Initiatives for the Development of Tourism in Tropical Australia

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Executive Summary

- The present report sources internationally and nationally published ideas and concepts from the tourism academic literature concerning the future of tourism. The report employs these ideas for consideration in building tourism in Australia's tropics

- Tropical Australia, defined as the area north of the Tropic of Capricorn, has multiple tourism resources including three World Heritage areas, four national landscapes, three significant touring routes and multi-faceted cultural capacities, including a strong Indigenous presence

- Many tourism reports including the *Jackson Report* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) and the draft CSIRO document *The Future of Tourism in Queensland* (Hajkowicz, Cook, & Boughen, 2013) describe national pathways for the future of tourism. Other key studies including the document *The Coalition's 2030 Vision for developing Northern Australia* (Liberal National Party, 2013) and *Stocktake of Regional Research: 50 pieces of influential regional research* (Regional Australia Institute, 2012) clearly envisage an expanding future for northern Australia and offer targets for tourism (two million international tourists annually by 2030). These studies, and many others, do not specifically focus on the regional initiatives for delivering this desired future.

- Additionally, even when new directions have been offered, the direct contribution of the national and northern academic voices to these conversations has been limited

- The report is structured around a five part model to help develop new initiatives. It considers the roles of intelligence, information computer technology, investment, and industry know-how in contributing to future oriented action

- Adopting a critical and applied appraisal of the international and national base of fundamental academic research, the report identifies 10 desirable initiatives and highlights action and policy directions for these themes

  1. *Developing tourism for community well-being*
     Proposes a new wider set of measures for evaluating tourism's contribution to community well-being
     Offers examples of topics to be measured

  2. *Improving cross-industry opportunities*
     Suggests that tourism and other important northern sectors - agriculture, mining, education and the military - could benefit from creating more tourism linked opportunities
     Recommends discussions to facilitate generic and business tourism linking these sectors

  3. *Reinforcing the well managed natural brand*
     Argues for the further emphasis in marketing on the natural brand for tropical Australia but recommends an audit and visible demonstration of sustainable practices at sites to reinforce the brand
     An integrative and wide ranging review of tourists' safety and well-being in tropical environments is also suggested

  4. *Incorporating the slow tourism approach*
     The value of linking to international market directions in slow tourism is noted as an underused but additional marketing emphasis

  5. *Boosting Indigenous opportunities*
     Recommends scholarship support for advanced education for Indigenous Australians for professional futures and empowerment in tourism

6. *Supporting the domestic backbone*
Argues for systematic soft and hard infrastructure development to support drive tourism
Recommends a uniform approach to tourism discounts for local regional visitors
Supports the importance of national and international sporting events being located in the region to boost local and out of region tourists

7. *Consolidating the international strategies*
Recommends a focus on the young Chinese independent market
Proposes using local voices and endogenous marketing to assure the authenticity of the experience appeal

8. *Integrating quality markers*
Proposes exploring the integration and alignment between Australia's accreditation and recommendation systems with international approaches

9. *Attending to research investment*
Notes the funding drought for fundamental and applied research in tourism at the northern/tropical scale while supporting the efforts of Tourism Research Australia for its particular role
Proposes explicit restatement in Australian Research Council grant schemes and T-QUAL grant scheme for research in tourism as a nationally significant priority for funding
Proposes greater interchange between government, industry and academic personnel in terms of visitor schemes and options similar to international practices in terms of senior business and government visitors and professors for a week

10. *Refreshing educational, career and extension structures*
Introduces a potential tourism employment classification scheme which boosts transferability between tourism, events and leisure roles.
Recommends the development of tourism extension officers, analogous to roles in other major sectors such as agriculture, to support the delivery of research and advisory information

- A community based competition for innovative public tropical infrastructure is proposed in the context of recent global initiatives for tourism.

Introduction

This paper seeks to contribute to the discussion of the future options and initiatives for tropical tourism across northern Australia. The work is conducted through the sponsorship of the Cairns Institute, James Cook University. The contribution rests firmly on the global and Australian academic tourism literature. To assist easy readability, the report avoids the dominant academic tradition of citing numerous references throughout the paper. Only key references are noted in the main body of the text. A concise reference list is attached at the end of each section.

The paper offers ten issues to consider in the planning and visioning process. These issues are framed as initiatives assisting the future of a profitable, environmentally aware, and community supported tropical tourism sector. The approach does not predict or forecast the future but rather outlines some issues judged to be desirable for developing tropical tourism activity. A community competition to suggest examples of new public infrastructure as signals for tourism innovation in the tropics is also proposed.

The paper initially considers the fundamental forces which drive innovation in Australian tourism at this point in time. The identified forces are Intelligence, Industry capabilities, Information and computer technologies, and Investment. This classification rests on a 10 year academic review of strategic issues in the Australian tourism industry (Ruhanen, Mclennan, & Moyle, 2013) and an understanding of policy and planning processes for destinations (Edgell & Swanson, 2013). Building on the interplay of these forces, the paper identifies ten initiatives for a "brighter future for life in the tropics". This position is consistent with the strategic intent of James Cook University and the Cairns Institute.

In addition to considering the academic sources, a personal familiarity with current industry and government issues was developed by meeting a range of key tourism government and business personnel. The author gratefully acknowledges the time of the individuals and organisations involved in these meetings. They are listed in Appendix 1. There is no implication that the inclusion of any individual or organisation in this listing in any way endorses the points made in this paper. Appendix 2 provides introductory notes for those less familiar with the tropics and the role of tourism across this part of northern Australia.

An Organising Framework

In the discussions undertaken to construct this document there was a recurring theme of the need for innovation and new initiatives including novel products and experiences in tropical Australia. This theme was taken as the key issue for the paper but any innovation has to fit within a developmental vision embracing the multiple goals of profitability, community acceptance and environmental responsibility. The Coalition's (now the elected Government's) 2030 vision for developing Northern

Australia written in June 2013 argues for a 2030 goal of two million international visitors annually (Liberal National Party, 2013). Ways to develop tourism in northern Australia which might assist in reaching this kind of goal are core to the present paper.

There are demanding goals for new developments which include the all-important ability to have new projects funded. Additionally, a clear perspective was expressed in many meetings that providing fresh experiences rather than competing with existing offerings was required. Further, the need to build tourism in ways seen by the community as desirable was emphasised. All of these points are also frequently reported in the academic tourism literature (Cohen, 2011; Edgell & Swanson, 2013; Morrison, 2013).

An analysis of the forces shaping innovation can be provided in the tropical tourism context by classifying the defining forces into the following themes; Intelligence, Industry capabilities, Information and computer technologies, and Investment. These themes aggregate the list of issues produced in such documents as the 2013 CSIRO report on *The Future of Tourism in Queensland* (Hajkowicz, et al., 2013). The defining forces are succinctly defined as follows:

Intelligence: the sum of the available assessment of market and supply issues led by Tourism Research Australia but enhanced by consulting and academic analyses. Changes and the trajectory of new markets and their interests define this component and shape the opportunities for innovation.

Industry capabilities: the level of skills and human resources currently and likely to be available in the future to meet the predicted demand. This topic includes the issue of education and training and updating the knowledge base of personnel in different parts of the sector. The quality of experience or product on offer to the market is subsumed within this category.

Information and computer technologies: digital capacity represents a dynamic tool in tourism in all phases: pre-trip marketing, onsite management and post-trip reporting. Technology management of sites and businesses for profitability and sustainability are opportunities for managers and owners at varied scales.

Investment: Repeated or return investment and new entrants into the tourism sector are required to compete with the different kinds of tourism in other competitive destinations.

This paper derives a number of issues from the interaction of these core forces. It then summarises academic directions relevant to these issues.
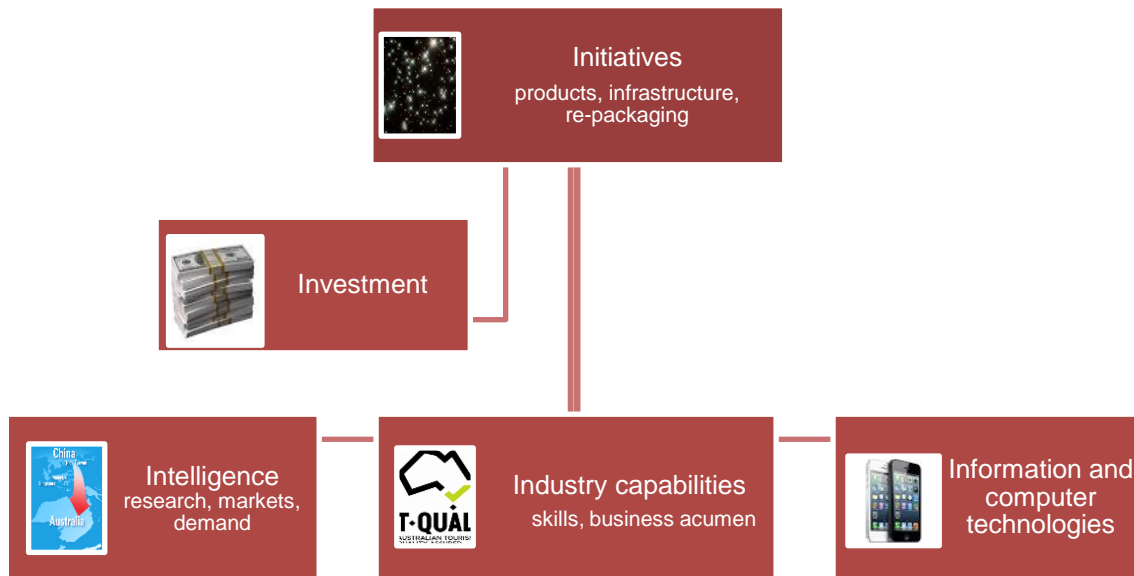
Figure 1. Forces underlying the construction of new tourism initiatives in tropical Australia

The topics to be considered in more detail as potential innovations for tropical tourism are linked to these core defining forces as follows:

- Developing tourism for community well-being
  Helps direct the kind of innovation required

- Improving cross-industry opportunities
  Expands the range of innovation options and builds industry capacity

- Reinforcing the well managed natural brand
  Extends industry capabilities, fits some major market intelligence

- Incorporating the slow tourism approach
  Augments innovation through market intelligence

- Boosting Indigenous opportunities
  Builds industry capability, offers new investment sources

- Supporting the domestic backbone
  Extends industry capabilities, employs information and computer technologies

- Consolidating the international strategies
  Fits some major market intelligence, employs information and computer technologies

- Integrating quality markers
  Extends industry capabilities

- Attending to research investment

  A focused form of investment

- Refreshing educational, career and extension structures

  Builds industry capability.

