VISITOR MONITORING IN MOUNTAIN PARKS AND RESORTS

SUMMER MOUNTAIN TOURISM, VICTORIA

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ABSTRACT

Mountains are a unique and valuable environmental, cultural and social resource. Tourism in the Australian mountains, in particular the 'Australian Alps,' has over the last fifty years contributed significantly to the national economy.

Key issues in Australian mountain tourism include the potential impact of climate change, the development of summer tourism and visitor monitoring. The sustainability of mountain tourism in Australia requires effective management of all these issues. Ski tourism has, since the 1970s been the principle activity and economic contributor in most alpine regions. However, more recently there is an increasing focus on summer tourism in these regions and the associated activities being undertaken. Such activities include: bush walking, mountain biking, horseback riding, fishing, canoeing, camping, sightseeing, climbing and abseiling. While there is ample information on the winter markets and activities, most resorts do not have a full understanding of the summer mountain tourism market. Furthermore, due to changes in the climate bringing shorter winter periods and extended summer periods, investigation of mountain tourism in the summer is of paramount importance.

This report examines the current and potential market for summer mountain tourism with a view to satisfying the expectations of these markets by providing the type of experiences and activities that best meets their needs while maintaining the environmental integrity of these mountain regions. In preserving the unique resources of the mountain regions, the nature of the market must be understood in order to predict and manage impacts.

A visitor monitoring study was undertaken at Mt Buffalo National Park to profile park users and determine the type of user, motivations for using the park and the degree of satisfaction experienced. Summer visitors are in the age category of 30-54 years, highly educated usually holding a tertiary education qualification. They travel in family groups and largely come from the more affluent eastern and southern suburbs of Melbourne. They are generally not winter visitors and were either first time visitors or infrequent visitors (every 2 to 3 years). The main concerns raised included poor access, lack of cheap accommodation alternatives and the limited range of dining options. The predominant motivation for visiting Mt Buffalo in the summer is to enjoy nature.

In an effort to further understand potential markets for mountains in summer a large perception study was also undertaken in the Melbourne CBD to gauge the impressions of visitors and non-visitors to visiting mountains during summer. Some of the findings of the first study were confirmed by this larger study. One important finding of the study was the general lack of awareness of mountains in summer and the recurring response that a beach holiday was the obvious choice as a summer destination. There was also a perception that mountains were too remote, the costs of visiting (accommodation, travel) would be too high (possibly equated with winter promotions) and that there would be little to do once there. On the positive side, the recurring image of mountains in summer included such attributes as 'unique', opportunity for improving health and well being, tranquillity and escape.

While improving the range of services and amenities offered at our mountain resorts is critical to increasing visitation, these studies also suggest that the key challenges for resort managers and marketing personnel include the need to overcome the negative perceptions related to access and cost and capitalise on the positive psychological attributes afforded to potential markets.

SUMMARY

Objectives of Study

The region commonly known as the Australian Alps are the highest mountainous areas that are situated in south-east of Australia including the Brindabella Range near Canberra, the Snowy Mountains in New South Wales, the 'alpine' area north-east of Melbourne and highland areas in south eastern Tasmania. Most of these areas that are often referred to as 'alpine' areas are not truly alpine and in global comparison can hardly be thought of as mountains. Mt Kosciusko in New South Wales is the highest peak reaching not much more than 2,000 metres. Even so, these regions are very beautiful, are high enough to have fostered a significant snow based tourism industry, albeit unpredictable and have the beginnings of a growing summertime tourist market. In the past, the snow-based activities have contributed $410 million every year to the national economy (Konig 1998) and there has been significant infrastructure invested to support tourism in these regions.

Mountain regions globally are extremely sensitive to climate change (Messerli & Winiger 1992; Parish & Funnell 1999), placing snow-based tourism in an increasingly vulnerable position. The winter ski season in Australia is becoming more unpredictable, shorter in duration and is consequently facing greater competition with other winter destinations relatively close by such as New Zealand. The market is becoming more reluctant each year to book accommodation in advance and most tend to 'wait and see' before deciding on a snow-based holiday. The stakeholders and surrounding communities in these mountain regions are becoming concerned about the increase in the number of months in the year that the facilities are laying dormant. There is a slow realisation that attention needs to be given to increasing tourism in the summer months if these seasonal alpine destinations are to survive. While mountain holidays in the summer have always been popular in other parts of the world, especially in Europe, in Australia the mountain resorts do not have an image as a summer holiday destination.

This report contains two chapters that seek to examine in part, the perspective of current and potential markets in undertaking a summer holiday in a Victorian mountain resort.

- Chapter 1 seeks to determine the profile of the summer mountain visitor, using Mt Buffalo as the study site.
- Chapter 2 presents the perceptions of visitors and non-visitors to Victorian mountain resorts in the summer.

Methodology

Chapter 1

The methodology for this study consisted of a survey conducted via face-face interviews with visitors to Mt Buffalo in 2000 over the Easter holiday period. A cluster analysis was used to determine a number of profiles of the summer visitor. A sample size of 200 was chosen and there was a 100% response rate.

The survey instrument included 22 items, most of which were quantitative in nature although there was opportunity for qualitative data to be recorded. In order to obtain a high rate of return and high quality data the survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews.

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with the major stakeholders of Mt Buffalo, the Mt Buffalo Chalet and Parks Victoria. A range of nominal, ordinal and ratio responses were required and a six-point Likert scale was used to measure the satisfaction levels of visitors to Mt Buller.

Chapter 2

This project involved a two phase study to determine how visitors and non-visitors to Victorian mountain resorts perceived this region as a possible summer holiday destination. The first phase consisted of focus groups to determine the components that comprise the image of Victorian 'alpine' mountains as summer holiday destinations. Phase two consisted of face-to-face interviews randomly administered to 260 respondents in the Melbourne CBD.

