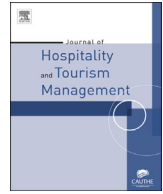




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The contribution of Australia-based researchers to tour guiding



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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 research 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 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, often in protected areas in which they are accountable for environmentally 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

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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 this 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 there was virtually no reported use of various ethnographic and novel data sources and methods such as analysis of diaries, narratives, discourse, documents and photos.

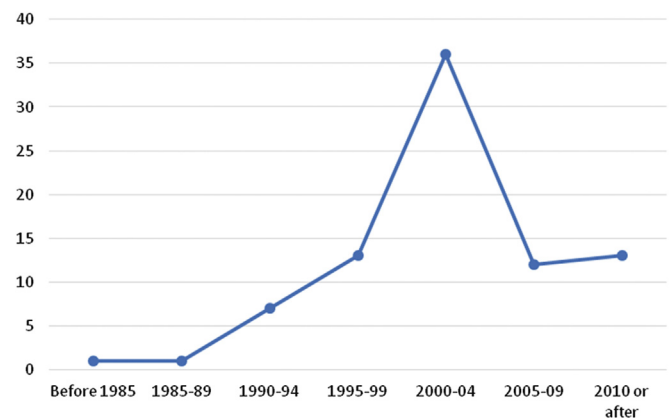


Fig. 1. Australian tour guiding research output 1980–2013.

Table 1
Methods used by Australian tour guide/guiding researchers.

Methodology	Frequency	Percent
Quantitative	27	32.5%
Theoretical/Conceptual	20	24.1%
Qualitative	15	18.1%
Mixed Methods	14	16.9%
None reported	7	8.4%
Total	83	100.0%

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