

# Mountainboarding Publicity Plan

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## 1. Introduction/Overview:

Public Relations is considered “the management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its various publics” (Wilcox ). An important component of this is publicity, which uses the mass media to distribute information to create a buzz. While P.T. Barnum is best known for using this method, it is currently most often used for sports, theater, music, film (Wilcox 63). Though for our campaign we will mainly be focusing on the publicity aspect, we will also draw upon public information, two-way asymmetric, and two-way symmetrical (which is the coveted mutually beneficial communication between the organization and publics).

Publicity campaigns can help change the target audience’s opinions and attitudes in many different ways. With accurate placement in the media, the campaign will reach the target audience in a persuasive and meaningful way. One way to be affective in the print media, is to get an opinion leader who has a pertinent column in a publication aimed at the target audience to write about the product or service. However, since media is a third party, there is no control over what the writer will say, but the hope is that he or she will give a sparkling review or mention of something. The same goes with a feature in a magazine.

The most common way for a public relations professional to generate publicity is through a news release that editors can choose to place in newspapers. Visual media holds the same general ideas. Publicity can be generated on television on the news through a video news release or with commercials. The ideal way though, like with the print media, is to get the most reach. This can be through an opinion leader, such as Oprah, or on one of the morning talk shows. An effective way of generating publicity is also by holding special events that indirectly benefit and highlight a product, service, or issue.

The foundation of our campaign will be reaching our target audience through public opinion and special events. In our next step we will conduct research to find out which public opinion holders will help us reach our audience most effectively and determine what type of special events will also generate awareness as well as build momentum and change the intended audience’s attitude and behavior towards mountainboarding.

Media influence is cumulative and long-term: when many media cover a subject over the years, perhaps expressing a viewpoint on the topic, whole generations can be influenced (Center 210). Such as is seen with “communism.”

Publicists can’t rely on buddy reporters, columnists or editors, any longer because of strict codes of ethics and monitoring by the FCC, FTC, and other federal agencies, as well as professional and trade societies. (Center)

The most effective way to change an audience’s opinion is by appealing to their current attitudes and/or behaviors. To figure out the most affective ways for these two, we will need to do research and define our objectives for this year. Once we have that information we will be able to strategically and tactfully target the audience through different media and then evaluate how successful we were and how we can improve.

An example of a successful publicity plans that we should keep in mind was Microsoft's for the launch of Windows '95.

## 2. Research:

Research will play a vital role in determining how to target our intended audience. It is necessary in deciding our target audience, making our messages persuasive, and generating publicity. It will be important in every step we take in planning, program development, and the evaluation process.

It will help us determine:

- “what is the problem?”
- “what kind of information is needed?”
- ”how will the results of the research be used?”
- “how soon will the results be needed?” (Wilcox 129)

It will give us insight into how “the demographics, lifestyles, characteristics, and consumption patterns of audiences helps to ensure that messages reach the proper audiences.” (Wilcox 131)

We need to know what to spend on so will be most effective. Before implementing the campaign it would be essential for us to use both primary and secondary research methods. Though we know that we want to target college age females we need to learn more about their interests and what their lifestyle is like. We can start off by doing secondary research on the internet to learn more about the target audience then use focus groups for qualitative research and surveys for quantitative research to find out where our research and goals fit in with their beliefs and attitudes.

Polls and surveys can generate publicity for an organization, such as Simmons Mattress and to measure success. Another question to consider is “did the time and money spent accomplish the stated objective?” The data we get from the focus group is a good alternative to individual interviews. It helps identify attitudes and motivations of important publics (136-7). With this knowledge it will be easier for us to organize effective communication objectives, which will also make our strategies and tactics more successful.

## 3. Communication Objectives:

- **To increase awareness of mountainboarding among 18-24 year old women over the next twelve months.** Mountainboarding is currently a sport of only 77,000 people. As it is still a fledgling sport, many people, including females, have never heard of it. In the next year, however, we can begin to increase awareness and get opinion leaders for this audience

to address mountainboarding. This will be important in generating positive publicity.

- **To change the current “extreme” image of mountainboarding over the next 12 months by targeting media.** Research shows that college-age females are “turned-off” by “what they perceive to be its ‘extreme’ and ‘dangerous’ nature.” We can begin to change that perception by showing the personal, feminine side of the sport in such media as magazines and newspapers. We should also use this method to show that mountainboarding can be as safe or as dangerous as the rider wants. This will be important in disseminating information about the sport to our target audience.
- **To obtain 150-300 placements in US media.** Part of the reason mountainboarding has not taken-off as a popular sport is due to a lack of media attention. Over the next year we should be able to improve on that through our various events and methods planned. This will be important in increasing awareness for the sport and creating a new perception of the sport.