Key Findings

Chapter 1

The first chapter in this report profiles the opinions of summer visitors to Mt Buffalo in an effort to understand the reasons for summer visitation, the activities undertaken and importantly the satisfaction gained from these visits. Almost half of the respondents were families or young couples who resided in the eastern and south eastern suburbs of Melbourne, the majority of whom were tertiary educated. The travel party consisted of groups of family or friends participating in a day excursion to Mt Buffalo (40%) or including the visit as part of a longer (week long) holiday. Motivations for visiting this alpine region were largely for the enjoyment of nature and for relaxation purposes

Chapter 2

Chapter two of this report provides results of a two-phase study undertaken in Melbourne to further understand the perceptions of visitors and non-visitors to mountains in summer. If these resorts are to become year-round destinations they must appeal to those potential visitors who for various reasons have not been visitors to the mountains in summer. The study identified the main feelings associated with mountain holidays, for both visitors and non-visitors, as 'relaxing' and 'peaceful'. The uniqueness of the setting was another 'pull' factor. Importantly, the major deterrents for non-visitors were largely issues related to access to the mountains (too difficult, too far away), the cost of such a holiday (often equated with the cost of a winter holiday) and the perceived lack of activities at the destination.

Recommendations

It is the view of the research that efforts to increase summer visitation must:

- address the negative perceptions held by non-visitors,

- provide a suitable range of facilities and recreational amenities for their enjoyment,

- promote the unique, relaxing and peaceful nature of such destinations.

Chapter 1

SUMMER MOUNTAIN TOURISM AT MT BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK: A VISITOR PROFILE

Introduction

This chapter reports on a study aimed at profiling the summer mountain tourist. The study was conducted in 2000 at Mt Buffalo National Park in Victoria. Mt Buffalo National Park is one of Victoria's oldest and most popular mountain resorts rich in natural resources and has a long cultural history. Situated in north-eastern Victoria, Mt Buffalo is a valuable resource to both residents and visitors. Within the region, Mt Buffalo plays a key role in tourism all year round. Due to the positioning of the resort, Mt Buffalo records considerably lower snowfalls compared to the surrounding alpine resorts. For this reason, in the winter months, Mt Buffalo is regarded as a family resort, where moderate snow-runs enable the beginner and young member of the family to enjoy the snow. In the summer months, Mt Buffalo is sought by many for its unique natural features and various activities on offer. Recently, summer visitation has increased, and the changing climate is one of the major underlying factors for this change (Konig 1998).

Undoubtedly snow-related tourist activities would be the most sensitive to rising temperatures predicted by climate change. Research indicates that among other severe impacts of snow deficient winters in alpine areas, winter visitor numbers have decreased noticeably (Galloway 1988; Keage 1990; Konig 1998). Hence the changes in climate will have unavoidably negative implications especially for the regional economies.

A response strategy to climate change, which is the underlying aim of the study, is to concentrate on the development of summer mountain tourism. To ensure visitors have the opportunity to enjoy the mountain environment in the future, appropriate management practices need to be in place to ensure its sustainability. Visitor monitoring is a fundamental practice for effective management and the first step is to identify the summer mountain tourist. This study will provide a demographic profiling of the summer mountain tourist using Mt Buffalo as the site to gather the data.

Aims and Objectives

The central aim of this study was to create a profile of visitors to Mount Buffalo in the summer. Key objectives included identifying:

- a demographic profile of summer visitors
- the activities undertaken by summer visitors
- the satisfaction levels of summer visitors
- the motivations of summer visitors.

The sample respondents were profiled on the basis of gender, age, educational status, life cycle group, origin, the nature of the travel party, length of visit and accommodation used. In being able to identify impacts of summer visitation, it is important to understand the range and type of activities undertaken by summer visitors. Identifying reasons for visiting and visitor satisfaction can contribute to estimating levels of repeat visitation.

Literature Review

This section will provide a brief overview of literature concerning the concept of visitor monitoring and mountain tourism.

Visitor Monitoring

A fundamental strategy employed by managers of fragile or protected areas is to systematically monitor visitors to these regions to ensure sustainability (McIntyre 1999). Visitor monitoring involves investigating how many visitors come to the area, identifying who the visitors are and the activities they undertake. Pannell (1997) suggests that, together with competitor analysis, reviewing tourism trends through visitor monitoring, is a crucial step in the development of a tourism strategy. Tourism trends influence the selection of target markets, decisions on product development, and the overall market positioning of the destination. Hence information regarding visitor characteristics and behaviour is fundamental to the implementation of sustainable practices. This study will use the definition of a visitor proposed by Hornback and Eagles (1999):

> A person who visits the area for purposes mandated for the area. A visitor is not paid to be in the area and does not live permanently in the area. Typically, the mandated purpose for the visit is outdoor recreation for natural parks and cultural appreciation for historic site (p.8).

McIntyre (1999) suggests that the management of protected areas in Australia suffers due to lack of reliable data on visitors, and when data is collected it fails to provide information on visitor characteristics and attitudes. Reliable visitor data is crucial to properly guide the provision and location of services, to provide estimations of carrying capacities and to estimate the contribution of protected areas to local, regional and national economies.

Civil's (2000) investigation into visitor monitoring in parks identified an increasing interest and concern in developing a better understanding of visitors. It showed that parks are important and are a valuable asset that deserves to be managed according to best business principles. It recommends that one of the cornerstones of good business management is information about products, markets and performance. Hornback and Eagles (1999) also agree that all management is dependent upon information and the better the quality of information, the better the opportunity for good management. Thus accurate management through visitor monitoring, information about the visitors and their activities enables managers to better deal with the challenge of implementing sustainable practices.