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1. Developing Tourism for Community Well-being

The national and international academic literature on the topic of community well-being offers a vision and a set of measures for studies of the future. The approach recognises the need for tourism to function successfully in a number of domains to meet the requirements of multiple stakeholders. The term 'capital' is often used in this thorough approach to characterising the well-being of communities. In this context 'capital' essentially means the level or state of the resources, skills or facilities in a number of important topic areas. The focus includes measures of human (individual), social (including administrative), cultural, natural, physical (infrastructure) and financial (including economic) capital. The scale at which the forms of capital are assessed is frequently a region, often analogous to the scale and size of tourism regions used in tropical Australia. Measures of capital can also exist for a city, town or local government area. Additionally a large tourism business such an attraction or a hotel/resort can also be considered in terms of their role in generating these varied forms of capital. All forms of capital can be seen as augmented or decreased by the type of tourism operating in a location.

The ideas underpinning community well-being emerged from a growing dissatisfaction with a simple focus on economic measures of community growth and development. Following the ideas outlined by Nobel Prize winner A. Sen, and many others, there has been a concerted attempt in academic circles and by some governments to provide these more holistic appraisals of the quality of life and well-being in a region or specific area. It can be argued that the future credibility and power of tourism as perceived in government circles is increasingly being related to more than economic performance and is beginning to envisage these kinds of capital or wide resource based approaches to community well-being. It is these issues and the specific measures to asses them which are likely to become the new Key Performance Themes and Indicators for those who manage tourism and events.

This more holistic approach to assessing the role of tourism and its influences is underpinned by the continuing evolution of the concerns with sustainability and the impacts of tourism which emerged in the 1990s. The early approaches to tourism sustainability were strongly oriented towards limiting damage to natural environments while maintaining tourism profitability. The sustainability concerns have widened to embrace more fully the social, cultural and organisational health of communities. The term the 'quadruple bottom line' has become the phraseology superseding the earlier triple bottom line approach of people, planet and profit.

A consideration of community well-being in terms of the forms of capital requires those who think about, plan and write vision statements relating to tourism to focus not just on but beyond the earlier treatment of sustainability. A specific treatment of community well-being by Morton and Edwards (2012) at the local government level in the tropics suggests setting targets for the following themes which are linked to aspects of capital:

1. Healthy, safe and inclusive communities (human capital, social capital)

2. Culturally rich and vibrant communities (cultural capital)

3. Dynamic resilient local economies (financial capital, social capital)

4. Sustainable built and natural environments (natural capital, physical capital)

5. Democratic and engaged communities (social capital).

These kinds of topics require a re-orientation in the evaluation of tourism. Rather than focusing on tourism success as measured by visitor arrival numbers, length of stay, expenditure and the minimisation of negative social and environmental effects, there can be a contemplation of the wide ranging influence of tourism. The questions become: "What is tourism's role in contributing to healthy, safe and inclusive communities?" and, "What is tourism's role in building culturally rich and vibrant communities?" and so on. This wider ambit of tourism performance can usefully draw tourism into the centre of all economic and community development discussions and remove the silo-style appraisals when tourism is seen as a stand-alone sector with its own measures, problems and outcomes.

There is a rich literature being built in academic texts and filtering into government circles to assess the performance of regions and the contribution of industries to these kinds of goals. The present document can simply direct attention to this newer way of thinking about the outcomes and consequence of tourism and direct those who assess tourism to these new goals and accompanying measures (see References). To at least sample the flavour of the approach some of the suggested measures include:

SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

Healthy safe and inclusive communities

How do tourism/tourism businesses influence amenity for young children, young adults, and seniors?

How do tourism/tourism businesses provide for people with a physical disability?

How do tourism/tourism/businesses influence or manage safety in tourism areas or activities?

Has tourism/this tourism business helped social interaction within the local community's public spaces?

How do tourism/tourism businesses create and manage health issues in their setting?

How do/does tourism/this tourism business create access to the internet?

Culturally rich and vibrant communities

How do tourism/tourism businesses provide opportunities for local citizens to effectively engage in: sport and recreation, art and cultural activities?

How do tourism/tourism businesses welcome people from different cultures?

How do tourism/tourism businesses provide opportunities for employment for people of different ethnic and social backgrounds?

How do tourism/tourism businesses and especially events energise cultural activities?

Dynamic resilient local economies

What total expenditure in the community is generated by tourists attracted by tourism/tourism businesses?

How well are tourism/tourism businesses providing a return on investment to maintain financially viable operations over time?

How do tourism/tourism businesses provide job security?

How do tourism/tourism businesses provide rates of pay commensurate with the skills and time expectations of employees?

How do tourism/tourism businesses provide training and build careers and incentives for long term employment?

Sustainable built and natural environments

How do tourism/tourism businesses protect and conserve the natural environment?

How do tourism businesses manage waste, reduce energy consumption and demonstrate good environmental practices?

How do tourism/tourism businesses affect the liveable built environment?

How do tourism businesses affect private/public transport and public crowding?

Democratic and engaged communities

How do tourism/tourism businesses provide opportunities for the community to comment on their activities?

What are the preferred tourism styles for the community considering expenditure and the influence of different tourist markets segments across the forms of capital?

How do tourism/tourism businesses contribute to the promotion and image of the region?

How do tourism/tourism businesses influence the performance of the local council and its activities?

How do tourism/tourism businesses enact corporate social responsibility in terms of sponsorship and creating community life?

What roles do tourism/individuals play in the leadership of the community?

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2. Improving Cross-industry Opportunities

Both nationally and internationally, the classification of tourism as a sector by governments is highly variable. Sometimes tourism is co-located in departments dealing with arts, culture and sport, while on other occasions it is a part of the resources sector with links to mining, forestry and agriculture. At the present time at the national level there is the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism while at the state level in Queensland the sector resides in the Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games. In the Northern Territory it is the Department of Tourism and Major Events, and in Western Australia tourism is not specifically profiled in any departmental title. Such variable classification underlines a potential for tourism to be more closely interwoven with other main economic and cultural industries.

There can be creative possibilities in recognising the diversity of opportunities when sectors are aligned in their interests of making money, building brand loyalty and providing mutual support. There is also the important potential for some tourists to see investment possibilities in a region following these sector based tours and experiences. Three kinds of linkages between tourism and other key economic and cultural sectors can be identified.

- There is the potential to jointly attract international and domestic tourists using more co-operative marketing approaches.

- There is a rich and largely untapped opportunity to create tourism experiences around the operation of other economic and cultural sectors.

- There is the potential for administrative sharing of resources and strategies for investment and efficient sector management.

In tropical and northern Australia four major sectors can be considered as offering special opportunities for closer integration with tourism using the three kinds of linkages specified. These sectors are farming/agriculture, mining, education, and public sector management for sustainability. These opportunities may all be seen as having both a leisure and business tourism component. Labels do exist for these tourism categories as follows: agritourism, heritage and industrial tourism, educational tourism, and the less well-known civic familiarisation tours. While rich possibilities can be spelled out for all these cross industry opportunities, the links with the farming/agricultural sector can serve to illustrate these kinds of multiple joint initiatives.

Agricultural sector activity can be the basis of organising general interest tours for a broad market segment or highly specific technical tours for those with special interests. There is a particular set of international opportunities here for study tours from Asian famers as well as those from India, and North and South America. The tours may mix types of agricultural and farming operations or be focused on one kind of production (beef, dairy, sugar, pineapples, sugar and so on). There are also

substantial opportunities to have informed public education and interest guided tours of these rural sector activities. In some cases the sampling of products and the purchase of souvenirs or discounted items from the production source can be incorporated in tours and day long visits. Accommodation options are also possible in the agricultural/farming sector and the existing farm tourism and rural retreat business can be expanded into both the budget market such as the provision of caravan and low cost accommodation sites through to luxury retreats. Some of these ideas were captured in the academic literature some time ago using terms such as 'sideline tourism'. The approach is reinforced by other themes mentioned in this document including slow tourism and reinforcing the natural brand of the region.

