



## UNDERSTANDING TOURIST 'EXPERIENCES' AND 'BEHAVIOUR' IN CITIES *An Australian Case Study*

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### Objectives of Study

In 2007 Edwards, Griffin and Hayllar argued that research on urban tourism was not reflective of its degree of importance relative to tourism in other types of destinations, and little of that research had been conducted in Australia. To address this imbalance this study aims to enhance the understanding of tourist experiences and behaviour in urban destinations.

Data was collected on tourists' movements and spatial behavior, the images they captured as memories, their expectations of 39 attributes grouped into five broad categories, and the perceived performance of the destinations in relation to these attributes. The ultimate aim of this project is to inform and guide the future governance and improved functioning of urban tourism destinations by developing a better understanding of the tourist in such settings.

### Methodology

The study was conducted in Sydney and Canberra employing a variety of research methods in three phases. Phase one involved a detailed literature review to identify a range of destination attributes required by tourists in urban destinations.

In phase two tourists were tracked using Global Positioning System (GPS) devices that recorded the direction, time, location and pattern of their movement during a single day's visit of Sydney or Canberra. Using digital photography, the tourists captured their experiences contemporaneously with their spatial patterns.

Phase three focused on refining the destination attributes identified in phase one and two and incorporating them into a survey which explores tourists' expectations on a range of attributes.

### Key Findings

- Visitor movement in Sydney is based on the city core or 'spine'.
- Sydney typifies a spatial system that tends to facilitate repetitive movements.
- Once respondents in Sydney found a path from A to B they tend to retrace their steps on future trips.
- Tourists visiting Sydney will walk up to 35 kilometres a day.

- To move tourists beyond the concentrated core, the means of facilitating such visitor movements needs to be implemented, at both macro and micro levels.
- Tourists will make similar comparisons to other destinations they have visited using those places as a benchmark by which to judge the location they are currently experiencing.
- Managers have to be concerned with facilitating visitor movement on both macro and micro levels within Sydney.
- Random exploration is undertaken by visitors between visits to specific attractions and sites.
- The dispersed nature of Canberra city means that visitors perceive walking to attractions as circuitous and time consuming.
- Tourists in the Canberra tracking study generally utilised the same patterns of movement.
- 'Viewing from the car' is a common way in which Canberra is experienced.
- Repetitive touring in Canberra was uncommon.
- Trips in Canberra are planned with specific attractions in mind.
- Thirty-nine attributes were grouped under five categories: 'city environment', 'city experience', 'range of attractions' and 'food services' were chosen for expectation–importance– performance comparison.
- Domestic and international tourists differ in their expectations of, perceived importance of, and performance of, destination attributes. This indicates that managing expectations and destination attributes to these two broad market segments will require different strategies.
- Image analysis suggests that the presentation of the images of a city through its iconic sites is an incomplete marketing message.
- Important marketing messages include: the positioning of people 'experiencing' a city; images of detail beyond the iconic sites; and an examination and presentation of different layers of experience within each destination.
- From the total respondents, cluster analysis identified three subgroups, 'the planners', 'spontaneous/repeat visitors' and 'the discoverers'.