Guidelines produced by the World Tourism Organisation highlight the need for research and monitoring of visitors to ensure that decisions are based on a thorough understanding of local resources, as well as social and economic factors (WTO 1992). In keeping with the suggestion that managing tourism means managing people, it highlights the necessity to be familiar with the human side of the tourism equation. Shackley (1998) suggests that visitor management and information has become a 'new science' that aims to balance the needs and requirements of the visitor with the potential impact that the visitor may have on the environment. Furthermore, visitor monitoring is required for: 'budgeting and setting fees; allocating personnel; scheduling of maintenance; understanding the users; detecting trends in use; and planning (WTO 1992, p.21).

The conclusions derived from Civil (2000) suggest that while visitor monitoring has immediate applications in management plans, site plans, operational plans, marketing and interpretation, the full benefits will only be realised when there is sufficient data to analyse the changes and trends, and to see whether the results are representative of visitor use.

Visitor monitoring is integral to the function of marketing. Investigation by Swarbrooke (1995, p.117) suggests that the most crucial aspect of attraction management is marketing, with successful attractions being those which have a 'systematic and professional' approach characterised by 'adequate attention to market research, for a full understanding of the market, its tastes and preferences.' He further suggests that successful attractions tap into growth markets and consumer behaviour trends, and the only way this can be accomplished is through information on the visitor. Visitor monitoring helps to ensure visitor satisfaction that subsequently leads to positive word-of-mouth recommendations to others.

While a comprehensive understanding of visitor demand is important to the success of all tourist destinations, it is particularly vital to those who manage destinations that are environmentally fragile. Australia's alpine regions of Victoria and New South Wales provide the only Australian opportunity for skiing, snowboarding and other snow-based activities. While these areas are extremely important to the domestic markets and significantly contribute to the local and national economies, they are also vulnerable to visitor impacts. The next section will provide an overview of the unique nature of mountain tourism.

Mountain Tourism

The use of mountain parks and resorts has traditionally been closely tied to the ski industry with many businesses within these regions relying heavily on visitation by skiers. However overall participation in snow based activities has shown little growth in recent decades in Australia and overseas, and has indeed been stagnant for the last two decades in this country (DNRE 2004). Climate change has brought decreased snowfalls and longer summer periods there has been a move in most winter resorts globally towards increasing the summer market (Keage 1990). Buckley, Pickering and Warnken (2000) believe that the challenge now lies with the resort owners and operators to compete for clients by expanding facilities and to increase revenues by broadening the nature of the destination from winter resorts to mountain resorts.

In North America, the efforts to capture the summer market have intensified over the last decade especially and Whistler renowned as a premier ski resort now boasts more visitors in summer than in winter (although yield is still significantly higher in winter). Other resorts such as Aspen have had a strong summer program since its inception as a resort however it is the snow-based activities that are still the primary attractor for national and international visitors.

In Australia, mountain tourism provides a wide range of recreational opportunities for a large proportion of people who live in the major cities of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide. With over four million visitors annually, approximately half of these visitors pursue snow-based tourism, for which considerable accommodation and associated infrastructure has been developed over the past two decades. Data from a study

of the net economic contribution made by Victoria's alpine resorts during 2000 identified that capital expenditure associated with resorts 'added a further $29.1 million in estimated value added spending and supported an additional 557 jobs within the Victorian economy' (DNRE 2004, p.30). Mountain tourism is still dominated by the ski industry, where alpine areas, covering 5,200km^2 extend over a greater area than in the European Alps (McKercher 1997). In Australia, the ski industry contributes approximately A$410 million per annum to the combined Victorian and New South Wales state economies and creates around 12,000 full-time jobs during the winter season. Victorian resorts contribute $129m and 3,740 jobs to the Victorian economy (DNRE 2004).

The commercial viability of winter tourism in the mountains, however, depends on sufficient snow conditions, namely snow depth and duration, and extent of snow cover (Konig 1998). Collectively, winter tourism in Australia is proving unreliable compared to overseas destinations, as snow cover is limited both temporally and spatially in comparison to Europe, Asia and the Americas (Buckley, Pickering & Warnken 2000). In the short term, this issue is being addressed by each resort in installation of comprehensive snowmaking facilities. According to CSIRO research and modelling, it is proposed that with continued investment in snowmaking systems and techniques, Victoria's higher altitude resorts (such as Falls Creek, Hotham and Mt Buller) will be able to maintain sufficient snow cover to remain viable as winter resorts until at least 2020 (DNRE 2004).

Mountain Tourism and Sustainability

The alpine environment is rare and fragile in nature due to the number of ecosystems which exist within these areas; therefore development activities have the potential to cause environmental damage to these ecosystems. Williams and Todd (1997) indicate that environmental damage is particularly pronounced in alpine regions where ski areas have been developed.

The development of downhill skiing at Cairngorm, Scotland, has been examined from different perspectives on sustainability and tourism development. Ecological studies reveal negative consequences for fauna and flora from the development of downhill skiing for commercial purposes, with a more obvious impact of the aesthetic despoliation resulting from ski lifts (Holden 1999). Holden also questions whether high impact tourism (ski tourism) is a suitable component of sustainable policy. Likewise, the research by Good and Grenier (1994) concludes that the environmental impacts of skiing in Australia are many, with some impacts being quite obvious, such as the destruction of vegetation during slope grooming operations and by skiers when the snow cover is poor.