There is a lack of structured tourism opportunities in these crossover spaces. There is some existing development in the agri-tourism space. Coffee, tea, and cheese/chocolate focused sites and experiences are available. There is some museum based tourist activity for the sugar and dairy industries in northern Queensland. There are, however, limited opportunities to visit or understand mining sites or production processes. The opportunities which do exist are historical or heritage based. Similarly, there is no systematic tour or way to visit university campuses, yet arguably there is much public and special interest in the campuses at Darwin, Townsville and Cairns. Despite a well-recognised and often praised management regime, there are no technical and professional tours of the management agencies, functions and operations pertaining to the World Heritage sites and natural landscapes. Similarly there are very limited tourist experiences interpreting and explaining the defence force presence in northern Australia.

All these kinds of activities have to be created afresh on each occasion. The organisation machinery for visitor experiences, both at the broad public and professional interest levels do not exist in tropical Australia. By way of contrast the wine industry in southern Australia has a well-developed visitor profile and technical tours for professionals. Internationally, visitor centres at and tours of universities are also well-developed tourist experiences. Mine tours in Mt Isa and Broome represent two of the limited opportunities to appreciate the scale of Australia's operations in this sector. The limitations of the current product and experience offerings in this cross-over space among industry sectors is especially well confirmed by the point that no tours of the mining, agricultural and farming sector can be purchased in such pivotal regional centres as Charters Towers, Atherton, Mareeba, Ingham or Kununurra.

The initiative to build cross sector opportunities can be facilitated in multiple ways. As a start-up activity public relations and government personnel from different sectors - mining, agriculture, education, environmental management, and tourism could convene to examine opportunities for cooperation. A detailed assessment of what kinds of tourist demand exists and what kinds of opportunities could be developed represent a part of this agenda. There might be possibilities for the creation of new positions or additional job roles from these discussions. Further items on the meeting agenda for such cooperative activity could include facilitating the promotion of technical tour opportunities, planning itineraries of tour groups, and providing language and logistical support,

including attending to occupational health and safety issues. There is also a clear link to creating conferences and bidding for meetings and events associated with these tour groups.

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3. Reinforcing the Well Managed Natural Brand

The key theme of this initiative is the extension of current tropical marketing and regional presentation efforts. The substantive tourism marketing direction for the future emphasises natural features of the tropics *supported by* a high level of visible and effective management for sustainability.

The continuing pursuit of a strong emphasis on marketing the natural attributes of the tropics is consistent with three large trends repeatedly itemised in the international academic tourism literature. Globally and especially in the key markets of interest to Australia's tropics, urbanisation is a key trend. Few international tourists from European and Asian and North American markets come from low population towns and villages and most are accustomed to an urban way of life. Even for the Australian domestic market the population densities in tropical Australian cities and towns are seen as low. In this context the smaller communities and natural features of the tropics represent contrasting social, visual and experiential landscapes. These kinds of contrasts represent opportunities for memorable natural environment engagement in the experience economy.

Secondly, travel is increasingly seen as a required component of contemporary life. Repeat international visitors to Australia have outnumbered first time visitors since 1998. Further travel in Australia throughout the tropics and its environments and societies thus represents the second or third visit opportunity for many international tourists. Australian travellers, too, are often repeat visitors, especially in the senior recreational vehicle market, and promoting the diversity of tropical destinations is very relevant to this domestic market base.

The third global trend reflected in much writing about tourism demand issues is a mounting awareness of green or sustainability issues. Characterised as a third force influencing many consumer choices (price and quality take precedence), a desire to visit environmentally special and well managed settings supports a continuing emphasis on a marketing approach built on natural attributes.

A strong tourism marketing emphasis on stressing the environmental attributes of the tropics with three world heritage areas and four national landscapes is hardly surprising. There is, however, a second key component of this continuing activity which requires the joint efforts of local councils, and managers of natural settings as well as tourism businesses. Visiting special natural environments and staying in such locations acts as a sensitisation force and creates visitor awareness, even a picayune critical focus, on how the environment is being managed in day to day operational ways. The natural environment focus in marketing the tropics represents what Esty and Winston (2009) label a "high exposure approach". Promoting the natural features of tropical Australia is at risk if the thorough support of this continuing emphasis is undermined by discrepancies tourists can see in their day to day travels. There is of course, much that tourists cannot see and immediately understand, and the call for the natural theme to be supported by sound practices is not intended to apply only to a surface gloss of visible actions.

A tourism-led, tropical environmental management audit which is nationally sanctioned and supported should be conducted on a council by council basis. Such an audit should be followed by subsequent remedial actions for problem cases. This initiative could do much to avoid the undermining of the tourist experience when the visually spectacular is accompanied by overflowing bins, littered and unclean rest areas and a lack of recycling. European sensitivities and behaviour towards energy use, recycling and good environmental practices are considerably well entrenched, more so than in Australia, and represent a benchmark for minimal adherence. Many tourists notice any black marks on good public behaviours related to presenting and protecting the physical environment. An audit followed by targeted site actions could not just clean up the tropics, a useful parallel to the clean-up Australia activities, but set new benchmarks for supporting tourist experiences and community amenity. Leadership in environmental management may arguably exist in some areas of reef and landscape management, but the communication of these plans and actions is only a part of the communication about management for sustainability.

There are further associated issues with strong implications for promoting the well-managed natural brand. Analyses of the global themes which define how human communities view the tropics uncovers two large-scale guiding representations or perspectives—the tropics as paradise and the tropics as a place of fear and mystery. These views have a long history in western culture. The first view also exists widely across Asian cultures with a second north-east Asian perspective sometimes emphasising discomfort and poverty. Marketing and presentation of Australia's tropical settings both domestically and internationally can build on rather than confront these views.

The notion that the tropics as paradise can be spoiled by bad environmental practices is one theme for considerable action as already suggested. National and state government support for funding for this kind of tri-state tropical tourism and community welfare action would be consistent with government visions for supporting tourism growth.

The second image of the tropics as a dangerous place also needs new integrating initiatives to accompany any continuing promotional theme highlighting the natural assets of the region. The tropics trouble tourists in several ways. There is solid literature on the effects of the tropics on human health with advisory information needed in relation to safe behaviour in the sun, on the road and at the reef. The ways to prevent sunburn and dehydration, tactics for safe driving often on difficult and inadequate roads, and safe behaviour in the water all matter to tourists and further to communities who have to manage ill-fated accidents.

There are some further unique behavioural management issues when tourists explore tropical environments. For walking and hiking, there are multiple dangers in not staying on paths and trails with stinging trees and leeches both capable of causing severe discomfort. Further, the lack of distinctive landmarks and the density of tropical rainforest vegetation can quickly disorientate unprepared or careless hikers. High temperatures and high humidity also cause rapid dehydration and potentially hyperthermia. This problem is not confined to the tropical coasts but is also pivotal in terms of guiding tourists on safe behaviours in cases of vehicle breakdowns on outback roads.

All of these topics are not new but there is no current coordination or overview of these multiple health messages, how they are framed, when and where they are presented and whether or not they are understood. There are certainly opportunities to bring this kind of advisory material on health and tourist well-being together and undertake research projects to examine effectiveness.

There are similar issues relating to the issue of animals and the dangers of the tropics. Animals which penetrate living spaces in the tropics are usually unknown, unfamiliar and occasionally cause stress to visitors. Small ants, geckoes and mosquitoes are the commonest causes of complaints with mosquitoes being the most serious in terms of potential health risks. Currently, malaria is not an endemic issue in Australia's tropics but the propinquity to Papua New Guinea is always a concern on this issue. Much publicity is given to crocodile attacks, bats, marine stingers, sharks, dingo bites, feral pigs and the presence of snakes and spiders. Each can cause problems and again studies of the communication, the style of the messages and the location, timing and effectiveness would benefit from integrative assessments and further analysis. More efforts such as the Queensland National Parks evaluation of the Crocwise program are required.

Two final seasonal stresses of the tropical settings are managing tourists in cyclones and in times of floods. A regional review of best practices in managing tourists in times of community stress due to major weather conditions could embrace the work of many organisations including and beyond the accommodation and attraction sector. There are good international practices and advice manuals published in this area but local adaptation and updating is required. The roles of the police, community volunteers and the potentially positive roles of tourism businesses and tourists to assist others in crises times represents a small initiative relating to tourists being in a well-managed tropical destination.

