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The contribution of Australia-based researchers to tour guiding

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ABSTRACT

The work of Australian researchers has been central to the development of theory and scholarship on tour guiding. The paper begins with a quantitative synopsis of the collective output of Australia-based research that has appeared in scholarly journals, published conference proceedings, edited books and research reports. More tour guiding research has emanated from Australia than from any other single country.

The bulk of the paper considers some of the key contributions that these Australian researchers have made, including conceptualisation and theory-building, the application and refinement of theory and methods from other disciplines to enhance understanding of tour guiding, and the synthesis of knowledge about tour guiding. Conceptual contributions include a six-cell framework for depicting the roles of tour guides, a multi-dimensional framework to inform the use of quality assurance mechanisms for tour guiding practice, a three-part model for the development of tour guide certification, a framework for aligning relevant theories, research designs and approaches to four categories of sustainability outcomes from tour guiding, and a set of principles for guide training in developing countries. Each of these has informed the researcher of others within Australia and globally. Australian researchers have also engaged theory from other fields such as human resource management, consumer behaviour, and applied communication to advance understanding and measurement of tour guiding phenomena and to refine the theories themselves. A recent synthesis of Australia-based research theory and findings together with the global body of knowledge on tour guiding suggests that the way has been paved for more theoretically-driven and methodologically-rigorous research in tour guiding.

The paper concludes with examples of research dissemination, technology transfer and research uptake, as evidence of the real-world impact of Australia-based tour guiding researchers. Publication of user-oriented products, often in collaboration with industry partners, has been a hallmark of Australian tour guiding research that, together with its scholarly contributions, puts Australia at the forefront of applied tour guiding research globally.

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1. Introduction

A small number of primarily conceptual papers on tour guiding, mainly by sociologists and anthropologists (Cohen, 1985; Holloway, 1981; Smith, 1961), were no doubt the impetus for publishing a special issue of Annals of Tourism Research on tour guides, in which Jafari described the subject as having ‘received little attention in tourism research’ (Jafari, 1985, p.1). In the decades that followed, tour guiding research has gained some prominence in the academic literature, including in Australia. More than fifty years after tour guiding first made its debut in the academic literature, there is now a critical mass of scholars actively engaged in tour guiding research, including a notable number in Australia who are engaged in developing and testing theory and applying rigorous scholarship to the study of tour guiding. There is also considerable evidence of both scholarly contribution and real-world impact of this research.

The Australian context for guided tours is different to some other parts of the world, and this has influenced the focus and contribution of tour guiding research in this country. As in other countries, many guides are employed as city, bus tour, cruise-based and attraction guides such as at museums, zoos, historic sites, and theme parks. Others, however, work exclusively in natural settings, including a notable number in Australia who are engaged in environmental and culturally responsible operations of the tour. Many natural area Australian guides work for extended periods of time in remote environments. Australian research has thus been prominent in considering the roles, performance and impacts of the
nature-based tour guide, as well as the particular challenges, support systems and quality assurance mechanisms needed for this kind of work.

This paper seeks to capture the work of Australian scholars, that is, researchers who are based in Australia, typically at Australian universities. Indeed, there is no other country in the English-speaking world that has amassed a body of research on tour guiding of the depth and breadth that Australian researchers have produced, making this review of particular value and relevance to scholars of tour guiding. That said, some of the tour guiding research presented in this paper has been undertaken in collaboration with overseas colleagues or with doctoral students who have since moved outside Australia. The vast majority of the research reported in this paper has been undertaken in Australia, although some of it has included international components.

The term ‘tour guiding research’ is used here to capture research on tour guides, sometimes referred to as tourist guides, tour leaders and other labels. Generally, the term tour guiding is used in this paper in preference to tour guide, as the latter sometimes refers to print and electronic media used by visitors. Collectively, Australian research has begun to build a profile of tour guiding and guides: who they are, their engagement with visitors, host communities and other stakeholders, the responses they elicit from visitors (mainly tourists but also locals), other outcomes of tour guiding, and mechanisms for managing and fostering quality and satisfaction of both guides and visitors. More recently, research is addressing the why and how questions that are so important for moving an area of study forward.

There are many methods and metrics that can be used to summarise the work of individuals and groups of scholars. In this paper, three overarching approaches are used. The first uses the quantity and distribution of publications on tour guiding to provide an overview of the scholarly output of Australia-based researchers (Section 2). This is followed by a more nuanced and qualitative examination of the contribution of Australian research to tour guiding that is necessarily selective, but attempts to illustrate as objectively as possible the conceptual and empirical outcomes of key publications (Section 3). Demonstrable outcomes are grouped by contributions to conceptualization, model-building and theory-building (Section 3.1); empirical application and refinement of concepts, theories and methods from other fields (Section 3.2); and knowledge synthesis (Section 3.3). The final section of the paper (Section 4) presents examples of end-user products and their applications to demonstrate real-world impact of tour guiding research in Australia.