In recognition of the need to adequately protect the Australian alpine environment, a major objective is to ensure that the establishment, development, promotion and use of alpine resorts is undertaken with due regard to environmental and ecological considerations (DNRE 2004). According to Humann (1990), in today's economic climate, resources are limited and a careful set of priorities needs to be established to properly manage mountain parks and resorts. Given the sensitivity of environmental issues in alpine areas and the different pressures which summer activities may impose on the environment, particular attention will need to be given to the continued development of appropriate management plans and strategies to ensure the preservation of such unique areas for the benefit of future generations.

The sustainability of mountain tourism in Australia clearly requires effective management at the national, regional and local levels. A variety of planning guidelines have been developed, but McKercher (1997) argues that most plans are weakened because they focus on future tourism development activities without addressing the historical issues that have driven past development at the destination. He also points out that they fail to account for the considerable inertia regarding the ongoing development of many destinations. Pearce (1989) agrees that it is this inertia that results in most tourism plans not being implemented or not achieving the stated objectives.

Most reports and discussions on sustainability and tourism have come from academics, or those in government departments who are anxious to preserve resources while developing their economies (Murphy 1994). Murphy alleges that most of this research is concerned with policy issues, procedures and implications with relatively little reference to the direct involvement and needs of the tourism industry and its principal clients, the tourists. He claims that 'we do not have a clear picture of the tourists' knowledge of, or commitment to sustainable tourism development' (p.174). Therefore a better understanding and monitoring of visitors to mountain parks and resorts in the summer will assist with effective planning for all those involved in mountain tourism.

The Impact of Climate Change on Mountain Tourism

The changing climate, particularly the decrease in snow cover, is likely to have significant effects on ski resorts and mountain tourism in Australia (Konig 1998). Poor snow seasons in the past have resulted in dramatic declines in income for resorts and associated commercial activities (Keage 1990; Konig 1998). Surveys of people currently visiting resorts to ski or snowboard indicate that the majority would give up skiing, ski overseas, or ski in Australia less often, if snow cover declines (Konig 1998). Konig also concludes that an

increase in snow making, reduced prices of lift tickets and the availability of non-snow activities are most important to skiers when choosing a resort in future snow-deficient winters.

In relation to predicted visitor trends, if snow cover does decline, summer mountain tourism should intensify as a result of the changing climate. It has already been found that the growth rate of mountain tourism in the summer is more rapid than in resort skiing (Buckley et al. 2000) and there is evidence to suggest that non-snow based activities are in demand by many visitors (Konig 1998). Experiencing the remoteness of the mountains in the summer is a major motivator for visitors, including the diverse landscapes providing a range of activities such as bushwalking, mountain biking, horseback riding, camping and fishing.

Notably the changes in activities will broaden the environmental impacts of mountain tourism to include those associated with summer recreational activities, as well as winter resorts and skiing (Buckley et al. 2000). The changes in activities mean that visitor numbers may increase, and growth in visitation results in greater potential for adverse environmental impacts (Driml & Common 1995). In addition, changes in conditions bring different types of visitors, which could also result in negative impacts if the differences are not noted or understood. The challenge in managing tourism is to reach a balance between the benefits of tourism and the maintenance of the natural environment. The careful management of natural resources ensures that any current and future deleterious environmental impacts remain within acceptable and appropriate limits of change (Good et al. 1994). Visitor monitoring becomes even more important with any change in visitor numbers, types or activities (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The role of visitor monitoring in managing mountain resorts
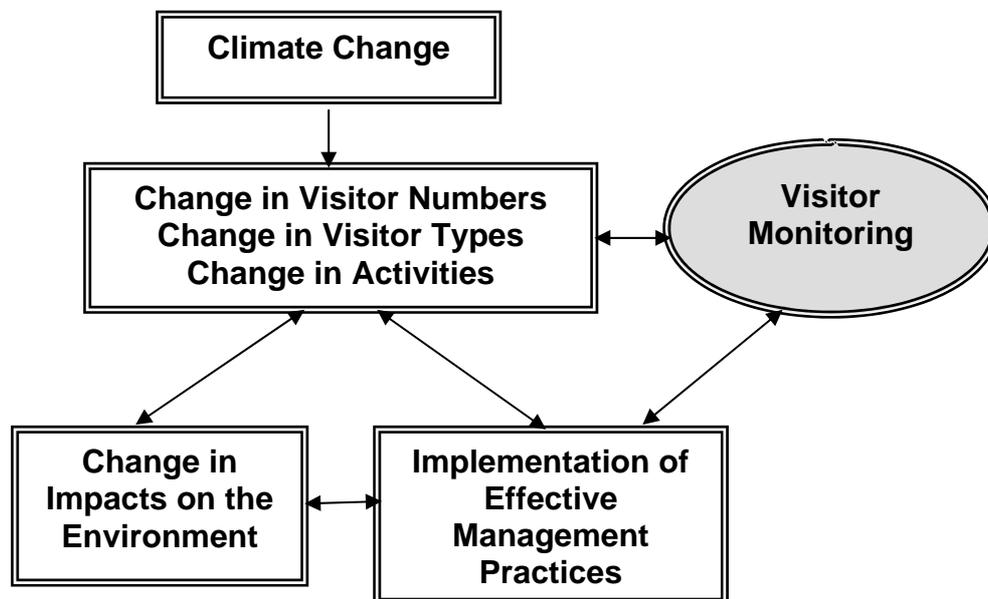
If managed well, non-snow based tourism will act as a buffer against the decline of winter tourism in the mountains and mitigate the decline of the economic health of the regions. Resorts and local regional centres need to focus more on year round tourism including special events, conferences, educational and health tourism as well as adventure sports.

Method

The data was collected in April 2000, during the Easter holidays at Mt Buffalo National Park. The population of interest was visitors to Mt Buller National Park for the purpose of a summer holiday or a day trip.

