AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA ON VISITOR PERCEPTIONS OF AMUSEMENT PARKS FOLLOWING A CRISIS.

Alice Gregg

Bachelor of Arts (Hons.)
International Tourism and Events Management

April 2017
Declaration

‘I declare that this Dissertation has not already been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree. It is the result of my own independent research except where otherwise stated’

Signed: .....................................

Name: Alice Gregg

April 2017
Abstract

Background
This research project was designed to investigate the influence that the media has over visitor perceptions of amusement parks, following a crisis. The global amusement park industry is very influential, and is worth over $32 billion annually. In recent years, there have been numerous high profile incidents at amusement parks around the world. With the use of social media gaining popularity, news stories can be shared worldwide, and reach and even larger audience almost instantly. Visitors to amusement parks are motivated by numerous factors. This research project will discuss how these motivations and overall perceptions can be altered; and the strategies for crisis communications that amusement parks should use.

Method
Firstly, the researcher will critically analyse the existing literature. The areas under analysis will include visitor motivations, the perception of incidents which receive media attention, the power of the media and the importance of crisis communications management; all in the context of the amusement park setting. The methodology chapter, will provide an outline of the data collection methods and justify why they were chosen.

Results
The researcher collected primary data via 125 online questionnaires posted on online forums and social media sites. The results were quantitative and formatted into various charts and graphs. These results were analysed and discussed in relation to the pre-existing literature.

The three main themes are Visitor Motivations and Typologies, Visitor Perceptions of incidents at Amusement Parks, and Crisis Communications and Public Relations management. The combination of the primary and secondary research helped the author to create a conceptual code of best practice for crisis communications in amusement parks.

Conclusions
The author concluded that both thrill and safety are desired and expected whilst visiting amusement parks. She discovered that media portrayals of accidents do have an influence on visitor perceptions, but they do not always impact decisions to visit.

Whilst the impacts directly affect people involved incident, this study has shown that other people are only really impacted in the short term. They may be impacted by what they have heard, but this research shows how incidents are unlikely to affect visit motivations in the long term. Even the amusement park and rides will eventually make a recovery, both socially and economically.

Word Count: 12333
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my friends and family for their support, motivation and patience with me during this dissertation process. There is no way I could have completed this project without the constant encouragement, and technical assistance I received along the way.

I would also like to offer thanks to all of my questionnaire participants, as without them the study could not have taken place.

Furthermore, I need to of course thank my dissertation supervisor Helene Grousset-Rees. Her support and guidance within our meetings helped to keep me organised, which can a pretty difficult task at times. Her assistance throughout the dissertation process was greatly appreciated.
# Table of Contents

List of Figures .......................................................................................... vi

Chapter 1.0 - Introduction. ........................................................................ ii
  1.1 - Introduction .................................................................................. 1
  1.2 - Context ....................................................................................... 1
  1.3. - Personal Perspective ................................................................. 3
  1.4. – Aims and objectives ................................................................... 3
    1.4.1. – Aim ................................................................................... 3
    1.4.2. – Objectives .......................................................................... 4
  1.5. – Conclusion .................................................................................. 4

Chapter 2.0 – Literature Review. ............................................................... 5
  2.1 – Introduction .................................................................................. 6
  2.2 - Visitor Motivation theories ......................................................... 6
    2.2.1. - Risk vs. enjoyment (sensation seeking) ............................... 9
  2.3 – Media and Communication Theories ......................................... 11
    2.3.1. - Media framing/ agenda setting/persuasion ............................ 11
    2.3.2. - Media Portrayals ................................................................. 12
    2.3.3. - Media and accidents/crisis .................................................. 13
  2.4. – Attractions and Crisis communications management .............. 14
  2.5 - Preliminary Framework ................................................................ 17
  2.6. - Conclusion ................................................................................. 18

Chapter 3.0 - Methodology ....................................................................... 20
  3.1. – Introduction ................................................................................ 21
  3.2. - Qualitative vs quantitative research ......................................... 21
  3.3. - Quantitative research choice ................................................... 22
  3.4. - Primary research strategy ......................................................... 24
  3.5. - Quantitative data collection ....................................................... 24
    3.5.1 - Survey design ....................................................................... 24
    3.5.2. - Sampling ........................................................................... 25
    3.5.3. – Analysis ............................................................................ 26
  3.6. - Reliability and validity ............................................................... 26
  3.7. – Ethics ......................................................................................... 27
  3.8. Conclusion .................................................................................... 27

Chapter 4.0 – Results, Analysis and Discussion ....................................... 28
  4.1. – Introduction .............................................................................. 29
4.2. – Visitor Motivations / Typologies ..............................................................30
4.3. – Visitor Perceptions of incidents at Amusement Parks..........................37
  4.3.1. - Online Comments ..............................................................................41
4.4. – Crisis Communications and Public Relations management..................42
  4.4.1. - New Conceptual Framework ................................................................44
4.5. – Conclusion ..............................................................................................49

Chapter 5.0 – Conclusion and Recommendations ........................................50
  5.1. – Introduction ..........................................................................................51
  5.2. - Aims and Objectives .............................................................................51
  5.3. - Summary of Key Research Findings ......................................................52
  5.4. - Contributions of Research ....................................................................53
  5.5. - Limitations of Study ..............................................................................53
  5.6. - Personal Reflection ...............................................................................55
  5.7. - Recommendations for Future Research ..............................................57
  5.8. - Summary of Research Project ...............................................................57

References ........................................................................................................58

Appendices ........................................................................................................63
  Appendix 1: Sample Questionnaire ...............................................................64
  Appendix 2: Tables of data collected .............................................................68
  Appendix 3: Consent Slip .............................................................................72
  Appendix 4: Completed and approved ethics documents ............................73
  Appendix 5: Online Comment .......................................................................78
  Appendix 6: Turnitin Receipt .........................................................................79
List of Figures

Figure 1.0: Risk and benefits in Adventure Tourism.

Figure 2.0: Stages in response to a disaster

Figure 3.0: Number of Theme Park visits made by participants

Figure 4.0: Age of participants

Figure 5.0: Gender of participants

Figure 6.0: Location of participants

Figure 7.0: Importance of different rollercoaster features

Figure 8.0: Visitor Motivations for Amusement Parks – Conceptual model

Figure 9.0: Whether participants would still ride after different incidents

Figure 10.0: The smiler crash news headline

Figure 11.0: How participants heard about The Smiler crash

Figure 12.0: Whether participants would still ride The Smiler.

Figure 13.0: Likelihood of participants’ decision to visit being affected by the incident

Figure 14.0: Participants belief whether media coverage influences visit decision.

Figure 15.0: Code of best practice for Crisis Communication and Public Relations Management in Amusement Parks – Conceptual Model
Chapter 1.0. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

1.2. Context

1.3. Personal Perspective

1.4. Aims and Objectives
   1.4.1. Aim
   1.4.2. Objective

1.5. Conclusion
1.1 Introduction

This research project will discuss how incidents at amusement parks are publicised and managed; and how visitor attitudes and perceptions are effected. It will critically analyse the literature surrounding visitor motivations, the perception of incidents that received media attention, the power of the media, and the importance of crisis communications management. Primary research will be carried out, and the results will be discussed and compared with the existing literature. Common themes will be determined, and the overall findings will be summarised and discussed.

1.2. Context

Defining the concept of theme parks and amusement parks has been viewed as a difficult task throughout history. Definitions may be seen as generalised and inaccurate due to the many formats of park that exist. The main feature for categorising theme parks is that they feature rides and rollercoasters as the main attraction (International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, 2015).

Clavé (2007) lists 12 characteristics which can be observed in most theme parks. These include how the available space is utilised, the length of visits, quality of entertainment available, the different commercial aspects on offer and how the management operates. There have also been disagreements surrounding the difference between amusement parks and theme parks, although in modern times it is agreed that they are mostly synonymous; with theme parks being a specific type of amusement park. For the purpose of this research the terms ‘Theme Park’ and ‘Amusement Park’ will be used interchangeably, unless otherwise specified.

Amusement parks have been an influential industry throughout history, it is hard to distinguish the first park to open as they date back into the early 19th century. Two of the earliest dating parks that are still operational and significant in present times are Coney Island in Brooklyn, New York, and Blackpool Pleasure Beach, England. They date back to 1895 and 1896 and
Introduction

still hold their popularity. Both parks introduced many worlds firsts, including, the first carousel, first rollercoaster and first ghost train (Adams, 1991).

According to industry analysts, the global theme and amusement park market is set to generate almost $32 billion in 2017. The industry was significantly affected by the economic recession in 2009, but stabilised and is now in recovery. In the UK, the industry has benefited from the popularity of ‘staycations’ (Mintel, 2010).

420.4 million people visited the top 10 amusement parks worldwide in 2015. This is a 7.2% growth in attendance figures from the previous year. In order of their annual attendance, the top amusement park corporations in 2015 were; Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, with 137,902,000 visitors, Merlin Entertainments Group with 62,900,000 visitors and Universal Studios Recreation Group with 44,884,000 visitors (Themed Entertainment Association, 2016). The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions have released their findings, which show that Amusement Parks directly employ around 600,000 people in the United States and over 50,000 in Europe (IAAPA, 2016).

Economically, theme parks play an important role in the tourism industry. They generate high levels of revenue, and increase visitor numbers and spending. There is also a growing trend towards adding other tourism products to theme parks. For example, adding onsite hotels, to increase the length of visits and number of overnight stays (Raluca & Gina, 2008).

In recent years, there have been numerous high profile incidents at amusement parks around the world. With the use of social media gaining popularity, news stories can be shared worldwide, and reach and even larger audience, almost instantly (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

In academic terms, this project will look into how visitors are motivated and how different aspects of amusement parks can influence these motivations, and the power the media has to influence these motivations. It will also discuss crisis communications and management, and the methods used by amusement parks in a crisis.
Sönmez (1998. p.441) defines crisis as

‘Any event which creates negative publicity and the period of time after a disaster occurrence which lasts until full recovery is achieved and pre-disaster conditions resume.’