2. Scholarly output of Australia-based research on tour guiding

A literature search of over fifty years (1961–2013) of tour guiding research (Weiler & Black, 2015) identified 280 outputs in tourism journals, edited books and conference proceedings, as well as research reports and scholarly books. An examination of this global body of tour guiding research and scholarship revealed that publications by Australia-based authors on tour guides and guiding are prominent. Some basic descriptive data on this output from Australian researchers provides one measure of the quantity of Australian researchers’ contribution to tour guiding research. The quality of the research is considered in Section 3 of this paper.

Based on an analysis of the first author’s institutional affiliation where this was identifiable (265 publications), 83 (31%) or nearly a third of all outputs on tour guiding were based on studies led by Australia-based researchers, as compared to 21% by researchers based in the U.S., and approximately 10% by researchers based in each of the UK, Europe (other) and China/Hong Kong/Taiwan. This paper is based primarily on the 83 Australian author-led publications in scholarly journals (31), published conference proceedings (19), published research reports and theses (22), and book chapters (11). All except 14 of the 83 outputs that were empirically-based were undertaken entirely or partly in Australia. More than half (47) were undertaken in a nature-based setting or context, while 11 were heritage-setting based and 10 were mixed.

Looking at Australian tour guiding research output over time, there was virtually no output prior to 1990, while there was a notable period around the turn of the century (2000–2004) when research output in tour guiding was extremely high. Notwithstanding this peak, interest in and contribution to tour guiding as a field of study seems to be continuing (see Fig. 1).

Other than being based almost exclusively at Australian universities, the researchers’ affiliations revealed little about them such as their disciplinary backgrounds and the expertise they bring to the study of tour guiding. Researchers are housed mainly in schools of tourism, hospitality, leisure, business, and environmental science, but like most areas of study in tourism, a wide range of social science disciplines influence the study of tour guiding. An examination of the theoretical perspectives of the research found few applications of theory from anthropology, sociology, and history as compared to much greater use of theory from education, planning, environmental studies, social psychology, business/marketing, and applied communication in Australian tour guiding research. Analysis of the methods used in these studies indicates a healthy mix of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (see Table 1). Further analysis, however, suggests an overreliance on survey methods (39 of the quantitative and mixed methods studies used some type of survey, mainly field-based surveys) by Australian tour guiding researchers. Tour guide/operator/visitor surveys, interviews and/or observation were used in 71% of all studies. Little use was made of focus groups or other group-based data collection methods and virtually no reported use of various ethnographic and novel data sources and methods such as analysis of diaries, narratives, discourse, documents and photos.

![Fig. 1. Australian tour guiding research output 1980–2013.](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
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<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theoretical/Conceptual</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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Table 1: Methods used by Australian tour guide/guiding researchers.
Based on a series of searches of dissertation databases, one of which included an analysis of research higher degree theses focused on tour guiding in Australia (Weiler, Black, & Ballantyne, 2009), it would appear that there have been fewer than forty English-language doctoral-level dissertations focused on tour guiding and globally, and only seven in Australia.

Finally, there are books and monographs focused on tour guiding and guiding. Most are “how to” books written for aspiring tour guides and educators/trainers, generally authored by professional researchers and not works of research and scholarship. Australian author Pastorelli (2003) made an important contribution with his book Enriching the experience – An interpretive approach to tour guiding which he wrote mainly for use as a textbook for college-level students training to be tour guides. Unlike most tour guiding textbooks, Pastorelli’s book is informed by theory and lessons learned through research as well as field experience. While this is an improvement over everything that has preceded this book, it is still largely a “how to be a better tour guide” book based largely on the author’s practical experience rather than an analysis of the research and scholarship. In other words, it is written for guides, not about them.

There is at most a handful of scholarly books about tour guiding, of which two are by Australian authors (Black & Weiler, 2003; and Weiler & Black, 2015). The former is an edited volume of work by Australia-based researchers consisting of 11 chapters, and of these only five chapters present research specifically about tour guiding. The latter takes a more comprehensive approach in which the authors review much of the English-language research that has been published on tour guiding globally. This book is revisited in Section 3.3 of this paper.

3. Contributions of Australia-based tour guiding research

While capturing quantity is one thing, painting a picture of the quality of tour guiding research is quite another. Metrics abound for judging whether individuals or collectives are producing academic output of quality or, in this case, for assessing the qualitative contribution of individuals and groups of researchers to tour guiding and scholarship. This section of the paper first provides a series of narratives about the scholarship of tour guiding research undertaken by Australia-based researchers, before returning to the question of quality.

There are three notable areas in which Australian researchers have made their mark, with contributions being far more extensive in the first area than in the latter two:

1. Conceptualization and model/theory-building
2. Applying and refining theory and methods from other fields
3. Contribution to knowledge synthesis

3.1. Conceptualization and model/theory-building

The first narrative that can be presented about Australia-based tour guiding research is its contribution to developing tour guiding concepts, theories, and models. Following the publication of Cohen’s (1985) model depicting the dimensions of a tour guide’s role, there followed a burgeoning of research discussing and examining the roles of tour guides. A considerable number of these studies emanated from Australia (e.g. Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001; Black & Ham, 2005; Haig & McIntyre, 2002; Howard, Thwaites, & Smith, 2001; Weiler & Crabtree, 1998; Weiler & Ham, 2001a; Weiler, Johnson, & Davis, 1992).