The study used a random sample of 200 visitors to Mount Buffalo. Every tenth visitor was surveyed and there was a response rate of 100%. The data was collected in the peak summer period of Saturday 22 April to Monday 24 April 2000. The characteristics of the sample included visitors of Mount Buffalo, between the age brackets of 18-70.

The survey instrument included 22 items, most of which were quantitative in nature although there was opportunity for qualitative data to be recorded. In order to obtain a high rate of return and high quality data the survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews.

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with the major stakeholders of Mt Buffalo, the Mt Buffalo Chalet and Parks Victoria. A range of nominal, ordinal and ratio responses were required and a six-point Likert scale was used to measure the satisfaction levels of visitors to Mt Buller.

The questionnaire was administered by the interviewer, face-to-face with the respondent. Each questionnaire took approximately eight minutes to complete, and each respondent was assured anonymity and the opportunity to decline a response to any question, without comment from the interviewer. This method provided the simplest form of data gathering and administration, as the interviewer completed the questionnaire, thus no gathering and time costs were experienced.

The following areas of Mt Buller were used as data collection sites:
- The Chalet & The Gorge Day Visitor Area
- Lake Catani
    - Grossmans Mill Picnic Area; Lakeside Day Visitor Area; Lake Catani Campground
- Cresta Valley Day Visitor Centre, Mt Buffalo Lodge
- The Horn Picnic Area

Using SPSS for Windows (Version 10), frequency distributions, and descriptive statistics were obtained accordingly for all variables. Cross tabulation and Chi-square analysis was used to ascertain that there is a relationship between two variables, and both cluster analysis and discriminant analysis were used to determine the strength of relationships between variables.

Results

Demographic profile

The first objective of the study was to establish a demographic profile of the summer visitor.
Table 1 provides an overview of the gender, ages, educational status and origin of the visitors surveyed.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC	CATEGORIES	INCLUDED GROUP (N)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Gender	Male	96	48
	Female	104	52
	Total	**200**	**100**
Age	18-19 years	1	0.5
	20-24 years	15	7.5
	25-29 years	17	8.5
	30-34 years	29	14.5
	35-39 years	33	16.5
	40-44 years	22	11
	45-49 years	27	13.5
	50-54 years	24	12
	55-59 years	14	7
	60-64 years	4	2
	65-69 years	10	5
	70+ years	4	5
	Total	**200**	**100**
Educational Status	Secondary	44	22
	Tertiary	152	76
	Neither	4	2
	Total	**200**	**100**
Life Cycle Group	Young Single	27	13.5
	Young Couple	41	20.5
	Young Family	12	6
	Middle Family	45	22.5
	Mature Family	30	15
	Older Couple	31	15.5
	Mature Single	12	6

	Single Parent	2	1
	Total	**200**	**100**
Residence	Central Melbourne	15	8
	Western Melbourne	11	5
	Northern Melbourne	22	11
	Eastern Melbourne	56	28
	Southern Melbourne	48	24
	Regional Victoria	28	14
	New South Wales	12	6
	Queensland	4	2
	South Australia	2	1
	Overseas	2	1
	Total	**200**	**100**
Number in Travel Party	0-2 people	10	5
	3-5 people	66	33
	5-7 people	68	34
	8-9 people	12	6
	10-12 people	23	11.5
	13-14 people	6	3
	15-17 people	4	2
	18-19 people	4	2
	20+ people	7	3.5
	Total	**200**	**100**
Travel Party Description	Alone	10	5
	With a Spouse or Partner	41	20.5
	Group of Immediate Family Members (Parents and Children)	37	18.5
	Friends or Relatives with Children	53	26.5
	Friends or Relatives without Children	53	26.5
	Educational Group	2	1
	Other	4	2
	Total	**200**	**100**
Description of Visit	Day Trip from Home	24	12
	Day Trip from Valley	80	40
	Holiday/Excursion lasting One Night	9	4.5
	Holiday/Excursion lasting up to a week	84	42
	Holiday/Excursion lasting longer than a week	3	1.5
	Total	**200**	**100**
Accommodation Used	Mount Buffalo Chalet	51	29
	Mount Buffalo Lodge	10	6
	Catani Camping Ground	23	13
	Alpine Shire (Myrtleford, Porepunkah, Bright, Mt. Beauty)	75	42.5
	In the Region	15	8.5

	(Wangaratta, Albury/Wodonga, Beechworth)		
	Other	2	1
	Total	**176**	**100**
Frequency of Visit	Every 2-3 years	53	26.5
	Annually	39	19.5
	2-3 Times a year	7	3.5
	Over 3 Times a year	7	3.5
	Other	94	47
	Total	**200**	**100**
Season of Visit (Seasonality)	Summer Only	161	80.5
	Winter Only	0	0
	Summer and Winter	39	19.5
	Total	**200**	**100**

The sample of respondents was evenly divided in terms of gender, 48% male and 52% female. The age group of 35-39 represented the highest percentage in the sample (16.5%), with the least percentage of respondents aged between 18-19 years (0.5%). Figure 2 illustrates that the majority of respondents are aged between 30-54 years (67.5%).

