragile environment.  
(Frey 2006)

Frey's piece also dedicated its first paragraph – from which the following quote is drawn – to exposing a remote, inhospitable but mesmerising wilderness:

In the southwest corner of this dense, drenched island lies Tasmania's wildest region: hundreds of miles of steep dolerite cliffs, cool dripping rain forest and glacial valleys virtually untouched since the last ice age. The highest peak in this ancient wilderness is a denuded, boulder-strewn uplift called Mount Anne...  
(Frey 2006)

“Wilderness” was more prominent still in the third article in the list (Power 2006), which included details of the Pedder and Franklin campaigns but did not refer openly to contemporary forestry conflicts. “Wilderness” appeared in its title, in a caption, and eight other times in the body of the text, where the author argued that past conservation battles had been “partly successful” and concluded: “That this wilderness is here by the mercy of good governance and dedicated citizens, that it comes on the heels of so long a struggle, makes it all the more beautiful (Power 2006).

The publication by the *Times* of the articles by Flanagan and Frey is evidence that travel journalism in that newspaper is not required – or at the very least not *always* required – to be entirely celebratory. This, in turn, suggests that government tourism public relations cannot always rely on overt editorial policies favouring elite sources. Just as it seems likely that Otterman’s silence on forest conflict was partly a result of her sources’ silence on the matter as well as her own wish to distinguish her article from those that had already been published by the *Times*, it is possible that, in her inexperience as a travel journalist, her habitus limited her ability to read unstated editorial expectations accurately and manage the textual complexities of framing cosmopolitan concern despite her belief that Tasmania’s natural beauty was vital to its future, as suggested by her following comments:

I think what's so neat about Tasmania is that they've figured out that actually their natural beauty and all of that is what's going to save them and allow them to develop and to keep it a place that has also a decent economy, but if you rush forward and you destroy it all, you're going to lose the whole idea. I mean, obviously there's issues about conservation, but I guess I thought that it was

neat to watch a place moving forward in that way and trying to find a way to capitalise on its natural gifts without really destroying them. (Otterman, S 2009, pers. comm., 20 June)

I did [hear about the forestry debates]. And that's the kind of thing – that's actually because I come from a hard news background it was hard for me to decide how much, if anything, I should put in about the cancer that the Tasmanian devils have and whatever – the pesticide shaped like carrots and the deforestation that there's quite a bit of, you know, because you don't want it— you still want it to be newsworthy, you know, you don't want to paint a picture that's not true. But it's hard in these travel stories – I was very, very new at doing this, and I found it hard to fit into a travel story the bad news in a sentence or two. That felt weird to me, in a story that short. I would have to do another story on whatever, Tasmanian devils' face cancer or something, or maybe there is a line in there maybe indicating that there is some bad-news issue but that story came out— I didn't stress the negatives in that particular story and if I was a travel writer for a living I'm sure this is something that I would get better at doing, would be a way to get serious issues into a travel piece in a way that still keeps it a travel piece and makes it readable. But I guess that was one of my early pieces. I wasn't quite sure how to do that, so I ended up not putting much in about anything negative in my piece. (Otterman, S 2009, pers. comm., 20 June)

Also of relevance here is the fact that tourism operator Crawford's recognition of how the benefits of positive travel journalism coverage in our online era continue long after an article has been published also implies the opposite: negative comment such as that included in the articles by Flanagan and Frey also now has global reach and an indeterminately lengthy shelf life.

## 7.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored the ways in which elite public relations practice, elite networks and struggles for publicity among sources can reduce the likelihood that challenger frames from non-elite sources or dissenting voices from within government will be mediated by travel journalists during times of environmental conflict. When authorities' control over the political environment lessens, travel journalists may become aware, or more aware, of contradictions between the place's real identity and the image that place branding projects. In such instances, structures and strategies that traditionally privilege elite definitions in travel journalism can function to shield the journalist's audience from evidence of conflict the government believes might compromise its branding. The brand is thus simultaneously more vulnerable and more politically instrumental.

In Tasmania's case, elites were able to gain definitional advantage from the close proximity of travel journalism to tourism marketing and the blurred editorial boundaries that emerged as a result. Equally, however, in a state where tourism operators relied on the government tourism organisation to provide publicity for the destination, and much of the arts sector was, to varying degrees, dependent on government support, it could be strategically prudent for cultural elites to avoid politically contentious subjects. Simultaneously, professional networks within and between the travel media and the tourism sector often stifled noise at the brand's interface and the brand generally functioned to regulate staff. But although there was pressure for VJP staff and associates with concerns for the environment to respond to forestry questions by travel journalists only in a neutral manner deemed appropriate by Tourism Tasmania, some talked back (Lury 2004) by giving their own opinions off the record.

Nevertheless, a senior travel journalist with considerable autonomy and tourism industry networks built up over a long career who was travelling without financial assistance from Tourism Tasmania chose not to report environmental conflict he had discussed with one of his sources, while an inexperienced travel journalist eager to make her mark may have underestimated the indeterminacy of her own publication's brand. Competition with other published travel journalists also contributed to Otterman's decision to focus on a particular aspect of the destination: her article gave a celebratory but incomplete representation of the island's identity. However, when her piece was read in combination with other articles available through the *New York Times*' "Travel Guides: Tasmania", a more complex Tasmanian identity emerged shaped by wilderness and environmental conflict as well as boutique urban chic and an arts-infused optimism. In this way, online publication amplified and extended the impact of both elite and challenger frames in the *Times*' travel journalism about the island.

Institutionally, a frame of "brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern" emerged that enabled actors to express a passionate attachment to Tasmania as a place of global environmental significance while tempering this with concern about logging practices they believed were a threat to the brand. In the following chapter I explore ways in which journalistic agency and the media's own branding sometimes combined to facilitate the circulation of that frame.

## Chapter 8: The Travel Media

Forestry is the biggest single industry. An old-fashioned, muscly, mannish, moustached, hard-hat and plaid-shirt job. Tasmanians have worked in logging for generations...The forest is being rubbed out by special pleading, arm-twisting and back-scratching corruption. The rest of Australia looks on with an environmental horror, but Tasmania is used to that: it's always been a place apart...

AA Gill,  
“*The End of the World*”,  
Sunday Times 2007

### 8.1 Introduction

Two forms of branding cooperate and sometimes compete in the relationship between tourist destinations and travel journalists: place branding, which has been my primary focus thus far, and the publication's branding, which I will attend to in this chapter. Although the travel media are, in some important respects, part of the tourism industry and have a vested interest in the positive mediation of destinations and tourism products, for the genre of travel journalism to be of practical use to corporeal travellers its descriptions and advice must be reliable. One way for individuals to test a publication's reliability is to take the trips they read about, but this overlooks the role played by travel journalism in helping people *choose between* destinations. The number of travel journalism articles that can be consumed by a publication's readers far exceeds the number of destinations visited. In travel media, as in tourism, readers and potential readers use brands to assess the value they can expect to derive from a product both for practical purposes and for the construction of their own identity. Travel

sections in broadsheet and tabloid newspapers are generally subsumed under the brand of the parent publication, but travel magazines must forge their own reputations. Glossy high-end travel publications often include claims of specialist knowledge and integrity when positioning themselves in the market. *National Geographic Traveler*, which has a circulation of around 725,000, employs the logo “Nobody Knows This World Better” (National Geographic Traveler 2012); *Travel + Leisure*, with a circulation of around 970,000, describes itself as “the **authority** for the discerning traveller” (Novogrod in Travel + Leisure 2012a, original emphasis); and *Condé Nast Traveler*, with a circulation of around 810,000 in the United States and 330,000 in the United Kingdom (where its title is spelt “*Traveller*”), promises “Truth in Travel” (Condé Nast Traveler 2012; Mediaworks 2012).

There are strong structural incentives for travel media institutions to be on good terms with government tourism organisations even if their staff and freelance journalists do not accept hosted travel. Nevertheless, in the relationship between the media and antagonists in political conflicts, “[p]ower is a question of relative dependence: who needs whom more at the time of the transaction” (Wolfsfeld 1997, p. 14). A travel publication’s brand may benefit from editorial content containing “constructive” criticism of a destination’s policies if from a media-branding perspective it can be seen as contributing to a high standard of service to readers and being in the long-term best interests of the destination itself. This may be the case even when, as in most instances, criticism is *generally* absent from the publication’s editorial content, or absent from other editorial content about the same destination. The following comments from freelance United States travel journalist Stephen Metcalf are worth quoting at

length for their nuanced explication of how the complexities of the travel media business model can accommodate a degree of this kind of journalistic agency by travel journalists secure in their habitus:

[B]efore anyone gives me an explicit command about how serious or unserious they want a specific piece to be, or how much they want me to play up the deliciousness of the food and underplay the complexity of the local politics – you know, before anyone says anything explicit – we are all working within a set of tacit assumptions. I mean, I'm at this point, I think it has to be said, something of a professional. And as a professional I understand that I'm writing for a specific outlet. And I understand that that outlet is – that their business model – is advertising driven. It's certainly newsstand sales [that] make up a proportion of it, so it's – quite a lot of it – is advertising-driven, and their advertisers are travel companies and airlines. I mean they also – I mean *Travel + Leisure's* a very big glossy and it also advertises all kinds of lifestyle items but nonetheless those lifestyle items all connote a certain lifestyle, and I am writing within a certain set of very, very established expectations, and those expectations are so well established they barely even need to be articulated. So, interestingly, I've never, ever had the open conversation with an editor of either a book review or a travel outlet in which they've said, "Look, you can't piss off our advertisers," but I think that's only because we all know that, and we all start from that assumption, and I understood that I was writing what was essentially a travel piece. Now the interesting thing is [that] within that understanding there's some room to play. And one of the reasons there's some room to play is that...people do want to read journalism and they want the journalism to be very distinct from the advertising. And they understand when something is an ad, i. e. something is designed entirely to sell them a product by the maker of the product. And they understand that journalism is something about an individual sensibility going to a faraway place and encountering it with a fair degree of honesty and sensitivity... I do think that people don't want the same thing when they read

journalism as they want when they look at an advertisement. And people who produce magazines understand this. And therefore *Travel + Leisure* really tries to get what they regard as good writers to write for them. They actually go out and find literary writers to write for them. And I've read some amazing things in *Travel + Leisure*. Some really top line, top notch literary journalists write for them and write extraordinary pieces that don't feel like typical travel pieces. Now that said, it's also true that *Travel + Leisure* – and I know this first hand...they're conflicted about what their mission is. On the one hand they want to be a high-end service journalism outlet. They want to write fun stories about exotic places that inspire people to travel because that's their business model, and frankly that's what a lot of people want when they read travel journalism. They just want to hear about some fun, sexy, exotic place that...they may go to or they may never go to but it's fun to look at the pictures and read about someone's experience going there...and that's tourism, or high-end tourism. But the magazine isn't called Tourism + Leisure, and there is a way in which they also understand that no-one wants to regard themselves as a tourist. Everyone else is a tourist. But everyone wants to regard themselves as a traveller, and so they try to play with both of those things. They try both to satisfy your desire to read about the fancy hotel and the really good food at the same time that it's a piece about travel. It's about going some place and experiencing it in a real way. But anyhow, so that's how I think that that balance is arrived at. And I knew that when I went there. (Metcalf, S 2009, pers. comm., 26 June)

Over the decade of the case study *National Geographic Traveler*, *Travel + Leisure* and *Condé Nast Traveler/Traveller* on occasion heaped praise on Tasmania in lists of the best islands, walks, beaches or hotels. Many of these accolades were used by Tourism Tasmania in its marketing and public relations over the years, including its corporate public relations via local media. They also appeared on a dedicated page on its corporate website (Tourism Tasmania 2009).

Yet each magazine also carried at least one piece of journalism that expressed concern for the state's forests. By considering the production of two of these articles, this chapter argues that a frame of "brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern" (see previous chapter) is tolerated by some travel magazines because it contributes to these publications' branding as tourism's watchdog without undermining the industry of which they are part. In the following section I take up the story of *National Geographic Traveler's* interest in Tasmania a decade after the World Congress on Adventure Travel and Ecotourism it co-sponsored in Hobart in 1994 (see Chapter 6). In Section 8.3 I focus primarily on Stephen Metcalf's wine and food story for *Travel + Leisure* researched and published during a fierce debate over a pulp mill proposed for a wine and food tourism region. The subsequent section considers the brand benefits to travel publications of Latona's nature, food and wine ecotourism venture Bay of Fires Walk.

This chapter overlaps in some respects with Chapter 9 and together the two contextualise and interpret travel journalism that challenged Tasmania's place branding.

## **8.2 Holding Destinations to Account**

In literature on place branding, destination branding is a term used to refer specifically to its tourism component. By contrast, when Jonathan Tourtellot established the National Geographic Society's Center for Sustainable Destinations he intended the term "destination" to encompass more than the tourism component of place (Tourtellot, J 2009, pers. comm., 24 October). In addition, he distinguished between ecotourism and geotourism, preferring the latter because it refers to the sustainability of a place's entire geography rather

than only the “nature niche”, “where nature is potentially a small part of the equation” (Tourtellot, J 2009, pers. comm., 24 October). The concept grew out of Tourtellot’s interests while he was working as a travel journalist for *National Geographic Traveler*. With editor Keith Bellows’ support (Tourtellot, J 2009, pers. comm., 24 October), Tourtellot was able to progress his Sustainable Tourism Initiative into a centre within the National Geographic Society; other parts of National Geographic including *National Geographic Traveler* now collaborate with the Center for Sustainable Destinations on “projects and programs with allied organizations, both global and local” (National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations 2010).

*National Geographic Traveler* magazine brands itself as having pursued “sustainable travel before it was cool”, distinguishing between tourism and travel, stressing “the inquisitive not the acquisitive” and “eschew[ing] fashion and fluff in favor of articles that offer a strong sense of place, inspiring narratives that make readers take trips, and solid service information to help them plan those trips” (National Geographic Traveler 2012). In 2004 the magazine published an article by Tourtellot presenting the results of a “Destination Scorecard” produced by what was then still the Sustainable Tourism Initiative in collaboration with England’s Leeds Metropolitan University. The scores were the result of a survey of more than 200 “specialists in sustainable tourism and destination quality” (Tourtellot 2004), approximately half of whose names were provided in a list on the website (National Geographic Traveler 2004b). The scorecard ranked Tasmania equal third in the top five of 115 destinations. In the printed version of this article (Tourtellot 2004), Tasmania only appeared in the scorecard list, where it was awarded the top

rating (“good”) for its environmental conditions and social and culture integrity but was given a warning for its outlook. By going to the website (National Geographic Traveler 2004a) it was possible to learn that the warning related to its forestry practices and commercialisation in and around protected areas – concerns that had been the cause of conflict in Tasmania itself. The website entry for Tasmania on this webpage, which was described as a “glimpse” of the views of the panellists and not the view of the National Geographic Society, is quoted below:

**Tasmania, Australia**

Score: 77

“Heritage assets still well conserved but need to watch commercialization in and around major parks.”

“The logging industry is out of control and the recent exemption of logging from the endangered species act is atrocious. All aspects are positive except for logging.” (National Geographic Traveler 2004a)

At the time that the Scorecard was published, the state government and tourism industry were able to capitalise on the ranking locally by successfully directing attention towards *National Geographic Traveler*’s praise (Lovibond, 2004; Tourism Tasmania 2004). In its related article, the *Mercury* celebrated the accolade with the lead “Tasmania continues to weave its magic on the international travel market and has been rated in the top five international tourist destinations” (Lovibond 2004). There was no mention in the article of *National Geographic Traveler*’s warning or the panellists’ comments provided on its website. The Tourism Council Tasmania chairman, Simon Currant – also a board

member of Tourism Tasmania and advocate of commercial development in and around national parks – was quoted as saying that “we need to do more to maintain and protect our magnificent World Heritage Area, our parks and our heritage buildings”. Such sentiments about public assets that were already protected had long been part of Tourism Tasmania’s and the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania’s discourse of accessible nature (see Chapter 6) and there was no indication in the *Mercury* that Currant might have been responding to criticism by *National Geographic Traveler* or the panellists when he made this comment. On the contrary, the report emphasised that the accolade “strengthen[ed] Tasmania’s position as a must-see destination in terms of a clean environment” and, paraphrasing Currant, “proved the strength and value of Tasmania’s brand” (Lovibond 2004). In the same article the *Mercury* reported an accolade in *Travel + Leisure* it had already reported in 2000, added a 2002 accolade from *Condé Nast Traveler*, and prominently positioned a recent award for one of the state’s lagers in the World Beer Cup. In 2005, however, Tourtellot reprised the scorecard criticism in an interview with Tasmania’s second biggest newspaper, Launceston’s *Examiner*, during a visit to the north of the state as a guest of Ecotourism Australia to attend another ecotourism conference Tourism Tasmania supported and expected to deliver the state strong positive publicity (Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment 2006, p. 27). In an alternative example of local media interpreting the international reception of the brand (see chapters 3 and 6) to those provided so far in the case study, the *Examiner* reported the criticism (Van den Berg 2005). The article accorded travel writers high status as commentators with the headline “Logging a Concern for Travel Writer”. Although Tourtellot’s expert status was only established in

the article by his association with National Geographic, his own agency and expertise were acknowledged by the *Examiner*'s inclusion of his observation that he was surprised by Tasmania's high ranking in the survey in view of its forestry issues. The negativity of this quote was undercut to some extent by his reference to the high percentage of Tasmania's environment that was protected. In the newspaper article, this comment was provided without the qualification Tourtellot added during his interview with me, in which he noted his observation that "the higher scoring destinations tend to have populations that basically give a damn about the stewardship of the place, and the fact that there are some pretty shrill arguments about how forestry is managed in Tasmania is a good indicator, because there aren't any in Borneo, and look who's lost most of their forests" (Tourtellot, J 2009, pers. comm., 24 October).

