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in the Leisure Industry**

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Contingency Planning for a Pandemic in the Tourism Industry: The Role of DMOs

Lorn R. Sheehan, Ryan B. Lee and Norma L. Nielson



“The risk of a pandemic flu, particularly one caused by human-to-human transmission of the H5N1 or another avian flu virus, is now a dominant theme in the global conversation on risk.”

Global Risk Report

World Economic Forum, 2006:4

Outline of Presentation



- ❖ Overview of Pandemics
- ❖ Specific Impacts to the Leisure and Tourism Industries
 - Risks facing these industries
 - Lessons from SARS
- ❖ Role of the DMO in Risk Communication
- ❖ Conclusions

The Avian Flu Pandemic (?)



- ❖ Moving from epidemic to pandemic
 - High illness rate for those infected
 - Transmission from human to human
 - High mortality rate
- ❖ Current flu is of the type that tends to become a pandemic
- ❖ Influenza Pandemic is overdue
- ❖ Issues regarding vaccines and antivirals

Pandemic Influenza History



- ❖ Spanish Flu - 1918
(40 million deaths)
- ❖ Asian Flu - 1957
(2 million deaths)
- ❖ Hong Kong Flu - 1968
(1 million deaths)



“It is not a matter of whether there will be another influenza pandemic but rather a question of when. It is 36 years since the last pandemic; with 39 years being the longest known previous interval between pandemics, the next pandemic is arguably overdue.”

MacMahon
Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy
(2005) 55, Suppl. S1, i5-i21

Pandemic Stages



- ❖ The World Health Organization has set forth a global preparedness plan for dealing with a pandemic consisting of three distinct periods:
 - Inter-pandemic period
 - Pandemic alert
 - Pandemic

WHO Stages of Pandemic Alert



Interpandemic phase	Low risk of human cases	1
New virus in animals, no cases in humans	Higher risk of human cases	2
Pandemic alert	No or very limited human-to-human transmission	3
New virus causes human cases	Evidence of human-to-human transmission	4
	Evidence of significant human-to-human transmission	5
Pandemic	Efficient and sustained human-to-human transmission	6

Common Risk Management Advice for Corporations



- ❖ Keep the communication channels open and actively provide pertinent information to employees
- ❖ Expect high levels of absenteeism – potentially hitting 50 % absenteeism at the peak of the pandemic
- ❖ Identify essential functions and personnel and have contingency plans in place to keep these functions working during the pandemic, ideally reducing the need for these individuals to have to physically come to work
- ❖ Work hard at taking care of sick individuals and preventing further spread of illness at the workplace.

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SARS Effects



- ❖ While only an epidemic, SARS had a considerable effect on tourism in affected areas
 - 5.3% drop in international tourism (Wilder-Smith, 2005)
 - Hotel occupancies <10% where infection rates high (Wilder-Smith, 2005)
 - 80% decline in passenger numbers over previous year at Hong Kong International Airport (Pine & McKercher, 2004)
- ❖ Fortunately occurred during low season (March 2003)
- ❖ What lessons can be learned form SARS?

SARS vs Asian Avian Flu



	SARS	Asian Avian Flu
Outbreaks	2003	Dec. 03 to Aug. 05
Virus (type)	Corona Influenza	H5 N1
Mode of Transmission	Droplet Aerosol	Droplet Spray
Symptoms	Fever, Cough, Aches, Breathlessness	Fever, Cough, Aches, Breathlessness
Differences		
Infectivity*	"+"	"+ + +"
Infectious Period	Only late stage	Early stage (before symptoms)
Place of Transmission	Mainly Hospital	Community
No. of Cases	8098	112
No. of Deaths	774 (9.6%)	57 (50.9%)

* “+++” reflects the higher infectivity of influenza as compared to that of SARS “+”

World Health organization
September, 2005 www.who.int

Towards a Tourism Response to a Pandemic



- ❖ SARS and other tourism disasters have prompted calls to better prepare for future events
- ❖ Efforts underway at a global & national level
 - United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
- ❖ Concern regarding contingency planning at the sub-national and local destination levels

What are DMOs



- ❖ Destination Management Organizations (DMOs)
 - National level – NTO
 - ◆ Canadian Tourism Commission
 - State level – STO
 - ◆ Travel Alberta
 - Local level – DMO or RTO or CVB (Convention & Visitors Bureau)
 - ◆ Tourism Calgary
- ❖ Traditionally focused on destination *marketing*
- ❖ Recently broadening to destination *management*
 - Including *destination crisis management*