Figure 2: Age of visitors
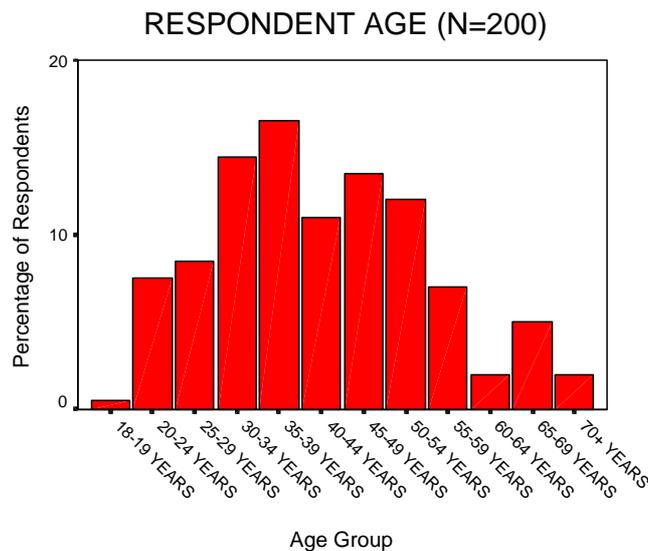
The majority of respondents were highly educated, with 76% having completed tertiary education (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Educational status of visitors

EDUCATIONAL STATUS (N=200)
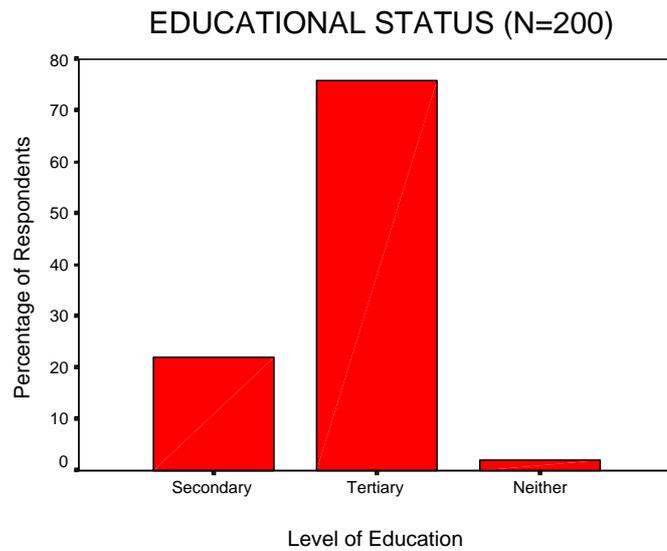
While visitors to Mt Buffalo do not represent the whole spectrum of life cycle groups found in the Australian community, two groups clearly dominated the profile of visitors from the sample: middle families (22.5%) and young couples (20.5%). Together these two groups comprised almost 50% of total respondents (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Life cycle groups of visitors

LIFE CYCLE GROUP (N=200)
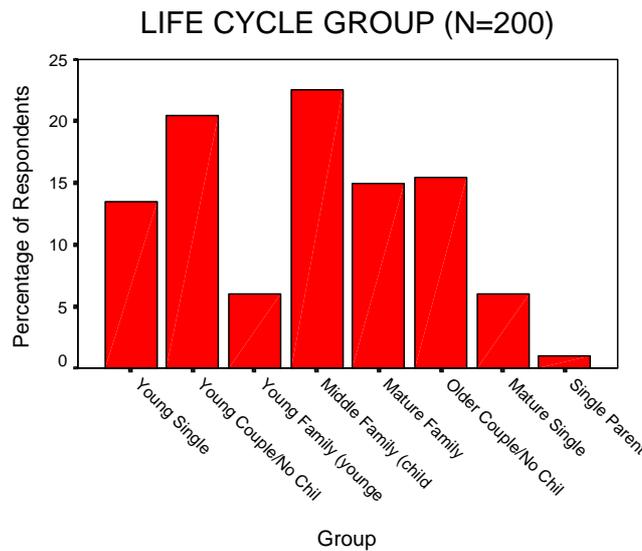
Respondents were asked for their postcode in order to map where the majority of the respondents lived, and how far they travelled to visit Mount Buffalo. Noticing that the majority of postcodes were from Melbourne, the researcher divided Melbourne into five divisions and calculated the percentage of respondents from each (Figure 5). The percentage of respondents from regional Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland and overseas were also calculated. The results indicated that the majority of respondents were from the eastern and southern suburbs of Melbourne (28% and 24% respectively), followed by the northern suburbs (11%), central suburbs (8%) and western suburbs (5%) of Melbourne. The remaining respondents came from regional Victoria (14%), New South Wales (6%), South Australia (1%) and Queensland (2%), with a small 1% from overseas. From this, the average distance travelled by the visitor was approximately 320kms, which is the approximate distance from Melbourne to Mount Buffalo.

Respondents were asked to state the total number of people, including themselves, in their travel party. These results are graphically illustrated in the histogram that follows (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Number in travel party

NUMBER IN TRAVEL PARTY (N=199)
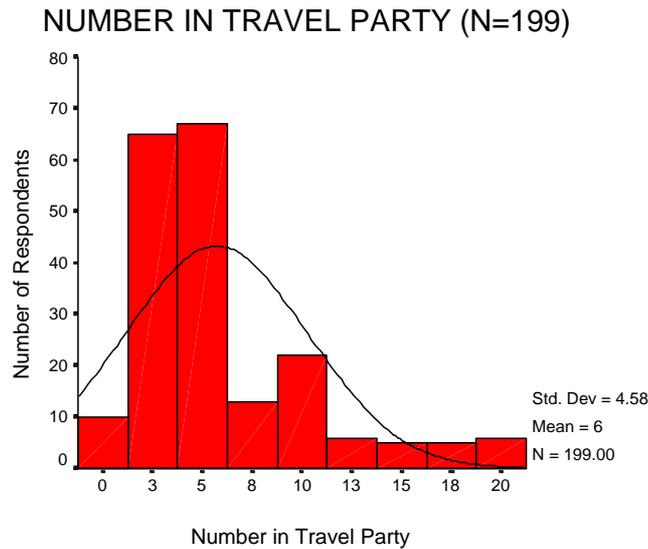
Evidently, the majority of respondents travelled within a group of five people, with the mean value of 5.8, range of 29, minimum of 1, maximum of 30 and a standard deviation of 4.88. There was one travel party of 30 that was excluded from the analysis.