Elsewhere in the *Examiner* article the newspaper reported Tourtellot's comment that Tasmania's arguments about logging were akin to those taking place in North America, thereby positioning environmental conflict as part of the human condition but also situating Tasmania's citizens as members of imagined communities of global risks (Beck 2011). Interestingly, the ubiquity of environmental disputes was one of the arguments offered by Flinn for his decision *not* to report on Tasmania's forestry conflict (see Chapter 7), but that was unusual within the bounds of the case study. Most interviewed travel journalists who, like Tourtellot, referred to environmental conflict in their home markets did so in relation to their inclusion of Tasmania's forestry conflict in their articles. In addition, as we saw in Chapter 7, former Tourism Tasmania PRP Nicholls recalled a comment similar to Tourtellot's made by *National Geographic Traveler* journalist Norie Quintos on a reconnaissance visit during

which Nicholls had been unable to shield her from evidence of logging in the Styx Valley (Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March). Although it is not possible to determine from the interviews for this case study whether Quintos's experience on her visit was associated with the 2004 scorecard assessment, Nicholls' description of the view of the Styx from the helicopter, the correlation between Quintos's and Tourtellot's comments about logging also being an issue in the United States, and the earlier comments by the magazine's then-editor at the World Congress on Adventure Travel and Ecotourism in Hobart in 1994 (see Chapter 5) suggest that the magazine felt entitled to hold Tasmania to account in relation to its natural branding. This was confirmed in 2006 when it published a piece of travel journalism by Tourtellot entitled "Greenish Tasmania" (Tourtellot 2006, p. 38), based on the 2004 scorecard and his brief drive with Tourism Tasmania's international PRP at the time Gabi Mocatta (see Chapter 7) following his attendance at the ecotourism conference he attended in 2005 (Mocatta, G 2009, pers. comm., 7 September; Tourtellot, J 2009, pers. comm., 24 October). Indeed, in Tourtellot's view travel journalism had an obligation to report on what some travel journalists and travel editors regarded as side issues such as the state of the environment, regardless of the genre's soft reputation. In the following quote, firm genre divisions between news journalism and travel journalism (such as those supported within the scope of this case study by Doward's, Flinn's and Otterman's explanations of their understanding of travel journalism quoted in Chapter 7) are represented as inappropriately inhibiting travel journalists' ability to mediate environmental conflict:

[T]ourism has become much, much too big and important a phenomenon to be relegated to the super-soft journalistic category, where it's all kind-of cheery and

promotional and we don't really care very much. And this is a real problem in journalism. Because even those writers who would like to tackle it that way have no place to put it. Because most editors are going to say, "Oh, it's travel, we stick it in the travel section. Oh, but this is serious. The travel section is supposed to be appealing." So you can't get published. Or if you try to get in the front section, they say, "Oh, this is travel, it's not hard news," and again, you can't get it published. It's a real problem. And so getting some journalistic respect for the serious side of what travel and tourism is all about and the enormous impact it has is a challenge that we both [Tourtellot and Harvard University's Elizabeth Beckett] think journalism has not met...the mindset that travel and tourism stops at the hotels and restaurants – and this is a mindset that holds within the industry as well as in other ways – is ignoring the fact if it is [a] touring-style tourism situation, or an R&R style situation – rest and recreation type tourism – the place is part of the tourism product. And so if the place has forests in it, that's part of the product. If the place is supposed to have forests but doesn't, that product has been altered. And I'm putting it in cold economic terms because that's sometimes the only way you get traction. But very often the industry forgets that its product is the place. That's beginning to change, but only recently. (Tourtellot, J 2009, pers. comm., 24 October)

In his 2006 *National Geographic Traveler* text Tourtellot confirmed Tasmania's branding as "an ecotourism paradise" but with "one big 'except'": logging. He represented Tasmanians as caring about their forests, using the government's claim that 40 per cent of the island is protected as evidence. But he also reported that some old-growth forests were still threatened and ended his article with an overt call to action with clear cosmopolitical resonances: "Visit Tasmania, and help a logger find a job in tourism" (Tourtellot 2006, p. 38). The message of Tourtellot's article was that threats to Tasmania's forests were

undermining its otherwise strong brand. As such it was an example of “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”.

### **8.3 Circulating Concerns through Brand Extensions**

As early as 1998–99 Tourism Tasmania had reported that it was using marketing campaigns to ensure “our unique natural environment, flora and fauna are supplemented by the authentic built heritage, fresh foods, quality cool climate wines and the friendliness of Tasmanian people” (Tourism Tasmania 1999, p. 17). In that and subsequent years the government tourism office devoted considerable resources to supporting wine and food tourism by, for example, developing a wine and food strategy, producing wine and food brochures, establishing a wine and food touring route through the state’s best-known wine producing region, the Tamar Valley, and, in a single year, hosting 27 international journalists to have a “food and wine experience” (Tourism Tasmania 2003, p. 33). Nevertheless, when Tasmania’s largest company, the woodchip exporter Gunns Ltd, announced in February 2005 that it intended to build a pulp mill in that same valley as the wine touring route, it soon gained government endorsement. By the time United States travel journalist Stephen Metcalf visited the island in 2006 to research a food and wine tourism article for the US edition of *Travel + Leisure*, opposition to the pulp mill had made it one of the state’s most serious environmental conflicts. The environment movement was opposed to the type of pulp mill proposed on many grounds, including the pollution it would cause and an expectation that it would increase and prolong the harvesting of native forest timber, regardless of its location. By contrast, not all of those in the wine and food tourism industry opposed to such a mill being

located in the Tamar Valley would necessarily have been opposed had it been located elsewhere. As it was, opposition by winemakers and food growers in the valley and nearby Launceston made the dispute directly relevant to the subject of Metcalf's article.

In addition to branding itself as “the **authority** for the discerning traveller” (Novogrod in Travel + Leisure 2012, original emphasis), *Travel + Leisure* saw itself as serviceable, celebratory and an expert on global culture:

Travel + Leisure is a **celebration of travel**. The magazine explores the **places**, **ideas**, and trends that define modern global culture while delivering the most comprehensive **service journalism** of any travel source. (Novogrod in Travel + Leisure 2012, original emphasis)

The magazine funded Metcalf's trip, though he did receive some logistical assistance from Tourism Tasmania (Alps, D 2009, pers. comm., 19 March; Metcalf, S 2009, pers. comm., 26 June; Seagram, K 2009, pers. comm., 15 September). In the course of his research, he came in contact with a range of winemakers, food growers and restaurateurs who, on balance, left him with the impression that the pulp mill proposal was a cause of great anxiety and a threat to the reputation of Tasmania as a clean and green producer (Metcalf, S 2009, pers. comm., 26 June). Among those concerned about the location of such a mill in the Tamar Valley whom he met but did not quote was Launceston restaurateur Kim Seagram (Seagram, K 2009, pers. comm., 15 September). This was prior to Seagram's appointment to Tourism Tasmania's board but during her long association with the organisation as a representative of the wine industry and an occasional expert guide for visiting journalists with an interest in wine and food.

Among those Metcalf interviewed and did quote was Tamar Valley restaurateur Daniel Alps, whose restaurant was situated in a high-profile vineyard. Alps had contributed to the food and wine components of Latona's tourism operations (see Chapter 6 and Section 8.4) and, like him, valued "wilderness" both as part of the experience and for its promotional value:

I've worked with Cradle Mountain Huts and Bay of Fires up until this year... [W]e were getting organic products into a national park and the walking. Doesn't get any better than that when you're thinking about the experience but it took a while to get that into my head, and into Ken's, and so that was [the] fascinating thing. The people who are doing the walk are the people who are active people who really are there to appreciate the wilderness. They also love good wine and they also know about good food. So to deliver those three together is an overwhelmingly good experience. (Alps, D 2009, pers. comm., 19 March)

Disappointed that Tourism Tasmania was not supporting the people in the wine and food tourism industry in their efforts to stop the pulp mill being built in the Tamar Valley, Alps believed it was reasonable and valuable for those stakeholders to express their concerns to travel journalists – that is, to use the Visiting Journalist Program (VJP) as a vehicle for publicising their own political views on what they considered to be a threat to their businesses:

[T]he thing is, we're talking about it more now. Tasmania I think has gone through this huge transformation in the last six years where everyone was feeling so threatened as a stakeholder in our state as things were going on that we had no control over. So what did we all do? We all started spilling out all our emotions to every journalist that came, to try and get our message out there, that this is not good; we need to change this. It helps us if someone wants to

listen and write it down. Because we know we're doing a good job – you can see we're doing a good job, you can taste it – but we need to let people know that we're dissatisfied with the way that it's all going. Because part of the thing with the VJP and government – and if we're talking about the quieter politics of it, you know, we subsidise VJP to a degree as well, we help pay for their lunches to help promote us – which is, well, why not get a little bit of bang for your dollar, because the tourism department weren't coming forth in supporting us in any way, shape or form. (Alps, D 2009, pers. comm., 19 March)

Alps, who had entertained innumerable food and wine travel journalists, attributed the way they would ask deeply personal questions about what it was like to live and work in the valley to the fact that they felt an affinity with him because they were part of an “artisanal industry” (Alps, D 2009, pers. comm., 19 March) crafting words just as he crafted food or his neighbours crafted wine: “it's that sort of [artisanal] industry versus big industry that doesn't give a rat's arse about anything apart from the bottom line, and there's a real struggle” (Alps, D 2009, pers. comm., 19 March). Alps' views in this respect appear to relate to the craft of writing rather than the travel media industry. And he knew the promotional value in the genre of a good brand-aligned story of accessible nature and clean, green produce, in words but also in action:

...we don't go to markets; the suppliers come to our door. And they love hearing that. They only love hearing that when you start telling and when they start seeing people rock up on an hourly basis. And they can see the venison come in the door and they can see all the veggies and all that sort of stuff, showing them that, and actually see the produce that they bring, which they don't see every day, like black radishes, for example, whatever, that provokes an emotion in them that they didn't think that they were going to be exposed to... [Y]ou look

at Tasmania as a small island, it's clean and it's green, it's got a good brand. For the Tasmanians, we forget that it's 40 per cent national park but we definitely leverage off that as a marketing tool. And only part of our national parks are actually used – there are some other fabulous ones that no one ever hears of. (Alps, D 2009, pers comm., 19 March)

This was the frame that during the pulp mill debate Alps and many of his neighbours remastered as “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern” by adding references to the pulp-mill conflict. In Metcalf’s article, Alps’ close-to-source philosophy and practice were described in some detail, setting the stage for his concerns about the pulp mill aired later in the piece.

Alps attributed what was, in his experience, travel journalists’ desire to gain quite a deep understanding of what it was like to live and work in Tasmania to personal interest but also to their need to “sell” the destination. This combination of motivations can be theorised as evidence of degrees of cultural cosmopolitanism instrumentalised as consumerist cosmopolitanism:

They also want to know a lot more than what’s going on: “What’s it like to live here? What challenges do you suffer? How far do you live from home?” They all ask do I live here, do I live in town? They ask me a lot of personal questions – a hell of a lot of personal questions – which means that they’re very generally interested because there must be some sort of fantasy going on in their head wondering, “Well, could I live here?” And that— as humorous as it is, that is part of what they need to get into to try and sell a place, to a degree. So all journalists are very keen to find out their own bent on what part of the area that would affect them if they were living here do they want to get in touch with. (Alps, D 2009, pers. comm., 19 March)

Importantly, Alps, like many Tasmanian restaurateurs and winemakers, did not rely solely on visitors for his income, having a strong local clientele who travelled to his restaurant from nearby Launceston. His work gave him a significant degree of independence from Tourism Tasmania and close ties with his local and regional community. The following short quote encapsulates not only the strength of his conviction that as a genuine stakeholder in the brand he was entitled to voice his opinions to journalists but also his awareness of the risk involved in speaking out. His opening statements recast the affective discourse deployed in local media by those with a long family history in the forestry industry by arguing that his, too, was a family business in which he had invested most of his life:

I'm a business man and I'm protecting my own family. I'm doing what I believe and I've done – you know, I've been a chef – since I was 14. It's not as though I keep picking up different things and running with them; there's a consistency there as well which has to be noted to do that. So I had absolutely no problem with it whatsoever. In fact I was happy with myself for doing it and I actually think it's benefited the restaurant. I actually— I lay awake at night with a few sleepless nights thinking whether it was the right thing to do, but I think it's benefited the restaurant. I think there's a lot of people who come to us and talk to us. They don't agree with it, they come to the restaurant. (Alps, D 2009, pers. comm., 19 March)

That both Seagram and Alps had been mainstays of the wine and food component of Tourism Tasmania's VJP for many years was an indication of their influence in the wine and food tourism industry. The negative publicity of any criticisms of the pulp mill Alps might make to travel journalists was a

significant challenge for the government's branding. Metcalf introduced Tasmania's forestry conflict through a textual tussle with his sources similar to one evident in an article in *National Geographic Adventure* by United States travel journalist Adam Sachs (2006) in his defence of Latona's commercial developments in national parks (see the following section). After quoting a source who criticised the commodification of "artisanal purity", Metcalf defended it as "utterly necessary" as an alternative to extractive industries (Metcalf 2008). Thus Metcalf, like Sachs but with a somewhat different discursive outcome, stayed true to his primary tourism-operator sources while simultaneously dismissing concerns that commodification was tainting their products' authenticity. Metcalf then described forestry practices using the "warlike conflagration" frame (see Chapter 7) second hand but concluding with his own experience of seeing plantations grown in place of native forests: "I saw the legacy of logging with my own eyes: in the middle of a dense tangle of primeval forest, blue gum trees stand in rows, like obedient schoolchildren" (Metcalf 2008). Later he paraphrased his sources to make their concerns for the Tasmania brand explicit: "its many critics claim the mill would pump sulphurous effluent into Bass Strait, to the severe detriment of marine life, not to mention Tasmania's new clean-and-green image" (Metcalf 2008).

In their analysis of news coverage of a pulp mill dispute in Argentina, Silvio Waisbord and Enrique Peruzzotti found that lay people became primary definers, not as victims of environmental catastrophe but as voices of potential side-effects (Beck 1992), because the news organisations in that country were not "bound by professional expectations and norms to defer to 'scientific knowledge'" in news and risk definition (Waisbord and Peruzzotti 2009, p. 703).

