Monash Tourism Research Unit: 

research on strategic communication to foster sustainable behaviour 

Betty Weiler, Director of TRU
Jim Curtis, PhD student
Presentation outline

- TRU: mission, members, strengths
- TRU: current partners and projects
- CASE STUDY: Gaining visitor acceptance of alternative transportation services in Australian national parks
- Potential for collaboration in multidisciplinary transport research
TRU mission:

to be a highly competent and experienced team of cross faculty researchers able to contribute to the knowledge base of tourism and meet the research needs of industry in Victoria, nationally and internationally
Who we are:

- interdisciplinary team of economists, educationists, geographers, historians, marketers, planners, psychologists

26 members:
- Dep’t of Management: 9
- Dep’t of Marketing: 2
- Dep’t of Economics: 1
- Faculty of Arts (tourism): 5
- Postdocs, HDRs and others: 9
Research strengths:

1. Tourism Planning and Management in Regional and Protected Areas
2. Strategic Communication in Tourism (including marketing, interpretation, and guiding)
3. Tourism Economics
4. Tourism Training and Education
5. Tourist Behaviour
6. Tourism, Image and Media
7. Tourism Business, Attractions and Events Mngt
Current research partners:

- **Government bodies:**
  - Tourism Victoria
  - Parks Victoria
  - Heritage Victoria
  - Tourism Tasmania
  - Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service

- **Attractions:**
  - Zoos Victoria (Melbourne, Werribee and Healesville)
  - Phillip Island Nature Park
  - Sovereign Hill Museums Association
  - Port Arthur Historic Site

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… current research partners:

- **Local Councils and Tourism Authorities:**
  - Mornington Peninsula Tourism
  - Tourism Frankston
  - La Trobe City Council
  - City of Casey
  - Shire of Mt. Alexander
  - Shire of Bass Coast

- **Tourism-related peak bodies and other associations:**
  - Ecotourism Australia
  - Interpretation Australia Association
  - Mornington Peninsula Vignerons Association
Recent & current projects:

- Analysis of Cruise-based Interpretive Guiding in Alaska’s Inside Passage and Ecuador’s Galapagos Islands (in partnership with the University of Idaho, USA)

- Evaluating Guided Tours in Victoria’s National Parks (in partnership with Parks Victoria)

- Understanding expectations and experiences of Chinese visitors to Victoria: A case study of two key attractions (in partnership with Tourism Victoria and Sovereign Hill)

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Recent & current projects:

- Experimental Evaluation of Persuasive Communication Strategies Aimed at Influencing Problem Visitor Behaviour at Port Campbell National Park (in partnership with PV)

- Achieving Conservation Outcomes Through Environmental Interpretation (in partnership with Zoos Victoria)

- Gaining visitor acceptance of alternative transportation services in Australian national parks (in partnership with PV and Tasmania Parks & Wildlife Service)
PhD Project: Jim Curtis

“Gaining visitor acceptance of alternative transportation services in Australian national parks”

Supervisors: Betty Weiler and Sam Ham

Funded with an STCRC PhD scholarship

Monash University Tourism Research Unit
Background

Growing vehicle numbers in national parks are a problem for park authorities

- Noise and air pollution
- Traffic congestion
- Visual intrusions
- Poor road and pedestrian safety
- Erosion of the landscape
- Demands for more road and parking infrastructure
Cradle Mountain in Tasmania

Issues:

- World Heritage Area
- Six-fold increase in visitation over the past 20 years; forecast to more than double over the next 25 years
- Traffic congestion and associated impacts on Dove Lake Road are inconsistent with world heritage values
- Expansion of existing road and parking infrastructure undesirable
The Grampians in Victoria

Issues:
- Third most visited national park in Victoria
- Limited road and parking infrastructure within Wonderland Range
- Poor traffic flows caused by narrow, winding roads
- Severe traffic congestion in peak holiday periods
The Challenge

How can park authorities influence more visitors to use shuttle bus services instead of cars?

Coercion

- e.g. road closures, parking restrictions, fines
- Creates problems for parks
- Currently not an option for park authorities

Persuasion

- e.g. a targeted communication strategy
- More compatible with the recreation, enjoyment and leisure objectives of national parks
- More appealing to park authorities
Research Aim

To use the voluntary shuttle bus services at Cradle Mountain and the Grampians to examine the efficacy of a theoretically-based persuasive communication strategy designed to increase visitor acceptance and use of alternative transportation systems in Australian national parks.
Research Outcomes

Park managers will receive a tested persuasive communication strategy designed to influence travel mode choice in national parks

- The persuasive communication strategy should help to increase passenger numbers on voluntary shuttle bus services and relieve the pressures on existing environmental, road and car parking resources

- The research will produce instruments that can potentially be adapted in other park settings with similar shuttle bus services
Avenues for Collaboration:

- multidisciplinary transport research involving TRU members, focused on:
  - protected areas (land and marine-based)
  - regional Victoria
  - transport attitudes, behaviour and impacts of specialist market segments (e.g. backpacker market, international student market, wine and food sectors, nature-based tourists)
  - transport issues at attractions and events

- joint-supervision of HDR students
- ARC Linkage grant applications with TRU partners
- joint-hosting of research seminars and workshops