It was also clear that most people were travelling with friends or relatives with children (26.5%) and friends or relatives travelling together without children (26.5%). Figure 6 shows the description of the travel parties. Other significant groups included: with a spouse or partner (20.5%) and a group of immediate family members, parents and children (18.5%).

Figure 6: Types of Travel Parties

TRAVEL PARTY DESCRIPTION (N=200)
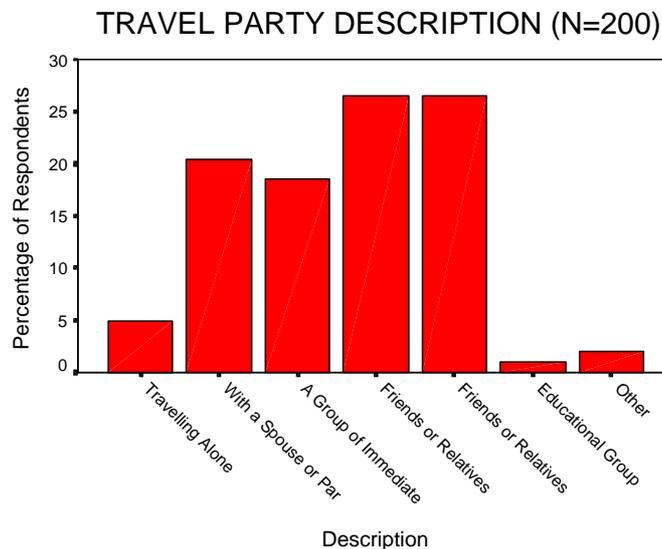
Nature of Visit

When respondents were asked to describe the nature of their visit, the majority of respondents were categorised into two distinct, but fairly equally sized groups: a holiday/excursion lasting up to a week (42%), and day trip from the valley (40%). Figure 7 shows the type of visits chosen by the visitors.

Figure 7: Description of visit

DESCRIPTION OF VISIT (N=200)
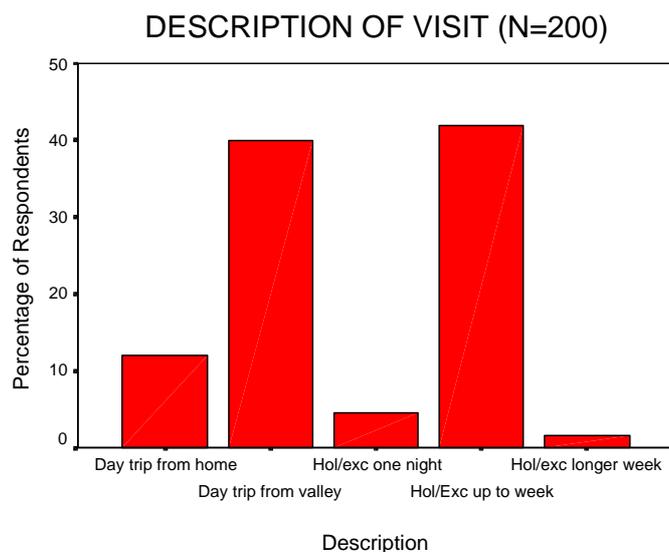
This study found that those who visit Mt Buffalo are also inclined to visit other alpine resorts in the area too. This suggests that the concept of mountains as a summer destination is a positive one, at least for the respondents in this study.

Activities Undertaken

Visitors to Mt Buffalo in the summer can enjoy a variety of activities. Table 2 lists the activities available in the summer.

Table 2: Activities offered at Mount Buffalo

Visit to the Horn	Visit to the Mount Buffalo Gorge
Visit to the Cathedral	Sightseeing
Bush walking (short walk)	Bush walking (medium walk)
Bush walking (long walk)	Bush walking (overnight hike)
Horse riding	Abseiling/climbing
Mountain Biking	Trout Fishing
Canoeing	Underground River Caving
Mount Buffalo Lodge – Audio Visual	Mount Buffalo Chalet – Tea Rooms
Swimming	Lake Catani Precinct

The range of activities provides opportunities for many types of visitors in the summer and indicates a well-developed base for Mt Buffalo's summer tourist product. A cluster analysis was used to see if there were groups of activities that were undertaken by different types of visitors. The analysis indicated seven clusters of activities that were undertaken by different groups. Table 3 shows the discriminant function for each of the activities in the seven clusters.