Visitor Attractions need to plan for a potential crisis, and not just treat them as a threat, in order to successfully manage disasters (Ritchie, 2009). This research project aims to evaluate public relations and crisis communication management strategies, and create a code of best practice for amusement parks to use during a crisis.

1.3. - Personal Perspective

The researcher has always been interested in amusement parks, particularly rollercoasters, and has been visiting parks both in the UK and internationally for many years. The Alton Towers rollercoaster ‘The Smiler’ crashed in 2015 and was widely publicised. As an avid visitor and fan of the park, the researcher felt particularly drawn towards this issue, and it provided the original inspiration for this research project.

During this project, the researcher hopes to learn more about how amusement parks manage their crisis communication and public relations strategies. Further investigating how they utilise different media channels, and the effect this has on visitor motivations.

In the future, the researcher would be interested in a career involved in the visitor attractions industry.

1.4. – Aims and objectives

1.4.1. – Aim
This project aims to investigate the influence of the media on visitor perceptions of amusement parks following a crisis.
1.4.2. – Objectives

- To critically review the literature relating to media influences, visitor perceptions, crisis communications and amusement parks.
- To compare the primary research with the literature in order to identify the key factors that influence visitors’ attitudes towards amusement parks.
- To develop a best practice PR crisis communications management framework for amusement parks.

1.5. – Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the overall aims and objectives of this research project, including a background of the amusement park industry. This project will consist of five chapters. The Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Analysis and Discussion and the Conclusions and Recommendations.

The next chapter is the literature review, which will provide an overview and critical analysis of the available literature and theories surrounding this topic.
Chapter 2.0.

Literature Review

3.1. Introduction
3.2. Visitor Perception
   Theories
   3.2.1. Risk vs. enjoyment
          (sensation seeking)
3.3. Media Communication
   Theories
   3.3.1. Media framing/ agenda
          setting/persuasion
   3.3.2. Media Portrayals
   3.3.3. Media and
          Accidents/Crisis
3.4. Attractions and Crisis
     communications
     management
3.5. Preliminary Framework
3.6. Conclusion
2.1 – Introduction

Throughout the available literature there is not a consensus on how to differentiate between theme and amusement parks. For the purpose of analysing the literature, these terms will be used interchangeably. Theme parks and amusement parks are categorised as human-made attractions being built with the specific purpose of attracting tourists (Swarbrooke & Page, 2012).

Following an incident at an amusement park, there are a variety of internal and external reactions that occur. Internally the management team need to respond appropriately. They not only need to deal with the incident, but also, they must consider public relations and how to approach the media. The external reactions from an incident involve the visitor reactions, and the media portrayals which can influence a change in consumer perceptions.

The area of research for this project is relatively undiscussed. There is a particular lack of literature that is modern enough to include the effects of social media; specifically, the instant nature of social media responses in crisis situations. This literature review focusses on a range of theories; visitor perception and motivational theories, the influence of the media, and theories surrounding crisis communications; all in relation to amusement parks.

2.2 - Visitor Motivation theories

Visitor motivations can be used to analyse behaviour, there is an abundance of theories and definitions. Dann (1981) states it has been defined as the biological and psychological needs and wants, which direct a person’s behaviour and activities.

Classic theories include push and pull motivational factors (Compton, 1979; Dann, 1997; Uysal & Hagan, 1994). They describe these motivations as a destination pull in response to motivational push from a visitor’s personal location or situation. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are discussed by Deci & Ryan (2000, p.55). They say that intrinsic motivation involves doing
something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable. And extrinsic motivations refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome. Experiencing satisfaction is the end goal for tourists, therefore this is a motivational force (Bramwell, 1998). Yoon & Uysal (2005) offer an integrated approach, and have created a model involving tourist motivation, the push and pull motivations, satisfaction, and destination loyalty. Amusement parks can use these ideas to understand visitor motivations, thus creating efficient marketing plans.

McClung (1991) discusses the different factors and motivations which can influence the attendance of guests. He describes how visitors and non-visitors have different preferences, and the types of multi-segmentation strategies chosen and used by theme park marketers. Segmenting visitors makes it easier to assess and deliver to their individual marketing needs.

Pearce’s (1993) Leisure Ladder model explains consumer motivations and can be applied easily to the context of theme parks. He states how visitors move through a hierarchy. This is similar to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, where the bottom stage of the ladder is physiological needs, these must be accomplished before moving onto safety, then love and belonging, esteem needs and finally an individual can achieve self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). Esteem and safety needs also feature highly in terms of amusement parks on Pearce’s Ladder. The first step must be accomplished before a guest can ascend to higher levels (Hall & Page, 2014).
People tend to ascend the ladder as they become older and more experienced in theme park settings. Higher level motives include needs from the lower levels also. The lower level motives must be satisfied or experienced first, before moving onto the higher levels of the ladder (Sharma, 2004).

**Stimulation** is the second stage of the ladder. This stage is crucial for theme parks, as it involves managing visitor’s arousal levels. Relevant to this research project, Pearce discusses how visitors want to feel safe, but still excited. The risk is that guests can become bored by safety regulations taking away from the thrills which they are seeking. Visitors in this stage are...
looking for the thrill from ride and are interested experiencing new things. The use of theming in amusement parks is also involved in this stage, and acts as very successful motivator for visitors to amusement parks (Bryman, 2004).

The completion of this stage will involve heightening stimulation and therefore arousal. The alternative, will result in visitors acting to avoid potentially dangerous or threatening situations, and deciding against visiting the theme park.

A visitors’ stimulation is a motivation stage which is discussed in detail by Bigné (2005). The author analyses how theme parks affect a visitors’ emotions and the effect that is had on overall satisfaction and perceptions. It states that emotions at theme parks consist of two independent factors, pleasure and arousal. Psychological models are applied to see how these emotions influence visitor behaviour, and how the emotions themselves are affected by different events (For example an accident or crisis).

2.2.1. - Risk vs. enjoyment (sensation seeking)

Galloway (2002) writes about the psychographic segmentation of visitors to national parks in Canada, and how ‘sensation seeking’ levels vary. He discusses how it can be a useful tool for park planners and marketers to consider. This research studies how low level sensation seekers look for different services when visiting a park, compared to those of a higher level of sensation seeking. This theory can be used for amusement parks too, as different guests will have different levels of sensation seeking and therefore different needs from visiting the park. The sensation seeking scale was designed to assess the personality traits of thrill and adventure seeking, disinhibition, experience seeking, and susceptibility to boredom (Zuckerman, et al., 1964). These are the type of people who ride rollercoasters and visit amusement parks. There is no literature specific to theme parks and sensation seeking, but links by researchers have been made.

Sensation seeking is a personality trait associated with a need for stimulation, and has been linked to tourist behaviour. Lepp & Gibson (2008) have
researched how the perceptions of risk are part of sensation seeking, and how these can affect tourists’ decisions. They discovered that levels of sensation seeking, do not directly affect perceptions of risk. In fact, both high and low sensation seekers perceived risks similarly. Although those with higher sensation seeking tendencies were more likely to partake in ‘riskier’ activities.

Potential risks at and amusement park have been seen to add to the overall thrill, and therefore overall enjoyment achieved from visiting a park. The founding theories of risk are discussed by Douglas (1992). She has published research on the sociocultural aspects of risk perception, and how individuals have different behaviour in regard to risk.

This figure discusses how the knowledge of risk is evaluated against the perceptions of the potential benefits, to assist tourists in assessing and perceiving potential risks. It lists motivating factors and benefits which will have an effect on visitor perceptions.

![Figure 1.0 - Risk and benefits in Adventure Tourism. (Ryan, 2003).](image)
Mohun (2001) discussed how the sensation of being at risk can become commodified. Amusement park operators and ride designers strive to offer the public rides that simultaneously provide both thrills and yet, are very much focussed on the safety of riders. She discusses how fear and risk influence people, and the differences between the genders and these issues. For example men have different risk taking behaviour and patterns to women. Operators catered to different guests by not by making rides feel physically safer, but rather by making parks appear socially safer. The idea of how risk influences consumers can be applied to this research study, tying into the research aim about how visitor motivations can be influenced by accidents at amusement parks.

This theory has been used by Rickard (2014), the article discusses how our perceptions of risk influence the ways in which we allocate responsibility for accidents. It discusses how in national parks, recreational risk taking can relate to the responsibility for the cause of unintentional injury. This study could be applied to theme parks in the future, and the results would be influential towards this research project.

2.3 – Media and Communication Theories

This section of research is geared towards discovering the impact that the media coverage of incidents at amusement parks has on potential visitors. Media communication theories have been discussed from different perspectives for many years, and can provide insight into how visitors may be influenced.

2.3.1. - Media framing/ agenda setting/persuasion

Thompson (1995) discusses the social theory of the media; and how a development of communication media has changed how the public interact with, and perceive media stories. The way an audience perceive a story may be down to how it is put forward, or framed.
The theory of media framing was first discussed by Goffman (1974). He examines primary frameworks, or the initial ‘schemes’ of interpretation, and states how a meaningless aspect of a scene can be ‘rendered’ into something meaningful. There are two distinctions within the primary framework; natural and social. Natural frameworks identify events as physical occurrences, whereas social frameworks build on these natural events and influence how they are interpreted, processed and then communicated. This can be applied to the amusement park setting, and how a crisis could be ‘rendered’ to seem worse than it is.

