

## Improving Experiences of Chinese Tourists Visiting Victoria Australia

Travel from China has increased more than 40 per cent over the past three years and is expected to grow a further 20 per cent in the next 12 months and to be Australia's fourth largest tourist market within a decade. It is a market that is challenging and unusual in that these are tourists from a developing country visiting a developed destination, and they have expectations that differ from the more experienced travellers Australia is accustomed to servicing.

In partnership with Tourism Victoria and Sovereign Hill Museums Association and with STCRC network funding, TRU Director Professor Betty Weiler and bilingual postdoctoral researcher Dr Xin (Lynn) Yu conducted research which identified several ways that tour programs in Victoria could be more satisfying to Chinese visitors. More than 400 Chinese tourists were surveyed about their visit to Victoria to determine

how they felt about their experiences and how they could have been improved.

The research also observed a number of tours and conducted in-depth interviews with departing tourists at Melbourne's international departure lounge. Most visitors were generally satisfied with their visit to Australia, but a number of problem areas were identified and passed on to Tourism Victoria and tourism operators, which has provided a solid base from which to make changes to both tour management and the marketing of experiences in Victoria.

The findings of this research were presented by Betty and Lynn to a group of key stakeholders on 13 December, including tourism operators and all levels of government, with representatives present from Tourism Australia (Sydney), Tourism Victoria, Dept of Industry Tourism and Resources, Dept of Immigration (Canberra) and Consumer Affairs.



## TRU News and Views

### International Tourism and Media Conference

Researchers have been invited to submit extended abstracts on the relationship between tourism and the media, including film-induced tourism, for consideration for the second International Tourism and Media (ITAM) conference, to be held at Monash University on 28 November – 1 December 2006.

The aim of the conference, hosted by TRU in association with La Trobe University and the University of Otago, is to move knowledge forward through presentation and discussion that will lead to further research. Sessions will be of sufficient length to facilitate collegial communication, interaction and collaboration, with opportunities for group and individual discussion and debate.

Key dates are listed below:

- Extended 1,000 word abstract submitted by 31st May
- Notice of acceptance of abstracts by 31st July
- End of early bird rate – 31st August
- Paper submission by 30th September
- Conference registration payment for inclusion in proceedings by 31st October

For further information, see [www.buseco.monash.edu.au/units/tru/conferences.php](http://www.buseco.monash.edu.au/units/tru/conferences.php)

## Upcoming Events

**31 May 2006**

### **Berwick Business and Economics Awards Night**

Monash University,  
Berwick campus

TRU Sponsors the award for the Best Graduating Student with a Tourism Major in the BBusCom

Contact: Jo Prezioso  
(03) 9905 7098

jo.prezioso@buseco.monash.edu.au

**8 June 2006**

### **TRU Seminar**

Monash University,  
Berwick campus

9.30 am – 3 pm

Contact: Jennifer Laing  
(03) 9904 7048

jennifer.laing@buseco.monash.edu.au

**13 June 2006**

### **TRU Annual General Meeting**

Monash University,  
Berwick campus

TRU Members only

Contact: Annita Allman  
(03) 9904 7224

annita.allman@buseco.monash.edu.au

**28 November –  
1 December 2006**

### **International Tourism and Media Conference**

Monash University

Contact: Glen Croy or  
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## Fostering Sustainable Behaviour through Communication with Zoo Visitors

Two members of the Tourism Research Unit Dr Sue Broad and PhD candidate Liam Smith, have completed a two year project in partnership with Zoos Victoria to examine the role that their three properties (Melbourne Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary and Werribee Open Range Zoo) play in fostering sustainable behaviour of visitors through environmental interpretation.

The project delivered several outcomes – an inventory and report on the conservation outcomes that Zoos Victoria aims to achieve with its visitor services/interpretation, a series of reports evaluating an interpretation experience at each of the three properties, and a documentation of a methodology they can use for on-going evaluation of their visitor services product.

Through presentations at several industry conferences (one international, two run by The Australasian Regional Association of



Zoological Parks and Aquaria (ARAZPA) and one on wildlife tourism), this project also helped raise the profile of Zoos Victoria and position them as a leader in the area of zoo interpretation.