Something similar may pertain in cosmopolitical travel journalism. In Metcalf's article, "cultural rationality" (Cox 2010, p. 199) prevailed in the definition of pulp-mill risk despite arguments against such fears presented by Tasmania's foremost winemaker, Andrew Pirie. Recognised as the pioneer of the island's contemporary viticultural success, Pirie had taken a job with a winery located in the valley and owned by the company planning to build the pulp mill. In the following extract Metcalf explains his belief that, as a journalist, he needed to meet with Pirie and hear his side of the story to better understand Tasmania's contemporary dilemma and also explains his rationale for representing Pirie as he did:

I met him I think fairly late in my trip and to that point I'd spoken to a number of people who were in the food and wine business and they all said the same thing, which is that they were shocked – they were shocked that he would agree to do this. They saw this in fairly black-and-white terms – that the food movement was new, exciting, fragile and a direction for Tasmania to go in going forward, and that to reindustrialise the island or to emphasise its industrial nature was to have threatened that, and that their chance to do something unique was really endangered by Gunns, and specifically by Gunns, and specifically by that pulp plant... And what can you do as a journalist? But do I know in anything like an omniscient way whether or not the food people are right and Pirie is wrong? I thought Pirie was an amazing man. I thought it was incredible to meet with him and talk with him. I thought he was so intelligent, so articulate, so urbane, and he had a much larger and more cosmopolitan perspective on the state of Tasmania in some ways than his critics, and I felt like I conveyed that in the piece, I felt like it was important to convey that in the piece, that he understood that relative to even small global producers the Tasmanian wine industry was tiny and that in order to grow it needed capital

and the capital had to come from some place...but my sense was that when pressed on the issue of what that company wanted to do and what its ambitions were I think he was very rationalising, in part I think because— one of his jobs is to make it seem as though there isn't an existential conflict between the food movement – the locavore movement – and the ambitions of Gunns. And I hope that came across in the piece. I hope it came across that I didn't see this guy as some horrible villain; I saw him as someone who was, you know, who was kind-of compromised and was now acting as the kind-of corporate mouthpiece.<sup>15</sup>

(Metcalf, S 2009, pers. comm., 26 June)

In his interview (pers. comm., 26 June) Metcalf explained that part of his interest in Tasmania's pulp mill dispute had been sparked by his experience of an environmental dispute in his home region – reasoning advanced in the previous section by *National Geographic Traveler's* Jonathan Tourtellot. Although Metcalf did not describe Tasmania's environment directly as globally significant, his own concern for it as an international traveller gave this impression, as do other observations in his text, such as his comment that its air, soil and waters are “some of the least contaminated on the planet” (Metcalf 2008). Seagram's comments on Metcalf's opinions suggest she viewed them as important brand feedback:

I think it starts raising awareness. And for somebody like Stephen to be concerned at the impact, obviously it's a really special place. So, you know, you've got two sides of the coin. And hopefully we can actually raise awareness within our own community. And this is what I've learnt from Economic Development strategies and a number of different things – to say, “Listen, we've got to really start mapping out our future as to where we're going to put our

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<sup>15</sup> Gunns sold Tamar Ridge winery in 2010.

energies and monies and time, so that we're all pushing our barrow in the same direction." (Seagram, K 2009, pers. comm., 15 September)

In his text, Metcalf described tourism and extractive industries as competitors – a direct challenge to government attempts to use place branding to achieve “strong alignment of message” across stakeholders who might be “in competition or conflict” (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2006, p. 11). But the extent to which Metcalf remained within the unstated boundaries of travel journalism established by his publisher is evident in the comments of one of his other important sources, local wine critic Graeme Phillips, who acknowledged the legitimacy of reporting on the pulp mill dispute but described the published article as in other respects a “puff piece” (Phillips, G 2009, pers. comm., 26 August) – a term also used ironically to describe travel articles including his own by Metcalf (2009, pers. comm., 26 June). As Phillips explained Metcalf’s style and, by implication, that of travel journalism generally: “everything’s good. Almost. Food and wine’s great. East coast is fabulous. No other place on Earth like it” (Phillips, G 2009, pers. comm., 26 August). Metcalf was generous to the operators and identities themselves – even Pirie – reserving his cosmopolitan concern for non-tourism threats to tourism:

It is like no place on earth, a paradise intelligently designed, if not by God, surely by Alice Waters. Delicacies everywhere, delivered from a nearby arcadia, produced by people who expressed their deepest essence in making it. But then the euphoria fades, and one remembers Tasmania is like every place on earth. At the very moment it’s coming to self-consciousness as a final redoubt of the small, the forces of exploitation are redoubling their efforts to degrade it. (Metcalf 2008)

Importantly, however, just as Flanagan's and Frey's articles lived on in the *New York Times* online long after their print publication, providing an additional perspective to Otterman's article, so too was Metcalf's article accompanied by entirely positive pieces by David Hochman (2001) and Bonnie Tsui (2004) in a list of Tasmanian articles and accolades still available online from *Travel + Leisure* in 2011. Interestingly, Metcalf's article, like Tsui's, was used on the magazine's website as an opportunity for providing links to promotional material by Tasmanian tourism operators in sidebars, suggesting that a degree of political comment in travel journalism does not necessarily reduce its value as a tourism marketing tool.

In Tasmania, the *Mercury* did not mention Metcalf's 2008 article in *Travel + Leisure*, despite in 2007 having itself extensively reported concerns about the mill by many in the tourism industry, including fears expressed by Alps (Alps in Duncan 2007) and nationally recognised food and wine columnist Leo Schofield (Schofield 2007) that it could damage the state's brand and strong reputation among travel journalists. Rather, during the remainder of the year in which Metcalf's feature on Tasmania appeared, the *Mercury* published seven separate news articles celebrating *Travel + Leisure* accolades for the state as a whole or one of its tourism products. One of these articles (Mercury 2008) included quotes from the Minister for Tourism, while another (McKay 2008) incorporated quotes from the CEOs of Tourism Tasmania and Tourism Industry Council Tasmania.

## 8.4 The Brand Value of Brands

Sometime after my interview with Alps, he left the valley, as he had threatened to do in Metcalf's article, and established a gourmet store in Launceston. In view of his association with Cradle Huts and Bay of Fires Walk, this seems an appropriate point at which to consider the sample of articles about the Bay of Fires I mentioned in Chapter 5 (see Appendix 4).

As discussed in Chapter 6, in the 1980s and 1990s Latona and his then business partner Masterman had been trail blazers in demonstrating the public relations advantages of luxurious Tasmanian ecotourism, but their success now went far beyond their own products, infusing the marketing of the entire state with an aura of environmental responsibility and aesthetic sophistication. In the first decade of the 2000s the public relations value of the Latona and Masterman walks through national parks and the pampering they offered walkers in the form of food, wine, accommodation and interpretation lay in their appeal to prestigious, high-circulation travel media (Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March; McGinity, M 2009, pers. comm., 23 October). From a place-branding perspective, these tourism products made it easy and pleasurable for travel journalists to represent Tasmania's natural environment in feature-length glossy narratives of personal discovery and rejuvenation.

Latona's third Tasmanian tourism venture – a four-day guided soft-adventure walk south through Mount William National Park to a luxury lodge at the secluded northern end of the Bay of Fires in the island's north-east – began operation in 1999. Some years before, he had parted company with Masterman. He had kept Cradle Huts while she had retained the Friendly Beaches Lodge and Freycinet Experience Walk on the Freycinet Peninsula, which was also on the

east coast but well south of the Bay of Fires. The Freycinet Peninsula was the location of the internationally praised Wineglass Bay in Freycinet National Park. In early 2000, the Freycinet Experience and Latona's Bay of Fires Walk were part of a feature by *Observer* journalist Euan Feguson (see Chapter 7) resulting in a full-page photograph of Wineglass Bay on the cover of the London newspaper's "Escape" travel section and praise for both ventures in the article itself. Ferguson came to the island as part of Tourism Tasmania's Visiting Journalist Program (VJP), which was also subsequently responsible for bringing Masterman's walk to the attention of well-known British novelist and literary non-fiction writer Nicholas Shakespeare (Masterman, J 2009, pers. comm., 3 August), who wrote a number of travel articles for British newspapers in which he featured the experience (2002, 2004). However, a woodchip mill was situated in a small town on the road between Hobart and Freycinet National Park, and in 2004 the *Melbourne Age* – a mainland broadsheet newspaper in Australia's second-largest city – reported that "[t]ravelling to the park from Hobart, her customers often pass up to 12 trucks. A French guest recently told one of Masterman's guides: 'In Tasmania, you have your forests on wheels'" (Fyfe and Darby 2004). Such reports in news journalism challenged the arguments of both of the state's main political parties that forestry and ecotourism could peacefully coexist. While Masterman was enthusiastic about the benefits of being part of Tourism Tasmania's VJP, she also appreciated the contribution of the Wilderness Society to the integrity of Tasmania's ecotourism offerings and invoked it as endorsement for ecotourism:

The Wilderness Society and people like Bob Brown, they all influenced the kind of size of the little huts that were put up or the Wilderness Society very much

influenced the dimensions of the Friendly Beaches Lodge and they've fought—while there are commercial operators, they've fought for those commercial operators having very strict conditions on them and covenants on them. And I think these commercial projects have been marvellous, but I think what's been a lovely thing is that the Wilderness Society is now very supportive of a lot of the tourist operators because they see they save places by saying, "Well look, okay, it won't create a lot of logging jobs but it will be a great asset in terms of tourism for Tasmania. And this is particularly so in somewhere like the Tarkine at the moment." (Masterman, J 2009, pers. comm., 3 August)

Latona, for his part, went on to develop a stronger relationship with Tourism Tasmania, joining its board in 2003.

The geographical Bay of Fires extends for nearly 30 kilometres along Tasmania's mild north-east coast. The bay's northern extreme falls within Mount William National Park. In turn, most of Mount William National Park is further north than the bay. Traditionally, locals have applied the name Bay of Fires to the bay's southern end, which is a conventional beachside vacation destination popular with Tasmanian families and characterised by holiday houses, water sports, horse-riding and opportunities for the use of off-road recreational vehicles. Bay of Fires Walk, by contrast, is an exclusive multi-day tourism product including an overnight trek through Mount William National Park led by fit young guides who tell Tasmanian stories, cook Tasmanian food and serve Tasmanian wine along the way. The walk starts well north of the bay, heads south along secluded beaches and ends just outside the park at the private lodge, which is largely hidden in bush. Grant Hunt, who in 2009 was the chief executive of the company that bought the operation from Latona in 2007, readily acknowledged that most of the walk was through parts of the park that were

north of the bay and paid tribute to the contribution of the name to the success of his business:

Ken Latona did his historic research and named the walk the Bay of Fires Walk, which has got a lovely romantic, emotional notion to it... The reality is we're north of the Bay of Fires. (Hunt, G 2009, pers. comm., 7 October)

The derivation of the name is attributed to British explorer Tobias Furneaux, who saw Aboriginal fires lining this coast when he sailed beside it in 1773. In the context of the walk, the name Bay of Fires is intended to signify a deep connection with place and cultural heritage. As such, Latona's original appropriation of the name was an example of traditional promotional uses of affect to create name awareness and brand attachment – a strategy that had proved successful for conservationists in Tasmania when applied to physical features of the landscape during the Franklin dam campaign (Lester 2007). In 2009 new operator Hunt was also attuned to the other crucial marketing and public relations attribute of this walk – the fact that it is through a national park, even if that park is not named after the bay at the walk's southern tip.

The establishment of Cradle Huts in the Wilderness World Heritage Area (see Chapter 6) in 1987 had initially exposed Latona and Masterman to opposition from Tasmanians who disapproved of tourism developments in protected areas. Later, however, their walks could surf any waves of publicity the conservation movement was able to generate for Tasmania's landscape, which the movement branded as a global asset. The beach walks in Freycinet and Mount William national parks had the added advantage of being able to exploit Tasmania's reputation for wilderness while packaging themselves as hidden

treasure to be found not in forests but on the sweeping white-sand beaches of an idyllic island, thereby also capitalising on Tourism Australia's marketing of Australia as a place of sea and sand.

In its first five years of operation (2000 to 2004 inclusive), the Bay of Fires Walk featured in travel journalism published in a wide range of high-profile, high-circulation British and United States newspapers and magazines, including, in Britain, the *Telegraph* (Chipperfield 2000), the *Observer* (Ferguson 2000), the *Independent* (Street-porter 2004; Wheeler 2002) and *BBC Wildlife Magazine* (Fair 2000), and, in the United States, the *New York Times Magazine* (Spindler 2001), *Travel + Leisure* (Hochman 2001) and *Outside* (Perrottet 2002). This was an impressive list of publications and authors. Perrottet was an expatriate Australian travel journalist living in New York who, early in his career, had filed news stories of military conflict from South America, while Chipperfield, Hochman, Ferguson and Spindler had strong journalism backgrounds. Street-Porter and Wheeler – who was born in England and educated at the London Business School but lived in Australia – were minor celebrities in Britain: Street-Porter was a broadcaster, while Wheeler was the influential co-founder of the guide-book company Lonely Planet, whose other co-founder was his wife, Maureen Wheeler, who had joined the board of Tourism Tasmania in February 2000. In the same year as Wheeler published his Bay of Fires article in the *Independent*, a small piece by him called “Fire Walking” also appeared in the third edition of Lonely Planet's *Tasmania* guide (Smitz 2002),<sup>16</sup> where it was printed beside the “Bay of Fires” section rather than beside a later section on Mount William National Park. Thus, early in the 2000s,

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<sup>16</sup> I was the updating author of the second edition of Lonely Planet's *Tasmania* guidebook (McGaurr 1999) but had no part in writing or editing subsequent editions.

in the minds of these United States and British journalists writing about Bay of Fires Walk and their readers, Lonely Planet and its readers, and the tourists who had done the Bay of Fires Walk, the meanings attached to the geographical Bay of Fires and its community were largely or entirely derived from the walk. Moreover, when the travel features included few references to places beyond the walk itself, their readers were likely to attach those same meanings to Tasmania as a whole, creating a perception far removed from the daily experience of most of the island's residents, as one former Tourism Tasmania and Brand Tasmania PRP acknowledged:

You do the Bay of Fires Walk, you're not going to see any local material, you're not going to meet anyone in fact. You're only going to meet the other 10 people on the trip. So it's quite a different view of a place. You do Bay of Fires Walk, there's no local towns, it's a remote beach, it's fully controlled, there's 10 people on the walk and you get to a lovely thing at the end and then out you fly.

(Former PRP McGinity, M 2009, pers. comm., 23 October)

As a socially constructed and detached, geographically secure, demographically exclusive, culturally staged tourism product, Bay of Fires Walk was an ideal marketing tool. As such, it soon became a symbol of Tasmania's branded naturalness, to the extent that symbols are "forms of collective representation that act as common reference points" and "symbolic systems are modes of communication, embodied in material form" (Meethan 2001 pp. 26-27). This was reflected in the articles mentioned above, which incorporated varying degrees of environmental cosmopolitan concern commodified in the promotion of Bay of Fires Walk and Tasmania's natural environment, which

itself was described by Latona in one article as “a good marketable commodity now” (Latona in Spindler 2001). Travel journalists responded to the Bay of Fires Walk’s staged authenticity (MacCannell 1999) by publicising the sustainable practices of the tourism operator and, by implication, the destination, and sometimes thereby promoting environmentally sustainable practices in day-to-day life and the care and protection of the natural environment more generally. They praised the destination as a place worth visiting and valuing but did not challenge the island’s place branding. As such, their framing was “place-branded cosmopolitan concern” – a form of environmental consumerist cosmopolitanism whereby the market is represented as capable of driving progressive social change.

A star of articles about the Bay of Fires Walk second only to the beaches, and sometimes not even to those, was the Bay of Fires Lodge – one of architect Latona’s “living, breathing things that could (by design) be felled as easily as the Tasmanian gum trees of which they are built” (Spindler 2001). Here, hand pumping water for a morning shower was not an inconvenience but a privilege that warranted mention in nearly every article; low-fat meals were not only healthy but put less pressure on the drainage system (Spindler 2000); and there was “wisdom to be gleaned” from using the “surprisingly elegant” composting toilets (Hochman 2001). Journalists in the sample sometimes noted Latona’s debt to Australian architect Glenn Murcutt, whose philosophy of constructing buildings that would “touch the earth lightly” (Spindler 2001; see Dovey 2000) had inspired Latona’s work, or they referred to the sense he gave that the style of the lodge epitomised a relationship with the nomadism of tribal Aboriginal culture (Hochman 2001). None of the journalists in the full Bay of Fires sample

(see Appendix 4) took the Murcutt/Latona discourse as a cue to engage with contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginality. Rather, a number mediated the Bay of Fires' cultural heritage by employing a tourism frame I describe as "distanced brutality", a term that refers to the possibility of mediating historical cruelty or environmental destruction but, crucially, with a strong element of regret. This frame was employed by Tourism Tasmania (for example, Croome 2005; Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts 2005; and Tourism Tasmania's website for tourists, [www.discovertasmania.com](http://www.discovertasmania.com)) and travel journalists generally (for example, Chipperfield 2000, 2002; Flinn 2005a, 2005b; Gill 2007; Perrottet 2002; Spindler 2001) in relation to various combinations of the following: the brutal treatment of convicts in colonial times; environmental degradation such as the annihilation of hillside forests and heavy-metal pollution of waterways surrounding the west coast mining town of Queenstown in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; the extinction by disease and at the hands of bounty hunters of the Tasmanian tiger in the 1930s; highly discriminatory anti-homosexuality laws that were not repealed until 1997; and the post-contact devastation of Tasmania's Aboriginal population. As effective and brand-aligned destination promotion, the "distanced brutality" frame paired temporal distance with contemporary remorse by consigning such brutality to the past, either with assurances of a more sensitive present and future (see, for example, references to the extinction of the Tasmanian tiger in Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts 2005) or by conveying a sense of regret or disapproval about the past that served as a foil to heighten the positive effect of other parts of the text. As such, it was not so much cosmopolitan concern as the thematic commodification of cultural heritage. The following paragraph by Spindler is an

example of the way this juxtaposition of regrettable past and “natural” present can still support place branding:

The native full-blooded Aborigines were exterminated, the Tasmanian tiger extinguished, convicts tortured. And yet nature seems determined not to give in completely to man's inhumanity to other living things. Despite it all, the place is still astonishing. Tasmania is said to have the cleanest air and water in the world, and has set aside 28 percent of its lands for national parks, some of which Latona has put his buildings in or near, and from which he runs guided tours. (Spindler 2001)

Another travel journalist whose article was included in this sample, Chipperfield (2000), adopted the “distanced brutality” frame by introducing the Bay of Fires Walk with a very detailed account of Aboriginal history in the area. Like others in the sample, he later also used the tribes’ nomadic lifestyle as a metaphor for the many satisfactions of Tasmanian ecotourism:

Little wonder that the more enlightened early European visitors to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania's former Dutch name) believed the island's inhabitants to be the most exulted of the planet's noble savages, a people living in complete harmony with their environment and themselves. (Chipperfield 2000)

Yet even Chipperfield – an expatriate Briton living in Australia and publishing in London's *Telegraph* newspaper – made no mention of contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, thereby perpetuating the myth of total annihilation that had become incorporated into Tasmanian tourism. The lack of living Aboriginal voices was a persistent absence in travel journalism about the state during the

case study that was directly related by the tourism industry to a perceived lack of contemporary Aboriginal tourism products (Hanna, D 2009, pers. comm., 26 June). Commenting regretfully on his decision not to include discussion of contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginality in his article about Cradle Huts and Bay of Fires Walk written in 2010, Curwen observed: “It was difficult to interact with something that didn’t seem to be there” (Curwen, T 2010, pers. comm., 3 June).