A key contribution by these Australian researchers has been theory-building, i.e. extending and adapting Cohen’s framework and operationalizing the extended version to assess guides’ performance and outcomes of particular roles (Black & Weiler, 2015). Cohen’s (1985) conceptual framework provided limited insight into the positive (or negative) contributions of tour guiding to host communities, environments and destinations. In an effort to make theoretical sense of tour guiding roles, particularly in the growing fields of ecotourism and nature-based tourism, Australian researchers Weiler and Davis (1993) developed a framework that depicts six roles across three broad role dimensions of tour guiding, including nature-based/ecotour guiding. As in Cohen’s framework, the first dimension focuses on pathfinding, leading and managing the group, while the second dimension focuses on the mediation, communication and experiential needs of individuals within the group. Weiler and Davis (1993) added a third dimension – resource management – which focuses on the needs of host communities and environments. In this dimension, the guide plays a key role in motivating and managing tourists’ on-site behaviour to minimise adverse effects on the natural and cultural environment, as well as fostering longer-term understanding, appreciation and conservation of those environments, mainly through interpretation and persuasive communication.

Like Cohen (1985), Weiler and Davis (1993) developed their framework as a heuristic rather than a testable theoretical model. Notwithstanding it became a point of departure for subsequent papers including, Australian-authored pieces (e.g. Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001) and also served as a theoretical framework for at least four empirical studies (Haig & McIntyre, 2002; Howard et al., 2001; Pereira and Reidar, 2012; Randall & Rollins, 2009). For example, in an Australian context, Haig and McIntyre (2002) undertook to operationalise Weiler and Davis’s (1993) model and assess tourists’ perceptions of the relative importance and/or performance of each guiding role. Howard et al. (2001), on the basis of interviews with Australian Indigenous guides and observations of selected tours, confirmed the relevance of all six of Weiler and Davis’s (1993) tour guiding roles to Indigenous tours and identified specific and multiple examples of guides performing all of these roles. The results of other Australia-based studies indicate that some protected area managers, operators and guides underestimate the importance of the mediating and interpretation roles of the guide (Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001; Weiler, 1999). Overall, results of these studies are mixed but confirm that all six roles identified by Weiler and Davis (1993) are seen as important by most operators, guides and tourists and has stood the test of time in drawing attention to the three dimensions of a tour guide’s roles (Black & Weiler, 2015).

Studies in countries such as Australia as well as Hong Kong (Ap & Wong, 2001) have highlighted challenges in performing some of the roles expected of tour guides. Drawing on preceding literature, Black and Weiler (2005) examined the potential of a range of tour guiding quality assurance and regulatory mechanisms to enhance guide performance with respect to their key roles. Their quality assurance framework provides a valuable tool for assessing the relative merits of professional associations, professional certification, licensing, codes of practice, awards of excellence, and training and education. Each of these is argued to be a way of increasing awareness, appreciation and documentation of the importance, positive impacts and value-adding of tour guiding for all stakeholders, of ensuring a minimum standard of practice of all tour guiding roles across the industry, and of promoting, recognising and rewarding advanced levels of performance of roles that are recognisable and rewarded (Black & Weiler, 2005). The framework is used as a reference point for nearly all discussions of quality control with respect to role performance in the tour guiding literature (Weiler & Black, 2015).

Another key contribution to the literature to address quality issues is Black and Ham’s (2005) model of tour guide certification.
informed by the development and evaluation of Australia’s Eco-
Guide Program (discussed more fully in Section 4.1). Black’s (2002)
comprehensive study critically analysed the development of the
program as a basis for building a best practice model for tour guide
certification. The proposed model has three components: a general
process model for developing a tour guide certification program,
key process principles and key program elements (Black & Ham,
2005). This model has been applied to the development and criti-
cal evaluation of quality assurance schemes in a number of other
countries (Calvo, 2010; Nasopoulou, 2011; Yamada, 2011). In
Australia, Carmody, King, & Prideaux (2010) used Black and Ham’s
model to critically examine whether the training, mentoring,
accreditation and professionalism of northern Australia’s Savannah
Guides could be transferred to other locations across Australia.

Closely related to guide certification is the development, de-
ivery and evaluation of training programs informed by theory and
research findings. As far back as the early 1960s, authors have noted
the lack of and need for adequate guide training and education to
improve tour guide performance, raise guiding standards and
advance professionalism (Hughes, 1991; Smith, 1961; Weiler,
Crabtree, & Markwell, 1997). Weiler and Ham’s collective expert-
ise in both the substance of tour guiding and in delivering guide
training programs led them to build on Black’s (2002) model to
produce a framework of key process principles and recommendations for the design, delivery and evaluation of future training courses in developing countries (Weiler & Ham, 2002). The model has underpinned many subse-
quent training efforts and is cited by a diverse range of researchers,
scholars and trainers.