Target Audience: college-age women (18-24 year old)

#### **4. Strategies and Tactics:**

Strategies:

- **Make connection between mountainboarding and activities popular among target audience.** To appeal to the target audience’s current beliefs and attitudes by having events and tactics tie in with audience’s current activities and views. This will help increase awareness and create a positive perception of mountainboarding as safe and mainstream.
- **Generate stories about female mountainboarders in media.** To create an image of the different characteristics of mountainboarders that is not extreme and the audience can relate to.
- **Include current female mountainboarders in process.** They can offer suggestions and opinions to make the campaign more effective and personal. With their input we can increase awareness and make mountainboarding interactive and geared toward college-age women. The media would also have interest in these women.
- **Get target audience members involved in formulating an opinion.** Can get the target audience involved in order to gain credibility among those potentially interested. This is important because if there are good opinions it can change the

attitude or behavior of others, this will particularly help form a new image of mountainboarding.

- **Get audience interested in industry and events.** Mountainboarding needs more participants. After the target audience is exposed to mountainboarding, it still needs to be motivated to follow the industry and events. Those first adapters to mountainboarding should want to know what's happening in mountainboarding as part of increasing their awareness.
- **Separate mountainboarding from its "extreme" image.** Generate media interest that is interesting and newsworthy. This is a very important component to the campaign and is necessary in changing the general image of mountainboarding.
- **Get public opinion leaders to discuss mountainboarding.** Public opinion leaders make up a small percentage of the population but have a far reach of who they influence. By getting talk show hosts to discuss mountainboarding either from an experience they had or set up, we can increase the buzz around mountainboarding rapidly. This will also help persuade the audience to embrace mountainboarding and change its imagery.
- **Get features in main newspapers and influential magazines.** Features and columns in the print media can be very important for promoting mountainboarding as a fun activity that is safe and mainstream. By having writers and reporters for influential newspapers and magazines, the topic of mountainboarding can resonate for months in the audience's minds.

Tactics:

- **Create a website with message board.** The website will be a "just-for-girls" one dedicated to female alternative sports athletes, and college female interests such as clothes shopping, dorm shopping, and music. It will be designed by current female mountainboarders and will have links for mountainboarding gear and mountainboarding news, as well as contain a message board for people to post any questions or information, particularly about mountainboarding. This site will make a connection between mountainboarding and other activities as well as get the target audience involved in formulating an opinion and learning more about the industry and events. It can be the main reference source for the media to use to obtain facts and figures on women's mountainboarding.
- **Show different "boarders" mountainboard on terrain in different college cities.** Have local skateboarding, surfing, and snowboarding legends compete against each other by mountainboarding on local terrain in the college cities, Boston, New York, and Los Angeles. This contest, dubbed "legend of the sea vs. legend of the mountain on legendary land," will take place on the hilly terrains of Boston Common and Central Park, and in a skating park in Los Angeles. It will

take place simultaneously on the same day and will also include a campaign kick-off celebration featuring a free mountainboard giveaway to ten random participants and banners all over the place with the mountainboarding website on it and postcard sized cards with the upcoming campaign events and general mountainboarding events. Local, college, and national newspapers and television stations will be notified and sent a press release in advance about this event. The main purpose of having this event first is to attract attention and increase awareness among a group of people who are already more likely to be interested in trying it out (as the innovators) and to rely on the media to spread this information about mountainboarding.

- **Visit seven college campuses throughout the year, lead by current star female mountainboarders.** Colleges include UCLA, Northwestern, UMASS-Boston, Wellesley, NYU, University of Maryland-College Park, and Oberlin. The tour will include a computer-generated “design-your-own-board” event, board fitting event, mock terrain course to test out, question and answer session with female mountainboarders, and discussion with managers of local resorts in surrounding areas about what their resorts offer mountainboarders. The finale of each event will be a concert by a favorite campus band. This event will be promoted to the media through a press release in advance. This tactic will help increase awareness of mountainboarding, its accessibility, safety-tips and can include coverage by campus newspapers and local newspapers.

## 5. Target Media:

### Television

#### MTV –

- MTV is consistently rated the top basic cable network with a reach of 387 million households worldwide. The median age of its audience is 21. Programming includes “everything from fashion, lifestyle and sports, to attitude, politics and creativity, and of course music” (MTV mediakit). With such characteristics and connection to our target audience, it is hard to ignore.