By definition, the “distanced brutality” frame could not be applied to the ongoing logging of old-growth forests, and of the eight articles in the Bay of Fires sample published between 2000 and 2004 only one drew attention to forestry disputes (Fair 2000, see Chapter 7). Spindler (2001), however, did refer to a failed attempt by Latona to introduce helicopter flights into the World Heritage Area (see Lester 2000). The impact of this revelation was softened by the fact that she had already mentioned his predilection for helicopter travel in the article’s opening paragraph. Rather than functioning as a criticism, Spindler’s reference to the controversy reflected the joint government and Tasmanian tourism industry discourse of accessible nature: when she queried the ability of ventures such as Latona’s to contribute to the protection of the environment by raising awareness of its value among visitors, it was as a rhetorical device positioned to introduce Latona’s own arguments in favour of commercial operations in national parks and the notion of luxurious nature-based tourism :

It's a continuing issue: is awareness necessary? Does communing with nature responsibly lead us to protect it? And does the person who demands a good glass of Tasmanian wine in an architecturally significant room before crawling into a four-star hotel bed really deserve to contemplate a platypus at close

range? In his glass houses, Latona doesn't leave much of a choice... (Spindler 2001)

Here, the contradiction between elitism and sustainability was acknowledged as a means of expressing *cosmopolitan concern* about the *commodification of cosmopolitan concern* possible within the discourse of accessible nature. In this respect too, however, the concern was rhetorical, as evident in the article's final few sentences, where Spindler executes a complex promotional manoeuvre that simultaneously supports the Bay of Fires Walk's and Tasmania's branding, alludes to the virtues of personal environmental responsibility while soothing the conscience of those who choose to do nothing except take a luxurious ecotourism holiday, and, in Fairclough's terms (see Chapter 5) incorporates prediction disguised as information:

If we can discover how to live this way, elegantly, but with little negative impact, why don't we? Perhaps because there's only one Ken Latona, and he's down there on the edge of the world. Not to mention the future. (Spindler 2001)

Of the eight travel journalism articles about the Bay of Fires Walk in the sample that were published between 2000 and 2004, none drew attention to the populated end of the bay and only one questioned the superiority of guided walks over free-range trekking. After devoting most of his long, complimentary narrative in *Outside* magazine to Latona's walk, Perrottet reported driving himself south to the Freycinet Peninsula, walking to Wineglass Bay unassisted and manfully taking his nature straight, without wine or cheese on the side:

Admittedly, my camping grub wasn't exactly gourmet – I'd brought a pastrami sandwich with me from a Launceston deli. The possums devoured my breakfast, which I'd strung up between two trees. And then it started to pour down rain, so I trudged back to my car like some wild-eyed prophet, taunted by the laughing kookaburras as I passed them. But I'd proven one thing: No matter how much pinot noir or double-cream brie it produces, Tasmania hasn't been tamed quite yet. (Perrottet 2002)

While this was certainly a narrative technique to reassert *Outside's* adventure branding (see Chapter 9) following its dalliance with the seductions of luxury trekking, it was also, possibly, a form of cross-promotion. At the beginning of the decade, the magazine had declared Wineglass Bay one of the top 10 beaches in the world, and ever since, Tourism Tasmania had used this accolade to promote the state (Tourism Tasmania 2009). True to its adventurous spirit, however, *Outside* would produce one more substantial Tasmanian feature before the end of the decade, and in this the environment movement's frames would be as prominent as Latona's were in Perrottet's (see Chapter 9).

In the full Bay of Fires sample of 11 articles, Only Fair's 2000 piece discussed in Chapter 7<sup>17</sup> and the three articles published after Gunns' plans for the pulp mill in the Tamar Valley wine tourism region were announced (Curwen 2010; Gill 2007; Sachs 2006) included reference to Tasmania's forestry disputes. AA Gill of the London *Times* and freelance journalist Adam Sachs writing for *National Geographic Adventure* were food reviewers as well as travel

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<sup>17</sup> Fair (2000), who at the time he visited Tasmania was the new travel editor of *BBC Wildlife Magazine*, travelled the state in the company of Ferguson as part of a hosted VJP tour (Fair, J 2009, pers. comm., 17 March) and visited the Bay of Fires Lodge. However, in his published article he did not mention the commercial walk and only referred to the Bay of Fires in an information sidebar. His comments about the bay were very positive, but the article proper incorporated criticism of Tasmania's forestry practices.

journalists, while the third – the *Washington Post*'s Thomas Curwen – had once been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and was the only journalist in the sample to do Cradle Huts and Bay of Fires walks after Lonely Planet named the Bay of Fires one of its top destinations for 2009 (Mocatta 2008). All three articles covered other parts of the island in addition to the bay.

Sachs' (2006) published discourse on Tasmania's environmental conflict was partially aligned with that of conservationists, acknowledging that "beyond the confines of the wilderness area" there was "a struggle for preservation" (2006, p. 64). In the manner of many of the other articles about Latona's ventures, it framed ecotourism as the solution to environmental insensitivity. However, by skillfully combining publicity for Latona's tourism products and forgiveness for Tourism Tasmania's exaggerated marketing of the state as pristine and pure with criticism of government-sanctioned logging practices, his discourse used its "ecotourism solution" framing to defuse the political charge of "brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern" (see Chapter 7). Sachs, who also did Latona's Cradle Huts walk, noted that visitors were likely to be exposed to anti-forestry bumper stickers outside the national park but cast "posh hikers" such as himself as the saviours of Tasmania's fragile environment.

Gill (2007) explored Tasmania's identity from a British perspective, in keeping with his philosophy that travel journalists write for their readers at home, not those they visit (Gill 2005). Although he came to the state with Austravel (Gill 2007) and was hosted by the Tourism Tasmania VJP (Dowty, R 2009, pers. comm., 3 June; King, G 2009, pers. comm., 7 June; Mocatta, G 2009, pers. comm., 7 September), his published text incorporated claims of "back-scratching corruption" associated with forestry (see the quote that opened this

chapter). Conceding little ground to the government's desire for wholly celebratory coverage, he represented the island as a complex place-based community of gritty contrasts. Tasmania was "constructed out of memory and homesickness", "a place left out at the edge of the world". It was "[a] secret not so much hidden as unspoken", its temperate rainforest "a great buttressed and hammer-beamed cathedral to the green gods, to Gaia and Puck" (Gill 2007). The only culinary experience he mentioned was abalone stew served in King's coastal shack. Using logs chain-sawed into "portraits" of World War 1 soldiers as a metaphor, he concluded his article by representing Tasmanians as "these hard, naive people, shy and silent and capable, growing out of the stumps of their trees" (Gill 2007). Yet even at the hands of such a notoriously harsh reviewer and commentator, following his visit to Latona's lodge (Dowty, R 2009, pers. comm., 3 June), the Bay of Fires remained "as perfect a beach as you will find anywhere in the world" (Gill 2007). And in view of the publicity value of Gill's celebrity, the expense of a lavish hosted trip and the calculated risk it had taken in inviting him to pass judgement, Tourism Tasmania's response to the article was relief rather than disappointment:

If you read AA Gill widely, that was a very positive article. That was a very positive article for AA Gill. He has to be a bit controversial because that's him. But I have seen him annihilate a destination, just wreck their reputation with tearing them to shreds. (Dowty, R 2009, pers. comm., 3 June)

Tourism Tasmania even used Gill's words to attract other travel journalists, posting an extract of pure praise on a media website it operated throughout the case study period but no longer maintains (Tourism Tasmania n.d.b). Gill was

not available to be interviewed for this research, but he has elsewhere recorded his thoughts on his own part in the production of travel journalism. He describes himself performing on “an invisible stage” for “more people than will pick up a Booker Prize-nominated novel in a year” (2005, p. 3). However, in spite of acknowledging the power this gives him – “That’s not a comparison of quality but a statement of impact” (Gill 2005, p. 3) – he downplays the authority of his opinions:

It’s my voice, my view, my opinion. And just as no one’s opinion is worth more than mine, so mine is worth no more than anyone else’s. I’m often accused of being contentious. I suppose predictably and rather arrogantly I take that as a compliment. If my articles cause raised blood pressure, then good – that’s what first person journalism is for. We hacks do opposition. But while they may be the start of the argument, they’re never the last word. There is no last word. No definitive view. The older I get the more I see, the more I’m convinced about nothing at all. Opinions, prejudices, theories and revelations are just the social and intellectual weather under which we live. (Gill, A 2005, p. 13)

Following the article’s publication, a link to it appeared on the *TasmanianTimes* website, described as Tasmania’s independent online “forum for discussion and dissent”, where an extract drew comment from politically engaged Tasmanians (Tasmanian Times 2007.). Blog discussion also followed the *Timesonline* edition of Gill’s report, and here Bruce Englefield – a British expatriate running a wildlife park on Tasmania’s east coast – praised tourism as the mainstay of the Tasmanian economy and invited British readers to visit his “Garden of Eden” but also joined Gill in criticising clearing of the state’s native forests (Englefield 2007). A “Letter to the Editor” from a locally well-known Tasmanian novelist

who was visiting Britain at the time Gill's article was published also appeared in the *Mercury*, reproducing and supporting his accusations of corruption and urging the premier to take note (Rose 2007). Thus Gill's celebrity, like Tourtellot's authority and agency, enabled his criticisms to penetrate local media flows to a small degree, in competition with authority efforts to deploy only those portions of his text that appeared to support the brand.

Curwen (2010) mediated a theme he said he found recurred throughout his trip and which had been a feature of Gill's discourse but not of Tourtellot's or Metcalf's – "a division between those (largely outsiders) who would like to turn the island into an eco-preserve and those (residents of Tasmania) who believe that more traditional, blue-collar jobs have to be created in order to maintain the island's diverse economy" (Curwen, T 2010, pers. comm., 3 June). This perception of an outsider–insider dichotomy was in part a vestige of the Franklin dam era: such a distinction was less pronounced in the period of the case study. In 2007, for example, a poll conducted for the Wilderness Society by a reputable market research company found that the majority of Tasmanians were opposed to the pulp mill (Wilderness Society 2007), while at a state election held shortly after Curwen's feature appeared the Labor Party would lose government in its own right for the first time since 1998 and Greens gain Cabinet positions for the first time in Australian history. Even at the height of the Franklin dam controversy, 35.5 per cent of electors had cast invalid votes following a call by the Wilderness Society for voters to write "no dams" on their ballots rather than vote for either of the two dam options proposed. Nevertheless, Curwen's article did reflect something of the intensity of the pulp mill debate, as well as noting a recent claim by British travel magazine *Wanderlust* that the

southern end of the Bay of Fires was in danger of being inundated by tourists since Lonely Planet had so praised the entire bay (Wanderlust 2010). Like all the travel journalists in the Bay of Fires sample, however, he failed to mention land claims over the bay and Mount William National Park that the Tasmanian Aboriginal community had been pursuing for a decade and which events following the Lonely Planet accolade had brought to British media attention (Marks 2009; Telegraph 2009; Wanderlust 2010). For this travel journalist, reference to Tasmania's environmental conflict was both a narrative technique to connect his readers with his text and, thus, with Tasmania and its commercial walks, and a genuine attempt to give a more complete sense of the island's identity:

This is not an uncommon dilemma. We face it here in California when it comes to our lumber industry and the beauty of our north coast. How do you develop particular environments without exploiting them? It's a question that is being asked all over the world from Tasmania to Greenland (which I visited five years ago), and it is in my mind a significant issue. To avoid this question in my story would have presented an incomplete picture of Tasmania. (Curwen, T 2010, pers. comm., 3 June)

Curwen's closing paragraphs were deliberately ambiguous and he hoped that "after spending time reading the story, readers will feel comfortable drawing their own conclusions" (Curwen, T 2010, pers. comm., 3 June). According to earlier parts of that story, *Wanderlust's* fears were "scandalous", the beaches at the exclusive end of the Bay of Fires were "empty", and dinner in the lodge was "rocket lettuce, corn and pecorino salad, braised wallaby and beef meatballs with roasted capsicum sauce, potatoes with lemon and thyme sauce, dressed greens

and a raspberry and vanilla bean panna cotta with macerated strawberries”  
(Curwen 2010).

## **8.5 Conclusion**

International travel journalism is prohibitively expensive for all but the biggest publications that refuse hosted travel, while tourism operators and tourism offices in destinations are unlikely to be prepared to pay the expenses of international journalists whose newspapers or magazines do not have high circulations, particularly if the destination is geographically distant from the publication’s market. This means competition among destinations for access to those travel journalists writing for elite readers who can afford overseas travel is fierce, and tourism offices will make representations to travel editors of prestigious publications on behalf of their destinations even when those destinations do not accept hosted travel (Nicholls, D 2009, pers. comm., 9 March). In place-branding terms, elite readers are also more likely to have consumer or business interests that may incline them to be curious about a destination’s exports or economic opportunities.

This chapter has demonstrated that prestigious travel publications whose own brands promise authoritative and reliable editorial will sometimes publish articles containing political comment and hold destinations to account for what their journalists perceive to be breeches of brand promises. Many of these publications also deliver the tourism industry a raft of accolades and awards that destinations can use in their marketing and publicity, as Tourism Tasmania’s “Accolades” page (Tourism Tasmania 2009) attests: among a long list of accolades from the period of the case study it recorded in 2009 were eight from

*Travel + Leisure*, five from *Condé Nast Traveler/Traveller* and three from *National Geographic Traveler*, including the 2004 scorecard result with no mention of its concerns about forestry. Tourism Tasmania was skilled at shielding Tasmania's citizens from evidence of any negative manifestations of the brand in travel journalism while capitalising on travel media praise. As we have also seen, such accolades frequently found their way into local media, where they functioned as endorsement of place branding. While in the case of the Center for Sustainable Destinations scorecard Tourism Tasmania succeeded initially in deflecting attention from criticism, through his own agency Tourtellot was subsequently able to deploy his status and his magazine's international reputation to reprise panellist criticisms in the local media, before revisiting these concerns in his own piece of travel journalism in *National Geographic Traveler*. By losing some of its control over the political environment, the government had lost control over the brand, which in turn had generated feedback in the form of Tourtellot's comments and travel journalism. Even so, Tourism Tasmania continued to publicise the scorecard result in its marketing, unqualified by the panellists' comments, as endorsement for its branding.

Criticisms of forestry or reports of conflict in travel journalism about Tasmania, when they occurred, were usually a relatively small part of otherwise highly motivational representations of the environment. Tourtellot's "brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern" represented tourism as a positive force capable of bringing about social change for environmental good and included an industry-friendly call to action in the form of more travel. Metcalf's incorporation of the same frame teamed it with the "warlike conflagration" frame and his own evidence for heightened impact. He did not overtly urge

readers to take action, but as Tourtellot had done in his local news interview, Metcalf in his travel journalism represented environmental conflict as part of the human condition and local publics as members of imagined communities of global risks. And although his criticism was crowded out of local newspaper the *Mercury* by its preference for reporting the many accolades his publication bestowed on the state, his views nevertheless functioned as brand feedback to Seagram, who was a member of Tourism Tasmania's board by the time his article was published.

In the case of the Bay of Fires Walk, international travel magazines and newspaper supplements were delivered an irresistible media-brand asset: luxurious and safe but environmentally sympathetic infrastructure and products in a beautiful, distant, unpeopled yet accessible landscape for their professional endorsement and recommendation. In Tasmania, national parks protected this asset from logging but the pulp mill threatened to damage it by bringing into question the reputation of the wine and food the island's place-branded environment had invested with symbolic purity and ecotourism entrepreneurs were serving to their guests. Thus, throughout the decade, and regardless of environmental disputes, Bay of Fires Walk, along with its birth sisters Cradle Huts and the Freycinet Experience Walk, was projected by the travel media as an indispensable symbol not only of Tasmania but of their own discernment and environmental responsibility. Even when "brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern" was expressed for Tasmania's "natural" branding, the Bay of Fires Walk at the "recommended" (Curwen 2010) end of the bay emerged from the texts unscathed.

## Chapter 9: The Challengers

Production assets and exceptional behaviour are also important in helping the challenger break the authorities' domination over the political environment... [O]rganization, resources and international status allow one to initiate and control events, to break through government restrictions on the flow of information, and to mobilize oppositional support.

*Gadi Wolfsfeld 1997, p. 126*

### 9.1 Introduction

In Chapter 8, challenges to Tasmania's place branding were mediated through travel journalism largely as a result of journalistic agency, media power, media branding and the close proximity of the environmental threat to travel journalism sources who did not rely exclusively on the tourism industry for their income. In the case of the last of these factors, the success of sources in gaining access to travel journalism demonstrated that brand extensions intended to bolster place branding can, in times of conflict, help expose it to scrutiny. Place branding proved incapable of "simultaneously mediat[ing] subjective qualities, tastes, and norms; and ...objective financial worth" (Aronczyk and Powers 2010, p. 7) when the threat was perceived by travel journalism sources to have a direct impact on their incomes, leading these sources to risk deploying a damaged brand in travel journalism.

