

TRU News and Views

Symposium on Quality Ecotourism

TRU, in conjunction with the CRC for Sustainable Tourism, is co-hosting a one-day symposium at Monash University's City Campus on **9 December 2005**, to facilitate discussion and debate on a range of topics important to quality ecotourism. The symposium, directed at both industry and researchers, will include panel discussions and a practical workshop and cover issues such as defining quality ecotourism, examples of quality ecotourism worldwide and quality assurance strategies. There will be no charge for this event. Many of the speakers are members of the Board of the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) and include:

Martha Honey, Executive Director of TIES and the Center for Ecotourism and Sustainable Development (a joint project of the Institute for Policy Studies and Stanford University). Martha has written and spoken widely on ecotourism as a tool for development and conservation.

Alice Crabtree, who developed the EcoGuide Certification Program and is an expert in tour guiding standards and best practice. Recent work includes setting standards for green hotels in Vietnam, encouraging ecotourism development in remote areas of China and continuing support of guide networks in Australia.

Andrew Fairley, Ecotourism Australia and Director, Turtle Island (exclusive eco-resort). Andrew is a well-known entrepreneur in sustainable tourism development.

Karen Lewis, who has been involved with remodelling designs and implementations, ecolodges in developing countries. Karen helped design, build and develop Lapa Rios, a sustainable ecolodge in Costa Rica.

For further information, see the TRU Website (<http://www.buseco.monash.edu.au/units/tru/conferences.php>) or contact Jennifer Laing, by email: Jennifer.laing@buseco.monash.edu.au

Destination Image and Lord of the Rings

The importance of destination image or how potential markets perceive a destination can have immense consequences for tourism now and into the future. The recent emphasis placed on the movie trilogy *Lord of the Rings* by Tourism New Zealand has demonstrated ways in which tourism can utilise movies to create these images, and how important



these fictional forms of media are in creating perceptions of places. Glen Croy, a member of TRU, recently visited the University of Otago's Department of Tourism to continue research on how movies change people's perception of place. In prior research, Glen identified the important attributes of place by which people decide between potential tourism destinations. Glen argues that movies change people's perceptions of these attributes in a place and further notes that if this change in perception can be identified early enough then destination managers can enact strategies to effectively maximise the positive influence of a film on the destination.

Indications so far are that movies that tell a story that can be personalised to viewers' lives have the highest potential to influence a person's perception of a place and their potential to visit that place. Glen also notes that movies and other fictional media are only components of the building of a destination image. He believes that generally people will require a familiar and complex perception of a destination made up from a multitude of sources for it to be a basis for travel decisions. Nonetheless, fictional media, ironically, may provide some very credible images of places that can form a large part of this persuasive destination image.

Glen Croy can be contacted by email: glen.croy@buseco.monash.edu.au

Tourism Research Unit (TRU) Seminar Update

Another very successful Tourism Research Unit (TRU) Seminar was held on Friday 10 June 2005 at the Berwick campus. Six papers on a variety of tourism related research projects 'in progress' were presented by researchers from the Berwick and Clayton campuses of Monash University and Charles Sturt University. Twenty-eight people attended the day, including TRU members, students, other researchers and industry partners. Presentations lasted no more than twenty minutes each to allow plenty of time for questions and discussion, which gave researchers valuable feedback on their projects.

The next TRU Seminar will be held on **25 October 2005**. The program features Professor Geoffrey Crouch speaking on 'Tourism and the Competition for Discretionary Expenditure'.

To be notified of future TRU events and seminars, please contact Annita Allman on 03 9904 7224 or email enquiries.TRU@buseco.monash.edu.au.