We can have the network profile a current college woman mountainboarder for the documentary series, *True Life*, which chronicles the “real life stories of young people.” Brian Graden, the president of Entertainment, would be the contact person for this opportunity. Getting exposure on MTV would help increase awareness about mountainboarding and can leave an impression on an audience that is usually considered to be innovators, and “represent \$250 billion in spending power.” We can meet the needs of MTV because mountainboarding is still considered a subculture and a topic that can attract the interest of its 12-34 year old market.

#### Boston Local ABC –

- ABC currently ranks highest in having a female audience. Its shows such as “Desperate Housewives,” “Grey’s Anatomy” and “Alias” all highly appeal to women. When we have our “Legend of the Sea vs. Legend of the Mountain” event at Boston Common we can contact the local ABC station news reporter, Amalia Barreda, to cover this story. This is something that relates to the students in the Boston area, would catch tourists in the area off guard, and be of interest to the local audience that watches ABC. In return our event and mountainboarding will have reached a wide local audience that presumably would have a high amount of the target audience tuned in.
- Ellen DeGeneres’s talk show *Ellen* has been critically acclaimed for its first two seasons and is very popular. Ellen is smart, provocative, and entertaining and loves trying new things. She is the Host/Executive Producer of *Ellen* and as a main decision maker of who is on her show, we can invite her to our contest in Los Angeles and offer her the opportunity to try mountainboarding. She can then feature this on her popular morning show and she can provide each audience member with a mountainboard as a gift compliments of us. Ellen should find this an interesting topic to present on her show and as a comedian, this can provide her with some funny material. As an opinion leader if she gives rave reviews of mountainboarding, it should help increase awareness and familiarity with mountainboarding and increase the amount of people who try mountainboarding.

#### Magazines-

##### SG –

- *SG*, or *Surfer Girl* magazine, is a specialized magazine for “girls” who surf, snowboard, or skateboard. While it only has a paid circulation of 55,000, it has a reach ten times greater and has an audience that is 98% female with the average age being 17. *SG* offers articles on swimwear, surfing, snowboarding, skateboarding and has themed issues for the different seasons. Its stated mission is “to be the leading resource for girls passionately living the action-sports lifestyle.” *SG* is the source for us to go to start making mountainboarding more mainstream and to directly target an audience that would be inclined to learn more. We can contact the Associate Publisher, Alex Ota, to include an article about mountainboarding as an alternative to snowboarding and surfing during the late spring months in the Spring issue of *SG* which hits stores in the beginning of March.

##### Jane –

- *Jane* is a hip fashion magazine with 36% of the audience being 18-24 years old and 87% female. It has a paid circulation of 733,035 and is an alternative to the

too mainstream magazines, *YM* and *Vanity Fair*. *Jane* has such sections as Women's Interest, Pop Culture, and Fitness and Exercise. We can contact the Fitness and Exercise editor, Stephanie Trang, and send her information about the fitness benefits of mountainboarding and see if she'll do an article on it as a up and coming activity. A subject like this will provide Jane readers with interesting information and will also provide us with a way of increasing awareness and perhaps disseminating the safety information if the magazine covers this.

#### People –

- People magazine is a popular mainstream magazine that features articles on celebrities, entertainment news, and profiles of regular people, with interesting tales. It has a circulation of 3,799,640, including 68% female, and 15% being in the 18-24 range. We can contact its Features Senior Writer, Joanna Powell, to let her know about mountainboarding's appeal to different people, and especially the impact it has had on a one of the leading female mountainboarders. This story will provide the audience with interesting information about an alternative sport, and will allow us to increase awareness on a large-scale.

#### Newspapers-

##### New York Times –

- Out of 6.1 million full-time undergraduate students, The New York Times “reaches one/4 full time undergraduates enrolled in four-year colleges and universities.” The average age being 20.4 years. It has a comprehensive Travel section that includes articles based on anything from politics and places to different journeys. Ben Hewitt, a travel columnist would be a good contact because he can cover the events at the US mountainboarding championships through the perspective of the resorts offerings. He can provide his audience with interesting information about a travel destination while providing mountainboarding with some exposure as a reason for travel and an additional activity for families or anyone to try out.