In this chapter I consider Tasmania's place branding specifically as it encounters challenges to its credibility mounted by travel journalists ideologically and strategically committed to environmentalism. The chapter draws attention to strategies and tactics of environment movements, the scope and limits of journalistic agency, and the role of rationality and affect –

particularly the strategic effectiveness of deploying celebrity and the voices of passionate locals as part of “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”.

## 9.2 The View from the Other Side

Like *BBC Wildlife Magazine* in 2000, the *New York Times* in 2004, *National Geographic Traveler* in 2006, and *Travel + Leisure* in 2008, the United States’ adventure magazine *Outside* was prepared to make space for “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”. On this occasion, journalistic agency and a form of challenger public relations countered the advantages the Visiting Journalist Program (VJP) gave the government’s frames in the discourse of accessible nature by framing the journalist’s own adventure in Tasmania as extreme access to contested forests. Mark Jenkins<sup>18</sup>, who was a staff journalist for *Outside* at the time, travelled to Tasmania at the expense of his magazine and was able to activate a substantial anti-forestry network in his quest to access some of the island’s most challenging wilderness. His objective in the Styx Valley was to do what Wilderness Society campaigner Geoff Law said to his knowledge “no human has actually done... cross end to end through one of the last contiguous stands of giant old-growth regnans” (Law in Jenkins 2005). Not only did Jenkins interview Law, who had been a key strategist in the Franklin dam blockade (see Chapter 6), but he also quoted Richard Flanagan, who in addition to his literary and journalistic achievements is the first person to have kayaked “the 25-mile Class III-IV Styx River” (Jenkins 2005) – an impeccable credential for a Jenkins interviewee. Jenkins was himself a traveller known for his feats of physical endurance and as a result enjoyed considerable editorial freedom, which he put

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<sup>18</sup> At the time of interview Jenkins was employed by *National Geographic* magazine.

to the service of his environmental concerns. The following quote describes his editorial preoccupations, research methods and the freedom he was afforded by his publisher:

I wrote a column called “The Hard Way” [for *Outside* magazine] for about eight years. And in that I did 75 journeys and 75 columns and none of them were someone else’s idea. None of them were suggestions by travel companies or whatever. All of them were about issues or subjects that I care about. So, I don’t know if I fit into your classic mould. Now I work for *National Geographic* magazine and the same applies. In fact, at *National Geographic* we are not allowed to take any junkets or get a free plane ticket or all those kind of things that are associated with travel journalism. We have a ban on that because it can influence how you write a story. I’ve never done that anyway, so for me it was an easy fit. So in terms of how information flows I see it as my obligation to write about the environmental issues of a place I go... I’m typically going someplace because I’m fascinated by the geography or the culture or particularly in the case of Tasmania I knew about the forestry issues there. I’d covered those same issues in the US, I’d read Richard Flanagan’s couple of his books. I wrote him a note, said, you know, I’m thinking of coming down and writing a story about your area and he invited me and when I got down I thought, you know, the way to do this is actually to have some kind of experience of these grand trees and that’s how Matt and I ended up deciding let’s see if we can do a complete traverse of what little is left of the Styx, and that’s what we did. And so, so often for me the – this is the way to put it – that the travel slash adventure for me is simply a narrative structure which I can use to talk about an issue.

(Jenkins, M 2009, pers. comm., 20 March)

Jenkins was an ideal fit for *Outside*, which describes itself as “dedicated to covering the people, sports and activities, politics, art, literature, and hardware

of the outdoors...[a]rmed with great writing that's always based on critical thinking and a sharp sense of humor" (Outside 2011). Thus, *Outside* proved a valuable forum for the "warlike conflagration" frame (see Chapter 7). The following description by Jenkins bears many of the hallmarks of the description provided by Metcalf in *Travel + Leisure* (2008, see Chapter 8), the difference being that Jenkins could claim first-hand experience of the aftermath of a burn:

What changed me more was the macabre graveyards of the clear-cuts. Peck drove us to the start of our bushwalk, through an apocalyptic scene: Charred logs lay like corpses across a battlefield; blackened stumps sat among funeral pyres of unremarkable trees.

Clear-cut logging in the Styx Valley is a four-step process. After all trees in a selected area are felled, the straightest and most easily transported are removed. Everything else – an astonishing stockpile of lumber – is left as waste. Eucalyptus seedlings require fire for regeneration, so logging contractors spray jellied petroleum (also known as napalm), igniting the debris and creating hazy plumes of smoke. (Jenkins 2005)

Jenkins described the vestiges of the Global Rescue Station – a camp surrounding a platform where activists, supported by the Wilderness Society and Greenpeace, had gained international media coverage by webcasting their five-month-long tree-sit 64 metres up in the Styx Forest canopy in the Australian summer of 2003–04 (Lester and Hutchins 2009). In his published text, Jenkins quoted one of the activists, who spoke of ongoing work to make the station and surrounding forest a life-changing destination: "We want people to come here and feel their beauty and presence and sacredness. When you've been in this forest and stood beside these trees, they change you" (Firth in Jenkins 2005).

Like Metcalf (2008) in Chapter 8, Jenkins was also careful to include a complicating voice in his article – one directly related to the subject of his story. Just as Metcalf included the comments of a winemaker associated with a woodchipping company in his story about wine and food, Jenkins included some information from a Forestry Tasmania district manager, Steve Whiteley, in his story about the Styx. In his interview for this research, Whiteley recalled that “[i]t was a good story for an outdoor magazine about an adventure, and the more the characters and some of those things can be worked into that sort of article then presumably that’s what the readers want so that’s what the journalist writes” (Whiteley, S 2009, pers. comm., 4 August). Whiteley felt that Jenkins had been candid with him in describing the kind of article he was writing and what his part in it would be but did not consider the article an opportunity to provide anything but factual information. He described his positioning in the article as providing “input rather than balance” (Whiteley, S 2009, pers. comm., 4 August):

[T]here was an activist campaign running and there were a number of different things that were going on and from time to time FT or I were called upon to provide information. In this case it was fairly reactive, if you like, so there were a set of questions that the journalist wanted answered, there wasn't really an opportunity to portray any other perspective. So it was more an interrogation rather than a— certainly I didn't see it, and it wasn't, an equal opportunity to participate at the same level as many of the other participants were engaged. (Whiteley, S 2009, pers. comm., 4 August)

As in Metcalf’s article (2008, see Chapter 8), the inclusion of a voice opposed to the general tenor of the text did not result in a less critical framing of

the state's forestry practices but, rather, enabled Jenkins to argue that he had assessed the evidence offered by both sides in forming his own opinion:

I was reporting so it was my duty to try to speak to all sides of the issue and so it was my job to talk to— as a reporter I can't just talk to Geoff, I need to talk to everybody I can about different perspectives on what's happening in the Styx. And so to do that I couldn't simply speak to Geoff Law at the Wilderness Society, I felt like I needed to speak to Steve Whiteley, who was the district manager for Forestry Tasmania. I felt like I needed to speak to all sides of it and then come up with my own assessment. (Jenkins, M 2009, pers. comm., 20 March)

Whiteley expressed no expectation of balance in what he described as opinion pieces:

As long as articles don't purport to be balanced then people don't have to write balanced articles. They can write opinion pieces with a particular agenda. There's no question of that... They write opinion pieces to be interesting and sell magazines. (Whiteley, S 2009, pers. comm., 4 August)

Whiteley cites as evidence of his view that the inclusion of facts from Forestry Tasmania was tokenistic the article's retelling of what he described as "the Tasmanian tiger bit...straight out of the Wilderness Society's campaign at that stage" (Whiteley, S 2009, pers. comm., 4 August; for a contemporary example of the Wilderness Society's narrative in relation to the Tasmanian tiger, see Wilderness Society 2010). Here, Whiteley is referring to Jenkins' transmission through his text of challenges to Forestry Tasmania's "sustainable" branding – and, by implication, Tasmania's "natural" branding – via the metaphor of the

Tasmanian tiger. Tasmania has an ambivalent relationship with the tiger: on the one hand it uses a “distanced brutality” frame of historical brutality teamed with tourism and contemporary regret (for an explanation of this frame, see Chapter 8) to manage the brand contradiction of its extinction (see, for example, Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts 2005); on the other hand, from 1995 the image of a Tasmanian tiger “in a wilderness environment” (Tourism Tasmania 1997, p. 12) was one of the state’s logos, intended to invoke the myth of the animal’s possible continued existence as a symbol of “discovery, surprise, intrigue, the unexpected, tranquillity and natural [sic.]” (Tourism Tasmania 1997, p. 12, see Chapter 6). Jenkins introduced the tiger in the first paragraph of his article but did not inform his readers of its extinction until his final sentence. The animal was portrayed as having become extinct at the hands of a government that allowed its forest habitat to be destroyed and paid a bounty for its carcasses. By continuing to log forests where tigers once lived the government was represented by Jenkins as showing itself unwilling to learn from history and therefore of protecting the environment in 2005, in direct contrast to the “distanced brutality” frame.

Forestry Tasmania represented its own tourism ventures as complementing wilderness experiences by offering something more akin to adventure activities: “Forestry Tas is looking for the ‘Get out there’ rather than the wilderness, [which] is more ‘Look from a distance’ or ‘Tread lightly’. So we’re visibly interested in a point of difference in what we’re trying to do for that part of the market” (Whitelely, S 2009, pers. comm., 4 August). However, Whiteley did not see his role in the interview with Jenkins as promoting those activities, despite *Outdoor*’s adventure branding. In his understanding that he

was providing factual information, he confined himself to a rational, scientific discourse that could not compete in the subjective, affective genre of travel journalism with the emotion-laden discourse of Jenkins and his other interviewees (Whiteley, S 2009, pers. comm., 4 August).

Jenkins' article was unusual in that it was a travel journalism feature in which the cosmopolitical aspects of "brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern" were textually prominent rather than a subsidiary theme. Whereas Forestry Tasmania regarded his story as part of the environment movement's campaign, Jenkins, who described himself as a "global correspondent", regarded himself as bringing cosmopolitan concern for the environment to the attention of his readers in America and particularly to those who might be dealing with similar issues:

I have the same problem in my own state in Wyoming where you've got foresters who don't really get the fact that they're cutting down some of the last stands that will ever exist, because the climate's changing... [H]aving been to the Congo, the Amazon, all over Asia, all over Africa, all over Europe, all over South America, all over North America, I recognise that there are these tiny gems left, and they're very small and there are very few of them, and I kind-of believe in trying to protect every one of them because essentially we're just going to have little parks, that's all we'll have left, you know. The population of the planet's going to double, and all we're going to have are little tiny pieces of wilderness. They'll just be tiny. They'll be like Central Park. They're going to be almost nothing. But it's something that young people can still take a walk through and have a sense of what used to be on the planet. I think that's valuable. (Jenkins, M 2009, pers. comm., 20 March)

In talking about the article, author Jenkins and interviewee Whiteley both invoked their professional expertise in support of their practice – the news value

of balance and his own cultural capital as a cosmopolitan travel journalist in Jenkins' case, scientific expertise and a commitment to multidimensional land management in Whiteley's. Although Jenkins did not regard himself as a travel journalist, he believed in ecotourism and expected his article to encourage his readers to visit the state (Jenkins, M 2009, pers. comm., 20 March). Such strong support in such a long article (nearly 3,000 words) in a United States glossy adventure/travel magazine with a circulation in 2011 of 678,000 (Outside n.d.) was an impressive public relations coup for Tasmania's environment movement. This was achieved in no small part by Flanagan's likely appeal as an adventurer as well as a novelist to *Outside's* demographic, which Jenkins knew intimately:

They're upper middle class urban people who do have enough money to go abroad at least once a year. I mean this is kind-of the profile, right, of an *Outside* reader: upper middle class wage earner. Typically white, typically male. Typically urban. Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle. Something like that. Athletic. Enjoy adventure. Would be the kind of person that might not necessarily plan their own expedition to climb and let's say mountaineer and something like that but might be inspired by the magazine to hire a guide and go do something like that. (Jenkins, M 2009, pers. comm., 20 March)

### **9.3 Tactical Travel Journalism**

Sometimes the environment movement's tactics have an impact on travel journalism in a more indirect way than was demonstrated in the previous section. In these days of direct access to foreign publics via online media, some of Australia's largest environmental organisations have deployed networked technology strategically and tactically to attract the attention of journalists and

gain access to mainstream print and broadcast news (Hutchins and Lester 2011; Lester and Hutchins 2009). In so doing, they have relied on elements of tactical media (Garcia and Lovink 1997; Lovink 2002, 2005; Meikle 2002) – “cheap ‘do-it-yourself’ media, made possible by the revolution in consumer electronics and expanded forms of distribution (from public access cable to the Internet)...exploited by groups and individuals who feel aggrieved by or excluded from the wider culture” (Garcia and Lovink 1997). In its purest form the term “tactical media” emphasises anonymity and rejects the institutionalisation that attends the evolution of many non-government organisations. However, when Geert Lovink coined the term in the 1990s, he made reference to tactical media practitioners working “both inside and outside the mainstream media” (Lovink in Meikle 2002, p. 120). This, together with his views that investigative journalism is “the basis of all ‘tactical’ output” but editorial desks are servile and censorious (Lovink 2002, p. 258), makes evidence of new-media tactics in the soft genre of travel journalism intriguing. In 2009 Lester and Hutchins elaborated and adjusted Lovink’s concept of tactical media in their exploration of the broader strategic and tactical uses of new media in environmental conflict, and I draw on their approach here when focusing primarily on the actions of travel journalists.

Each of the two examples to follow begins with the deployment of a new-media tactic by environmental activists. In the first example, the original web protest emerges in a form that readily corresponds with Lovink’s description of tactical media as anonymous outsider do-it-yourself new-media activism. In the second, the initial online campaign seeks legitimacy by publicising the involvement of large, well-established NGOs, thereby making a

virtue of the very “professionalism inside the office culture of these networked organizations” with which Lovink takes issue (2002, p. 260).

### **9.3.1 The Legacy of the Styx**

In November 2002, the Wilderness Society, together with WWF and Planet Ark, bought billboard space in Sydney Airport and erected a billboard juxtaposing an image of Styx Valley forest due to be logged in 2003–04 with an image of forest that had been cleared and burnt. The billboard headline “Discover Tasmania before 2003” repurposed words that are part of the URL of Tourism Tasmania’s holiday website [www.discovertasmania.com.au](http://www.discovertasmania.com.au). The airport advertising agency removed the billboard after one day, saying it had not been approved in advance by the airline Qantas. A report in the *Mercury* (Ribbon 2002) suggested the state’s premier and minister responsible for Tourism Tasmania, Jim Bacon, had pressured Qantas to remove the billboard. Qantas denied this, but Bacon publicly attacked the environment groups who had erected it and claimed there was “no truth in the statement that Tasmania’s forests are threatened in the way that the last of our forests are about to disappear” (Bacon in Ribbon 2002, p. 3). Two weeks later, an anti-forestry website with the URL [www.discover-tasmania.com](http://www.discover-tasmania.com) was posted anonymously. When the website owner was exposed a week later, the *Mercury* newspaper identified him as a former Tasmanian tourism operator, Gordon Craven, who said he was acting alone and had set up the site primarily to protest against removal of the airport billboard and to highlight the cruelty of the forestry industry’s use of 1080 poison to kill animals that browsed on seedlings (Bailey 2002, p. 3). Tourism Tasmania’s chief executive at the time was reported by the *Mercury* as labelling the website “a ‘direct hit’ on the state’s reputation which threatened visitor numbers and could have a multi-million-dollar impact”

(Giason in Bailey 2002, p. 3). In the same article, Craven was quoted as saying that he “set up the site to shame the Government and Forestry Tasmania who use tourism, and the tourist operators who just stand by and let it happen” (Craven in Bailey 2002, p. 3). In a related dispute about Craven’s registration of the associated domain name [www.discover-tasmania.com.au](http://www.discover-tasmania.com.au) for a tourism website that linked through to his original site, the World Intellectual Property Organization (2003) ruled against Tourism Tasmania. In later years, one of the forestry conflicts publicised by Craven was a campaign against plans by major Forestry Tasmania customer Gunns Ltd to build the AUD1.9 billion pulp mill in the state’s most significant wine tourism area, the Tamar Valley (see Chapter 8) – a dispute that also captured the attention of British travel journalist Paul Miles.