This media framing is linked closely with Agenda Setting Theory; also known as The Agenda Setting Function of the Mass Media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This article discusses the important role editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters have when choosing news stories. It highlights the part this can play in shaping political reality. They state that the readers of news stories learn not only about an issue; but can be influenced how much importance to attach to that issue from the information in a news story and its position. The media has the power to distribute importance throughout stories, and can therefore determine how certain people or places will be portrayed. They suggest that the media sets the public agenda, and guides their opinions in a certain predetermined direction. This is a criticism which could be attached to stories about a crisis at an amusement park, influencing visitor perceptions.

2.3.2. - Media Portrayals

Coleman (1993) discusses theories of risk judgment and the media. She has theorised how it is split into two distinct areas: personal-level risk judgment and social-level risk judgment. Health and risk communication literature suggests that mass media channels are more likely to influence social-level risk judgment. This research discovered how personal-level risk was also influenced by mass media channels to some extent. This is relevant to this research project as Coleman suggests the media influences how individuals perceive risk, and thus go on to make decisions based on these judgements. For example, reading about an accident at an amusement park in a
newspaper may influence an individual’s risk judgement. Risk perception is thought to cause and affect an individual’s behaviour (Wahlberg & Sjoberg, 2000). With the growing popularity of social media as a source for breaking news, 51% of people with online access use social media as a news source (Wakefield, 2016). The power that social media can have should not be underestimated. There has been a rise in the number of so called ‘fake news’ articles. These items may have misleading headlines and incorrect content, promoting hidden agendas, whether political or otherwise (Marchi, 2012). The media is a very powerful tool having great effect on public knowledge and opinions.

2.3.3. - Media and accidents/crisis

Regardless of the general opinion that the mass media often “blow risks out of proportion,” the area has been subject to little academic acknowledgement (Kitzinger, 1999). Literature supporting the mass-media has presented the conflicting argument, stating that the media may minimise some reporting that could upset “large-scale capitalistic industries” (Freudenburg, et al., 1996). Emotionalism after an incident can affect how individuals perceive a location, or in terms of this research project, a visitor attraction; more specifically amusement parks. A readers’ emotionalism can be affected by many different things, for example: headlines, photographs and loaded words (Staub & Green, 1992). When reports about incidents use words or pictures designed to provoke an emotional response, these can bring about some negative connotations to that place. Shocking headlines will attract the attention of potential readers, regardless of the consequences for amusement parks, and how visitor’s perceptions may be altered. This could be an explanation for the way in which newspapers report accidents at amusement parks.

Braksiek & Roberts (2002) describe how the media coverage of amusement park injuries has increased over the past several years, raising concern that amusement rides may be dangerous. This source offers an insight closest to
that required from the research question. It states how injury rates have increased, and media coverage of this has called for a recap on legislation for the industry. It also provides a medical viewpoint of how rollercoasters affect human physiology, and that riding on thrill rides should come under neurological reports.

2.4. – Attractions and Crisis communications management

Visitor attractions, in this case amusement parks, need to develop crisis communication strategies, to ensure the safety of guests and employees. All of this must be done whilst maintaining their reputation as safe and exciting destinations. Theme parks will have an emergency procedure in place, in case of any potential crisis. Faulkner (2001;2003) discusses tourism disaster frameworks, and states that natural and man-made disasters alike are neither predictable or avoidable. The key definition for a disaster or crisis is that they are ‘a triggering event, which is so significant it challenges the existing structure, routine operations or survival of the operation.’

He discusses different disaster management strategies and provides comparisons of many models. The main issue with these frameworks and their suitability for modern amusement parks, is that for the most part they pre-date social media. The more recent models may make reference to the use of different media platforms, but none highlight the weight of importance that social media holds in modern life.

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

*Figure 2.0* - Stages in response to a disaster (Faulkner, 2003).
Theme parks can suffer competitively due to internal and external shocks. The incidents that this research considers, are an example of internal shocks. External shocks are beyond the control of theme park owners and can include things such as economic recessions, war and even reported nearby criminal activities (Braun & Soskin, 1999).

Management in amusement parks involves not only the attitude of the manager towards the job itself, but also towards the many stakeholders involved; including but not limited to, staff, investors and customers (Swarbrooke, 2002). After a serious incident has occurred, some type of response is expected from Management. Keown-McMullan, (1997, p.9) states

‘Even if the crisis is successfully managed, the organisation will have undergone significant change’

Hoffman & Kleinman (1996) suggest that parks should develop crisis management policies and procedures. They discuss the importance of successfully managing the media, and state that it is crucial that staff can handle questions from the media, regarding accidents that may happen in the facility.

The importance of truth in crisis communications is an issue discussed by Deuschl (2005). PR practitioners in Visitor Attractions must be prepared to deal with various incidents’, this article uses natural disasters as an example. Several theme parks and attractions in Florida were reluctant to fully disclose information about the extent of the damage and park closings, in fear of losing future business. As a result, the media and potential guests received mixed messages about the parks status, thus the parks lost their credibility with those audiences. The lesson for park officials to take from this is “in a crisis of any kind, tell the truth and tell it quickly”. Otherwise the risk of damaging the reputation of the park increases, making future PR attempts less likely to succeed. This can be applied in term of crisis management after an accident.

This is linked closely with the theory of ‘stonewalling’, where there is a refusal to communicate or cooperate with the media (Vivian, 2005).
Mansfeld & Pizam (2006) discuss tourism and crisis management issues, and the importance of strategy in crisis situations. They state that efforts need to be well-coordinated and involve comprehensive media efforts. These are some of the essential factors when creating a crisis management plan.

2.5. Preliminary Framework

To create a code of best practice for crisis communications in amusement parks, the researcher took into consideration different aspects of several older models.

Quarentelli, (1984) lists possible implementation strategies

- Disaster drills
- Better training of staff, including training for emergency situations
- Ensuring first aid availability
- Educating the public about disasters
- Continually updating disaster strategies

Turner, (1994) provides steps in strategy development which could be used by amusement parks to develop a personal crisis strategy.

- The first step discussed is forming a disaster comitee, a group of people who will take charge in a crisis and be aware of the correct procedures. They will also help to create the crisis strategy.
- The next step is to create a risk assessment, prioritising events by their probability of occurrence.
- Next is to analyse both the short and long term impacts of possible disasters. Turner states you must identify strategies in order to develop a framework; For example identifying ways of avoiding and minimising the impacts of potential risks, setting critical actions, and creating a chain of comand within the comitee.
- Finally, Turner suggests preparing an emergency procedure manual, it will contain details of procedures, and to include relevent contracts and
agreements from the emergency contacts, alongside their emergency details.

Faulkner (2001) reviewed many existing frameworks and named the essential criteria for tourism disaster management.

- Risk assessment – Discussing the possibility and probability of potential crises and accidents occurring, and the threats associated.
- Prioritisation – This of course depends on the scale of the crisis, but can include rescuing and saving human lives, and minimising further structural damage.
- Protocols – These may be predetermined by different agencies, and will provide a guide of how to act in emergency situations.
- Command Centre – This can be made up of a designated crisis team, or management staff. They will remain updated with the status of the crisis and provide direction and solutions.
- Media – A media communication strategy will ensure that the initial response is appropriate, it cannot be interpreted as misleading, and all information given must be correct. This is essential for keeping people updated, during and after a disaster. This stage is also very important in maintaining reputation of organisations.
- Warning Systems – Appropriate warnings to be given to ensure knowledge and safety of surrounding people.
- Involvement, education and review – This is an important long term step for managing a crisis. Ensuring organisations use a crisis as an opportunity to learn and prepare for the future.

These are the criteria that the researcher will develop to create a new code of best practice for amusement parks in a crisis. The researcher will focus on the media responses, specifically highlighting the importance of using social media appropriately.

2. 6. - Conclusion
In specific terms of how a crisis at an amusement park can influence visitor motivations, there is not much existing literature around. Although, the broader theories of visitor motivations and perceptions, media portrayal theories, and crisis management can be easily applied to tourism, and therefore to attractions and the amusement park setting. The lack of specific literature, along with the popularity of amusement parks, and increasing media surrounding disasters; demonstrate how this is an area with room for a lot of future research. This research project will demonstrate further why it is a relevant area of study, and following the primary research, recommendations for future work can be made. The next chapter is the methodology, a guide through the primary research decisions taken by the researcher.
Chapter 3.0. Methodology

3.7. Introduction
3.8. Qualitative vs Quantitative research
3.9. Quantitative Research Choice
3.10. Primary Research Strategy
3.11. Quantitative Data Collection
3.11.1. Survey Design
3.11.2. Sampling
3.11.3. Analysis
3.12. Reliability and Validity
3.13. Ethics
3.14. Conclusion
3.1. – Introduction

In this chapter, the different methods of research will be reviewed and discussed in terms of the research project. Both primary and secondary research was undertaken by the researcher. The methods used will be discussed both theoretically and in terms of the research project, with justification for why they were chosen and what the overall implications will be.

The reliability and relevance of secondary sources must be considered to ensure they are suitable. The researcher used a range of secondary resources while completing this project, for example; books, journal articles, reports and other online sources. These have been discussed and analysed in the literature review.

Primary data is generated and collected specifically for the research project being undertaken (Saunders, et al., 2012). Primary data can be collected in different ways, but in this project it will be quantitative, and in the form of online questionnaires.

Secondary data is data collected from research which was originally intended for another purpose. They can be analysed and discussed further, and be used to provide a further insight on a topic (Blaikie, 2004).

This chapter will identify how the researcher selected and applied different methods of research, and explain their importance in relation to the research project.

3.2. - Qualitative vs quantitative research

Research methods are often divided into two main types; Quantitative and Qualitative methods. Quantitative research is defined as explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods, predominantly statistics (Aliaga & Gunderson, 2006).
Methodology

Quantitative uses numbers as data, it seeks to identify relationships between results, using these to explain and predict information. It generates ‘shallow’ but broad data, so there is not a lot of detail, but there are a large number of participants. Quantitative data seeks consensus, norms or general patterns. It aims to reduce diverse responses, and to get an average response. It has a fixed method and can be completed quickly (Tolich & Davidson, 2011).