##### The Boston Globe –

- The Boston Globe is the newspaper for one of the largest college towns in the United States. According to it's mediakit, “there are nearly 681,000 college or graduate students in the Boston market,” contributing to Massachusetts ranking “number one in concentration of Colleges and Universities.” It has a daily readership of “1.3 million.” In order to generate publicity for our college town tour and “legend of the sea vs. legend of the mountain on legendary land” contest, we can contact metro reporter, Stephanie Ebbert to cover the local event. This will provide the *Globe's* college audience with news regarding something related to

campuses as well as informing the audience as to why Boston Common was used for the event. This will provide us with increasing awareness, as well as allowing people to try mountainboarding out.

USAToday –

- USAToday reaches 15% of students (New York Times Mediakit) and has an overall reach of 2,309,853 readers. According to MRI research for USAToday, 48 percent (with an index of 152) of the audience will attend any sports event, while 79 percent (with an index of 120) will watch any sports events on TV. 34 percent of the audience is female. We can contact Gene Sloan, a sports columnist who has covered snowboarding's "coming of age," and let him know about mountainboarding and it's new campaign to get women involved. As a writer of such topics, an article by him on this issue can create awareness as well as provide an opinion, which can then be widely spread about mountainboarding.

## **6. Pitch Letter:**

November 9, 2005

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704 Commonwealth Avenue  
Boston, MA 02215

Amalia Barreda  
WCVB-TV  
5 TV Place  
Needham, Massachusetts  
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Dear Amalia:

What looks like a “skateboard on steroids”? It’s a mountainboard, of course. A mountainboard is like a skateboard with suspension and air-filled tires and is used for the increasingly popular sport, mountainboarding. A sport, that is about to hit Boston Common and Bostonians in a real way.

On Wednesday, November 16, the mountainboarding industry will enter the mainstream with a kick-off celebration for its yearlong nationwide plan in Boston Common. The event, “Legend of the Sea vs. Legend of the Mountain on legendary land,” begins at noon and will feature some local snowboarding and skateboarding greats compete against each other mountainboarding on the Boston Common terrain. The campaign, aimed at college-age women, is open to everyone and will feature a simultaneous video cast of the same event also taking place in Central Park in New York City and ASA Mobile Skate Park in Los Angeles, California.

It is known that the Boston Channel (ABC affiliate) targets a female audience and is a leader in primetime programming. This event will surely have people wondering more about what mountainboarding is doing in a city and coverage will draw a local audience, college audience, and sports enthusiast audience.

For more information, please feel free to contact me at 914-844-3908 or check out our website at [www.mountainboardinggirl.com](http://www.mountainboardinggirl.com). I look forward to discussing this with you.

Thank you.

Lisa Damast  
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Quigley PR

## 7. Evaluation:

The most important question to consider when evaluating the publicity plan, is how did it help the organization achieve it's objectives?

To find that out it is necessary to ask such questions as:

“Was the activity or program adequately planned?  
Did the recipients of the message understand it?  
How could the program strategy have been more effective?  
Were all primary and secondary audiences reached?  
Was the desired organizational objective achieved?  
What unforeseen circumstances affected the success of the program or activity?  
Did the program or activity fall within the budget set for it?  
What steps can be taken to improve the success of similar future activities?”  
(Wilcox 195).

We can answer these questions by using such methods as “computerized news clip analysis, survey sampling, quasi-experimental designs in which the audience is divided into groups that see different aspects of a pr campaign, and attempts to correlate efforts directly with sales.”

We should consider the “measurement of audience awareness, comprehension, and retention of the message and the measurement of changes in attitudes, opinions and behavior.”

For our campaign in specific we can track our total amount of media placements, hits on our website, and benchmarking. We can also trace how we did publicity wise by measuring audience attendance at our events (Wilcox 197). It is also essential for us “to determine whether the audience actually became aware of the message and understood it.”

We can measure audience awareness and attitudes at events by providing surveys, We can measure the “audience attitudes and opinions before, during, and after” the publicity campaign. This will also provide us with graphs that show “percentage difference in attitudes and opinions as result of increased information and publicity” (Wilcox 203).

We can also use the surveys and focus groups to see if we had met our objectives. We can have an evaluation sheet at the end of the meetings “with a 1-5 scale or poor to excellent” to get feedback.

*Works Cited*

Wilcox, Dennis L. and Glen Cameron. Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics. Boston: Pearson, 2006.

Center, Allen H. and Patrick Jackson. Public Relations Practices: Managerial Case Studies and Problems. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003.

MTV

SG

USAToday

Boston Globe

NYTimes

Jane

People

SRDS

Bacon's