Miles was an environmentally and socially conscious freelance journalist who listed the NGO Tourism Concern as one of his non-media clients (Miles n.d.). Prior to visiting Tasmania late in 2007, he had been aware of its forestry conflicts – so much so that until then he had avoided writing about the island (Miles, P 2009, pers. comm., 9 March). After learning of the pulp mill dispute, however, he decided to tour Tasmania as a hosted and guided guest of the Visiting Journalist Program (VJP), thereby acknowledging the appeal of travel journalism as a vehicle for raising concerns about environmental issues. In his words, “I thought it might be quite good if I could try and write about the pulp mill and the controversy around that as well as writing about the good things that are happening in the state” (Miles, P 2009, pers. comm., 9 March). The extent of the value tourist destinations place on coverage in prestigious, high-circulation publications – in this case the British edition of *Condé Nast Traveller* and London’s *Financial Times* – is evident in Tourism Tasmania’s decision to host

Miles in spite of his admission that he intended to investigate the pulp mill dispute. Nevertheless, he felt his candour made the organisation's British PR representative extremely nervous. This led to a struggle for editorial control enacted in a debate in which expectations of genres and genre attributes were both explicitly and implicitly contested. The public relations practitioner invoked the news journalism ideal of balance specifically in response to her concern that Miles might have been intending to operate as an investigative foreign correspondent in Tasmania rather than as a travel journalist:

I was very up front with her about it, yeah. I told her I wanted to talk about those issues too. And as I said, she was anxious, but she agreed that it would be okay. (Miles, P 2009, pers. comm., 9 March)

She did try to persuade me that things weren't as bad as some NGOs make out and that maybe I had only heard one side of the story and I should investigate both of them and I should also see how good the forestry is and that it was well-managed and everything. (Miles, P 2009, pers. comm., 9 March)

Although interviewed PRPs with experience in Tourism Tasmania's VJP demonstrated an understanding of the difference between *news* journalism and marketing, their discourse and that of other members of the tourism sector was less likely to differentiate strongly between *travel* journalism and marketing. This may be attributable partly to their own experience of working with travel journalists who so often ignored controversy or criticism in their published texts. It was probably also partly due to confusion created by the work practices of travel journalists themselves, many of whom sometimes accepted copywriting assignments in addition to working as journalists. Within these understandings

and expectations, however, there was considerable heterogeneity among Tourism Tasmania PRPs, and, as we have seen, a few did more than merely pay lip-service to the notion of journalistic objectivity. However, with some important exceptions (see Section 7.2.2), an institutional discourse was evident whereby it was argued that any travel journalists who did insist on including negative comment about the state's forestry practices should be prepared to balance this with views about logging from pro-forestry sources. As evident in the following quotes, the response of the British PRP who had agreed to host Miles despite his interest in the pulp mill was part of a strategy to manage travel journalists with environmental concerns by arranging interviews for them with government-accredited sources with specialised knowledge. This was a more active intervention than had been the practice early in the decade, when, if pressed, the senior PRP would provide travel journalists with contact details of people on both sides of the debate but would refuse to arrange interviews for them with either side (Nicholls, D., 2009, pers. comm.). Reference below to a conscious decision to change tack and adopt more traditional government media-referral practices later in the case study period suggests that criticism in international travel journalism was becoming more problematic for Tourism Tasmania as the decade progressed. This was partly because the pulp mill proposal had seen environmental concerns increasingly voiced by wine and food tourism operators who might not otherwise have taken an active interest in forestry disputes:

PRP 1: ...I think we've learnt from things that have happened in the past and by that I mean that perhaps we haven't— what we do now— perhaps we haven't steered people in the right direction to speak to the right people. And what we're doing now is we're doing a lot more interviews with people with experience. So

we'll send someone to a professor at the university to talk about the devil tumours. We'll send someone to meet with someone to talk about forestry practices if that's what it takes. We'll send someone to talk about climate change and the effects on Tasmania. You know, we won't profess to being them, because, you know...if people are going to quote things we want them to quote *them*. And then we'll depend on those specialists in the field to do that. We'll also send an appropriate guide that we feel will handle that situation. So we certainly won't say, "Oh we better not have them come because they might write something about it." We'll just say, "Okay, well how can we give them the best information?" (PRP 1 2009, pers. comm., 8 March)

PRP 2: ... if we were taking journalists out to dinner and those issues came up, you'd give them the facts. You know, just in discussions, you'd say, "Well, this is the stage it's at..." We wouldn't make any comment. If they then wanted to speak to somebody about it further we'd look at what we could do to help them out speaking to appropriate people.

RESEARCHER. And what are appropriate people?

PRP 2: I knew you were going to ask that. We've had a few instances and the thing that we always tried to do was give a balanced view. So if they wanted to talk to someone from the Wilderness Society, which was quite common, that's fine, we would not arrange – I don't think we ever directly arranged it for them, but they were free to go and talk to them. At the same time we'd offer a forestry person. (PRP 2 2009, pers. comm., 16 March)

In most cases, the discourse of PRPs with experience in Tourism Tasmania's VJP lacked a reflexive sense that their own arguments might equally be used to justify criticism of logging in travel journalism on the basis that it balanced place branding representations of the state as "natural" in the rest of the article. Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, busy itineraries functioned as an attempt at

media management (see Section 7.2), but one that had limited effect if journalists were determined to pursue the issue.

Having secured editorial agreement from *Conde Nast Traveller* to cover the pulp mill dispute, Miles organised an alternative guide unconnected with the VJP to show him the proposed pulp mill site in the one free day his Tourism Tasmania itinerary allowed him (Miles, P 2009, pers. comm., 9 March). The resulting article (2008b, p. 34), which referred in its lead to Tasmania's forests as threatened "wilderness", was written in the third-person style of news journalism, favoured the framing of those opposed to the mill, included restaurateur Daniel Alps (see also discussion of Alps in Chapter 8), and included the counterarguments of Gunns. Miles' feature for the *Financial Times* (2008a), by contrast, was in the first-person style of a traditional travel journalism narrative and covered much of his Tourism Tasmania itinerary. In the draft he submitted to the newspaper, he contrasted Tasmania's "pristine wilderness" with what he described as the state's "reputation for feckless forestry practices" (Miles, P 2009, pers. comm., 9 March). In the draft he also described the process of clear-felling and burning associated with old-growth logging and explained the potential effects of the pulp mill on the island's wine and food industries. The newspaper cut these parts of the story before publication, which Miles saw as demonstrating that power in commercial travel journalism publishing resides with the editors and publishers (Miles, P 2009, pers. comm., 9 March). Miles, however, engaged in a form of "hit-and-run" (Meikle 2002, p. 119) tactical media that briefly challenged such power. Beneath the URL of Tourism Tasmania's website for tourists noted after his article, he listed the URL of the tourism anti-forestry website [www.discover-tasmania.com.au](http://www.discover-tasmania.com.au) (Miles 2008a). As

Miles recalled in 2009, “I listed that and they included it in the feature... [T]hat’s as close as I’ve got really, in the FT. I think that was kind-of a little bit subversive actually. I think they just assumed it was a link to the Tourism [Tasmania] website” (Miles, P 2009, pers. comm., 9 March). Yet although Miles was able to challenge the newspaper’s power briefly by including this URL, the structural forces that generally privilege the messages of elite sources in travel journalism were not altered by his gesture. Commenting almost a year after the article appeared, he remained despondent about the power imbalance in his relationship with editors:

Sometimes I don’t even know if/when a feature is going to appear. Subs and editors seem to go ahead and do their own thing. It is rare for them to bother to check with writers that we agree with any changes, but sometimes, thankfully, they do. Occasionally I give some feedback, but it doesn’t achieve much and as far as the readers are concerned, it’s already too late. (Miles, P 2009, pers. comm., 10 March)

### **9.3.2 Under the Radar in the Tarkine**

In February 2005, shortly after an Australian election in which Tasmania’s forest disputes had featured prominently, the United States NGO Ethical Traveler mounted an online letter-writing campaign in association with the Wilderness Society (Ethical Traveler n.d.). The campaign asked members to urge the Australian Government to hold firm on all of its election promises in relation to the protection of Tasmania’s old-growth forests. In reporting Ethical Traveler’s actions, a related publication, *Earth Island Journal*, noted the importance of tourism to Tasmania’s economy and observed that “the partner groups view their joint environmentalist–traveler campaign as a logical next step in protecting

these extraordinary forests” (McColl 2005). *Earth Island Journal* ended by stating that Ethical Traveler’s executive director, Jeff Greenwald, had given assurances that Ethical Traveler would “monitor” the situation to ensure the Australian government held to its promise (McColl 2005).

Jeff Greenwald is also a noted travel journalist and travel book author. In recounting a 2007 tour of Tasmania as a guest of Tourism Tasmania, he said he’d arrived with few preconceptions and had been only superficially aware of Ethical Traveler’s 2005 campaign in conjunction with the Wilderness Society. While in Tasmania, however, he had also made contact with people to whom, as he explained, Tourism Tasmania would probably rather he had not spoken (Greenwald, J 2009, pers. comm., 6 March). The resulting article published in *Islands* magazine in 2008 duly praised a variety of tourist attractions and described the destination as a “global treasure” but also deployed the “warlike conflagration” frame. In addition, the article called on the Australian government to make “wise choices” for Tasmania’s forests, but it did not mention Greenwald’s association with Ethical Traveler.

Greenwald maintained a personal blog, but he did not use it while in Tasmania in 2007; nor did he blog for Ethical Traveler on this visit, although he had posted blogs on that site before and would do so again. His decision not to blog is especially interesting in view of his having created the first international blog, which he published on what is claimed to be the world’s first commercial online publication, *Global Network Navigator* (O’Reilly and Associates Inc. 1993), while circling the globe by land in 1994. He has described the experience of blogging at that time as giving him a sense of being “almost on fire, that the excitement and heat of my journey was something I could broadcast in no time at

all. It was a very giddy feeling” (Greenwald in Shapiro 2004, p. 250). Despite this initial intoxication with online media, however, more than a decade later he was apologising on his blog (Greenwald n.d.a) for his tardiness in failing to blog while in Tasmania, and observing that he didn’t like blogging while on assignment. At the very least, this comment privileges traditional media assignments over the journalist’s commitment to readers of his blog.

Both Miles (2008b) in *Conde Nast Traveller* and Greenwald (2008) in *Islands* juxtaposed their criticisms of Tasmania’s environmental practices with references to Tasmania’s brand promise of “Australia’s natural state” or “Your natural state” in what functioned textually as an ironic play on journalism’s balance ethic. And like Metcalf (2008), Flanagan (2004) and Jenkins (2005), both these travel journalists’ appealed for global sensitivity to Tasmania’s forests through the voices of locals with an intense attachment to place. Greenwald went so far as to quote his Tourism Tasmania guide, Di Hollister, first in reference to devil facial tumour disease and then, just a few lines later, in reference to the environment in which it lives:

“Unless we cure the disease,” she says, “devils may be gone from this Earth in 15 years. That’s just unthinkable to a Tasmanian.” (Hollister in Greenwald 2008)

“What I love about this place”, Di says, “is that I can be up a mountain in the morning, in alpine meadows surrounded by trees and animals you can’t find anywhere else – and on an empty beach, swimming, in the afternoon.” (Hollister in Greenwald 2008)

Neither Greenwald nor Miles noted in their articles that Hollister worked for Tourism Tasmania yet both paid tribute to her – Miles for her past life as a Greens Member of Parliament (Miles 2008a), Greenwald for her passion for her island (Greenwald 2008). Thus, tourism public relations were turned to the advantage of the authors' cosmopolitan concern through the voice of a passionate local and, in the case of Greenwald's article, the symbol of the Tasmanian devil. In addition, Greenwald expressed his personal active political cosmopolitanism by entreating Australia's government to intervene to protect Tasmania's rivers and forests:

This is a critical time for all Tassie's residents, not just the [Tasmanian] devils. How Australia's new government manages the island's rivers and forests will affect every member of its ecosystem, from the earthworms to the devils to the kangaroos. To visit is to hope for wise choices, for Tasmania is a global treasure. (Greenwald 2008)

Greenwald expressed no sense of obligation to Tourism Tasmania for hosting him in 2007 (Greenwald, J 2009, pers. comm., 6 March). Rather, when discussing the kinds of articles he wrote, he spoke in terms of his publishers' expectations. *Islands*, he said, had wanted a traditional atmospheric travel narrative, whereas *Afar*, which funded a second trip to Tasmania inspired by the first, wanted something far more people-focussed (Greenwald, J 2009, pers. comm., 6 March). The extent to which Greenwald was prepared to write to direction is evident in the following interview extract, which refers to a dispute over proposals by Forestry Tasmania to pave a section of road through an area of rainforest in the Tarkine to create a "tourist loop":

[O]ne of the reasons I was so keen to come back, was I really wanted to be able to focus my attention on the political conflict unfolding in western Tasmania. Now, though I was given that mandate by the magazine *Afar*, it was also made clear to me that it wasn't to be a good versus evil story. *Afar* magazine wanted to see the human side of the issue from both sides and as a result we spoke to people who were passionately committed to their point of view on both sides of the forestry argument and the Tarkine road argument. So, you know, there was no— though I may have my own prejudice in terms of what I'd like to see done to the area, the function of my story is not to editorialise but to just present how different people who grew up in the same part of Tasmania can have such different views about how to use the land and what the future of that forest should be. (Greenwald, J 2009, pers. comm., 6 March)

The Tarkine loop road proposal was opposed by local tourism organisation Cradle Coast Authority, peak tourism industry body Tourism Industry Council Tasmania and environmental group the Tarkine National Coalition. In discussing their desire for media publicity in relation to objections to this second Tarkine road proposal (see Chapter 6 regarding protests that failed to stop the construction of another road in the Tarkine), the Cradle Coast Authority and the Tarkine National Coalition expressed varying opinions on lessons learned from the Franklin dam campaign and the value of controversy in public relations. Recalling the subsequent benefits to tourism public relations arising from publicity achieved by the Franklin campaign, Cradle Coast Authority's Ian Waller expressed the opinion that media coverage of conflict over the Tarkine road proposal would help raise awareness of an area he felt was still relatively unknown among tourists:

I suppose there is a line somewhere between news and tourism, but when we're talking about a new product, such as the Tarkine, I think that line is blurred quite dramatically. We're talking about a word that not many people know, don't know where it is, so there is a need for that – and believe me, I'm not a great believer in this concept that any publicity is good publicity. If we end up with images of bulldozers steaming through the Tarkine in the next six months I think that will be a significant negative for, not just the Tarkine but for the whole of Tasmania, but it will still reinforce that message of Tarkine, it will still get that out and about. People will be aware of it. (Waller, interview 2009)

Scott Jordan of the Tarkine National Coalition was more circumspect in his assessment of the value to his organisation's campaign of media coverage of controversy. He wanted to attract support from outside the state, but he also wanted to "bring the community on side" (Jordan, S 2009, pers. comm., 18 June). In his view, the generally conservative residents of north-west Tasmania would be alienated by reports of high levels of open conflict: "I think if we were to take a similar stance here to, say, the southern forests campaign [in and near the state capital, Hobart], while it might work for their aims down there, it would certainly alienate people in the north-west coast, and we would find that we would very quickly make the Tarkine a dirty word" (Jordan, S 2009, pers. comm., 18 June).

Although the Tarkine National Coalition did not target travel journalists in particular, Jordan believed travel journalism had the potential to engage readers who might know nothing about the Tarkine. Once engaged emotionally, he believed, these readers would be more likely to engage politically:

I think it's incredibly valuable. The news journalism really engages people who are already engaged with the issue. And if they're already in love with the Tarkine then the news journalism will tell them what the threat is and that they need to get out and give, and that the issue's alive. The travel journalism really is what gets people to fall in love with the place. If it encourages people to come and visit it or just to look at pictures in a good article and see it as some place that's beautiful, then it opens doors for the news journalism to work. If you just got another article about another place that they're logging, there's no shortage of those, there's nothing really to inspire you to engage. But it's the travel journalism that convinces people that something is worth saving I think. (Jordan, S 2009, pers. comm., 18 June).

Despite objections by the Cradle Coast Authority and the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania, however, some tourism operators were very much in favour of the road. One prominent advocate was the manager of a large accommodation operation in the area, John Dabner, who was also the vice-chairman and immediate past chairman of Circular Head Tourism (Circular Head was one of nine councils that were members of the Cradle Coast Authority) and a member of several other industry organisations. Dabner said he had initially failed to realise the importance of the Tarkine and other natural attractions to tourism in the north-west but was now an enthusiastic supporter of associated tourism development. In the following interview extract Dabner refers to the positioning of the far north-west as "the edge of the world"; a scientific facility on the region's Cape Grim promoted by the Tasmanian tourism and agricultural industries as having recorded the cleanest air in the world; and the then-forthcoming UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. In so doing, he frames environmental awareness as a tourism marketing tool in a manner similar

to that of Tourism Tasmania, its PRPs, the Cradle Coast Authority, the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania and other tourism operators interviewed for this case study:

[F]rom my experience in the area and in hospitality and in tourism and with what the trend is out there in the world and people wanting nature and wanting clean, green – and it's even more relevant now with Copenhagen and everyone talking about it again – I honestly think that the “Edge of the World” and the Tarkine and the cleanest air in the world, we've got great potential to actually target markets in that and we're not doing that enough, and so I think that should be depicted more [in travel journalism]. (Dabner, J 2009, pers. comm., 9 December).

Dabner saw value in travel journalism as a means of drawing visitors to the region but his comments in his interview for this case study suggest he did not see travel journalism as an appropriate forum for promoting or defending his support for the Tarkine road proposal (Dabner, J 2009, pers. comm., 9 December).