Upcoming Events

25 October 2005

TRU Seminar 10.30 am – 3.20 pm
Monash University, Berwick Campus
Contact Jennifer Laing – (03) 9904 7048

28 November – 2 December 2005

Ecotourism Australia National Conference
'Ecotourism: Creating Unforgettable Natural Experiences'
Hobart, Tasmania
Contact Ecotourism Australia
conference@ecotourism.org.au

9 December 2005

Seminar/Symposium on Quality Ecotourism
Monash University, City Campus
Co-Hosted by TRU and the CRC for Sustainable Tourism
Contact Jennifer Laing – (03) 9904 7048

6-9 February 2006

CAUTHE (Council for Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Education) 2006 Annual Conference
Sofitel Hotel, Melbourne
<http://www.cauthe2006.com.au/>

Encouraging Alternative Transport in National Parks

As visitor and vehicle numbers continue to grow in Australian national parks, authorities are faced with the challenge of balancing the objective of environmental protection with that of visitor access. In response, park managers at Cradle Mountain in Tasmania and the Grampians in Victoria have introduced voluntary shuttle bus services as a means of providing visitors with an alternative mode of transport within the parks, while at the same time relieving the pressures on the existing road, car parking and environmental resources. Given that these services are voluntary, park authorities are interested in finding ways of persuading more visitors to use the shuttle buses instead of having to resort to more restrictive measures such as road closures.

Research being conducted by TRU member Jim Curtis and funded by the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre, is examining the use of theoretical frameworks to develop and evaluate a persuasive communication intervention, designed to influence visitors' travel mode choice in national parks. With the support of Parks Victoria and the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service, Jim has been collecting data to identify the underlying cognitive determinants that influence visitors' decisions regarding the use of the shuttle bus services. By identifying the factors that distinguish users from non-users, Jim is aiming to develop a theoretically-based communication intervention for park authorities that seeks to persuade a car-loving public to forego their vehicles and embrace these alternative transport modes when visiting national parks.

Jim Curtis can be contacted via email: James.Curtis@buseco.monash.edu.au

Interpretation Evaluation Tool Kit Launched

The *Interpretation Evaluation Tool Kit* was formally launched at the national conference of the Interpretation Australia Association on Monday 3 October in Strahan, Tasmania. This Tool Kit has practical value for organisations and businesses whose missions depend on the quality of the interpretation they deliver to visitors. Developed by TRU members Sam Ham and Betty Weiler, the kit measures eleven indicators of the effectiveness of interpretation primarily through a short questionnaire completed by visitors in less than five minutes.

The Tool Kit was developed with the assistance of the STCRC and industry contributors, particularly Tourism Tasmania, Sovereign Hill Museums Association and Port Arthur Historic Site.

The authors anticipate a quick take-up by industry and look forward to monitoring its use. The Tool Kit can be purchased online from the Sustainable Tourism CRC (STCRC) - <http://www.crctourism.com.au/> [Source: October STCRC newsletter]

Media Mentions

Jeff Jarvis, Lecturer at the National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, spoke to ABC regional NSW in June on the impact of working holiday makers to regional tourism in NSW.

Liam Smith's article "Profound Wildlife Experiences", based on his recently completed MPhil thesis, was featured in the Autumn 2005 issue of the Interpretation Australia Association Newsletter.

Glen Croy's research into tourism and the media has recently been mentioned in "The Star" and Otago Daily Times (New Zealand).

Accolades

Since the publication of our last newsletter in April, TRU members have had a number of successes ... here are a few we'd like to share with you:

Warwick Frost

Congratulations to Dr Warwick Frost on his promotion to Senior Lecturer and we look forward to even bigger and better things from Warwick in the coming years!

Varintra Sirisuthikul

Well done Varintra Sirisuthikul, for completion of her confirmation of candidature for her DBA. Varintra's research project is entitled "An Examination of Congruency between Brand Identity and Brand Image in Destination Branding" and she is now preparing her application for Ethics Approval and designing her field work for collecting data from Tourism Authority of Thailand staff and prospective tourists to Thailand. Varintra is co-supervised by Dr Mike Reid and Prof Betty Weiler.

Kirsty Tumes

Kirsty Tumes, a Monash Department of Management scholarship holder, has secured cash and in-kind support from Parks Victoria for her PhD research "Understanding and Managing Recreation Conflict in Protected Areas in Victoria". Her project will investigate conflict in two or three urban fringe parks, particularly with respect to the use of tracks and trails by different types of users.

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