The contribution of tour guiding to sustainable tourism and
sustainability outcomes provides a final context to reflect on the
work of Australian scholars. The widespread adoption of sus-
tainable tourism as an ideology has shone light on the importance
of the tour guide, particularly the ecotour guide’s use of inter-
pretation to help visitors understand, care about and value heri-
tage and nature. This has led to much discussion about the guide’s
capacity and effectiveness in shifting visitor attitudes and
behaviour. However, Beaumont (1991) noted more than two de-
ades ago that participants on such tours may already have atti-
tudes and behaviours that are pro-environment, and thus tour
guides and others may simply be “preaching to the converted”
(1991: 317). Australian researchers responded with more
thoughtful and rigorous research designs to examine the rela-
tionships between face-to-face interpretation/tour guiding and
sustainability (Ballantyne, Packer, & Hughes, 2009; Zeppel &
Muloin, 2008). Several Australian studies have provided evi-
dence that tour guiding can be effective in reducing levels of non-
compliant behaviour as well as illegal and unintentional on-site
behaviours (e.g. off-trail hiking, wildlife feeding and littering)
(Howard et al., 2001; Littlefair, 2003; Orams & Hill, 1998; Scherrer,
Smith, & Dowling, 2011). While many of these studies have relied
on visitors’ self-reports of how guiding impacted their behav-
iorual intention or actual behaviour, a few have actually observed
on-site behaviour such as reducing noise, reducing off-track
walking and increasing pro-environmental behaviour such as
picking up other people’s litter (Littlefair & Buckley, 2008). On the
other hand, at least two Australian studies conducted in the states
of Victoria and Western Australia respectively (Armstrong &
Weiler, 2002; Scherrer et al., 2011) have pointed to more that
guides can and should be doing with respect to delivering mes-
gages relating to sustainability outcomes and monitoring and
managing visitor behaviour. Weiler and Kim (2011) synthesise this
body of research to present a framework of sustainable tourism
outcomes that includes relevant theories, research designs and
approaches that can strengthen the explanatory power of future
tour guiding research across four domains: (i) enhancing visitors’
understanding and valuing of the site and its natural and cultural
resources, (ii) influencing visitors’ decisions about their voluntary
on-site behaviour, (iii) monitoring and managing visitors’ on-site
behavioural compliance, and (iv) fostering visitors’ post-visit pro-
environmental and pro-conservation attitudes and behaviours
through persuasive communication.

3.2. Applying and refining theory and methods from other fields

In addition to theory-building, a second narrative about
Australian research in tour guiding is application of theory and
methods from other core and applied disciplines such as psychol-
ogy, human resource management, consumer behaviour and
applied communication (interpretation) studies, and applying,
adapting and testing these in a tour guiding context. Three notable
areas of study in which multiple Australian authors have contrib-
uted are outlined here: the application of the theory of emotional
labour to the tour guiding context; the measurement and model-
ing of satisfaction in the context of a guided tour; and the oper-
ationalisation and testing of the cognitive, affective and behavioural
outcomes of interpretation.

3.2.1. Examining emotional labour in a tour guiding context

Among the wide range of roles expected of guides are those
that require them to manage and display appropriate emotions when
working, or what is referred to as emotional labour (Hochschild,
1983). Emotional labour is, in effect, the commodification of feel-
ings where workers act out an expected feeling in line with orga-
nizational requirements. As such, Hochschild suggests that
emotional labour can have a negative impact on employees.

Black and Weiler (2015) identify the application of emotional
labour to tour guiding as a prime example of researchers making
the most of theoretical developments in other fields to advance
new theoretical and empirical findings. Several Australian re-
searchers have examined emotional labour engaged in by heritage
and adventure guides, the latter of whom in particular are required
to be in close proximity with clients, often over extended periods of
time with few opportunities to retreat to ‘backstage’ areas where
they can relax and step out of their leader persona. Guides engage
in emotional labour when, for example, presenting interpretation,
creating rapport and group cohesion, responding to tourists’ fears
and euphoria, and dealing with problems and complaints. Indeed,
Australian researchers Van Dijk, Smith, and Cooper (2011) suggest
that the performance of emotional labour is inextricably linked to
the tourism product.

Torland’s (2011a,b) study of adventure guides sought to critically
examine the relationships between emotional labour and job
satisfaction among Australian adventure tour leaders and in
particular the relationships between surface acting and deep
acting. She found that deep acting had a positive impact on their job
satisfaction, in contrast to surface acting that did not, which she
attributes to feelings of achievement and a sense of authenticity
during deep acting. Unlike previous research, Torland (2011a,b)
found no significant differences between males and females in
relation to surface acting, deep acting and their impact on job
satisfaction. She describes adventure tour leaders as ‘shape-
shifters’, drawing on the best aspects of masculine and feminine
traits to meet the job requirements, rather than conforming to
gender stereotypes.

In a study of interpretive guides at an Australian heritage site,
Van Dijk and Kirk (2007) found that guides actively and
consciously engage in emotional labour consistent with concepts
establish in the literature. However, in contrast to other studies,
they found that emotional labour and emotional dissonance are
distinct constructs.

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Torland (2011a) notes that the emotional performance of guides can impact tourists’ experiences and satisfaction, as well as other outcomes important to tour operators such as profit, repeat visits and image. However, Van Dijk et al. (2011) found in a later study of Melbourne zoos visitors that tourists could not tell whether a guide was surface acting or deep acting (really “feeling”) the emotion, and were satisfied with both, suggesting that the guides were competent in displaying both deep and surface acting consistent with tourist expectations. They concluded that managing tourists’ expectations and perceptions may be as important as guide performance in ensuring positive visitor outcomes.