Just as the value of international publicity had been sufficiently seductive to persuade Tourism Tasmania to host Miles in 2007 despite his stated interest in the pulp mill, it was attractive enough to elicit an unusual degree of cooperation with Greenwald from the Tarkine National Coalition in 2009, as Jordan explained:

[W]e gave him some names of people that we perhaps under normal circumstances wouldn't have told the media to go off and get comment from these people. But his project was perhaps a bit different from what we'd

normally do in media so we tried to assist him where we could...hopefully, if we generate some passion in people who are overseas reading that article [they might] then join the campaign in some way and contribute to letting our government know that this area does have international recognition and is worthy of protection. (Jordan, S 2009, pers. comm., 18 June)

When Greenwald's *Afar* article was published in the United States in 2010, almost a year after the journalist's second visit to the island, it focused closely on the human-interest story of the relationship between wildlife tourism operator Geoff King (see Chapter 7) and his brother, whose views on conservation differed. The tagline to the published text summed up Greenwald's thesis: "Depending on how you view it, Australia's Tasmania island is a paradise of unusual critters and ancient forests or a victim of logging and mining. One family's story illustrates the divide" (2010, p. 64). Two issues later, *Afar*'s letters page contained a paragraph from the King brothers strongly critical of the way their relationship had been portrayed (King and King 2010, p. 8). Nevertheless, there is little doubt that Greenwald's article accurately reflected views expressed by others closer to home and reported in the national media that Tasmania's brand was being undermined by its forestry practices (see, for example, Denholm 2009). As one former Tourism Tasmania and Brand Tasmania PRP put it, "There's a huge issue and we all pretend that there's no issue, and there is an issue. And the problem is that the argy-bargy's become the issue. This sort of fighting all the time is now becoming our brand" (McGinity, M 2009, pers. comm., 23 October). By the end of the decade Brand Tasmania was acknowledging the forestry conflict on its own website (Brand Tasmania 2009a). Not so Tourism Tasmania, however, whose references to environmental conflict

on the “Environmental History” page of its website ended with the Franklin dam campaign (Tourism Tasmania 2011b).

Apart from its high-impact headline, “Bedeviled Island” was less overt in its political subjectivity than Greenwald’s *Islands* article had been. Instead, it framed the difference of opinion about environmental matters between Geoff King and his brother as a metaphor for Tasmania-wide environmental conflict. It gave space to Dabner’s support for the proposed Tarkine road, reported claims that the road was a threat to what was then believed to be the last remaining wild population of Tasmanian devils free of facial tumour disease, and even covered King’s protracted efforts to prevent the riders of off-road vehicles from damaging the foreshore of his property – a personal concern (see Chapter 7) that had rarely gained exposure in travel journalism despite his best efforts. It also mediated local contestation about the meaning of “wilderness”.

In November 2010, *Afar* won the top award in the magazine category in one of the United States’ most prestigious travel writing competitions, the Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Awards, run by the Society of American Travel Writers, and “Bedeviled Island” won the top award in the category of environmental tourism article (Society of American Travel Writers n.d.). In this second Greenwald example, then, journalism took precedence over activism in relation to coverage of Tasmania’s forestry debates.

## **9.4 Conclusion**

Miles and Greenwald had a personal commitment to environmentalism and connections with groups whose campaigning for ethical tourism sometimes included environmental issues. In both cases, past uses of new media in

environmental protests contributed to their ability to mount insider challenges to the definitional advantages enjoyed by elite tourism sources. Indeed, there was an element of Lovink-style tactical media in Miles' hit-and-run inclusion of one of Craven's URLs in his *Financial Times* article. By contrast, Ethical Traveler's online campaign in 2005 was openly networked, but it nevertheless saw its message delivered in a mainstream travel article that did not acknowledge its author's association with the group, thereby turning the tables on government tourism organisations that thrive on positive publicity from hosted travel journalists who neglect to inform readers of their assistance (Gartner, 1993). However, neither the *Financial Times* nor the *Islands* example represents a sustained assault on media power, as evidenced by Miles' continued lack of control over his published texts and Greenwald's willingness to meet *Afar*'s editorial requirements. Moreover, although personal blogs offer travel journalists the ability to circumvent the editorial control exerted by media institutions, as yet they rarely provide an income or the symbolic capital afforded by mainstream publication. In these circumstances, it seems unlikely that the more direct access to readers and the tactical opportunities offered by online technology will be exploited sufficiently by sympathetic travel journalists for environmental groups in dispute with the governments of tourist destinations to gain sustained definitional power in the genre purely as a result of such tactics.

Where international travel journalists appeared able to exert some limited influence was at the margins of the island's brand. In the 2000s Tasmania's brand managers projected an increasingly diverse and culturally sophisticated image of the island by promoting heritage, wine and food experiences and providing government support to high-profile cultural events, but in late 2010 the

most important component of Tasmania's brand was still overwhelmingly its natural environment ("wilderness" plus "coastal nature" in Tourism Tasmania 2011a). Though initiated by Tourism Tasmania and pursued by Brand Tasmania, this positioning of nature in the brand was largely an outcome of the environment movement's early success at public relations. Moreover, the existence of Tasmania's globally significant wilderness and the value of nature were constantly re-asserted through the very protests and other tactics the environment movement used to draw attention to Tasmania and its own causes, while Tourism Tasmania's branding efforts simultaneously built further awareness of Tasmania's place-branded environment on the global public stage – awareness the environment movement could continue to exploit. As early masters of branding in its own campaigning, the environment movement was itself ready to deploy similar tactics to those used by Tourism Tasmania to gain access to travel journalists, providing them with storylines, frames and guided tours either directly or by recommendation. And travel journalists with ties to tourism NGOs proved adept at turning Tourism Tasmania's VJP to their own advantage, while continuing to provide the destination with valuable endorsement among tourists and other travellers through the frame of "brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern". In addition, something unexpected happened when Tourism Tasmania attempted to appropriate cosmopolitan concern for the Tasmanian devil as a marketing tool. Whereas colonising the symbolic territory of "wilderness" had helped the Tasmanian government in its attempts to brand Tasmania, promoting the idea of cosmopolitan concern for the devil drew attention to the contradictions in the brand, enabling the dissemination of a more

complex message about Tasmania's environment than the government would have considered brand-aligned.

Although sources on both sides of the debate sometimes attempted to deploy their own facts and/or rational economic or scientific arguments, in articles written by travel journalists who had chosen to become "*advocates of the underdog*" rather than "*faithful servants to the authorities*" (Wolfsfeld 1997, p. 69, original emphasis), it was the affective discourse of character-driven stories and narratives of forest battlefields, old-growth graveyards, homeless eagles, doomed Tasmanian tigers and endangered devils that dominated, and carried the messages of the environment movement most decisively. Sources on both sides of the debate understood this, but inevitably cast as the villain in such stories, Forestry Tasmania was further hampered by explanatory appeals to science that were too complex to be developed in a travel journalism article. As in the case of Flinn's article discussed in Chapter 7, competition between sources was not confined to competition between challengers and elites. Importantly, travel journalists with an interest in challenging the brand were able to turn these source struggles to their own advantage, though usually only within the constraints of the genre's requirement for text that celebrated travel. However, Greenwald's 2010 article demonstrated that there was also another possibility – the inversion of the semi-honest broker in Wolfsfeld's model (Wolfsfeld 1997, p. 69) in the form of travel journalists whose sympathies were with the challengers but who allowed those opposed to the challengers "a significant amount of time and space to air their views" (Wolfsfeld 1997, p. 69).

For Jenkins and Greenwald, an ability to mediate criticisms of Tasmania's branding was significantly enhanced by assistance from the

environment movement or activists in the form of production assets, exceptional behaviour or international status (see Wolfsfeld 1997). Both journalists also had high cultural capital, while Jenkins' article, like Tourtellot's and Metcalf's in Chapter 8, contributed directly to his publication's branding. But *Outside*, like so many other travel magazines discussed in this case study, had also furnished Tasmania with an accolade it had disseminated through its marketing and on its corporate website throughout the decade (Tourism Tasmania 2009), and at the end of the case study Perrottet's (2002, see Chapter 8) brand-aligned article in the same magazine remained accessible online, just as Jenkins' did.

There were, however, many limitations to journalistic agency. Miles' attempt to incorporate "brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern" in his *Financial Times* article was stymied by routine editorial practice. Although he was able to challenge his publisher's power briefly by including the URL of the tactical media tourism website at the end of the piece, his environmental concerns with long-haul travel ultimately led him to start exploring subjects other than travel for his freelance journalism. That is, he did not continue his attempts to work for change through his *Financial Times* travel articles but instead changed his subject matter to avoid publishing material he found environmentally compromising:

I think as news of climate change becomes increasingly worrying and the damage that we're causing through – well, not just through flying obviously, but the damage that is happening to the planet is just becoming increasingly worrying – I just find it hard to rationalise promoting especially long-haul tourism, so I'm scaling back on that actually at the moment. And just doing local stuff, or trying to get away from writing about tourism. I'm writing less about

tourism. Just had a piece about living on a narrow boat, for instance. (Miles, P 2009, pers. comm., 9 March)

For Greenwald, whose blogs frequently refer to his associations with other notable identities in international travel writing and publishing, the cultural capital associated with his expertise as a traveller and writer was clearly important, as was the symbolic capital of having his publications recognised in awards. In his online biography (Greenwald n.d.b), his books and awards were given far more prominence than his association with Ethical Travel, which was relegated to the biography's final paragraph and described only as "a global community dedicated to exploring the ambassadorial potential of world travel". For a writer who frequently follows traditional travel articles with articles that focused on the politics of the same destination (Greenwald, J 2009, pers. comm., 6 March), journalism rather than activism was the outcome of Greenwald's second visit to Tasmania. He was motivated by the news values of conflict and drama, he used his skill as a journalist to gain access to a range of sources on both sides of the debate, and he employed engaging narrative techniques to represent broad human dilemmas through a deeply personal tale. By writing to his publisher's brief he produced an article more concerned with mediating culture than the branding messages of either brand-aligned elites or challengers. The result was subjective journalism that nevertheless attempted to reveal some of the island's social complexity by talking at length directly to Tasmanians with opposing views.



## **PART 3: CONCLUSION**



## Chapter 10: Travel Journalism and the Cosmopolitan Public Sphere

The encouragement of people to think internationally, to regard the culture of their own country as part of world culture, to conceive a physical, spiritual and intellectual world heritage, is important in the endeavour to avoid the destruction of humanity.

*Australian High Court Justice Lionel Murphy (The Tasmanian Dam Case 1983)  
in Palmer and Robb 2004, p. 31*

We live in a fragmented world... In the end, I believe that a good story creates a community of readers...

*Thomas Curwen 2010,  
pers. comm., 3 June*

### 10.1 Introduction

My aim in this thesis has been to understand how cosmopolitan concern and place branding interact in the production of international travel journalism about destinations experiencing environmental conflict. In terms of place branding, to the best of my ability I focussed in my case study on how it was actually practised by government and stakeholders rather than how its advocates such as Anholt (2007, 2010) argue that it should be implemented. And in regard to travel journalism production, I sought to interpret the on-ground negotiations between journalists and sources, and the strategic value of place-branded and cosmopolitan framing of the environment to sources, media institutions and journalists. In so doing, I regarded the government tourism organisation as a media source and part of government, which in turn I regarded as the main actor responsible for the state's adoption of place branding and a continuing key player in the state's attempts at brand management. Adopting Wolfsfeld's (1997)

terminology, and in view of the existence of a large government business enterprise in the forestry sector, Forestry Tasmania, I also considered the Tasmanian government one of the main authorities in the conflict between the forestry sector and the environment movement. The other significant authority was Forestry Tasmania's biggest client, Gunns Ltd. In addition, I took the lead of Govers and Go (2009) in referring to Tasmania's tourism public relations as place branding rather than destination branding because the destination had adopted place branding that incorporated tourism. This approach was further justified by clear evidence presented in Chapter 6 that the state's place branding had evolved out of its destination branding.

To address the aim of my thesis, I conducted a comprehensive literature review to locate unifying themes in what initially appeared to be the disparate fields of place branding, travel journalism and cosmopolitanism. I then sought to deepen and expand my insights by creating thick descriptions of the production and – where possible and relevant – subsequent careers of individual international travel journalism features about Tasmania. Tasmania was chosen because it enthusiastically adopted “natural” place branding at the turn of the century and pursued it through a decade of intense environmental conflict. Travel journalism in the United States and Britain was considered because these were Tasmania's biggest international tourism markets and also because I did not have access to translation services. My ethnographic approach combined long interviews with travel journalists, their sources and other relevant individuals, textual and contextual analyses of travel and news journalism and a wide range of other documents, and minor elements of analytic autoethnography.

This enabled me to gain a multidisciplinary perspective that took account of professional cultures, social structures, agency and political economy.

## **10.2 Research Conclusions**

The case study in this thesis has provided a glimpse of how travel journalism about places that attempt to brand contested environments operates at the cusp of consumerism and conflict. By telling stories intended to make distant consumers care about destinations whose contested natural places contribute to global flows of resources, travel journalists contribute to parallel flows of cosmopolitan concern.

My thesis concludes that place branding can shape consumerist cosmopolitan discourses in ways that appeal to travel journalists and are consistent with the commercial constraints of travel media. This can contribute to the circulation abroad of frames that depoliticise tourism attributes that may be contested in the news media. Simultaneously, successful branding helps places attract accolades and awards from travel publications. When publicised through a place's own news media, these function as evidence of the validity and value of government representations of local identity. In addition, travel journalists sometimes build narrative strength using a frame I have called "place-branded cosmopolitan concern", which in turn positions readers as members of imagined cosmopolitan communities of environmentally conscious consumers, enhances the journalist's cultural capital and demonstrates environmental responsibility by governments, the tourism industry and the travel media.

If governments lose control over place branding during periods of environmental conflict, they are less able to influence the travel media's agenda

and the way their brand messages are mediated in its journalism. This can afford travel journalism sources with interest-group sympathies, cosmopolitical travel journalists, and powerful travel media institutions that brand themselves as honest, environmentally responsible and/or discerning an opportunity to circulate alternative, politically charged meanings and symbols within a cosmopolitan discourse compatible with their participation in the tourism industry using a frame I have labelled “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”. Such interventions may be relatively rare, but the audiences they reach in their printed form can be numerically large and affluent. In addition, free online publication is still relatively common in big travel magazines and the travel sections of newspapers (even some that have pay walls for their news journalism), which can greatly expand the reach and shelf life of such articles.

Expressions of environmental cosmopolitical concern in travel journalism are often motivated or justified by travel journalists on the basis that they or their readers encounter similar concerns at home. As such, they contribute to a cosmopolitan public sphere and the emergence of imagined communities of global risks (Beck 2011). However, the extent to which these expressions of concern circulate back to local publics as brand feedback appears limited. There are at least two reasons for this. Firstly, the charisma of tourism as a celebratory industry capable of building local pride makes it difficult for external criticisms of place-branded projections of identity to gain access to local media. Secondly, “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern” incorporates extensive praise of the contested brand attribute, which in the case of published travel journalism heightens the textual impact of the journalists’ concerns but also means the articles can easily be stripped of their political charge and redeployed

as quotes that support the brand. In the absence of overt calls to political activism, cosmopolitical concern expressed by high-status international travel journalists during their visits and in their published texts is more likely to provide feedback at the margins of the brand, possibly contributing to dissensus or a mood for change within and/or among government agencies.

### **10.2.1 Associated Research Questions**

- 1. How might cosmopolitan predispositions influence the way transnational travel journalists mediate nature-based destinations experiencing environmental conflict?*

Hosted visits in particular work against the development of cosmopolitan cultural competence by cloistering journalists and relieving them of the need to interact with locals in the management of their day-to-day affairs. In the case study, however, those journalists with an interest in environmental conflict tended to interact with locals and include their voices in their published texts, privileging the risk definitions of citizens. Discussion of environmental conflicts in travel journalism features is, however, apparently rare and, notwithstanding actions they might take in other capacities, travel journalists' ability directly to influence local policy formation is largely through the limited and contingent indeterminacy of place brands rather than any interest they might have in using the genre to rally their home audiences or global publics to take political action themselves on behalf of distant, contested place-branded environments. In its consumerist form, however, cosmopolitan concern in travel journalism appears to have some influence on the cosmopolitan public sphere via its contribution to banal globalism and banal cosmopolitanism. Consistent with the findings of

Szerszynski and Urry (2002) in regard to media professionals generally, some travel journalists in the case study were found to be “reflexively aware of this cosmopolitanism and [to] seek ways of extending it, through brands, icons and narratives, often in ways that enhance global ‘connectedness’” (2002, p. 477). Travel journalists themselves described their decisions to raise local environmental issues in their published texts in terms that accord with the concept of an emerging community of global risks – a sense that environmental conflict is part of the human condition, that the Earth is a shared, finite resource, that the plight of local places of global value is of interest to distant audiences and that distant audiences experiencing similar conflicts will draw a sense of community from learning of others’ battles. These were some of the meanings the cosmopolitical travel journalists attached to their experiences of Tasmania’s environmental conflicts. Determining whether their readers might take similar meanings from their articles would, of course, require reception studies, but the willingness of travel magazines to publish the articles suggests publishers believe the journalists’ concerns will resonate with their audiences. However, in contrast to Beck’s vision of imagined communities of global risks initiated by an awareness of shared vulnerability independent of compassion or normative intent, cosmopolitical travel journalism strives to promote an ethics of care by using the language of affect to build relationships between readers and distant environments. This may, in turn, contribute to a sense among readers of being a little more “at home in the world” (Hannerz 2004b, 2006), because even if the world is increasingly precarious, it is a world whose concerns they share with distant others.