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4. Boosting Indigenous Opportunities

Indigenous people who live in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory are proportionately more likely to live in rural and regional areas than those in other states. As indicated in the accompanying figure, tropical Australia is an important home base for Indigenous Australians. The 2011 census estimates indicate those living in rural and remote areas to be 72% (QLD), 80% (NT) and 69% (WA). A composite estimate is that there are 200,000 Indigenous Australians in the tropics or about 35% of the estimated national population of 517,200 (Australian Bureau of Statistics - Updates pending).
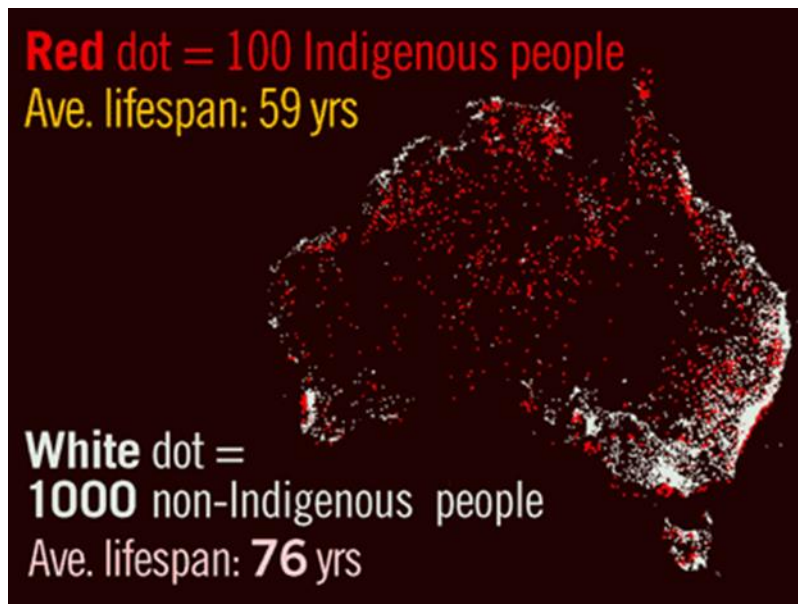
Figure 2. Regional distribution of Indigenous Australians
Source: www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/aboriginal-statistic-timeline

Two kinds of issues - the provision of employment for Indigenous Australians and the opportunities for tourists to experience Indigenous communities and culture - are prime concerns in this topic area. Commonwealth government activities in this space are linked to state and local tourism authority work. For example, The Indigenous Tourism Development Working Group has been established under the National Long-Term Tourism Strategy. Building on the *Tourism 2020* report (Department of Resources Energy and Tourism, 2011) the working group focuses on both the employment issue and offering experiences. Initiatives underway and relevant to tropical tourism include The Savannah Way project. This pilot project involves tourism operators in QLD, NT and WA. A small number of Indigenous tourism businesses have been selected to be mentored by successful business owners involved in the Savannah Guides program. It is planned that mentoring will include areas such as site development, product development, accredited training and business management and improvement.

A second employment program seeks to assist employers to work with trainees. Initiated by the Working Group, the project is a unique collaborative traineeship project for Indigenous Australians led

by Tourism Tropical North Queensland with participation from Job Services Australia, the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, the Queensland Government and local tourism industry operators. The project has developed a model for small to medium mainstream tourism businesses to use training and employment pathways to recruit and employ Indigenous Australian job seekers. An evaluation of this program has been conducted and suggests a range of actions to make such trainee schemes function more effectively. Substantial preparation by highly committed program directors, astute selection of trainees, generous rather than tight funding, and constant support and monitoring for the trainees and business partners are pivotal issues to make the programs successful.

One commentary on these kinds of efforts is that while they are in themselves praiseworthy, there is an absence of education and training options at the more managerial or professional level in business and tourism. In other countries explicit attempts to develop tourism leaders of the future with strong specialist programs has been identified. Canada and China provide examples (Wu, 2013).

There are no special schemes, scholarships or incentives for young Indigenous Australians to pursue an education at a university level in management, business and tourism. An unintended but unfortunate consequence is that the vision for Indigenous Australians in this area of employment has been limited to training employees assisting the goals and profitability of others in the sector. These comments are not meant to belittle the sincere efforts of regional and tropical tourism businesses which employ Indigenous Australians but rather serve to identify a further educational goal.

There are some sharp criticisms in the academic literature directed at tourism organisations and industry personnel who view or seek to use Indigenous and ethnic content or themes simply as resources and attractions. Endogenous marketing and social marketing represent pathways to counter this criticism (Morrison, 2013; Pearce & Wu, 2013). In essence these approaches require that Indigenous Australians approve the marketing of their culture and tourism opportunities. Further Indigenous Australians should directly feature in the presentation of the tourism linked opportunities. Tourism Australia has operated an approval process for some time and the further extension of this approach to tropical tourism marketing is an initiative with important empowerment consequences.

There are also endeavours to develop community based tourism in many tropical countries, but Australian efforts in Indigenous communities using this approach are limited. The approach is not without its critics and problems (Singh, 2012) and partnership models with strong controls and rights appear to be more effective (Graham & Edwards, 2003). Above all, the advocacy of tourism in any kind of indigenous context or using indigenous products and resources needs to recognise the broad goals for tourism related growth identified in the first initiative discussed in this paper - developing tourism for community well-being.

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5. Incorporating the Slow Tourism Approach

Slow tourism, a niche but powerful special interest and travel style emanating from Europe, can be allied to an emphasis on the natural, green and sustainable brand for the area. Four defining elements of slow tourism are: reduce use of energy/soft footprint, rich exploration of any setting, willingness to support the local community, and high social contact. The concept of slowness is an extension of the slow food movement which originated in Italy as a pleasurable way to enjoy local gastronomy and regional products.

Honore (2004), a journalist and a key organiser of the ideas in this interest area, suggests that in modern and post-modern cultures fast-paced living is the norm. The standard view is that to do things quickly is to be efficient. Further, doing as much as possible in the finite time-lines of one's life is seen as using time well and makes for an energised and engaged existence. Honore argues that there are multiple reasons to question this prevailing view and that the antonym of the fast and efficient life is selective slowness. The argument here is that there are many activities which are better appreciated and more richly fulfilling if undertaken in a leisurely and low key manner. In whatever areas of life the term has been used, it is seen as a contrast to tightly defined allocations of time which juxtapose many activities and tasks into a crowded life style.

The concepts of slow travel and slow tourism are rich in providing distinctive types of tourist experiences. Slow travel is the type of travel where tourists experience a deeper understanding of a place by moving at a deliberate and controlled pace through landscapes. Walking, bicycle tourism and some forms of train and car travel may qualify as slow travel, particularly when seen as a contrast to the rapid transit across continents and countries now commonly available through international flights. Typically such travellers stay in one place for an extended period of time. Additionally, slow tourists tend to avoid long day trips. For example, this type of travel may involve remaining in a vacation rental for a week and attempting to live simply. Moltz (2009, p. 280) suggests that those participating in slow tourism seek to live like locals "establishing local routines, indulging in local cuisines, and becoming connoisseurs of the local culture". The activities enjoyed are simple and can include shopping at local stores, going to the same places each day or taking the time to see attractions that are in the vicinity of the vacation home. Findings from research studies suggest that these travellers typically engage more deeply with places and people and that slow travel experiences can be rewarding and relaxing. It can be noted that slow tourism activities involve contemplation of one's type of transport with desirably low emission forms preferred over airplanes, cruise ships, and cars.

Warm to hot tropical weather, as well as wet and tropical rainy days, are conducive to slow tourism initiatives and connections. Slowness can be used as a marketing tool and connections suggested to local foods, lengthy stays in smaller towns and regions and health benefits through stress reduction. Volunteer tourism and activities which integrate and connect tourists into communities build on the slow tourism concept. Connection between tropical tourism bodies and slow tourism interest groups nationally and globally represent marketing and development pathways.
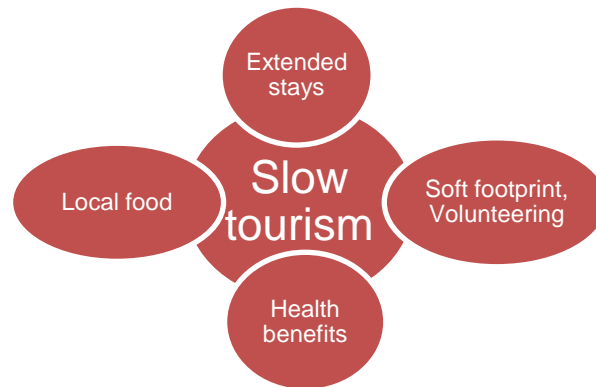
Figure 3. Defining elements of slow tourism

The slow tourism concept with its emphasis on closely exploring local environments and communities can also be linked to one of the major conceptual themes in tourism research; this theme is authenticity. Expressed succinctly, the international analysis of authenticity stresses that tourists have opportunities to create and experience important moments in their life when travelling. These authentic moments may be dramatic and occur when tourists visit inspiring places, hear striking stories or meet people whose views and lives prompt deep thought (Cohen, 2007). More prosaically, but still importantly, authenticity is sometimes represented in the everyday and the mundane and in accord with the slow tourism perspective, giving tourists opportunities to see local ways of life, visit local industries and mix with local citizens can be powerful points shaping tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

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6. Supporting the Domestic Backbone

The undisputed core of tourism to tropical Australia is the domestic market. Accommodation figures in terms of number of nights and expenditure patterns confirm this assertion (see Appendix 2). There are many ways to subdivide the domestic market but three sub-sections can be identified where initiatives should repay holistic community and industry benefits. The drive market, the visiting friends and relatives sector and the festivals/events calendar are all currently important and can be enhanced in some key ways.

The drive market is a distinctive form of tropical tourism where the mode of transport is integral to the enjoyment of the whole holiday experience. This is especially true when recreational vehicles (hereafter RVs) are considered. RVs include caravans, pop-top caravans, camper trailers, tent trailers, motorhomes, campervans, slide-on campers, converted buses, and fifth wheelers. The RV sub-community of the drive tourism market has been growing since the 1970s. As an example, in Australia there are currently around 330,000 registered RVs. It is estimated that there are between 70,000 and 80,000 RVers travelling on an extended tour around Australia at any one time and interest group assessments suggest they can spend over $500 per week (Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia, 2013). Much of this travel is in northern and tropical Australia in the winter months. Continuing demographic trends, such as an ageing population and early retirement are providing a boost to the RV tourism market.