Follow-up projects include the development of a training-of-trainers package, and support for Liam's PhD project, involving an examination of the relationships between emotion, visitor attitudes and behavioural intention in the context of interaction with wildlife in a zoo setting.

TRU has also committed to on-going mentoring of zoo staff, to help them achieve their goal of becoming an international leader in interpretation practice and research.

## Visit by Professor Michael Hall

World renowned tourism author and scholar, Professor C. Michael Hall from the Department of Tourism, University of Otago was a guest of TRU recently.

Whilst visiting Monash University's Berwick campus on Wednesday 13 April, Professor Hall spoke with TRU members

about 'Building a Research Centre,' including the Research Quality Framework (RQF), strategies TRU might implement and lessons learnt from New Zealand.

Possible linkages between research being undertaken at Otago and Monash were discussed.

The following day, Professor Hall, together with panel members A/Professor Sue Beeton and Professor Betty Weiler, took part in a seminar held at the Monash City campus, co-hosted by TRU, La Trobe University and CAUTHE. This seminar covered issues such as 'hot' research topics, making academic research 'industry relevant' and publishing strategies for early and mid-career researchers.

TRU will be hosting other visiting academics in the coming months, to strengthen networks with the tourism research community.



## Tourism Research Unit Seminar

TRU will be hosting the fifth in its seminar series at Monash University's Berwick campus on Thursday 8 June 2006, which will feature six presentations of research 'in progress,' conducted by TRU members.

Topics include:

- emotional experiences in zoos: the key to influencing visitor behaviour
- seasonality in the tourism industry
- air travel and sustainable tourism yield
- brand identity in rural tourism destinations: the case of North East Victoria, Australia
- exploring the nature and extent of recreation conflict

- victims, hooligans and cash cows: representations of international backpackers in the Australian media over time

The format of the seminar allows time for questions and discussion after each presentation, providing valuable feedback for researchers, and showcasing the range and depth of research activity undertaken by TRU.

Those wishing to attend this seminar or to be placed on the mailing list for future TRU events should contact Jennifer Laing on email [jennifer.laing@buseco.monash.edu.au](mailto:jennifer.laing@buseco.monash.edu.au)

## Update on Symposium on 'Quality Ecotourism Experiences'

In December, TRU hosted a one-day symposium on 'Quality Ecotourism Experiences' at the Monash University Conference Centre in Melbourne's CBD. Run in conjunction with the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) and co-sponsored by the Sustainable Tourism CRC, the aim of the event was to present real-world examples and case studies and facilitate discussion of key issues pertinent to this important sector of the tourism industry.

The symposium took advantage of the Australian presence of a number of key international ecotourism experts on the TIES Board to provide participants with a rare opportunity to hear global as well as national perspectives on "quality."

### Presenters were:

**Martha Honey**  
Executive Director, TIES;

**Alice Crabtree**  
TIES Asia-Pacific;

**Richard Denman**  
The Tourism Company, U.K.;

**Cathy Parsons**  
Green Globe;

**Carlos Teuffer**  
NGVenvironmental Consulting;

**Andrew Fairley**  
Turtle Island Resort;

**Chandra de Silva**  
Ranweli Village Eco-resort;

**Karen Lewis**  
Lapa Rios Ecodge.

A variety of topical issues involving quality ecotourism were discussed, such as certification and international standards, as well as three fascinating case studies – Turtle Island in Fiji, Ranweli Village in Sri Lanka, and in Costa Rica.

Approximately 70 people attended, and took advantage of the opportunity to listen to presentations, ask questions, engage in some lively discussions and network at this highly successful event.

Copies of powerpoint presentations and abstracts provided are available for download from the TRU website: [www.buseco.monash.edu.au/units/tru/conferences/9dec2005/9dec05.php](http://www.buseco.monash.edu.au/units/tru/conferences/9dec2005/9dec05.php)

## TRU Members Participate in Workshop on Attitude Scale Construction

On 11 May, twelve members of TRU were fortunate enough to undertake a half-day workshop on psychometric measurement, led by Lecturer Dr Ross Donohue and Research Fellow Brian Cooper of the Department of Management, Monash University.