3.2.2. Measuring satisfaction with tour guides, guiding and guided tours: Pre- and post-trip, and satisfaction and dissatisfaction

Satisfaction with guided tours has been a somewhat vexed area of study, partly because satisfaction can be a slippery construct with multiple components and levels such as satisfaction with the guiding, the guide, the tour, the tour company and the experience. Research in this area has been informed to some extent by consumer behaviour literature, but the theories and models that make sense for other types of products do not always translate satisfactorily to tourism and lifestyle tours, where other components (which are complex ‘products’) with a multitude of potential antecedents and components that can influence satisfaction. Much of the recent work on satisfaction with tour guides and guiding has been driven by researchers in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

However, a few Australian studies are notable in their early application of pre- and post-trip self-administered questionnaires with tourists. Hughes’ (1991) study of a boat cruise to Palm Island in North Queensland was the first published tour guiding study of any kind by an Australia-based researcher. She found that the guide’s performance had considerable impact on visitors’ satisfaction with the guided tour, and that the degree to which visitors’ expectations were met determined their level of satisfaction with the overall tour. Three important components of guiding emerged from this study as being associated with visitor satisfaction: the ability of the guide to effectively interact with the group, to provide commentary of interest, and to ensure the smooth running of the tour.

Similarly, Moscardo and Woods (1998) surveyed and observed visitors at Skyrail in the World Heritage rainforest of North Queensland to determine how satisfied they were with the guided interpretation compared to the non-personal interpretation such as signs. Using a pre- and post-visit questionnaire survey and observation of the attracting power of the interpretive component of the visitor experience, they found that the interactions with the guides were highly rated by visitors and made a significant contribution to visitors’ overall satisfaction with their Skyrail visit.

Ham and Weiler (2003) sought to drill down into the theoretical underpinnings of ‘quality’ in nature-based interpretive guiding in the context of two nature-based cruises and found that passengers assess high-quality guides as those who are passionate, insightful, enjoyable, relevant and easy-to-follow, and that these attributes resulted in passenger satisfaction. Attributes that passengers identified as dissatisfiers included ending the tour too soon, being disjointed, providing too little information, providing no new insights and being too simplistic.

Weiler and Yu’s (2007) study of Chinese-speaking tour guides in Australia found that some aspects of a tour guide’s performance are particularly influential as satisfiers, for example when a guide provides a deep understanding of culture and lifestyle, while other aspects of tour guiding are primarily dissatisfiers, such as the unethical practices of some tour guides in relation to duty-free shopping.

3.2.3. Conceptualising and measuring other outcomes of interpretive tour guiding

The delivery of guided tours via interpretation, an approach that is largely underpinned by communication theory, has long been of interest to Australian tourism scholars and researchers (Moscardo, 1998). Australian authors Weiler and Kim (2011) define interpretation as ‘engagement with visitors in ways that provoke them to think about and connect with natural and cultural heritage, including places, sites, people, artefacts, and natural and historical events’ (Weiler & Kim, 2011, p. 115). They note that in addition to its importance in enhancing visitor satisfaction, the use of interpretation by tour guides is often viewed as critical for achieving sustainability outcomes (Gaioumns, Skanavis, & Matopoulos, 2006; McGrath, 2007; Weiler & Ham, 2001a,b; Weiler & Kim, 2011). There is general agreement among scholars that interpretation and tour guiding should not be judged solely on measures of visitor enjoyment, satisfaction and factual recall, however, quantifying other important aspects of tour guiding outcomes can be difficult (see examples of sustainability outcomes, Section 3.1).

Many Australian authors have researched the interpretation principles, practices, tools and techniques that can be and have been applied to tour guiding (Howard, 1998; Hughes & Ballantyne, 2006; Weiler, 1999; Weiler & Ham, 2001a,b). Australian scholars also have been prolific about producing critical reviews (Ablett & Dyer, 2009; Ham & Weiler, 2006; Munro, Morrison-Saunders, & Hughes, 2008; Moscardo, 2014) and meta-analyses (Zeppel, 2008; Zeppel & Melouin, 2008) on the outcomes of interpretation. As Skibins, Powell, and Stern (2012), Moscardo (2014) and others have noted, however, linking specific interpretation practices to outcomes is another matter. Sophistication in interpretation research design is relatively recent, particularly in terms of the operationalization and analysis of relationships between antecedents and outcomes. Theorising the links between the practice of interpretation and its desired outcomes has also come late to tour guiding research (Moscardo, 2014; Weiler & Black, 2015).

Nonetheless, Australia-based researchers have completed a number of relevant projects, as evidenced by the 20-plus Australia-based studies in Skibins et al.’s (2012) meta-analysis of 70 peer-reviewed articles published between 1996 and 2009 and the more focused analysis by Davidson and Black (2007) both of which report on studies attempting to link the application of one or more interpretation principles to outcomes. Several of the Australia-based studies have focused on or been inclusive of guided interpretation (interpretive guiding), contributing to building a body of understanding of relationships between tour guiding practices and outcomes.