A summary of development needs for the RV and drive sector is summarised below from a multi-stakeholder workshop held in Townsville in July 2013.

The dominant issues for best practice at the free/low cost sites were itemised as follows:

- Well sign posted, substantially in advance of the need to turn off highways

- Sites need to be specified in the online information resources

- Easy off and on highway/main road access

- Physically flat site to enable operation of recreation vehicle facilities

- Adequate numbers of toilets

- Signs, bins and recommended behavioural practices to encourage clean sustainable behaviours

- Clearly off the main highway to be quiet and private and more secure

- Occasional monitoring by council or service organisation needed to collect donations/gold coins and offer a sense of ownership

- Grey and black water disposal

- Water points easily accessed

- Information on local shops, attractions and facilities.

The dominant issues for best practice as the caravan park sites were itemised as follows:

- Welcoming staff and park atmosphere

- Security fence or assurances

- Hardened, flat surfaces for parking and for annexe to the RV to be set up

- Easy through access and turning for large vehicles, avoiding overhanging trees and branches

- Graded scales of charges depending on facilities being used

- Grey and black water disposal

- Water points easily accessed

- Information on local shops, attractions and facilities

- Park layout to separate family market and children from those who prefer quiet

- Target park branding and image to over 50s clients or similar

- Pet friendly

- Clean facilities

- Social area for cooking and interaction.

On road services

Principal needs identified for Queensland roads included. Road safety needs were the consistent top priority-the implications here are:

- More passing lanes

- Encouraging highway courtesy

- Recommending skilled driver training for RV users

- More online Australian focussed driver advice videos

- UHF radio purchase and use when likely to be on roads with trucks

- Special licence for larger vehicles and fifth wheelers

- Review international training advice offered by rental companies

- Review of distance between rest areas

- Clearer and consistent signing for the pattern of near and more distant areas at each site and on the highways

- Screening by police of vehicles for safe practices.

Other facilities recommended included:

- More rubbish bins—too often overflowing or not emptied

- More toilets—use different designs to suit local environment and circumstances

- Clearer and more frequent provision of local information and options to for visiting an area at rest areas and in camping areas

- Notice boards near dump points represent an immediate information opportunity.

For the visiting friends and relatives market there is a growing appreciation from the academic literature that commercial accommodation expenditure is sometimes involved. Further visitors to a region often "pull" locals to attractions restaurants and shopping precincts as well stimulating tours and in-house expenditure. Systematic and widely publicised discounts for local residents when accompanied by out of town visitors operate in many other locations, notably Florida and the multiple theme parks in that environment. Boosting local willingness to recommend and accompany those who visit them with special discount cards and deals can be initiatives for capitalising on the strong tropical tourism visiting friends and relatives (VFR) sector. Destination management bodies are the key link in the development of these systems.

The festivals and events calendar in the tropics has flourished in the last decade. Cultural events including music and ethnic festivals have had considerable success. Key development opportunities lie in staging more national and international sporting events. Darwin, Cairns and Townsville have shown that such events as mid-year cricket tests, Australian Football League (AFL) football matches, and Davis Cup (tennis) ties can be supported by the existing facilities and do receive strong support. Nevertheless, only national rugby league and basketball have regular games in these cities. Significant sporting events boost local community amenity and provide opportunities for domestic tourists to see leading edge competition in novel surroundings. Again, destination management bodies are pivotal to the development of these initiatives but the value for the national and international sporting bodies can also be considered.

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7. Consolidating the International Strategies

There is a widespread acknowledgement within the national and state tourism organisations that Australia is an expensive international destination. Tourism experiences in tropical Australia can be seen as particularly expensive, not only because of the already high costs of Australian tourism generally, but due to further transport and labour issues exacerbated by remote delivery of an experience. The strategic responses to these high costs and consequent high prices are managed in other tourism destinations in a variety of ways. One strategy is to concentrate on promoting only to very affluent and high yield customers and providing commensurate luxury products. Key international destination managers and operators promoting globally appealing natural features such as the Okavango Delta Botswana and the rainforest environments of Costa Rica have opted for this strategic luxury pathway. This kind of strategy as a whole of destination approach is unlikely to be realised in tropical Australia due to a the levels of investment required and distance from the North American and European markets which have traditionally been attracted to these special locations.

An alternative approach is to offer "the best environmental experiences in the world" not through luxury infrastructure but through the leading interpretive skills and understanding of those "who explain and entertain". The academic literature in this area stresses the emergence of the experience economy. It is a theme which has been taken up in part by the tourism promotion bodies and classifications of visitors into different kinds of experience seekers. It has not been fully understood or exhaustively embraced, possibly because one way of approaching the marketing in this style built on the film "Australia" was unsuccessful.

A strong design principle to help develop the best environmental experiences in the experience economy lies in understanding the concept of authenticity. The term 'subjective authenticity' now tends to rule the way the expression is used. Many researchers have highlighted that authenticity is a perceived quality rather than an essence or inherent characteristic of the viewed world. In the language of the experience economy, authenticity is a co-production where the tourist and host interact productively to produce highlights for the visitor. Authenticity is sometimes applied to the most uplifting and dramatic traveller experiences, but to provide marketing information related to such uplifting experiences is complex. The expression 'mundane authenticity' has also been used. It directs attention to observing everyday spontaneous activities including seeing local customs and places or more simply seeing how others live. Observations of how environments work, how others live and how communities function offer somewhat tangible insights for tourists and have this every-day or mundane authenticity value. Promotion of mundane authenticity represents an important direction for tropical tourism positioning.

This discussion of authenticity leads to the development of a more concerted endogenous marketing approach. The term 'endogenous' in this context means locating the local citizens at the centre of the promotional efforts and providing images of local people in authentic, personalised styles. When local people and their voices portray a destination, they are effectively portraying mundane authenticity.

There is a promise in this promotional approach that the visiting tourist will be able to interact with people and places similar to or honestly represented in the promotional frame. Additionally, the use of local citizens provides a link and an expectation that the attractions portrayed and the activities depicted are accessible to ordinary tourists rather than being the province of the very wealthy or those with highly advanced skills.

It remains the case that the destination marketing organisations exert control over these processes in the sense of stimulating the production of material, organising its public access or sometimes vetting what is said. There is a major and increasingly globally relevant role here for endogenous marketing through the digital communication channels. The forms of this expression can vary. In the online environment, local citizens can be asked to describe their favourite place in a region, upload the best photograph they have taken, or tell a story describing the best times they have had or seen others enjoying. These efforts may be elicited by competitions or simply by requests to participate and show off the home region. The latter approach builds on a sense of pride and public spirit.

The essential element is that local faces and voices dominate the communication rather than the presentations being led by prominent actors, sports personnel or attractive professionals from modelling agencies. The international promotional strategies which pursue this endogenous approach need to be supported by the interpretive and entertainment skills of those who deliver tourists' experiences.

These marketing styles have a particular application to the most significant emerging market to tropical Australia. That market is China. A successful expansion of the China tourism market into tropical Australia could be the largest "game changing" activity for profitability and growth across the region. This generic assessment is not based on the simple criteria of numbers or volume alone but instead identifies the capacity for China to supply a range of specialist tourism interests compatible with the style of tourism considered in other sections in this document. These tourism interests include those who seek the sustainability supported natural settings and slow tourism with a strong experiential component.

Researchers are aware of and are beginning to monitor the growth of the new activities and experiences undertaken by Chinese outbound tourists. The changes in this outbound Chinese tourist market are rapid and far reaching. Arlt (2013) recently labelled the new movement of Chinese outbound tourism as a second wave of tourism. There are two issues identified in this second wave that are particularly relevant to the current document.

Firstly, there is a marked growth in the number of independent tourists. While the group tour is still popular among overseas Chinese tourists, increasing numbers of Chinese are travelling independently (CTA & Ctrip, 2013). The growing numbers of Chinese tourists view independent travel as having several advantages. Firstly, it is associated with controlling one's own itinerary and being flexible. In addition, independent travel is considered to have more challenges, and is perceived as more enjoyable because individuals must master these challenges as they arise. Independent travel

also offers spontaneity and moments of unexpected pleasure, which is associated with enhancing one's knowledge and skills. Travelling independently, as travelling in an unconventional style, is sometimes also connected with social status and self-pride. For these reasons, together with increasingly easier processes to gain a visa, independent travel is growing.

Compared with group tour participants, the independent Chinese tourists have significantly more travel experience and tend to more critical about the on-site management. Importantly for the Australian context they have workable English skills and many are keen to practice these abilities when in a western English speaking country. It is anticipated that the number of independent Chinese tourists will keep growing and lead to new trends for the whole tropical tourism market (Arlt, 2013).

Another feature defining the Chinese market is its tech-savvy nature (McKinsey&Company, 2013). The China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC) (2013) recently documented that there are currently 564 million "netizens" and the number is increasing. Blogs, virtual communities, microblogs, reviews and websites are all a part of this online community. In common with other tourism markets, social media in China has become an important information source for travel planning and reflections. Some online travel communities, focusing on independent travelling, have been established, with considerable numbers of participants. These information and communication options are keys to help understand the contemporary Chinese market.