Reasons for DMOs

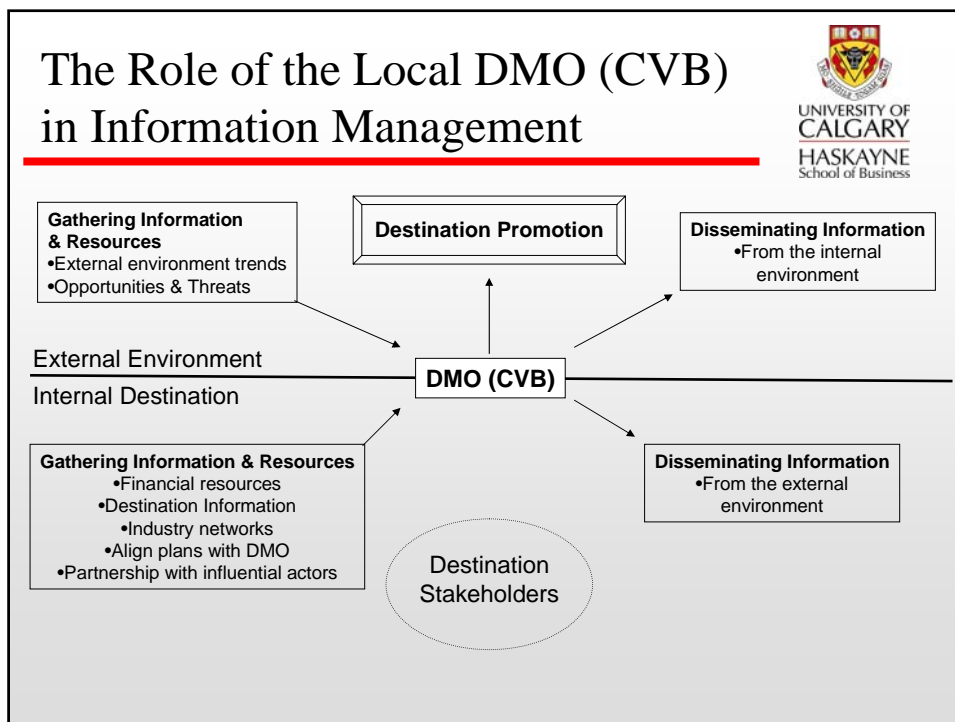
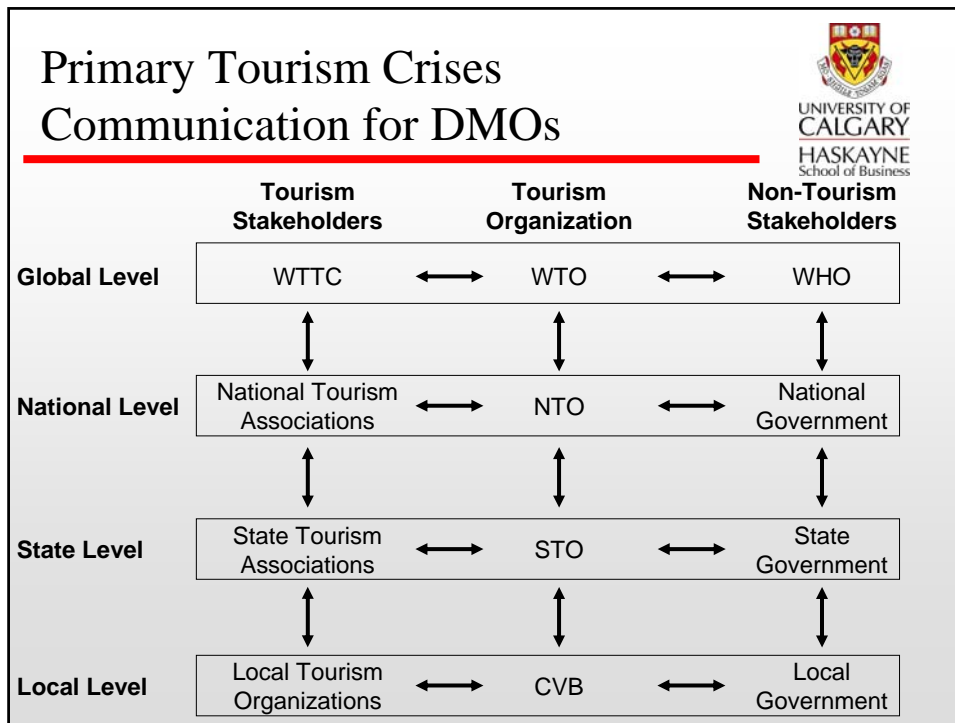


- ❖ Unite a collection of firms in different sectors
 - *“Interdependence, small size, market fragmentation and spatial separation are all factors which may lead to a desire for combined action, a willingness to unite to achieve common goals, a need to form tourist organizations” (Pearce, 1992:5)*
- ❖ Institutionalize the public-private partnership
- ❖ Provide a public good – destination marketing

World Economic Forum, 2006



- ❖ Called for proactive communication in global crises
- ❖ Advocated a Disaster Response Network for the Tourism Industry
 - *“Link to existing networks for disaster warning and disaster response, rather than recreate efforts...”*
 - *“Fill some gaps specific to the tourism industry”*
 - *“Improve the understanding of other stakeholders”*



Conclusions



- ❖ The role of the DMO in dealing with pandemics should evolve beyond marketing
- ❖ The DMO's role a coordinator of communications with both internal and external audiences
 - Built upon a strong network of stakeholder relationships
 - Recognized by all destination stakeholders
- ❖ Auditing the pandemic preparedness of tourism firms
- ❖ Brokering of tourism services for non-traditional uses to limit business interruption expenses