Qualitative research is defined by Saunders et al (2012, p.163) as being

“An interpretive philosophy, because researchers need to make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings expressed about the phenomena being studied.”

Qualitative research relies on written and spoken words for its data. It seeks to understand and interpret meanings from looking at the context that the words are in. It can produce knowledge that contributes to a general understanding. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative generates ‘narrow’ but rich data. The information may be detailed and complex, but there are not as many participants. It can seek out patterns, but explores differences within the data. Qualitative research tends to generate theories from data, valuing personal insights. The method is less fixed, therefore allowing a shift in focus of the study more easily. Overall it tends to take longer to interpret and analyse qualitative data, because there is no set formula (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

3.3. - Quantitative research choice

Quantitative research is research which involves the counting and measuring of events, and then carrying out a statistical analysis of numerical data (Eyles & Smith, 1988). The main purpose of quantitative methods is that they are reliable, valid, and can be easily simplified to provide a clear result (Cassell & Symon, 1994).
Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The strengths of the quantitative method include:</strong></th>
<th><strong>The weaknesses of the quantitative method include:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Stating the research problem in very specific and set terms</td>
<td>• Failure to provide the researcher with information on the context of the situation where the studied phenomenon occurs;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clearly and precisely specifying both the independent and the dependent variables under investigation;</td>
<td>• Inability to control the environment where the respondents provide the answers to the questions in the survey;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Following firmly the original set of research goals, arriving at more objective conclusions, testing hypothesis, determining the issues of causality;</td>
<td>• Limited outcomes to only those outlined in the original research proposal due to closed type questions and the structured format;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Achieving high levels of reliability of gathered data due to controlled observations, laboratory experiments, mass surveys, or other form of research manipulations</td>
<td>• Not encouraging the evolving and continuous investigation of a research phenomenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eliminating or minimizing subjectivity of judgment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allowing for longitudinal measures of subsequent performance of research subjects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1:** Strengths and Weaknesses of using Quantitative Research Methods. (Matveev, 2002)

For this research project the data collection aims to find out how visitors react to incidents at amusement parks. This could be done qualitatively in the form of interviews, providing an in-depth insight into a few customers’ experiences.
Methodology

and opinions. Alternatively the research could be carried out quantitatively in the form of a survey or questionnaire. Using the quantitative approach, and generating questionnaires will provide the data and answers this project is looking for.

3.4. - Primary research strategy

The primary research for this project will be conducted in the form of online questionnaires. The main benefit to this approach is that they can be distributed to a large number of people, from different backgrounds and locations, at relative ease to the researcher. As this research project involves a worldwide approach, it can be applied to incidents and amusement parks globally. Surveys will provide a platform to access the opinions of people across the globe, which interviews would not. Surveys are one of the most effective methods for quantitative data collection. They are a cost-effective way of collecting a large amount of data. Surveys are mostly done in the form of a questionnaire, as a questionnaire will provide standardised data sets, making it easy for comparison and analysis (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

The best way to access different people would be using an online questionnaire. Sharing the link on various media will allow the maximum number of participants from different backgrounds to be reached, at no cost to the researcher. The link will be shared on rollercoaster fan forums, to ensure the target audience are reached.

3.5. - Quantitative data collection

3.5.1 - Survey design

Questions are in a predetermined order; they aren’t loaded so there is no risk of showing bias in any way. They are specific, and written to avoid questions which could be confusing to participants. Likert style ratings will be used on questions wherever possible, as these allow respondents to rate how strongly
they agree or disagree with statements. These can be used to deter respondents from 'sitting on the fence' with their answers (Saunders, et al., 2012). The questions are closed, to provide quantitative data which will be easier for the researcher to analyse. This will also make it simpler for participants, as it will be quicker to fill out, improving the rate of response. Although this can encourage 'mindless' replies, as respondents don't have to think and provide their own opinions. Open ended questions allow the respondent to pen their own response. These can provide greater insight, and a wider range of responses; but are time consuming and are more likely to be skipped than a closed ended question (Harvard University, 2007). Open ended questions are also harder to analyse, and can be subjected to an unintentional bias.

See Appendix 1 for a sample questionnaire.

3.5.2. - Sampling

A sample is selected so that its most important demographic characteristics match those of the population of interest (Crowther & Lancaster, 2012). For this project the researcher was interested in accessing the opinions of members of the public from all demographics, who frequent theme parks in their leisure time. More specifically, those who ride rollercoasters. Using the internet was deemed to be the simplest way to access these participants.

Once the questions had been finalised, the survey pilot was sent out to a few participants as a test run. Feedback was received on whether the questions were being asked and understood correctly. Once final adjustments had been made, the questionnaire was posted online, on different rollercoaster fan forum websites and other social media sites, with the aim of attracting 80-100 responses. The survey was designed so that it would take less than 5 minutes to complete, to ensure these participants fully engage. 125 responses were collected in total, for the time that the survey was live.

See Appendix 2 for a table of data collected.
Methodology

3.5.3. – Analysis

Saunders et al. (2012, p.665) define analysis as:

‘The ability to break down data and to clarify the nature of component parts and the relationship between them.’

Survey results could be collected as soon as a response had been received. The Qualtrics website offers all the results in different formats; graphs, diagrams, percentages, so the researcher could determine which fit the question best. Results were then imported into Microsoft Excel and collated on there. The results have been analysed by the researcher, the information taken from them was written up in chapter 4 of this research project.

3.6. - Reliability and validity

According to Crowther and Lancaster (2012, p87.)

Reliability is defined as:

‘The extent to which a data collection or measurement technique yields the same results on different occasions.’

And Validity is:

‘The extent to which a data collection or measurement technique measures what it is supposed to measure.’

In terms of this study the researcher believes that the data collection method is reliable and valid. The many benefits of using quantitative data collection have previously been discussed. The surveys were specifically designed to help answer the research question, with no option for any bias to show. Using quantitative methods approach alongside reviewing the available literature, allows for the researcher to ensure the project is approached from multiple angles, with both primary and secondary research included.
3.7. – Ethics

Bryman and Bell (2007) state that there are the 10 principles of ethical considerations to follow when conducting research. They discuss how research participants should not be subjected to harm in any ways whatsoever, and that respect for their dignity should be prioritised. Full consent should be obtained from the participants prior to the study, this was ensured in this research project so that the participants could not take part in the questionnaire without giving their consent and confirming that they were over the age of 18. (See Appendix 3)

They discuss how the protection of the privacy of research participants must be ensured, and that there is an adequate level of participant confidentiality. This is maintained in the research project by keeping the anonymity of individuals and organisations participating in the research. The only personal data required is the age range, gender and the continent in which the participant lives.

Any deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research must be avoided. The researcher had to ensure that there was no bias shown with questions, specifically those about incidents at amusement parks. These questions and included images had to be non-threatening towards the participants.

The ethical documentation was filled out to determine and minimise the risks to the participants, the researcher and the research project. See Appendix 4 for the completed and approved ethics documents.

3.8. Conclusion

Primary and Secondary research were both undertaken in this project, in the form of questionnaires and providing a critical analysis of the available literature. The researcher will analyse the findings from this research and discuss them in the next chapter.
Chapter 4.0. Results, Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

4.2. Visitor Motivations/Typologies

4.3. Visitor perceptions of incidents at amusement parks

4.3.1. Online Comments

4.4. Crisis Communications and Public Relations Management

4.4.1. New Best Practice Framework

4.5. Conclusion
4.1. – Introduction

This chapter will present and analyse the data collected from the primary research, and discuss the recurring themes of visitor motivations and typologies, visitor perceptions of incidents at amusement parks, and crisis communications and public relations management.

In total 125 participants provided answers to the online questionnaires. The analysis of these will help the researcher to achieve the three main project objectives;

‘To investigate visitor perceptions of media content in order to assess its effect on visitors’ attitudes towards amusement parks.’

‘To compare the primary research with the literature in order to identify the key factors that influence visitors’ attitudes towards amusement parks.’

‘To develop a best practice PR crisis communications management framework for amusement parks.’

By the end of this chapter the researcher will also achieve the overall project aim:

‘To investigate the influence of the media on visitor perceptions of amusement parks following a crisis.’

During this chapter, the researcher will discuss connections between the primary research and the literature available, and the common themes that reoccur. The researcher will also provide a best practice framework for crisis communications and public relations management in amusement parks, which was developed during this research process.
4.2. – Visitor Motivations / Typologies

Visitors to amusement parks can be motivated by many factors. This research was aimed towards the views of rollercoaster enthusiasts, who could have different motivating factors to other visitors. Although, as seen in Figure 3.0 the target participants were not necessarily reached. The chart shows how many visits participants make to theme parks. 41% stated that they visited less than once per year. If visit frequency was a way to determine whether participants were rollercoaster and amusement park enthusiasts, this result would suggest they weren’t, as a further 33% stated that they visited only 1-4 times per year. The researcher aimed the questionnaire at theme park and rollercoaster enthusiasts and with 70% of participants visiting less than four times per year, it is indicated that many of the participants were not necessarily enthusiasts as desired. This could have influenced responses to later questions.

![Figure 3.0: Number of Theme Park visits made by participants.](image)

Though the questionnaire participants were not all necessarily fans, the researcher decided that the results were still valid. The overall aim of the research project is to determine the influence the media holds over visitor perceptions of amusement parks following a crisis. So, although the participants may not have been fans, they were still visitors which could have been influenced by the media. This means their opinions would still be valid for this research. If this was an important issue, the researcher could have
included alternative questions, asking participants directly if they considered themselves fans or enthusiasts.

As stated in the Literature Review, McClung (1991) discusses the importance of market segmentation for potential theme park guests. He states that potential segmentation criteria can include demographics, geography, and psychographics. The visitors in each segment will have different attitudes towards risk and safety (Douglas, 1992), and therefore different motivations for visiting amusement parks.