In summary, this brief review of selected research on Chinese outbound tourists has identified the changing nature of the market, due to the rise of a middle class; the growing interest and confidence in independent travelling, and the tech savvy character of Chinese life. These trends, together with other associated changes (e.g., easing of visa approvals), have resulted in a massive growth of new Chinese tourists, who may be quite different from the previous influx of Japanese and group based Chinese tourists who have travelled to northern Australia. The suggested international marketing approach of offering "the best environmental experiences in the world" not through luxury infrastructure but through the leading personalised explanations suits the younger, independent, Chinese tourists whose English skills have been developed through the extensive program of language training in Chinese high schools.

The most dramatic and potentially important boost to the international tourist inflow to tropical Australia rests on successfully promoting to and satisfying this independent younger Chinese market. It is in this area of interest where the leading marketing initiatives should be constructed.

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8. Integrating Quality Markers

Understandably, both domestic and international tourists are concerned with the quality of their experience and the trustworthiness of the promotional attempts to attract them to that business or setting. These concerns are especially relevant for expensive tourism purchases. Such issues are recognised nationally through the T-QUAL program which is Australia's national accreditation scheme. The T-QUAL Tick is the national symbol of quality for tourism products and services in Australia.

Tourism organisations that apply a quality standard to their operations, business units or related business entities, can apply for T-QUAL Accreditation. If successful, the operators and related business are offered a T-QUAL Accreditation sub-licence which allows operators and related business entities to display the T QUAL Tick. The tick is a certified Trademark. Tourism Australia markets the T-QUAL Tick as a commitment to quality.

There are also other quality checks and recommender systems operating in the tourism sector. A cursory review of these systems includes the recommendations on Trip Advisor (http://www.tripadvisor.com/), the ratings of accommodation and attractions by the motoring organisations, the Ecotourism and Advanced Ecotourism accreditation schemes and ancillary accreditation and award schemes. Some of these are independently judged and are prestigious amongst those who know how they are selected. For example, state and national tourism award winners are carefully evaluated. Nevertheless some of the schemes which are self-accrediting or where membership is conferred based on payment of annual fees are more problematic. These certificates and documents may appear to confer status and engender trust in the tourism product but at times they reflect more the capacity to pay the fees or charges rather than ensuring high standards. The diversity of these recommendation systems is arguably a challenge for indicating the quality of Australian tourism operations.

Two initiatives can be suggested for this important issue of trust. The continuing and much more public marketing of the T-QUAL approach can be recommended. Anecdotal rather than empirical evidence suggests that very few tourists recognise the symbol and questioning a number of operators who display the sign indicated that few tourists ever noted its existence or understood its meaning. Arguably the T-QUAL acronym is not transparent and the full title might be better. An allied concern is that the approach appears to function more as a basic threshold rather than a graded quality system. There is clearly work to be done to evaluate the ongoing success and consumer and industry reaction to the system, both in the tropics and elsewhere.

The second initiative lies in linking the T-QUAL and or other systems of accreditation to the indicators used globally. In Europe, for example, there is a very well respected Blue Flags (http://www.blueflag.org/) program for beaches and an orange flag designation for distinctive Italian villages (Bandiera Oranciona http://www.bandierearancioni.it/). Perhaps more importantly given the

growing numbers of Chinese tourists to Australia, the relationship between the Chinese grading systems for attractions which is a highly developed and comprehensive approach could be linked to Australian counterparts.

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9. Attending to Research Investment

A recurring and long standing problem in regional tourism is the inadequate intelligence for decision-making at multiple levels. This lack of information affects immediate management, investor confidence and innovation. Intelligence in this context can be summarised as the combined capacity or understanding by tourism personnel of present activity and future trajectories. There are gaps in local industry knowledge, only partially successful state and national research efforts, and some high quality but limited regional consulting and academic services. Across all of these information resources there are weaknesses in the available tropical tourism intellectual capacity. Local industry knowledge is reinforced by associations and city based local networks but the knowledge base is operational and managerial rather than strategic. Day-to-day business commitments prevent many operators from contemplating the broader strategic and research-related issues.

The activities of the state tourism industry associations (such as QTIC - Queensland Tourism Industry Council) are necessarily diffuse across the state and a parallel situation exists in Western Australia with the centralisation of state bodies in Perth. The smaller financial base of many tourism businesses in the tropics (over 90% have been identified as micro-businesses with less than 6 employees) results in little capacity for broad based research investment or sponsorship. The state promotional and national research bodies undertake survey work of accommodation and visitor arrivals and departures but at the scale of tropical regions some of the data are unreliable and at the site scale they are inadequate.

Several local consultants offer services and have personal rather than company capacity. Necessarily much of the work they do is not for public consumption. In preparing this report there was a repeated emphasis in conversations that the contribution of the university sector to developing policy and industry practice is ineffective but possibly underused and not appreciated. Paradoxically, the tourism academic research effort across Australia is globally well respected. Calls for more research feature strongly in multiple policy documents. Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) rates James Cook University as one of the top two universities in tourism in Australia. Funding to support personnel to add to the capacity of the senior academics (five of whom have long standing links in the region) is difficult to obtain and the demise of the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) research world relevant to the tourism (firstly the Reef CRC, then the Rainforest CRC and finally the Tourism CRC) has heralded a research funding drought. The quality of consulting work in tourism is tied to the quality of research training in Australia and the creativity and competence of the university sector. Both suffer in the current funding drought.

The point was foreshadowed nationally in the Jackson report in 2009 (p. 24) and continues to disadvantage the research base of the tourism sector across the country as well as in the tropics. A long standing impediment to research activity lies in arguments and ambiguities concerning the desirable kinds and levels of research. For tropical tourism initiatives this problem can be solved by applying the defining recommendations of the Jackson report within a tropical context. Australian

tourism research needs to help develop tourism offerings as follows: tropical Indigenous culture, tropical landscapes, tropical cities and regions, tropical people and lifestyle. These directions might appear to be so all inclusive that they lack focus. Further direction can be developed by emphasising an even balance between supply side and demand side studies for each of these areas of interest. Additionally the levels of research warrant attention. Fresh research efforts are desirable at both the macro scale as in regional economic analyses and the micro scale such as managerial options and studies of tourist behaviour and experience.

State government initiatives to allocate research and development funds to state departments with responsibilities for tourism planning need to be considered. These funds can be directed towards assessment of the value and needs for infrastructure (broadly conceived) which supports tourism. Existing funding for demand side studies need to develop a strong future oriented component as well as immediate reporting of regional trends. The practice of allocating doctoral level scholarships (cf. the dairy and horticultural industries) to advanced students for strategic research in the specified areas of interest is altogether missing in the tourism sector. The CRC Sustainable Tourism capacity building which was developing in this direction can be re-assembled by forming (relatively cheaply) new investment options at this level. This funding of new studies is arguably a necessary part of a national initiative or at least at a northern Australian initiative (see also recommendations about education and training and the need to attract talented people into tourism study and employment).

Remedial action to boost applied and strategic research funding can take further forms. Existing grant schemes (e.g., T-QUAL grants) could develop a further category of strategic research thus opening up the grant scheme to many more projects to support multiple businesses.

The country's major national competitive grant schemes, the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) effectively marginalise tourism by two processes. Tourism researchers are not members of the key decision-making elites in these organisations and tourism is not included in any of the national priorities for research. This is a glaring contradiction in terms of the industry's significance in the national economic picture, especially when compared to the funding allocations and priorities as well as the multiple organisations, including CSIRO, which support farming and rural industries. Industry and political lobbying for the importance of tourism as a significant industry is needed to open up these funding sources beyond the dominant control of the traditional academics in the sciences and health sectors. Tourism without any CRC support and with only Tourism Research Australia (http://www.tra.gov.au/) as a data collecting retrospective archival unit is very poorly served by the current national research funding arrangements.

A direct and personalised transfer of research information needs and skilled application of research time can be achieved by adopting practices used in Canada and Hong Kong. The schemes are known as "professor for a week" and "senior visitor appointments". These labels describe the exchanges developed among business, government and universities through having individuals temporarily visiting a different tourism "world" for an intense and short period of time. The resultant

personal ties, trust and mutual understanding of each group's interests can be a quick start generator to significant mutually beneficial projects.

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10. Refreshing Educational, Extension and Career Structures

The digital era and the accompanying capabilities of the new media shape initiatives in the educational space for tourism training, education and extension. There are also significant and accompanying new directions needed in the human resources management field pertaining to career structures for those who work in tourism.

At present, there are some significant contradictions in the tourism educational landscape. Across Australia but particularly in the three universities (James Cook, Charles Darwin and Central Queensland which lie in the tropics), tourism courses are small-scale and have declined in terms of student demand and university support since the 1990s. The continued existence of many tourism courses has been maintained in part by students from Asia, who seek to study tourism and related areas with more enthusiasm than Australian students. There is therefore the contradiction that Australia is providing advanced education for the future managers and employees of its current and future competitors.