An important contribution has been Ham and Weiler’s (2006) development of an instrument for measuring visitors’ cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes that can be used in a wide variety of guiding context (Weiler & Ham, 2010). Their validated, multi-item, self-report instrument assesses the extent to which the interpretive guiding makes visitors think (elaborate), helps them connect (empathise), makes them care (nature or heritage appreciation) and makes them want to act (behavioural intention), and has been used in a number of published research studies (Weiler & Black, 2015).

For example, in a study of 288 zoo visitors in the state of Victoria (Weiler & Smith, 2009), respondents were exposed to messages delivered by experienced and trained interpretive staff about the difficulties faced by lions that live outside reserves, particularly when they come into contact with humans. Each visitor was exposed to interpretation delivered via up to three different media (a static display, a zookeeper talk, interaction with a volunteer guide, an encounter with a guide engaged in role-play, and a behind-the-scenes tour with a zookeeper/guide), all aimed at...
helping visitors to understand the lions, their habitat and the threats to their survival, and to connect with and value the species and its environment. Mean ratings on the cognitive and affective scales were consistently higher for visitors exposed to greater numbers of interpretive media, with the combination of non-guided and guided interpretation resulting in more positive outcomes than non-guided interpretation alone (Weiler & Smith, 2009).

Another study using the same self-report measures of 285 Chinese visitors who were guided around an Australian heritage site for up to two hours by a bilingual, bi-cultural interpretive guide found somewhat lower but still positive mean ratings on elaboration, connection and attitude toward heritage preservation (Van Dijk & Weiler, 2009).

Huang, Weiler, and Assaker (2015) take tour guiding research an important step forward in combining validated research instruments with statistical modelling to test links between antecedents (interpretation) and outcomes (including satisfaction) in the context of tour guiding. Their study examined the effects of both cognitive and affective tour guide interpretation outcomes (using the Ham & Weiler instrument) on tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention in an Australian heritage tourism context. Data were collected via a survey of 282 inbound mainland Chinese tourists. A hierarchical structural model was constructed and tested, with results showing that a cognitive outcome had a greater impact on tourist satisfaction and sustaining visitor arrivals than an affective outcome, whereas satisfaction with the guided tour experience directly impacted behavioural intention and largely mediated the effect of the cognitive outcome on behavioural intention.

3.2.4. Other avenues for applying and refining theory in tour guiding research

The foregoing three broad themes in which researchers have applied theory from other disciplines — emotional labour, satisfaction and interpretation — are areas in which there has been a critical mass of Australian researchers. There are many other theories and bodies of literature that have been introduced to tour guiding, with some notable applications by individual Australian researchers. For example, Pearce (1984) made a very exploration into guided tours using social situation analysis as a framework. Australian researcher Moscardo (1999, 2009) has written extensively about the relevance of mindfulness theory to interpretation, although she herself notes that there is scope for more application of this and other dual-processing theory such as the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) to tour guiding (Moscardo, 2014). Walker has been a champion of means-end analysis and has successfully used it to develop a model for guiding practice (Walker & Moscardo, 2014) and research extension such as tour guide training (Weiler & Walker, 2014). Australian research has certainly drawn on adult learning theory principles and practices (Ballantyne, Packer and Sutherland, 2011), but some areas are still under-researched, such as interactive and experiential learning approaches to tour guide training (Christie & Mason, 2003; Weiler & Ham, 2002) and building reflection into experiences to make them memorable and prompt pro-environmental behaviour (Ballantyne et al., 2011). The application of theory to the study of particular guiding techniques has been limited primarily to interpretation, mediation and intercultural communication, although a recent suite of studies have begun to explore how theory and research can be applied to a better understanding of the use of humour by guides and others (Pearce, 2005; Pearce & Pabel, 2014, 2015).

Applications of theory by Australian tour guiding research from the business disciplines such as marketing and organisational behaviour have been noticeably modest. In the late 1990s, both Weiler (1996) and Howard (1998) identified Hersey and Blanchard's leadership model as potentially providing insight into appropriate leadership styles for tour guides and for assessing tourists' level of readiness in relation to leadership, but leadership theory has still not been applied to the study of tour guiding. Another theoretical area introduced but not widely explored in tour guiding literature is the influence of organizational culture on the training and learning abilities of guides (Cambrody et al., 2010; Lugosi & Bray, 2008). Finally, Weiler and Kim (2011) list a number of useful theories such as applied behaviour analysis, norm theory and moral reasoning development for examining or experimentally manipulating tour guiding variables in order to impact tourist behaviour.

3.3. Synthesising research on tour guiding

The third and final narrative of this section of the paper is the contribution of Australia-based researchers to synthesising the findings and implications of tour guiding research. While this paper is in itself a synthesis of research, there is merit in integrating this work with tour guiding research elsewhere. For example, the considerable number of tour guiding researchers in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong are publishing their work in English-language journals and this may well be just the tip of an iceberg of Chinese-language research being undertaken in those and other Chinese-language countries. At least three international tour guiding research symposiums, one edited book and several themed journal issues on tour guiding are evidence of a critical mass of tour guiding researchers in Scandinavia and western Europe and again, the extent of research output in Europe’s other languages is not known, as no international organisation exists to bring together researchers and advance research on tour guiding.