The initial section of the questionnaire helped to gain a demographic of the participants, including age, gender, location and how often they attended amusement parks.

![Figure 4.0: Age of participants](image)

**Figure 4.0** shows how 63.2% of participants were aged between 18 and 34. No participants were over the age of 74. Lepp and Gibson (2008) reference Gibson’s earlier work about the Thrill-Seeking Lifecycle. She concludes that social expectations and responsibilities increase with age. Thus, explaining that ‘Sensation Seeking’ behaviour may often decrease with an individual’s increasing age (Gibson, 1996). These results may also reflect on the popularity of the internet with younger people (Inal, et al., 2008), and therefore older rollercoaster enthusiasts may not have been able to access the online questionnaire.
Mohun (2001; 2012) discusses how men and women have different methods of risk perception, and will therefore behave differently in situations. She states that men associate risk taking behaviour with masculinity, and the construction of amusement park rides historically represents this. For this research project participants were asked to disclose their gender. Figure 5.0 shows that 54% of participants were female, 38% male, and the remaining participants selected other, or preferred not to say. The research conducted in this project allowed for participants to remain anonymous. The outcome of this is that the researcher cannot make links between the participants’ gender, and their attitudes regarding accidents at amusement parks. If this study was conducted again, participant anonymity would be an area to reconsider.
Participants shared their geographic location in Figure 6.0.

The majority (81%) of participants came from Europe. This made the researcher consider the potential difference in results, if a further country specific question had been added. McClung (1991) considered geography as an important segmentation tool for potential theme park guests. The geographic location of some participants in relation to an amusement Park, could hold an influence over some answers.
Figure 7.0. shows how participants rated the importance of 8 different rollercoaster features. Ride Features/Inversions, Safety, Thrill level, Uniqueness, Comfort, Gimmicks, Speed and Theming, were all rated in 5 categories between Not important at all and Extremely important. The standout result from this question is that 70% of participants reported safety as being either very or extremely important to them, and 83% of participants reported thrill as being either very or extremely important to them. Although more individuals voted extremely important for safety than for thrill, both aspects are clearly considered important for participants. This is shown in the Stimulation stage of Pearce’s (1993) Leisure Ladder Model, in that visitors want to feel safe, while still remaining excited. This is reiterated in the literature stating how visitors’ risk perceptions are analysed and rollercoasters are being designed with improved safety, whilst simultaneously becoming more thrilling and ‘scarier’ to ride (Mohun, 2012).
Sensation seeking is a personality trait which can be involved in McClung’s (1991) psychographic segmentation of potential amusement park guests. It links the need for stimulation with what amusement parks can offer. This trait was the inspiration behind the researchers’ conceptual model for Visitor Motivations to amusement parks, shown below in Figure 8.0.

The researcher looked at traditional methods of motivational theory, and combined them with the reasons visitors attend amusement parks. The product of this research created idea for the conceptual model of visitor motivation. There are 7 different aspects that the researcher considers influential towards visitor motivations.

**Figure 8.0**: Visitor Motivations for Amusement Parks – The researcher’s conceptual model.
Results, Analysis and Discussion

**Unique experience** – Visitors may be motivated to visit a theme park if they are able to experience something out of the ordinary. These pull factors are the features which attract a customer towards visiting an amusement park. For example, the park theming has a significant impact on the overall visitor experience as discussed by Bryman (2004). The different rides and rollercoasters contribute to the park experience, and are an attractive factor for guests. The Walt Disney World Parks offer a unique experience which cannot be replicated anywhere else, this is an example of the pull motivational factors that amusement parks have.

**Self Esteem** – This is traditional motivational factor, which is the second highest stage of Pearce’s (1993) Leisure Ladder Model for theme park settings. This stage involves intrinsic motivations, reflecting how guests may visit amusement parks to feel good about themselves.

**Status** – Similar to the Self Esteem section, Status is a feature of Ryan’s (2003) model which displays tourists’ motivations to take risks. Visiting amusement parks can be an expensive past time, so has the potential to be used to show off, used by guests to reaffirm their social status.

**Satisfaction** – The relationship between visitor satisfaction and visitor motivations is discussed in the literature review. Yoon & Uysal (2005) state how satisfaction is the main goal of motivated visitors. It is an intrinsic motivation, closely linked with Bigné et al’s (2005) discussion of pleasure seeking theories.

**Escape reality** – Similar to the Unique Experience this section involves park theming, and how it can create an alternative reality for visitors (Bryman, 2004). This can involve push motivational factors as visitors want to differentiate from their daily lives. Alongside this, the activities offered by amusement parks can provide pull motivations.

**Sensation seeking** – This is the personality trait which inspired the researchers conceptual model for visitor motivations towards amusement parks. The researcher has made the link between this trait and amusement
park motivations, summarising that is the trait which encourages visitors to visit amusement parks, and ride the attractions on offer.

**Outside factors** – These are the factors that influence visitors which may not be their own. For example, they may be visiting with friends or family, attending a special event, or be using an offer or discount voucher.

### 4.3. – Visitor Perceptions of incidents at Amusement Parks

The primary research for this project asked participants for their opinions on different incidents that may occur at Amusement Parks, and about the 2015 Alton Towers ‘The Smiler’ crash specifically.

![Figure 9.0:](image)

**Figure 9.0**: Whether participants would still ride after different incidents.

**Figure 9.0** shows example of different types of incidents involving rollercoasters, and gains the participants’ opinions on whether they would still ride a rollercoaster after each event. As the severity of the incident increases, the percentage of participants who would not ride also increases. For example, when a rider feels unwell due to a rollercoaster 15% would not ride, whereas when someone is fatally injured only 24% would still ride.
In June 2015, two carriages of ‘The Smiler’ at Alton Towers collided. This incident received widespread media attention, due to the severity of the injuries of those involved. There was a lot of speculation over whether the incident was due to a technical difficulty, which sparked concern over the safety of rollercoasters worldwide. This resulted in temporary closure of several other Merlin attraction rollercoasters. In November 2015, it was reported that the crash was due to human error (BBC News, 2015). Alton towers and the Merlin Entertainment Group suffered great losses to not only their profits, but the numbers of visitors also fell (Mintel, 2016).

**Figure 10.0** displays a picture of a Sky News breaking news report during the aftermath of the 2015 ‘The Smiler’ crash at Alton Towers. It features the headline ‘Four Teenagers have sustained serious leg injuries after a collision between two carriages on ‘The Smiler”. 85% of participants questioned say that they remember some coverage of this incident. Television, and online via social media sites and news websites, were shown to be the most popular way that participants heard about the crash. **Figure 11.0** shows that 69% of participants saw television coverage, 63% read up on social media and 55% used online news websites. Less popular methods included radio and newspaper. 30% of participants reported that they saw coverage on online roller-coaster forums; which indicates that the target audience were indeed reached with these questionnaires being posted on forums.
This is reflected in the literature by Staub & Green (1992) about how media stories can provoke an emotional response from readers. Shocking headlines attract readers attention, bringing them to learn about stories from grabbing headlines.

![Bar chart showing how participants heard about The Smiler crash](image)

**Figure 11.0 – How participants heard about The Smiler crash**

The researcher concluded that this section of the questionnaire could have been designed better for those participants who hadn’t heard about the crash. If participants had selected that they were not aware of the incident, they could have been provided with more information in order to better answer the next questions. Alternatively, they could have been given the option to skip questions they did not have an answer for.
Participants were asked if they would still ride the rollercoaster ‘The Smiler’ whilst considering this coverage. The results were not strongly in favour of any outcome as shown in Figure 12.0. Although slightly more said they would still ride, with 41% saying they would still ride, 34% said they would not ride, and 25% remained undecided.

![Figure 12.0](image)

**Figure 12.0** – Whether participants would still ride The Smiler.

The researcher concluded that in order to determine a clearer answer, more questions should be asked to participants. The researcher would include questions with more specific options, or without a maybe option.

![Figure 13.0](image)

**Figure 13.0** – Likelihood of participants’ decision to visit being affected by the incident.
Participants were asked whether an incident in similar nature to the Alton Towers crash would have an effect over whether they would still visit that theme park. **Figure 13.0** displays their responses on a scale between very likely and very unlikely. 55% of participants said the incident would either be unlikely or very unlikely to influence their decision to visit the park. The available literature about accidents suggests that media framing and agenda setting, would influence visitors perceptions and lead them away from visiting parks. This is the opposite of what the primary research found. The results may have been influenced by the participants. For example, if the participants were enthusiasts they would be influenced differently, and hold alternate views on amusement parks than those who are infrequent visitors. They will be receptive to different media tactics, and hold contrary opinions.

4.3.1. Online Comments

The researcher posted the questionnaire on different online rollercoaster forums and message boards, aiming to reach the target audience. Although the questionnaire left no open questions for participants to put forward their opinions, some forum users left their thoughts as comments on the forums. See **Appendix 5** for details.

A well-known member of *Coasterforce* left a comment which the researcher deemed to provide a relevant insight. The user stated that it was not whether there had been an incident, but what had cause the incident which affected their decision to visit.

“If there are fatalities because the ride derailed or the restraints opened, I would not ride it or visit that park”

They said they would still ride ‘The Smiler’, as the crash was due to human error. This user also commented on media influences, and said how the media surrounding this incident made them aware of Alton Towers as a park, and now they have a desire to visit. The user draws on the quote “There is no such thing as bad publicity”. They also discuss the importance of the
manufacturer and the reputation they hold in the industry, as well as whether independent safety checks are carried out.

This comment has displayed how there is space for future research, particularly in the technical aspects of manufacturing and safety.

After reading this comment the researcher thought a lot about how the questionnaire could have been tailored for more appropriate results.