The rapidly growing online educational possibilities for tourism education in Australia offer a new horizon of educational engagement. Two features are critical to this new form of engagement. Firstly, students can now study fully online with the implication that attendance at the university campuses is minimal. This feature alone potentially introduces the tourism subject material to people who wish to stay in more remote communities and who are engaged in a part-time or even full-time employment. The second feature of the new digital online courses is that they are unlike earlier distance education offerings. Online tutorials and evening class times with lecturers and tutors are becoming the new norm for what is referred to as the "flipped classroom". In this approach students and lecturers are resource personnel and students spend much more time discussing, reviewing and engaging with material rather than being recipients of long lecture sessions or set the task of slowly progressing through traditional textbooks. James Cook University, for example, will have its tourism, hospitality and events majors in the undergraduate Bachelor of Business fully online in 2014. Masters degrees by coursework for professionals already engaged in middle to senior management jobs will also be available online in the next two years.

For the courses taught and offered in this online environment there is a particular challenge. The challenge is to communicate to school leavers and people already in the workforce that this new style of teaching and learning is actually a superior way of learning and building personal capacity. It is not a watered-down or second-rate education where the student is left to solve all their problems alone - a charge which was sometimes valid for the earlier distance education models using hard copy materials. The pivotal issue then is for an education sector and tourism industry joint initiative in terms of a promotional partnership to create awareness of these new educational opportunities in the tropics.

There is, of course, national and international competition in the digital education era. James Cook University in particular is well positioned to be a key player. Not only is there some occasional contact with the university required by students which makes the Townsville and Cairns campus locations a useful occasional meeting point, but the history and current achievements of JCU in the tourism field are notable. Briefly, there is recognition in the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) assessment that James Cook is one of the top two universities in the tourism field in Australia. The University of Wollongong, the other leading university in tourism research, does not offer undergraduate tourism education. James Cook has the longest history of teaching tourism in Australia having been the first in 1989 to establish a tourism department with a full professor of tourism.

Providing new ways of building a tourism education is a useful initiative but it cannot flourish unless two other issues are also considered and some progress made towards resolving the current problems. The first hurdle of substance is the availability of jobs, in short the need for new labels and quality employment possibilities. These new jobs, some of which have not yet been created, need to follow the strategic direction of promoting, interpreting and entertaining tourists in the experience economy style outlined in earlier sections of this report (see section 7. Consolidating the International Strategies). Some of these jobs are potentially in the public sector while others are in industry.

For the public sector opportunities, it can be noted that there is a marked disparity in the employment profiles of the major industries in the tropics. The area of agriculture for example has a rich network of personnel engaged in extension. As public service employees these individuals are a conduit of information and support for many hundreds of small rural businesses across the tropics. There is a glaring lack of such personnel in tourism. A particular contradiction here is that tourism education and research in the United States actually has extension officers in university departments whose job, like Australia's public sector employees, is to support and offer new directions to tourism businesses. Government policies which are directed at boosting tourism in Australia have not attended to extension personnel as a way forward. It has never appeared on a policy agenda (Ruhanen, Mclennan, & Moyle, 2013).

New graduates with skills in digital marketing, value-chain analysis, business models, interpretive competencies, project management and financial planning could form this new cadre of support personnel. At present only those larger tourism businesses with the capacity to employ consultants, some of whom have modest levels of formal education or contemporary skills, can readily access advice. More often, small operators are trying to learn and do everything themselves. The analogy here would be a beef farmer conducting advanced soil and agronomy tests, researching new genetic markers and building herd statistics while also feeding stock and repairing fences. For the agricultural sector there is support, for tourism there is not and this opportunity and investment could be the difference between a world class industry in the tropics in 20 years' time or Australia's tropical tourism becoming a marginal player in the global market.

An allied and complex task lies in the better designation of tourism jobs in business. The interface between education and training institutions and industry employment is weak and confusing for both

employees and employers. In many situations there is a need for employees to have multiple skills including customer service skills, a range of certificate based abilities including driving licences for different types of vehicles, first aid skills, digital technology awareness and abilities, capacity to coordinate events and social occasions, appreciation of business and legal issues and specific task abilities and cross cultural communication sensitivities. A proposal to have Commercial Tourism Officer Grades 1 to 10 can be suggested. Each level could be designated as specifying a minimum number of a subset, but not all of a desirable set of skills in tourism employment. A hierarchy could be specified which accounts for the experience and time in previous employment. The full development of this approach warrants extensive consultation with employers, unions and training providers. It is at least clear that a proposal of this type may help identify professional steps and opportunities for tourism employment.

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    12*(1), 47-58. doi: 10.1016/j.jhlste.2012.11.001

A Community Competition

The impetus to tourism provided by public infrastructure construction has been noted in a number of key tourism development papers and texts. In addition to investing in the major transport arteries and facilities which connect communities, states and countries (notably airports, cruise terminals and significant highways) there is also a focussed contribution to tourism from the development of specific public places. In the tropical tourism context the Esplanade in Cairns, the Strand in Townsville and the Lagoon in Airlie Beach represent efforts in the last 15 years to provide key facilities which can be shared by local citizens and many types of visitors.

A fresh suite of new public projects can be proposed which build on these earlier investments. There are several key criteria which can be suggested for these further actions in supporting tourism. Desirably, the funding to construct new installations needs to be sourced from partnerships across all three levels of government. The community acceptance of the new initiatives needs to be assured. The kind of infrastructure or innovative project needs to provide amenity for local citizens and be attractive to a range of tourists. The projects suggested have to have both attracting power (it is worthwhile going to the location to see this feature) and holding power (the experience at the site/feature is sufficient to keep people entertained for some time). There is a need for multiple projects across the tropical cities.

It is common in tourism project development to copy or imitate installations and developments in other locations. That is not the intention of this part of the Cairns Institute paper. Instead the proposal lies in suggesting community competitions to identify desirable new public developments to meet the needs of multiple tourism markets and the local community. For demonstration purposes only several international public infrastructure developments are illustrated in the accompanying images. The kinds of features which have had success, as measured by awards won, increases in visitor numbers, community acceptance and visibility include fountains and laser light shows, music created from wave motion, star and night sky observation platforms and dynamic mazes featuring unique vegetation and art. The commonality amongst these kinds of features includes the ability for their contribution to reach many markets, be a source of pride, and be available on a regular or continuing basis.

It is proposed that the management of the competition be conducted using social media and local newspapers. These mechanisms offer wide exposure and can provide for tourist and local views. Substantial prizes for the best ideas could be a feature of the competitions. There has been considerable success in generating publicity for Queensland and Australia with the "Best Job in the world" competitions. The proposed competition has analogies with this approach but with a different aim and content focus. Leadership and further development of this approach can be achieved through government and tourism destination marketing organisation cooperation and discussion in each key tourism location.

Examples of international public infrastructure developments

Overview of Sea Organ, Zadar Croatia

Photograph by Andrej Šalov, 27 April 2008
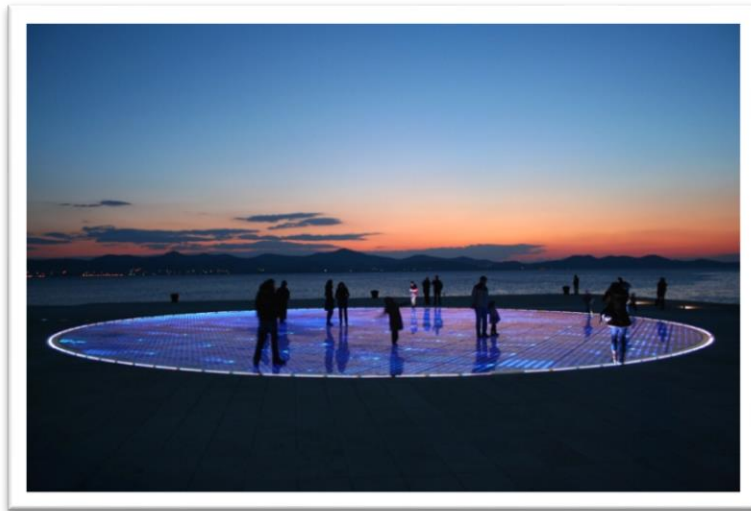commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Andrej_%C5%A0alov

Locals and tourists listening to wave driven music from the Sea Organ, Zadar, Croatia

Photograph by SimonO, 18 October, 2011
kurungabaa.net/2011/10/18/sea-organ-croatia/

Greet the sun installation, laser solar light show, Zadar, Croatia

Photograph source: Croatia's Solar Powered Interactive Light Installation
Posted by Pinar on October 16, 2012
www.mymodernmet.com/profiles/blogs/nikola-basic-greeting-to-the-sun