Weiler & Black’s (2015) inventory, critical review and synthesis of the global English-language literature on tour guiding research is thus a timely and important contribution to the study of tour guiding. A single volume cannot do justice to the some 280 research outputs on tour guiding that have been produced since the first scholarly paper on tour guiding was published (Smith, 1961), but the book’s integration of a wide body of literature into six themes contributes to:

- exploring how tour guiding theory and practice from a range of disciplines have evolved over time and what factors have contributed to this
- critically examining tour guiding research, methods, findings to date and research gaps
- consolidating the knowledge base on tour guiding and fore-shadowing how current and future trends and issues might impact on tour guiding research and practice in the 21st century.

As such, the book can serve as scaffolding for current and new researchers of tour guiding, helping to broaden and deepen their use of theory from cognate disciplines and to stimulate further desktop and empirical studies.

There is more that could be done. For example, meta-analyses have been published on related topics such at interpretation (Skibins et al., 2012), however, none has been undertaken on the topic of tour guiding. And while Australian researchers have played an important role in disseminating and championing tour guiding research, it is probably fair to say that they have not been as pro-active as they could at collaborating with international researchers, and in cross-fertilisation with other areas of research specialisation, both within and outside tourism studies.
Nonetheless, Australian researchers have made considerable contributions to tour guiding research and scholarship, including conceptualisation and theory-building, the application and refinement of theory and methods from other disciplines, and the synthesis of knowledge about tour guiding. The collective story of these narratives as being one of quality is further supported by the fact that many of the studies discussed in this paper have been published in tourism's highest-ranked and highest-impact journals.

4. Impacts of Australia-based tour guiding research

This final section examines the impact of tour guiding research undertaken by Australian researchers. The term research impact is used to mean many different things, including academic impact (what is referred to in this paper as contribution and discussed in Section 3). More often than not, however, it refers to the dissemination, technology transfer (upAKE of knowledge and skills) and benefits that accrue to non-academic end-users (AACSB, 2012), including – in the case of tour guiding – training providers, policymakers, planners, managers, employers, government agencies, communities, visitors, and of course guides.

Many of the following studies include recommendations for policy, management and tour guiding practice too numerous to list here. For example, most of the research on tour guiding roles includes guidelines and recommendations in relation to the recruitment, selection, training, self-management and performance management of tour guides. The research on emotional labour provides strategies for reducing stress, burnout, staff turnover, and poor service quality.

Such recommendations are not unusual in published studies. What is notable in the Australian tour guiding literature is the translation of theory and findings into practical forms such as end-user products and the delivery of workshops to assist with their uptake.

Much of the credit for this real-world impact is due to many Australian researchers establishing close working relationships with government and industry partners. This was helped considerably by Australia’s Commonwealth government, state governments and a number of industry associations and individual businesses establishing and jointly-funding the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (STCRC), whose mandate for its thirteen years of operation was to undertake research and deliver knowledge and tools to inform policy and planning to support sustainable tourism businesses and destinations (STCRC, 2012). There was a requirement inherent in research supported by the STCRC to not only generate knowledge through research but to communicate and in some cases commercialise that knowledge to end-users around the country. Two STCRC-funded products based mainly on tour guiding research are still available via an online portal: Ham and Weiler’s (2005) tool kit for use in systematically evaluating interpretation, including tour guiding, and O’Neill, Barnard and Lee’s (2004) best practice manual for operators and educational video for visitors. Other examples of Australia-made tour guiding ‘products’ that were developed based on research undertaken in partnership with industry and in some cases funded by tourism industry grants include Ballantyne, Weiler, Crabtree, Ham, and Hughes’ (2000) video and workbook package for training tour guides; Crabtree and Black’s (2000) EcoGuide Program for accrediting individual tour guides; and Walker, Weiler, Miller, and Cvetko’s (2012) training package for swim-with-whale guides in Tonga and for other wildlife guides in the South Pacific.

If dissemination is a necessary first-step to impact, then the fact that these products are now in the hands of tour guides, guide trainers, tour operators, tourism attraction managers, park management agencies, and other employers, managers and policymakers in Australia and globally is evidence of at least some level of real-world impact. All of these products have been subject to field-based evaluation and all but one have also been through peer-review as evidenced by publication in journals (Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001; Black & Ham, 2005; Weiler & Ham, 2010; Weiler & Walker, 2014).

Dissemination is also evident in the presentation of tour guiding research by Australian researchers to government policy-makers and at industry conferences, and the delivery of workshops based on the research. The STCRC, for example, funded workshops for researchers to present, demonstrate and train end-users in the use of the Interpretation Evaluation Tool Kit. A perusal of conference and symposia proceedings reveals that Australian researchers have presented their findings at dozens of national and international industry conferences on zoos, museums, heritage and nature interpretation, environmental education, tourism, ecotourism, tour guiding and resource/national park management over the past twenty years.

None of this, of course, provides concrete evidence of uptake of research findings and ideas, let alone the impact of those findings in improving tour guiding practice and other associated benefits to end-users. Section 4.1 that follows outlines one early instance of this, precipitated by the development of competency standards for tour guides (Crabtree & Weiler, 1997). Separate bodies of research led to the development of materials and programs that are used to deliver tour guide training, and these are presented in Section 4.2.