4.4. – Crisis Communications and Public Relations management

As previously discussed Figure 13.0 displays whether an incident in similar nature to the Alton Towers crash would have an effect over whether participants would still visit. As the majority said it was unlikely to affect their decision to visit, this proves that not all hope is lost in terms of crisis management. In terms of this incident, the media did not have an influence over attendance attitudes.

As shown in Figure 11.0 63.2% of participants heard about the ‘The Smiler’ crash due to social media, the second most popular option behind television. This reflects the importance for communications managers to use social media appropriately during a crisis. The literature and theory surrounding the use of social media in crisis management is still a relatively new area, with a lot of space for future work. Using social media can be a cheap and fast way of reaching a widespread audience as discussed by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010). Public relations and crisis communications managers need to be able to understand the power of social media, and be able to use it appropriately in times of crisis. This is an area which helped to inspire the researchers conceptual framework for a code of best practice in crisis communications at amusement parks.

Although participants said an incident of this nature was unlikely to impact their decisions to visit, Alton towers reported profit losses and a decrease in visitor numbers in the follow up to the crash (Themed Entertainment Association, 2016).
Finally, participants were asked their opinions on whether they thought the media coverage of incidents had an influence over their decisions to return to the park. The results as seen in Figure 14.0 are varied. 50% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed, 34% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 15% remained undecided.

Participants stated that they did believe media coverage of incidents influenced their visit decisions. This is represented in the literature, displaying that media is very influential, Coleman (1993) agrees, stating how the media influences how individuals perceive risk. Risk perception can be an important influence of visitor motivation (Ryan, 2003). Thus, amusement parks must be aware of their media portrayals, and how they can successfully use the media in crisis communications management. This will be discussed in the researchers’ conceptual model in section 4.4.1.

The researcher could have asked more open questions in this stage, for example asking participants how they felt they had been influenced, and how they were personally affected. This would have provided richer data for analysis. Although the researcher couldn’t necessarily ask participants about crisis communications management, they could have asked more about
participants’ impressions of park responses and how effective they were deemed. All these influences inspired the researcher to create the conceptual framework for crisis communications and public relations management.

4.4.1. - New Conceptual Framework

There are many existing frameworks available for disaster management. The main area which will be added for improvement is to include social media. As a very recent development, it is not in a lot of pre-existing literature, but it is an essential part of modern media communications. Managing social media content will play a crucial role of crisis communications management in amusement parks.

Faulkner (2001) states that there are three pre-requisites for effective disaster management planning, these are:

1. **A Co-ordinated team approach**

   He states that all aspects of organisation must work together with external parties involved, to ensure successful disaster management.

2. **Consultation**

   To achieve successful teamwork from all areas, disaster planning should involve successful consultation. Agreements should be made and followed throughout the process.

3. **Commitment**

   No matter how in-depth the disaster management plan is, it will be limited in its success if all involved parties are not aware and fully committed.

   The crisis management framework must be clear and detailed, containing protocols and directions for all the involved parties. All parties must fully understand what is expected from them. The researcher used inspiration from a variety of past disaster management models including work from Quarentelli (1984), Fink (1986), Turner (1994), Robert (1994), and Faulkner (2001). These models were compared, and the importance of social media
Results, Analysis and Discussion

management in modern organisations was factored in. Below is a conceptual model, displaying the researchers own code of best practice for crisis communication and public relations management in amusement parks.

Figure 15.0: Conceptual model for Crisis Communication and Public Relations Management in Amusement Parks – Adapted by the researcher
The model is divided into four sections, Pre-incident, During incident, Post-incident (short term), and Post-incident (long term). They offer a timeline of action points for crisis communication and public relations managers, starting from before an incident takes place.

**Pre-incident** involves the steps that organisations should take in case of a disaster occurs.

- In this stage an amusement park should assemble a crisis response team. This will include the people who will take action and responsibility during a crisis. These staff will be appropriately trained to ensure they understand their responsibilities.
- Risk assessments should now be completed, discussing the probability of different incidents occurring. They should be prioritised in terms of how likely they are to occur.
- Models of potential crises can be made, and appropriate action plans for these situations can be prepared.
- Social media sites should be set up, and regularly updated with park news and information. They should post often to keep in touch with fans and guests, these interactions can be monitored and analysed. This can be the beginning of creating a respectable reputation with visitors.

**During incident** involves the initial actions that staff should take as a crisis is beginning to develop.

- Firstly, amusement parks must determine their priorities. If there are potential fatalities, parks need to act to save and protect human lives.
- Parks should be aware of damage limitation, in terms of physical damages and also for their reputation. Park staff must be very careful, as how they act in this stage is critical. As rides and rollercoaster can be a very expensive and important resource for amusement parks, it will be in the parks best interest to protect them to the best of their ability.
• Warning systems already in place will be used to inform the rest of the park, and to reassure guests.
• The nominated staff will take control of social media accounts and ensure only the essential information is released. They will be able to monitor any initial media reactions and perception, for example using any related hashtags.
• Any information they reveal must be accurate and truthful, whilst also trying to protect the park’s reputation.

Post-incident (Short term) guides amusement parks how to act directly after an incident has occurred. These actions should be taken to provide short term solutions.

• In cases of a crisis, amusement parks must determine an official media response. This is likely to attract attention to the park, and must be honest, whilst remaining sensitive to any potential victims. This may happen in the form of a press conference in front of global news reporters.
• After this the official statement will be posted on social media sites, to reflect the united front of the park staff.
• Depending on the crisis, there may be resulting ride or even full park closures. This information can be presented in the official statements, and updates of the closure status will be available on social media channels.
• The staff in charge of the social media accounts will spend this time monitoring perceptions, and getting more of an idea of the scale of the social implications of the incident. They can use these channels to reassure guests, whilst remaining sensitive to victims and being truthful.
Results, Analysis and Discussion

**Post incident (long term)** involves the park moving on from a crisis, showing how they have learned from the experience, and the actions they must take to ensure the sustainability and future of the park.

- The park management must accept and admit liability for the incident, and be honest about causes and findings that follow.
- An analysis of the parks crisis response must be carried out to determine its efficiency. The action plans can be reviewed and strategies developed. This can be used to demonstrate how the park has learned through experiencing an incident, and how they may act differently in the future because of the experience.
- A parks main priority now is to rebuild and maintain their relationship with guests, whilst remaining sensitive surrounding the incident.
- Social media sites will be used to deliver positive stories, breaking news and updates. The should provide relevant information about the incident, whilst demonstrating the positive learning outcomes from the experience.
- Social media sites can also be used as a marketing tool at this stage, by encouraging guests to return to the park. This can be done by sharing any special offers or discounts available to users, or promoting events happening at the park.

This code of best practice can help amusement parks to set long and short term goals in terms of managing public relations and crisis communication strategies. It displays a real focus on the importance of social media unlike past models.
4.5. — Conclusion

This chapter offers an analysis and discussion of the findings from 125 online questionnaires. The researcher formulated charts from the questionnaire data, and compared the findings with the available literature. The findings were organised into three main themes. These themes are representative of the chronological order of a crisis at an amusement park. The first theme visitor motivations and typologies, involve the decisions surrounding amusement parks before any incident. Visitor Perceptions of incidents at Amusement Parks, is the second theme, and discusses how visitors are influenced by different incidents and the media coverage of them. The final theme of this research is Crisis Communications and Public Relations management. This involves the steps amusement parks should follow after an incident has occurred. The combination of the primary and secondary research helped the author to create a conceptual code of best practice for crisis communications in amusement parks.

The next chapter will be the conclusion of this research project. It will determine whether the initial project aims and objectives were met, and discuss limitations the project faced. The key findings will be summarised along with a reflection of the researchers’ experience, and their contributions to research from this project. The researcher will also discuss any recommendations for future work in this subject area.
Chapter 5.0. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. - Introduction
5.2. - Aims and Objectives
5.3. - Summary of Key Research
5.4. - Contributions of Research
5.5. - Limitations of Study
5.6. - Personal Reflection
5.7. - Recommendations for Future Research
5.8. - Summary of Research Project
5.1. – Introduction

This chapter will provide a summary of the research project, discussing all aspects of the researcher’s contribution. The key findings from the research project have been summarised, and project aims and objectives will be revisited. The attempts taken to reach these objectives have been analysed and discussed. The researcher also completed a personal reflection to provide a summary of the experience whilst undertaking this project. Furthermore, the researcher discussed the limitations which the project faced, and provided recommendations for future research in this subject area.

5.2. - Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this research project was:

‘To investigate the influence of the media on visitor perceptions of amusement parks following a crisis.’

The researcher attempted to achieve this aim by completing the project objectives. The first objective was to critically review the literature relating to media influences, visitor perceptions, crisis communications and amusement parks. This objective was completed via the Literature Review in Chapter 2 of this project.

The second objective of the project was to compare the primary research with the literature in order to identify the key factors that influence visitors’ attitudes towards amusement parks. This was accomplished in chapter 4 of this project, Results, Analysis and Discussion. The researcher collected participant data from 125 online questionnaires. The results were analysed and compared with the existing literature available, the main findings of this will be discussed below.

The final aim of this research project was to develop a best practice PR crisis communications management framework for amusement parks. Previous
frameworks of disaster management and crisis communications were analysed; and the researcher decided that the importance of social media, was the key feature which was missing from previous models. The researcher used ideas from previous models to create a code of best practice for crisis communications management in amusement parks. This is shown in Figure 15.0.