*2. Can cosmopolitical travel journalism challenge the definitional advantages of authorities in place-branded “natural” destinations experiencing environmental conflict?*

The thesis offers support for Lash and Lury’s (2007) argument that branding is largely a form of domination. The findings of the thesis suggest travel journalism’s endorsement of a place’s brand is sufficiently valuable to be sought by governments at the cost of hosted travel, not only because it may increase visitor numbers but also because it can interrupt the flow of local concerns onto the cosmopolitan public stage. However, the case study has demonstrated that travel journalists’ uncritical endorsement of place brands cannot be assumed, whether or not they are hosted. Moreover, in small, tightly knit communities, talk between public sector colleagues, or between colleagues and stakeholders, of travel journalists’ concerns about the brand may provide “an effective form of counterpublicity in relation to the brand” (Lury, 2004, p. 141) in the destination, even in the absence of widespread local access to travel journalism texts published internationally or mediatised political action by overseas readers of those texts.

Institutional sensitivity to the views of international travel journalists is consistent with the word-of-mouth circulation of travel journalist, public relations practitioner and other travel journalism source views and experiences through the public sector, the tourism industry and the broader community. In the case study this sensitivity was evident, for example, in the fact that during the decade under consideration Tourism Tasmania’s VJP responded to the mediation of environmental conflict in travel journalism by making a conscious and overt

change to the way it attempted to manage travel journalists' interested in forestry matters (see Chapter 9), encouraging them to talk to "appropriate" experts and arranging the interviews for them. Attempts to counter "brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern" with technical argument were likely to be ineffective, however. In travel journalism about Tasmania that touched on the issue of the pulp mill, for example, there were similarities to Argentinian news coverage of protests against pulp mills to the extent that "[f]or journalism, citizens – as the voices of 'side effects' as Beck would have it– were legitimate 'primary definers' of environmental risk, as political actors, as members of mobilized communities" (Waisbord and Peruzzotti 2009, p. 704).

### *3. What forms might cosmopolitan concern take in international travel journalism about such destinations?*

Cosmopolitan concern in travel journalism is a versatile concept that can be incorporated into predominantly consumerist or more-cosmopolitical discourses. As a mostly consumerist frame it supports the nature-based tourism industry and in the case study took one or both of two forms. In one scenario, travel journalists responded to staged authenticity by publicising the sustainable practices of the tourism operator and, by implication, the destination, and sometimes thereby promoting environmentally sustainable practices in day-to-day life and the care and protection of the natural environment more generally. In its second guise it mediated the state government's and tourism industry's promotion of commercial access to national parks on the ecological modernisation premise (Hajer 1995) that the financial benefit derived from

tourism gave local communities the motivation to protect their own environment. In either form, it praised the destination as a place worth visiting and valuing but did not challenge the government's place branding. As such, it was "place-branded cosmopolitan concern" – a form of environmental consumerist cosmopolitanism whereby the market is represented as capable of driving progressive social change.

In addition, a frame of cosmopolitan concern with varying degrees of environmental cosmopolitical content was identified and labelled "brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern". This frame unveils threats to place-branded environments by expressing concern for places it simultaneously praises as tourist destinations worth visiting. With the assistance of environmentally proactive travel journalists with high cultural capital, the frame can gain access to prestigious international travel media whose brands promise authoritative, honest and/or discerning editorial content. This is possible firstly because such a frame can contribute to the media institution's brand and further enhance the travel journalists' cultural capital and, secondly, because it can reconcile some institutional sources' and travel journalists' challenger sympathies with their continuing participation in the tourism industry. "Brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern" has limitations, however, because it tends to ignore social issues that fall outside the scope of place branding, such as, for example, land claims by Tasmania's Aboriginal community pursued in a period when there was little evidence of contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal culture on display in the tourism sector.

"Brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern" explains examples of source–media relations that succeed in subverting expectations of the genre but it also

accommodates a number of observed anomalies, such as governments hosting high-profile travel journalists even when they know they might challenge the brand, travel media publishing articles critical of destinations they elsewhere furnish with accolades or awards, and the rarity of authorial rallying calls to cosmopolitical *action* by readers on behalf of the place-branded environment, notwithstanding that the articles often include mildly cosmopolitical statements by journalists themselves as well as mediation of conflict, environmental damage or contested environmental practices.

The more effectively travel journalists seek accurately to reflect distant cultures on those cultures' own terms, the more likely it is that complexity will challenge the simplifying normative narratives that tend to animate cosmopolitan concern. Concern is, by definition, subjective, which is what makes it such a useful focus for the analysis of the highly subjective genre of travel journalism. Journalism, however, is a continuum – from hard to soft, objective to subjective, informative to entertaining. Whatever the term “genre” might imply, it is merely an organising device. With this in mind, it seems likely that the extent of cosmopolitan concern in travel journalism that acknowledges political conflict will be inversely related to a journalist's or publisher's desire to strive for objectivity and balance. But there is substantial disagreement between travel journalists and sources, including PRPs, about what constitutes journalistic balance.

*4. How might sources influence the likelihood that cosmopolitan concern for place-branded environments will be incorporated in, or excluded from, travel journalism features?*

In place-branded destinations government tourism offices attempt to distract travel journalists from evidence of conflict. This works in the favour of governments engaged in environmental disputes. Hosting travel journalists, furnishing them with guides and busy itineraries, and ensuring their itineraries avoid contentious sights are the most obvious routine government tourism office practices that can serve the dual purpose of promoting the destination and minimising dissent. Providing brand-aligned information subsidies and setting up interviews and experiences with tourism operators and other sources with strong narratives of “place-branded cosmopolitan concern” provide busy travel journalists with alternative but affective frames to “brand-sensitive cosmopolitan concern”.

In the case study, a discursive strategy that proved to be especially potent when “natural” place branding incorporated forestry was framing nature-based tourism as a response to non-confrontational global environmental concern within the discourse of accessible nature. The circulation of place-branded frames and symbols through the bureaucracy and broader tourism sector and related creative industries, together with the maintenance of strong external industry networks, contributed to the effectiveness of this place branding even when travel journalists had not been hosted. However, travel journalists committed to mediating cosmopolitical concern sometimes turned traditional government tourism office strategies to their own advantage, accepting hosted visits but pursuing their own agendas by activating their own networks. The environment movement and activists – within the limits of their much smaller budgets – guided journalists, made introductions, offered the media frames and

storylines, and used new media tactically to gain media access. Both antagonists knew the value of deploying celebrity, and this could prove especially valuable when the journalist concerned had a high public profile – more likely in the subjective, narrative genre of travel journalism than news journalism – and was prepared to deploy his or her own celebrity in the interests of one side or the other.

*5. How has the introduction of online publishing of printed travel journalism affected its ability to contribute to the public sphere?*

Since the appearance of David Harvey's *Conditions of Postmodernity* in 1989, much academic research has focused on the ways in which the Internet has contributed to the compression of time. In travel journalism during the first decade of the 21st century, however, the opposite was also true. The slow pace of magazine production meant that it was not unusual for travel journalism to appear many months – sometimes more than a year – after the journalist had visited a destination. There was nothing new in this. What was new was the simultaneous or subsequent online publication, which often resulted in articles remaining in the public domain indefinitely.

Even as “cosmopolitan elites” (Castells 1996), some transnational travel journalists were willing to publicise the messages of those seeking to protect places and proved capable of exploiting global flows to furnish a variety of publics with alternative frames to those advanced by their brand-aligned colleagues or place-brand managers. The co-presence of articles by a variety of travel journalists on single travel media or newspaper websites gave potential

visitors or imaginative travellers easy access to more, and more-diverse, representations of destinations but also to information that was already dated by the time it was published online, where it then contributed to “a culture at the same time of the eternal and of the ephemeral” (Castells 1996, p. 462). The danger of such long-life travel journalism is that dated information may perpetuate images of disharmony after concerns have been addressed. For example, following gay law reform in Tasmania in 1997, gay activist Rodney Croome and Tourism Tasmania found it necessary to join forces to conduct an extensive and protracted marketing and public relations campaign to change national and international perceptions of Tasmania as homophobic built up during the nine-year battle for legislative change (Croome, R 2009, pers. comm., 2 April). Media attention during the conflict had been largely in the form of news journalism, which by the 2000s was to a considerable degree temporally cocooned; had the conflict been more widely reported in travel journalism that continued to be available online long after law reform, the task of changing Tasmania’s reputation as homophobic might have been even greater. As it was, travel journalism contributed to attempts to change that perception.

*6. How do travel journalism and news journalism interact in the coverage of place-branded environments in destinations experiencing environmental conflict?*

The case study found evidence that news journalism about contested place-branded environments can influence travel journalism but little evidence that travel journalism takes the initiative in breaking news of environmental threats

itself. This finding is supported by the fact other issues, such as wildlife tourism operator Geoff King's battles against local off-road vehicle use that was damaging sensitive coastal areas of his property and Aboriginal hut depressions received little coverage in international travel journalism despite his prominence in these texts.

Investigative journalism practices sometimes permeated travel journalism. In those newspapers in which a fairly firm division in style and content between news and travel journalism was maintained, part of the motivation (in addition to commercial considerations) may have been to enable the genres to coexist harmoniously in a single product without cannibalising each other's content. In travel magazines, by contrast, occasional incorporation of news-like content in features could function as confirmation of the publication's brand promise.

In the case study, the government was able to exploit travel media to promote its place-branded version of local identity to local publics by publicising travel-media awards and accolades via local news media. Nevertheless, through the persistence or celebrity of some travel journalists, concerns about the validity of place-branded messages gained limited exposure in local news media (see Chapter 8). It is possible that these contributed to national news commentary on damage accruing to the brand as a result of protracted environmental conflict (e.g. Denholm 2009) and the emergence of an apolitical community group whose objective was to end the conflict (Our Common Ground n.d.).

### 10.3 Reflections on Research Design

Both the limitations and the challenges of a qualitative approach became more apparent as my research progressed. Structuring my case study would have been much easier if I had had my own quantitative results to test through qualitative analysis. On the other hand, the more intimately I came to know my subject, the more apparent it became to me that quantitative analysis could tell me very little about what I wanted to explore – how, why and in whose interests decisions about discourse were made. That said, it sometimes became apparent to me during my interviews that my interviewees were being strategic in their answers, to a greater or lesser degree. People do not shed their professional personas simply because academic researchers wish to better understand their practices and meanings. But as each interview added to my understanding, I became increasingly confident about which bits of information I could generalise from and which bits I had to put to one side or identify as particular.

I am conscious that all of my public relations interviewees were female and all but one of my travel journalism interviewees were men. Women were overrepresented in Tasmanian government tourism public relations in the period of the case study, but I believe the gender balance among travel journalists who conduct their research in the field is reasonably even. I did send out interview requests to other female travel journalists but they did not respond. In retrospect I believe I should have made a better attempt to recruit more women. However, I do not think this significantly diminishes the validity of my results.

When recruiting travel journalist participants, I looked for articles that reported on different parts of the state. For example, the particular article that resulted in my interview request to Chipperfield was about Queenstown and

Strahan – the former a mining town, the latter the 1980s logistical headquarters for the Franklin dam blockade and now a tourist destination celebrating that victory; Flinn wrote about the state’s most famous convict site, Port Arthur, south of Hobart; and both Fair and Otterman included a popular wildlife cruise off Bruny Island that has won many awards, though they did not mention its marine conservation interests. Yet as I honed my results, it slowly became evident that by structuring my work according to geography or tourism attraction I was in danger of allowing tourism and public relations to overshadow my primary focus, which was journalism. I should also note that my interviews yielded data about issues beyond the environment – data I initially attempted to incorporate more fully. For example, my original draft attended to a protracted and ultimately successful gay rights campaign and subsequent gay-friendly tourism promotion, and also to a conflict between tourism operators, environmentalists and the Aboriginal community about proposals for a Bay of Fires national park. However, the relationship between travel journalism, the cosmopolitan public sphere and those particular issues was opaque and subtle, requiring a degree of elaboration that would have pushed my final draft well beyond the word limit. Much as I regretted having to narrow my focus, I believe it has resulted in a stronger case study, given that the aim of my approach was depth rather than breadth.

#### **10.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

There is a pressing need for an extensive travel journalism reception study with a cosmopolitical focus. Beyond this, I believe a comparison of cosmopolitical outcomes from visiting journalist programs that target travel journalists and

those that target news journalists would provide ground-breaking insights into the influence of public relations on journalism and the public sphere.

Clearly, travel blogs are new targets for tourism public relations (see Tourism Australia 2009). An analysis similar to the one I have conducted but focussing on commercial travel blogs may yield intriguingly different results to those presented in this thesis.



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## APPENDIX 1: British and United States Travel Journalists Interviewed

Travel Journalist	Role at Time of Visit(s) to Tasmania* *Some interviewees have since changed roles and/or employers
Mark Chipperfield	Australia-based freelance journalist, writing for the <i>Telegraph</i> , Britain
Thomas Curwen	Staff journalist, <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , United States
Jamie Doward	Staff journalist, <i>Observer</i> , Britain
James Fair	Staff travel editor, <i>BBC Wildlife Magazine</i> , Britain
John Flinn	Staff travel editor, <i>San Francisco Chronicle</i> , United States
Jeff Greenwald	Freelance journalist, writing for <i>Islands</i> and <i>Afar</i> magazines, United States
Mark Jenkins	Staff journalist, <i>Outside</i> , United States
Stephen Metcalf	Freelance journalist, writing for <i>Travel + Leisure</i> , United States
Paul Miles	Freelance journalist, writing for the <i>Financial Times</i> and <i>Condé Nast Traveller</i> , Britain
Sharon Otterman	Freelance journalist, writing for the <i>New York Times</i> , United States
Jonathan Tourtellot	Founding director of National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Tourism, writing for <i>National Geographic Traveler</i> , United States



## APPENDIX 2: Other Interviewees

Interviewee	Role at time of interview* *Some interviewees have since changed roles and/or employers
Daniel Alps	Restaurateur, Daniel Alps at Strathlynn
Richard Crawford	Former founding joint owner–operator of the Henry Jones Art Hotel
Rodney Croome	Spokesperson for the Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group and occasional expert gay & lesbian and/or cultural heritage guide for visiting journalists
John Dabner	General manager of Tall Timbers Hotel-Motel
Ruth Dowty	Senior Tourism Tasmania Visiting Journalist Program public relations practitioner
Daniel Hanna	CEO of Tourism Industry Council Tasmania
Di Hollister	Tourism Tasmania Visiting Journalist Program guide
Grant Hunt	CEO of Cradle Mountain Huts and Bay of Fires Walk
Scott Jordan	Spokesperson for the Tarkine National Coalition
Geoff King	Owner–operator of King's Run Wildlife Tours
Trina Mangels	Marketing manager for Pennicott Wilderness Journeys (Bruny Island Cruises (formerly Bruny Island Charters) and Tasman Island Cruises)
Joan Mastermann	Owner–operator of The Freycinet Experience and Friendly Beaches Lodge, and former founding joint owner–operator of Cradle Mountain Huts (with Ken Latona)
Michele McGinity	Former Tourism Tasmania and Brand Tasmania Visiting Journalist Program public relations practitioner
Gabi Mocatta	Travel journalist and former Tourism Tasmania Visiting Journalist Program public relations practitioner
Nick Mooney	Senior government wildlife officer and occasional expert wildlife guide for visiting journalists and other travellers
Delia Nicholls	Former journalist and former senior Tourism Tasmania Visiting Journalist Program public relations practitioner

Graeme Phillips	<i>Mercury</i> newspaper restaurant and wine critic, and former restaurateur
Brian Ritchie	Musician and curator of annual Museum of Old and New Art Festival of Music and Art (MONA FOMA)
Andrew Ross	Marketing manager for Port Arthur Historic Site
Kim Seagram	Joint owner–operator of Stillwater Restaurant, Tourism Tasmania board member and occasional expert wine & food guide for visiting journalists
Ian Waller	Regional tourism manager for the Cradle Coast Authority
Urs Walterlin	Vice-president and former president of the Foreign Correspondents Association Australia and South Pacific, Australian-based correspondent for German and Swiss media, and co-publisher of German-language Australian travel website <a href="http://www.wombatmagazin.com">www.wombatmagazin.com</a>
Steven Whiteley	Forestry Tasmania Derwent district manager

## APPENDIX 3: Articles by Interviewed Travel Journalists

*Travel journalism sample comprising articles about Tasmania by interviewed British and United States travel journalists published during the case study period*

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## APPENDIX 4: Articles Including the Bay of Fires

### *Travel journalism sample comprising articles including Tasmania's Bay of Fires published during the period of the case study*

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## APPENDIX 5: *New York Times* Articles

*Sample comprising articles published by the New York Times during the period of the case study and appearing in the newspaper's online Tasmania guide (in order of appearance, most recent to oldest)*

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