Fountains and laser light show West Lake, Hangzhou, China
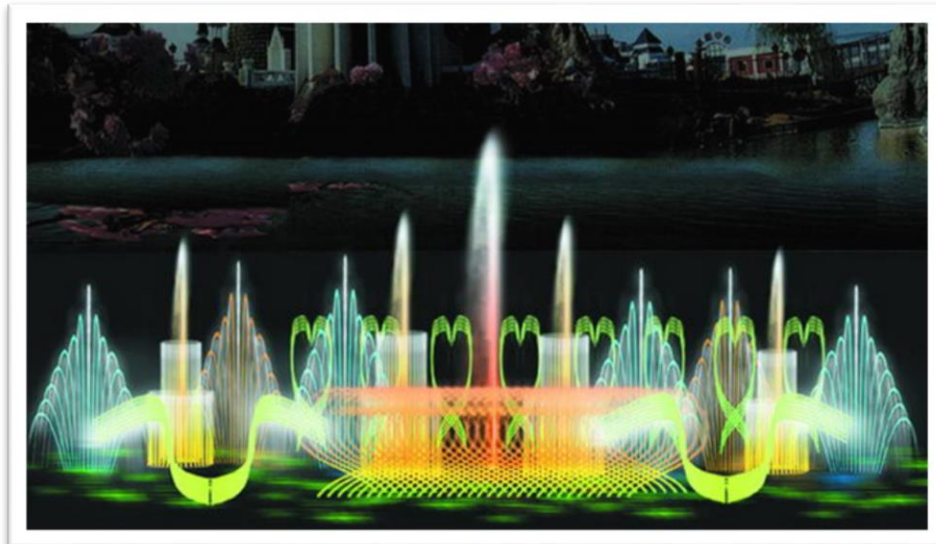
Photograph source: History of the Fountain, Sunny Electronics Technology Co.,Ltd
www.firstfountain.com/

Tropic of Cancer Observatory and Park, Chiayi, Taiwan

Pineapple Maze, Dole Cannery, Oahu, Hawaii

Photograph source: Dole Plantation
www.dole-plantation.com/worlds-largest-maze

Appendix 1 Personnel and Organisations Consulted in Preparing this Report

As noted in the text, the views expressed in this report are those of the author and the personnel listed below do not necessarily endorse the perspectives offered in this paper. The time and willingness of the individuals listed to discuss issues about tourism and the tropics is gratefully acknowledged.

Table 1: Personnel and organisations consulted in preparing this report

Name	Affiliation	Date of consulting
Max Shepherd	Managing Director - Skyrail Rainforest Cableway	15 March 2013
Bruce Prideaux	Professor, James Cook University	15 March 2013
James Doyle	Manager Economic Development, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, QLD	25 March 2013
Roger Kaus	Trade & Investment Officer, Trade & Investment Queensland	25 March 2013
Patricia O'Callaghan	General Manager (Tourism), Townsville Enterprise	28 March2013
Simon Millcock	Senior Economic Development Officer, Townsville City Council	3 April 2013
Kate Sullivan	Senior Economic Development Officer, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, QLD	3 April 2013
Geoff Brown	Former General Manger (Tourism), Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism	15 April 2013
Leo Jago	Chief Economist, General Manger, Tourism Research Australia	23 April 2013
Chris Stamford	General Manager, Tourism Programs Branch, Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism	23 April 2013
Helen Cox	General Manager, Tourism Programs Branch, Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism	23 April 2013
Melanie Crosswell	Manager, Tourism Quality Section, Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism	23 April 2013
Tania Willis	Strategic Tourism Investment, Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism	23 April 2013
Byron Keating	Professor, University of Canberra	24 April 2013
Xiang (Robert) Li	Associate Professor, Texas A&M University, USA	24 April 2013
Jane Madden	General Manager – Head of Investment, Australian Trade Commission	24 April 2013
Ulrike Gretzel	Associate Professor, University of Wollongong	25 April 2013
Lisa Travers	Senior Project Officer, Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games, QLD	26 April 2013
Fiona Antonucci	Manager, Tourism Investment Attraction, Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games, QLD	26 April 2013
Niki Macionis	Associate Dean, James Cook University, Brisbane	26 April 2013
Colin Balfour	Managing Consultant, Balfour Consulting	2 May 2013
Gary Rebgetz	Former Chairman, Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia Ltd	2 May 2013
Rosa Lee Long and Council	Mayor, and Council, Tablelands Regional Council	24 June 2013

John Courtenay	Tourism Consultant, PROBE	26 June 2013
Rob Giason	Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Tropical North Queensland	27 June 2013
Sharyn Brydon	Business Manager, Tourism Tropical North Queensland	27 June 2013
Vicki Tang	Marketing Manager – Eastern Markets, Tourism Tropical North Queensland	27 June 2013
Ken Kipping	Board Member, Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia Ltd	30 June 2013
Roger Bow and Council	Mayor and Council of Hinchinbrook Shire	1 July 2013
Mark Williams	Owner, Range Caravan Park, Townsville	12 July 2013
Stuart Lamont	Chief Executive Officer, Caravan, RV & Accommodation Industry of Australia Ltd (CRVA)	15 July 2013
Kristy Ponting	Operations Manager, Caravan Parks Association of Queensland Inc.	15 July 2013
William Condon	Owner and Manager, Black River Stadium	18 July 2013
Chris Newsam	Project Manager, Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games, QLD	2 August 2013
Paul Martyn	Deputy Director - General, Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games, QLD	2 August 2013

Appendix 2 Background to the Tropics and Tourism

The following brief notes introduce some key contextual issues for those less familiar with tropical Australia. Tourism in the tropics operates within a special human and natural landscape. Tropical Australia, effectively the area to the north of the Tropic of Capricorn, accounts for 46% of the nation's landmass. The total population is 1.2 million. Population figures for key cities as at the 2011 census were Darwin (131,000), Townsville (175,000), Cairns (142,000) Mackay (81,000), Rockhampton (77,000), and Mt Isa (21,000). Smaller centres of tourism interest in Queensland include Charters Towers (8,100), Airlie Beach (7,800), Innisfail (7,100), Atherton (6,700), Mareeba (6,800), Ingham (4,700), Port Douglas (3,200) and Cooktown (2,300). In the Northern Territory and Western Australia population figures include Katherine (9,100), Kununurra (5,500), Broome (4,300) and Derby (3,100). Approximately 35% (200,000) of the total population of Indigenous Australians live in the tropics.

The warm winter climate of northern Australia has long been a source of attraction for southern Australians. Traditional domestic tourism markets have followed a clear seasonality pattern with the dominant time for visitors being May to October. Tourism is an important economic sector across the tropics and forms a strong part of the regional mix of activities where mining is the most profitable, beef cattle and sugar the traditional industries, and the service sector (including the presence of the defence forces) is now of considerable importance.

The Great Barrier Reef, which was declared a World Heritage Area in 1981, is the region's most widely recognised tourism feature. It extends nearly 2,000 kilometres from east of Cape York to Gladstone, just south of the tropic zone. Since the 1980s and the introduction of catamarans to the reef, a marine tourism industry has developed along the tropical Queensland coast. This industry is especially important in Cairns, Port Douglas, Mission Beach, and the Whitsundays. Kakadu (Northern Territory-declared in 1979) and the Wet Tropics (northern Queensland-declared in 1988) are also World Heritage Areas. Three biogeographic regions, the outcomes of the combination of soil types, climate and topography, have been identified as Australian national landscapes: the regions of interest here are the Kimberley, the Timeless North and the Wet Tropics.

The connections for domestic and international tourists into and around the region are key components of tourism's infrastructure. Current international airports are based in Cairns and Darwin. Both Broome and Townsville have international capabilities but are not currently active as overseas passenger arrivals and departure points. A network of highways has been designated in the tropical areas of Australia as routes with scenic or tourist interest. These include the cross state route The Savannah Way (Broome to Cairns) and the Northern Territory Stuart Highway (Adelaide via Alice Springs to Darwin).Within Queensland the tropical tourist drive routes are the Matilda Highway (Cunnamulla (Blackall) to Karumba), the Great Tropical Drive (Townsville to Cooktown) and the Overlander's Way (Townsville via Mt Isa to the Northern Territory border). Rail connections are limited to the Northern Territory north-south link and in Queensland the coastal route and some links to the western cities of Mt Isa and Longreach.

The scale of the tourism to tropical Australia is revealed in part through the 2012 international visitor data. In 2012, there were 664,000 international visitors to tropical North Queensland, 141,000 to the Northern Territory excluding Alice Springs, and 66,700 to Western Australia's North West. For domestic tourists the numbers of overnight visitors to Tropical North Queensland was 2,462,000; overnight visitors to the Northern Territory (including Alice Springs) were 1,032,000; and visitor numbers to WA's North West amounted to 669,700. Day trip visitors (those not staying overnight) provide a further significant tourism presence across the region.

Detailed inventories of accommodation and attractions across the tropics can be accessed through the web sites of the state tourism bodies.

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About the Author

Philip Pearce has taught in Australian Universities for over 30 years. He is the first Professor of Tourism in Australia and is based at James Cook University. He has a First Class Honours degree in Psychology and Diploma of Education from the University of Adelaide and earned a Doctorate from the University of Oxford studying tourists in Europe. He has held a Fulbright scholarship at Harvard University.

In his position at James Cook University he teaches at all levels with a focus on tourist behaviour and experience. In 2008 he won an Australian Learning and Teaching Council award for advancing tourism education and for the supervision of doctoral level students, having successfully supervised 30 such students. He has 250 publications and eight books on tourism. He was the founding editor of *The Journal of Tourism Studies* (1990-2005) and now reviews and edits manuscripts for other journals on a regular basis. He is a frequent keynote speaker at tourism conferences particularly in Asia. His special interest areas are tourist behaviour, notably tourist motivation and experience, tourism and communities and tourism education and research. He has recent interest and publications in the areas of Chinese outbound tourism. He supervises a large number of PhD students and has been the principal supervisor for over 30 PhD successful graduates from 12 countries. He currently supervises PhD students from China, Thailand, Malaysia, Australia, and Singapore.

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