5.3. - Summary of Key Research Findings

This research project faced some limitations, which will be discussed in detail in section 5.5. Using the results collected from the researcher’s primary research and ideas from the literature, common themes were determined. The key finding from this research project are summarised below:

- Visitors to amusement parks are motivated by a variety of factors.
- Thrill and safety are both highly desired and expected traits from visiting amusement parks.
- Media portrayals of accidents do have an influence on visitor perceptions, but they do not always influence decisions to visit.
- Using social media appropriately is an essential tool for crisis communication management in amusement parks.
- The importance of managing short and long term impacts following a crisis in an amusement park

The aim to investigate the influence of the media on visitor perceptions of amusement parks following a crisis, was accomplished in different sections. First the power of the media, and then how visitor perceptions are influenced by a crisis.
Conclusions and Recommendations

Whilst the impacts directly affect people involved incident, this study has shown that other people are only really impacted in the short term. They may be impacted by what they have heard, but this research shows how incidents are unlikely to affect visit motivations in the long term. Even the amusement park and ride will eventually make a recovery, both socially and economically.

5.4. - Contributions of Research

The researcher contributed to academic theory with the conceptual models that were created. Figure 8.0 showed the different ways in which visitors to amusement parks are motivated, highlighting the importance of the sensation seeking personality trait.

The code of practice for crisis communication and public relations management in amusement parks Figure 15.0, highlighted the importance of using social media effectively. This could be used as a basis for other organisations needing tools for managing the media after a crisis.

The researcher could have got confirmation on these models by asking questionnaire participants for their opinions. That is why these are conceptual models, with space for adaptations and additions with further research.

5.5. - Limitations of Study

The researcher became aware whilst progressing with this research of the limitations which it faced. Many of these came from the primary research decisions. The researcher has determined that the methods chosen needed improvement, to thus improve the quality of the results.

The first limitations are regarding the questionnaire. The researcher posted links to the questionnaire on rollercoaster forums to attract the people who are interested in rollercoasters. In terms of the results, a different approach to participant confidentiality would have been better, for example being able to link participants to specific answers. This would have allowed the researcher
Conclusions and Recommendations

to make better use of the demographic information collected, and allowed trends in results to be compiled. E.g. Participants over 35 rated safety as more important than thrill.

Another addition the researcher would make to the questionnaire, would be to add an option for participants to share their ideas and opinions. This came about after the researcher received forum comments in reply to the questionnaire, which offered an interesting insight which the researcher hadn’t previously considered.

The second limitation the researcher came across was the boundaries faced by only collecting quantitative data. The benefits of quantitative data collection are listed in the methodology chapter, but the researcher discovered there may have been area for other primary research techniques. For example, conducting individual interviews or focus groups with rollercoaster enthusiasts would have determined a stronger outcome of results.

Originally the researcher intended to produce a netnography of the media surrounding different incidents, providing case study examples. This would have provided the researcher with stronger arguments of how visitors can be influenced by what the media says about incidents at amusement parks.

Although even faced by these limitations, the researcher did accomplish the aims and objectives set in the initial stages of this research project.
5.6. - Personal Reflection

The researcher used Gibbs’ Reflective Cycle to reflect upon her experience during the dissertation process.

- Description – *What happened?*

  The researcher has completed this project to investigate the influence that the media has on visitor perceptions of amusement parks, after they have some kind of crisis. Primary research was conducted in the form of 125 online questionnaires. The results of these were discussed and compared with the existing literature in the field, and the key themes and findings summarised.

- Feelings – *What were you thinking and feeling?*

  The researcher went through various emotions during this project, with an overall feeling of stress due to the weight and importance of the project. The researcher experienced pride and satisfaction for the completion of this project, and the effort that was involved.
Conclusions and Recommendations

- Evaluation – *What was good and bad about the experience?*

The researcher found the Literature Review section difficult, as it was the first time completing this type of research. In particular, the researcher struggled with lack of research in some areas. Although she did enjoy researching motivational theories, specifically the psychological side of the subject.

The researcher feels that she did not make the best decisions for collecting the primary data. If the questionnaires were designed differently the researcher believes the results may have been stronger.

- Analysis – *What sense can you make of the situation?*

The researcher found that she managed her time well over the course of this project, and was able to dedicate enough time to each section. She felt that even though she had a lot of time working on the literature review, she still was unsatisfied with the final edit. This may be due to a lack of existing literature, and the researcher felt unsure of the decided themes.

- Conclusion – *What else could you have done?*

The researcher could have spent more time planning the questionnaire questions to ensure the data collected was relevant and detailed enough.

Perhaps undertaking a different form of primary research would have allowed for the researcher to address the research aim more directly, and provide more in-depth data for analysis.

- Action plan – *If it arose again what would you do?*

If the project were to be completed again, the researcher would use different methods for primary data collection. For example, conducting a focus group to gain opinions or doing an in-depth analysis of the media content surrounding incidents at amusement parks.
5.7. - Recommendations for Future Research

- Collecting qualitative data for primary research, would have provided a wider range of ideas for analysis. This could enhance the quality of results, providing new areas for common themes.
- This research could be conducted as a specific incident case study, including the researcher collecting primary research at the site. Details about that incident and the media surrounding could be analysed, and visitors could be asked outright if/how they had been influenced.
- The online comment the researcher received drew them to think more about the specific about causes of accidents, and how each case may differently influence visitors. The researcher recommends an investigation into the influence of different causes of incidents on visitor perceptions.

5.8. - Summary of Research Project

The initial aim of this research project was to investigate the influence of the media on visitor perceptions of amusement parks following a crisis. Although the study faced limitations, the aim was successfully addressed. Primary research was conducted and this was compared with secondary research collected. Common themes were discussed and the arising issues addressed.

The researcher accumulated the material to create a code of best practice for crisis communications and public relations in amusement parks, thus addressing the final research objective. The researcher learned a lot during this process, and understands that the limitations did impact the results of the study. Overall the researcher deemed the project beneficial, and believes the area is note-worthy, and will provide scope for thought-provoking future studies.
References


Appendices

1. Sample Questionnaire
2. Table of Data collected
3. Consent slip
4. Completed and approved ethics documents
5. Online Comment
6. Turnitin Receipt
Appendix 1. – Sample Questionnaire

Q1. How old are you?
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 - 74
- 75 or older

Q2. What is your Gender?
- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say
Q3. Where do you live?
- Europe
- North America
- Central and South America
- Asia
- Africa
- Oceania
- The Middle East

Q4. How often do you visit theme parks?
- Less than once a year
- 1-4 times per year
- Every two months
- Once a month
- More than once per month

Q5. How important are the following features when considering rollercoasters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Slightly important</th>
<th>Moderately important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ride Features</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Inversions)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrill level</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniqueness</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gimmicks</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theming</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q6. How likely are you to still ride an attraction if:

- Would not ride
- Maybe
- Would still ride

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>22/13/2018</th>
<th>Qualtrics Survey Software</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It stops for a technical problem</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People feel unwell after riding</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A minor injury occurs in the ride area (cuts/bruises)</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ride has crashed but there were no injuries</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ride has crashed before, but the injuries were not fatal</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone has been fatally injured on the ride, at some point in the past</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q7. The photo below shows a headline of a past theme park incident.

![Image of the headline](image)

Q8. Do you remember any coverage of this incident in the media?

〇 Yes
〇 No
Q9. If yes, how did you hear about it? Select all that apply

☐ Newspaper
☐ Television
☐ Online - Social Media Sites
☐ Online - News Sites
☐ Online - Rollercoaster Forums
☐ Radio
☐ Other

Q10. Would an incident of this nature affect your decision to visit the park?

☐ Very likely
☐ Likely
☐ Neither likely nor unlikely
☐ Unlikely
☐ Very unlikely

Q11. Would you still go on this ride?

☐ I would definitely still go on this ride
☐ I would be hesitant to go on this ride
☐ I would definitely not go on this ride

Q12. Do you believe media coverage of an incident like this has an influence over your decision to return to the park?

☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree
Appendix 2: Tables of data collected

Q1 - How old are you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>18 - 24</td>
<td>40.80%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25 - 34</td>
<td>22.40%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>35 - 44</td>
<td>12.80%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>45 - 54</td>
<td>10.40%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>55 - 64</td>
<td>5.60%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>65 - 74</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>75 or older</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q2 - What is your Gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38.40%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54.40%</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>4.80%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q3 - Where do you live?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>81.60%</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>North America</td>
<td>8.80%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Central and South America</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>3.20%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Middle East</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q4 - How often do you visit theme parks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Less than once a year</td>
<td>41.60%</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1-4 times per year</td>
<td>32.80%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Every two months</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>8.80%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>More than once per month</td>
<td>8.80%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q5 - How important are the following features when considering rollercoasters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Slightly important</th>
<th>Moderately important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ride Features / Inversions</td>
<td>6.40%</td>
<td>12.80%</td>
<td>28.80%</td>
<td>36.00%</td>
<td>16.00%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
<td>14.00%</td>
<td>22.40%</td>
<td>41.60%</td>
<td>24.80%</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thrill level</td>
<td>3.20%</td>
<td>25.60%</td>
<td>41.60%</td>
<td>24.80%</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Uniqueness</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>34.40%</td>
<td>36.00%</td>
<td>13.60%</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
<td>13.60%</td>
<td>34.40%</td>
<td>36.00%</td>
<td>13.60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gimmicks</td>
<td>28.00%</td>
<td>32.00%</td>
<td>27.20%</td>
<td>8.80%</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>5.60%</td>
<td>17.60%</td>
<td>36.80%</td>
<td>28.00%</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Theming</td>
<td>16.00%</td>
<td>27.20%</td>
<td>32.00%</td>
<td>16.00%</td>
<td>8.80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q6 - How likely are you to still ride an attraction if:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Would not Ride</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>Would still ride</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It stops for a technical problem</td>
<td>22.40%</td>
<td>24.00%</td>
<td>53.60%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>People feel unwell after riding</td>
<td>14.40%</td>
<td>22.40%</td>
<td>63.20%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A minor injury occurs in the ride area (cuts/ bruises)</td>
<td>28.80%</td>
<td>24.80%</td>
<td>46.40%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The ride has crashed but there were no injuries</td>
<td>44.00%</td>
<td>19.20%</td>
<td>36.80%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The ride has crashed before, but the injuries were not fatal</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>25.60%</td>
<td>34.40%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Someone has been fatally injured on the ride, at some point in the past</td>
<td>49.60%</td>
<td>25.60%</td>
<td>24.80%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q8 - Do you remember any coverage of this incident in the media?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>85.60%</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>14.40%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q9 - If yes, how did you hear about it? Select all that apply

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>40.80%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>68.80%</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Online - Social Media Sites</td>
<td>63.20%</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Online - News Sites</td>
<td>55.20%</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Online - Rollercoaster Forums</td>
<td>30.40%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>33.60%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16.80%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q10 - Would an incident of this nature affect your decision to visit the park?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td>13.76%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>16.51%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Neither likely nor unlikely</td>
<td>13.76%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>23.85%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very unlikely</td>
<td>32.11%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q11 - Would you still go on this ride?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I would definitely still go on this ride</td>
<td>40.80%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I would be hesitant to go on this ride</td>
<td>25.60%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I would definitely not go on this ride</td>
<td>33.60%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q12 - Do you believe media coverage of an incident like this has an influence over your decision to return to the park?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>22.40%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>28.00%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>15.20%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>16.00%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>18.40%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Consent Slip

Questionnaire - Theme Park Incidents and Visitor Perceptions

I am a final year student at Cardiff Metropolitan University currently in the process of completing my dissertation. I have designed a questionnaire, and am looking for the views of rollercoaster enthusiasts.