4.1. Research informing practice: an accreditation scheme for tour guides

The emergence of ecotourism in the late 1990s led to the need for development of new competency standards for guiding guides that were both evidence-based and practical (Crabtree & Weiler, 1997). Shortly thereafter, the importance of the guide’s role in facilitating a quality tourist experience gained prominence while at the same time expectations of quality from tourism industry stakeholders and consumers were increasing (Jones, 1999; Page & Dowling, 2002). In response to this call for quality and quality assurance, research was undertaken aimed to assess the on-the-job performance of nature-based/ecotour guides (Weiler & Crabtree, 1998), which ultimately positioned Australia as a trailblazer in developing research-led quality assurance for tour guiding (Dowling, 2014). The research was both driven and informed by government policy such as the National Ecotourism Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994) and eventually advanced the development of the Australian EcoGuide Program, a national ecotour guide certification scheme which, as discussed in Section 3.1, Black (2005) used to develop a model for ecotour guide certification that was subsequently used by other guide organisations both within Australia and overseas (Carmody et al., 2010; Yamada, 2011). These early studies thus helped ensure that quality assurance in tour guiding in Australia is grounded in theory and empirical evidence of what makes quality guiding practice.

4.2. Research informing practice: tour guide training

Changes in the tourism industry have put increasing emphasis on having well-trained guides. Firstly, the tourism industry is evolving from a service-based economy to an experience-based economy. Secondly, visitors are now well informed, more interested and have high expectations of their guides. Finally, tour guides are now expected to not just provide factual commentary.
but require other skills such as interpretation and intercultural skills, the ability to contextualise information and the transmission of emotion (Weiler & Black, 2015).

Carmody’s (2013) study of Savannah Guides Ltd, an organisation for (eco)tour guides interpreting and protecting the tropical savannas of Northern Australia, supports and promotes the value of intensive professional development schools as a training model. The foundational elements of Savannah Guide schools are continuing learning, practical training, mentoring, certification and standards of professionalism. These schools benefit the guide and tour guiding industry, particularly in remote parts of Australia, and Carmody’s work has helped other regional destinations take up the lessons learned by Savannah Guides in their efforts to enhance the quality professionalism of tour guiding.

The content and delivery of other guide training both within Australia and overseas has been informed by tour guiding research, particularly on guide roles but also on related research such as principles of interpretation, intercultural communication, tour guide performance, visitor satisfaction, and sustainability outcomes, as well as by adult education theory. Several Australian training workshops, programs and packages, particularly focusing on improving interpretive guiding practices, have been delivered to tour guides, employees of park agencies (e.g. Parks Victoria, Port Arthur Historic Site, Wombi Wildlife Reserve, South Coast Zoo, Reelfoot Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and Parks Victoria), other natural tourism attractions (e.g. cave guides; West Coast Wilderness Railway), heritage attractions (e.g. Port Arthur Historic Site, Sovereign Hill Museums Association), and state and urban tourism authorities (e.g. South Australian Tourism Commission, City of Bendigo). Two of the products listed in Section 4 (Ballantyne, Weiler, Crabtree, Ham, & Hughes, 2000 and Walker et al., 2012) are training-focused. Australian-based research has also been influential in informing nature and ecotour guide training globally, including training programs in New Zealand, Vanuatu, Tonga, Malaysia, China, Taiwan, Egypt, and several Latin American countries and locations (Panama, Galapagos Islands, Guatemala, Patagonia).

Other indicators of impact (AACS, 2012) could be cited: Australia-based tour guiding researchers have published in practitioner journals and newsletters, presented and delivered workshops at industry conferences and training events, sat as members of the executive of tour guide industry associations, made invited submissions to government reviews, and provided advice to tourism organisations and government bodies as individuals and as member of advisory committees. Such indicators are mentioned only in passing here, as evidence of research dissemination, uptake and benefits is not tracked or captured by on-line search engines or even in annual government or business reports, nor systematically reported by researchers in the same way as research outputs are reported and tracked (see Section 2).

5. Conclusion

Until very recently, tour guiding research was characterised as being generally theoretically weak. Australia-based research has helped shift this small but enthusiastic global research effort, and synthesis of the global body of knowledge on tour guiding into one research volume should further contribute to advancing theoretically-driven, methodologically-rigorous research in tour guiding by Australians and others.

Australian tour guiding researchers are highly visible in the published literature, including conceptual and empirical papers in what many would consider to be the field’s highest quality journals. The contribution of Australian researchers is particularly evident in the development of conceptual frameworks and models. They have been active in drawing on some bodies of literature such as education, social psychology, consumer behaviour and applied communication, and in using survey methods together with mainly descriptive, though sometimes inferential, statistics.

Where Australian researchers particularly excel, however, is in tour guiding research dissemination via the development of user-oriented products, and in technology transfer via industry workshops, training and other forms of outreach, often in collaboration with industry partners. These have been a hallmark of Australia-based tour guiding research that have helped put Australian researchers at the forefront of applied tour guiding research globally. It is hoped that this review will foster more Australian research but, more importantly, more international collaboration in the coming years.

References


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