Workshop participants were immersed in the concepts and procedures required to construct, refine, and validate multi-item scales for measuring attitude and other similar types of concepts. Such scales are used in many TRU research projects, investigating phenomena such as problem behaviours in protected areas and assessing the influence of communication and interpretive programs.

In addition to gaining a sound introduction to the theory and practice of scale construction, the workshop equipped participants with knowledge and skills to critique published scales in tourism and related fields.

Finally, the workshop leaders directed us to a number of useful print and electronic sources where researchers can access psychometric instruments and scales that have been thoroughly tested and validated. The outcomes of this research will prove invaluable for all of us engaged in research about constructs such as beliefs, perceptions, values, attitudes, behavioural intentions and behaviours, and generally improve our appreciation for and our ability to critically evaluate scales that measure these complex phenomena.

## Accolades

TRU members have been extraordinarily successful in the past several months in securing funds from the Cooperative Research Centre in Sustainable Tourism (STCRC) for undertaking a range of projects that vary from 1 to 2 years in length. Congratulations go to:

- **Dr Mike Reid** (Project Coordinator) and Glen Croy on “Marketing of Protected Areas as a Tool to Influence Visitors’ Pre-Visit Decisions,” in association with Associate Professor Stephen Wearing from UTS.
- **Dr Warwick Frost** (Project Coordinator) and Dr Victoria Peel on “Identifying the Needs of Local Heritage Communities,” together with Dr David Wood and Dr Michael Hughes of Curtin University.
- **Dr Victoria Peel** (Project Coordinator) and Dr Warwick Frost on “Successful and Unsuccessful Characteristics of Cultural Heritage Tourism Operations,” together with Dr Celmara Pocock, University of Tasmania, Professor Jack Carlson and Dr Michael Hughes, Curtin University.
- **Dr Victoria Peel** and **Dr David Dunstan** (Project Coordinator) in “Identifying Cultural Landscapes,” together with Professor Jock Collins and Dr Ruth Skilbeck, University of Technology Sydney, and Dr Tracey Firth, University of New South Wales.
- **Dr Sharron Pfueller** (Project Coordinator) on “Community Values for the Murray River Reserves,” together with Xuan Zhu, Monash University, Paul Whitelaw, Victoria University and Caroline Winter, La Trobe University.
- **Dr Christine Lee** (Project Coordinator) on “Environmental Sustainability Practices of Victorian Tourism Enterprises,” together with Sue Beeton, La Trobe University and Sue Bergin-Seers, Victoria University.
- **Dr Christine Lee** (Project Coordinator) on “Seasonality,” together with A/Prof Adela McMurray, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Dr Graeme Galloway, La Trobe University, Sue Bergin-Seers and A/Prof Barry O’Mahony, both of Victoria University.

All of these projects involve industry partners and will produce publications as well as practical outcomes for tourism practice.

Varintra Sirisuthikul was the successful recipient of a scholarship to attend and present at the Summer School workshop during Asia Pacific Week at the National Thai Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra in late January. Varintra presented an overview of her DBA research – “An Examination of Congruency between Destination Brand Identity and Image.”

Three new PhD candidates and members of TRU have commenced their candidature. They are Monash University honours graduate Brent Moyle, who has won a full STCRC scholarship to undertake a PhD relating to modelling the impacts of natural area tourism and recreation on communities; Leah Purvis from the University of La Trobe (Bendigo) who has been awarded an APA plus an STCRC top-up scholarship to look at strategic planning for community engagement in cultural heritage tourism and Michael McNamara, Lecturer in Business Law and Taxation, who is examining how to manage and cherish nature ‘risk’ in recreation, with a focus on indigenous enterprises.

TRU members Glen Croy and Mike Reid have each won a Dean’s Teaching Award for Excellence in 2005. This is a Faculty of Business and Economics award scheme which commenced in 2004. This year there are approximately 381 equivalent full-time teaching staff in the Faculty, with some 30 individuals applying for teaching awards and only nine winners - well done to Glen and Mike.



Glen Croy outside Berwick campus.



Mike Reid receiving his award in December.

### Contact details

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