The results of this questionnaire will help me to investigate the different influences on visitor perceptions of amusement parks following a crisis.

I appreciate you taking the time to complete this questionnaire, it should take less than five minutes to complete.

Your responses are voluntary and will be confidential.

If you have any questions, please contact ST20041044@Outlook.cardiffmet.ac.uk

Thanks in advance!

Please tick to confirm you are over 18

☐ I am over 18
Appendix 4: Completed and approved ethics documents

## Devolved Ethics Approval Application Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name: Alice Gregg</th>
<th>Student Number: ST0041044</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module Name:</td>
<td>Module Number:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme Name: Internat. Tourism + Events Management</td>
<td>Supervisor Name: Heike Groote-Rees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To be completed by student and supervisor before submission to Ethics Approval Panel</th>
<th>Student Signature:</th>
<th>Supervisor Signature:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application for ethics approval</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant information sheet</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant consent form</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot interview/s</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot questionnaire/s</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter(s) to participating organisation/s</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation of interviewee participation</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First Submission [ ] Resubmission [ ]

Date: ____________________________

---

### For use by the devolved ethics approval panel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panel Members</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module leader, Chair:</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>[Signature]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor:</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Signature]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSM Ethics Committee Representative:</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Signature]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date: 23/11/16

**Outcome:**

- Project Approved [ ]
- Chair’s Action [ ]
- Application not Approved [ ]

Reference number issued: ____________________________

Comments for projects not fully approved:

---

The original to be retained by the supervisor and a copy given to the student and module leader. In the case of a resubmission being required this original form should be submitted with the resubmission not a new, blank, one.
CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

When undertaking a research or enterprise project, Cardiff Met staff and students are obliged to complete this form in order that the ethics implications of that project may be considered.

If the project requires ethics approval from an external agency (e.g., NHS), you will not need to seek additional ethics approval from Cardiff Met. You should however complete Part One of this form and attach a copy of your ethics letter(s) of approval in order that your School has a record of the project.

The document Ethics application guidance notes will help you complete this form. It is available from the Cardiff Met website. The School or Unit in which you are based may also have produced some guidance documents, please consult your supervisor or School Ethics Coordinator.

Once you have completed the form, sign the declaration and forward to the appropriate person(s) in your School or Unit.

PLEASE NOTE:
Participant recruitment or data collection MUST NOT commence until ethics approval has been obtained.

PART ONE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of applicant:</th>
<th>Alice Gregg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor (if student project):</td>
<td>Helene Grousset-Rees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School / Unit:</td>
<td>School of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student number (if applicable):</td>
<td>ST20041044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme enrolled on (if applicable):</td>
<td>International Tourism &amp; Events Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>An investigation into the influence of the media on visitor perceptions of amusement parks following a crisis. (An international case study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected start date of data collection:</td>
<td>01/01/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate duration of data collection:</td>
<td>2-3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Body (if applicable):</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other researcher(s) working on the project:</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the study involve NHS patients or staff?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the study involve human samples and/or human cell lines?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Does your project fall entirely within one of the following categories:

- Paper based, involving only documents in the public domain
  - No
- Laboratory based, not involving human participants or human samples
  - No
CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

Practice based not involving human participants (eg curatorial, practice audit) | No
Compulsory projects in professional practice (eg Initial Teacher Education) | No
A project for which external approval has been obtained (e.g., NHS) | No

If you have answered YES to any of these questions, expand on your answer in the non-technical summary. No further information regarding your project is required.
If you have answered NO to all of these questions, you must complete Part 2 of this form

In no more than 150 words, give a non-technical summary of the project
This project aims to evaluate the influence that media coverage of incidents at amusement parks has on visitor attitudes and perceptions, their experience and visitor numbers. The research will relate to a number of international case studies of incidents, and how amusement park PR teams dealt with them in terms of crisis communication management. The researcher will conduct a netnography, content analysis of media coverage surrounding incidents at amusement parks, and the responses to these incidents.
The researcher will collect primary data by creating an online survey, asking visitors to amusement parks questions about their experiences of amusement parks and how they feel about accidents and incidents. The survey will be shared to members of the general public through online media, specifically rollercoaster forums.

DECLARATION:
I confirm that this project conforms with the Cardiff Met Research Governance Framework
I confirm that I will abide by the Cardiff Met requirements regarding confidentiality and anonymity when conducting this project.

STUDENTS: I confirm that I will not disclose any information about this project without the prior approval of my supervisor.

Signature of the applicant: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

FOR STUDENT PROJECTS ONLY

Name of supervisor: ___________________________ Date: 22/11/16

Signature of supervisor: ___________________________

Research Ethics Committee use only

Decision reached: Project approved [ ]
Project approved in principle [ ]

Application for ethics approval v6 October 2016

75
## CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
### APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Project deferred</th>
<th>Project not approved</th>
<th>Project rejected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Project reference number: Click here to enter text.

Name: Click here to enter text.

Signature:

Date: 23/11/18

Details of any conditions upon which approval is dependant:

Click here to enter text.

## PART TWO

### A RESEARCH DESIGN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A1 Will you be using an approved protocol in your project?</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A2 If yes, please state the name and code of the approved protocol to be used</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A3 Describe the research design to be used in your project**

1. Qualitative Data
   - The researcher intended to do a netnography and content analysis of media coverage surrounding incidents at amusement parks, and the responses to these incidents.
   - A range of articles and news stories from different sources, will be collected compared and reviewed thoroughly by the researcher.

2. Quantitative Data
   - The researcher is aiming to collect quantitative data, in the form of surveys. These will provide a larger audience to be accessed, and are a very effective way of collecting data. Surveys provide standardised data sets, making it easy for comparison and analysis.

**Sampling**
- The target market for the questionnaires is those who frequent Amusement Parks in their leisure time.
- The opinion of people over the age of 18, from all demographics are desired by the researcher. The aim of receiving answers from 80-100 surveys has been set. Participants will be recruited via online rollercoaster forums, and other social media sites. The survey aims to take less than 5 minutes per participant to complete, to try to ensure participants fully engage with it.

**Analysis**
- Qualtrics, the online survey tool which will be used has been set to keep participants anonymous, ensuring confidentiality. The only personal information will be the age and gender of the participant.
- The site is fully endorsed by the university and allows results to be exported to different programmes, where the researcher will conduct a statistical analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A4 Will the project involve deceptive or covert research?</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A5 If yes, give a rationale for the use of deceptive or covert research</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6 Will the project have security sensitive implications?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7 If yes, please explain what they are and the measures that are proposed to address them</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1 An Approved Protocol is one which has been approved by Cardiff Met to be used under supervision of designated members of staff; a list of approved protocols can be found on the Cardiff Met website here.
# Previous Experience

**B1** What previous experience of research involving human participants relevant to this project do you have?

In college as part of the extended project qualification, the researcher conducted interviews, designed and handed out questionnaires to collect opinions about issues at music festivals.

**B2 Student project only**

What previous experience of research involving human participants relevant to this project does your supervisor have?

Helene Grousset-Rees has experience of both qualitative and quantitative research.

# Potential Risks

**C1** What potential risks do you foresee?

- **a)** Risks to Participants include –
  
  The only risks to participants would be if questionnaires included images and content of a threatening nature. The content could be seen as upsetting for some respondents. Some participants may be concerned with anonymity.

- **b)** Risks to Researcher include – There should be no real risks to the researcher as using online tools allows for the researcher to remain anonymous.

- **c)** Risks to Project include – Participants may not show interest in the questionnaire, not taking part or only partially taking part.

**C2** How will you deal with the potential risks?

- **a)** The researcher will ensure no disturbing images are used, ensuring all questions are sensitive and appropriate for all participants. All participants will be made aware of the data protection and confidentiality rules, the reasons for taking part and will agree using a consent form. The questionnaire is entirely optional, and participants can take part under their own free will.

- **b)** All steps will be taken to ensure the researcher remains anonymous, sharing only limited info about herself.

- **c)** The questionnaires will be shared with a wide range of people, to attract as many participants as possible. A pilot of the questionnaire will be given out before launching, to ensure the effectiveness. The researcher will also allow 2-3 months for data collection, to give maximum time for responses.

When submitting your application you **MUST** attach a copy of the following:

- All information sheets
- Consent/assent form(s)

An exemplar information sheet and participant consent form are available from the Research section of the Cardiff Met website.
Appendix 5: Online Comment

Appendix 6 – Turnitin Receipt