Table 3: Discriminant function for each cluster

CLUSTER NUMBER	ACTIVITIES	DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION
1 N = 20	X_1 = Visit to the Horn	.428
	X_2 = Visit to Mount Buffalo Gorge	.502
	X_4 = Sightseeing	-.306
	X_5 = Bush walking (short walk)	.665
	X_6 = Bush walking (medium walk)	.539
2 N = 35	X_1 = Visit to the Horn	-.555
	X_4 = Sightseeing	.699
	X_5 = Bush walking (short walk)	.770
	X_{15} = Lake Catani Precinct	.394
3 N = 23	X_1 = Visit to the Horn	-.825
	X_2 = Visit to Mount Buffalo Gorge	1.037
	X_5 = Bush walking (short walk)	-.437
	X_6 = Bush walking (medium walk)	.352
4 N = 24	X_3 = Visit to the Cathedral	.521
	X_4 = Sightseeing	.304
	X_5 = Bush walking (short walk)	.621
	X_7 = Bush walking (long walk)	-.299
	X_8 = Bush walking (overnight hike)	-.352
	X_{10} = Abseiling/climbing	.332
	X_{14} = Mount Buffalo Chalet – Tea Rooms	-.754
5 N = 44	X_1 = Visit to the Horn	-.789
	X_2 = Visit to Mount Buffalo Gorge	.434
	X_3 = Visit to the Cathedral	-.311
	X_5 = Bush walking (short walk)	.846
	X_9 = Horse riding	-.302
	X_{14} = Mount Buffalo Chalet – Tea Rooms	.412
	X_{15} = Lake Catani Precinct	-.289
6 N = 37	X_1 = Visit to the Horn	.324
	X_2 = Visit to Mount Buffalo Gorge	.321
	X_4 = Sightseeing	.193
	X_6 = Bush walking (medium walk)	.669
	X_8 = Bush walking (overnight hike)	.454
	X_{13} = Mount Buffalo Lodge – Audio visual	.233
	X_{14} = Mount Buffalo Chalet – Tea Rooms	.469
	X_{15} = Lake Catani Precinct	.362
7 N = 17	X_1 = Visit to the Horn	.493
	X_4 = Sightseeing	-.414
	X_5 = Bush walking (short walk)	.577
	X_6 = Bush walking (medium walk)	-.379
	X_{10} = Abseiling/climbing	.267
	X_{14} = Mount Buffalo Chalet – Tea Rooms	.292
	X_{15} = Lake Catani Precinct	-.555

* X_1 = Visit to the Horn; X_2 = Visit to Mount Buffalo Gorge; X_3 = Visit to the Cathedral; X_4 = Sightseeing X_5 = Bush walking (short walk); X_6 = Bush walking (medium walk); X_7 = Bush walking (long walk); X_8 = Bush walking (overnight hike); X_9 = Horse riding; X_{10} = Abseiling/climbing; X_{11} = Mountain biking; X_{12} = Underground river caving; X_{13} = Mount Buffalo Lodge – Audio visual; X_{14} = Mount Buffalo Chalet – Tea Rooms; X_{15} = Lake Catani Precinct.

Visiting the Horn was included in all clusters. Cluster one also included a visit to the Gorge and bush walking (short and medium walks), whereas cluster two included sightseeing as well as bushwalking (short walks). Cluster three included a visit to the Gorge and bush walking (short walks), and cluster four added a visit to the cathedral, as well as bush walking (short and overnight walks), abseiling/climbing. Cluster five undertook the majority of activities, with visits to the Horn, visits to the Gorge, visits to the cathedral, bush walking (short walks) and horse-riding. Cluster six undertook the activities of bush walking (medium and overnight walks), visits to the Lake Catani precinct, whereas cluster seven, undertook visits to the Horn, sightseeing, visits to the Gorge, and bush walking (short walks) and to the Lake Catani precinct.

Visitor Types

Each cluster differed on the dimension of life cycle group, length of visit and number in travel party. The seven clusters are described in Table 4.

Table 4: Clusters of visitor types and activities most likely undertaken

CLUSTER NUMBER	CLUSTER NAME	DESCRIPTION
1	'The Day Tripper'	As the name suggests, this group visited Mount Buffalo for the day and visited the Horn, the Gorge and went bush walking (short and medium). Every life cycle group was represented within this group, however young couples and middle families dominated. They travelled within small parties of two to five members.
2	'The Mature Aged'	This group represented the older life cycle groups, and undertook fewer physical activities. They visited the Horn, went sightseeing and bush walking (short). This group both visited for the day and for up to a week, and travelled within small parties of two to nine members.
3	'The Older Day Tripper'	Similar to *the day tripper*, this group predominantly visited Mount Buffalo for the day and visited the Horn, the Gorge and went bush walking (short). The only difference in activities between this group and *the day tripper* was this group undertook short bush walks only. It was assumed that the life cycle characteristics of this group were a factor in the activities undertaken, with a significant portion being older couples. This group travelled within small parties of two to nine members.
4	'The Family Holidayer'	Dominated by families, this group visited the Cathedral, went bush walking (short and overnight), abseiling/climbing and visited the tea rooms. This group mostly spent up to a week at Mount Buffalo, and travelled in parties of two to six members.
5	'The Young Family Day Tripper'	Predominantly families, but also young singles and young couples, this group undertook many activities, despite mostly visiting for a day. They visited the Horn, Gorge and Cathedral, went bush walking (short walks), horse-riding and visited the tea rooms. A significant portion of this group also stayed up to a week or longer on the mountain, and travelled within a party of three to seven members or more.
6	'The Vacationist'	*The vacationist* stayed at Mount Buffalo for up to a week, and undertook bush walking (short and overnight) and visited the tea rooms and Lake precinct. They were primarily made up of families, however young couples and older couples were also significant. *The vacatio*nist travelled within a group of two to six, however large groups of over nine members was also evident.
7	'The Group Vacationist'	*The group vacationist* was made up of family life cycle groups. They visited the Horn and Gorge, went sightseeing, bush walking (short) and visited the Lake precinct. As the name suggests, this group travelled in large numbers, with a significant proportion travelling within a group larger than ten, staying on the mountain for up to a week or longer.

The shorter the length of visit, the fewer activities the visitor is likely to undertake. Both the *day tripper* and the *older day tripper* included visits to the Horn and Gorge and bush walking. The results further confirmed that bush walking was popular throughout all seven groups of visitors - the Horn was a popular site in five groups and the Gorge in four groups. Natural attractions like the Horn and the Gorge are key attractions for Mt Buffalo's summer tourism market.

It was clear that families who visited Mount Buffalo took part in the majority of activities, including the more physical activities of horse riding, abseiling/climbing, as well as the prime activities identified earlier. As families travel in both small and large groups and predominantly visit for up to week, this strengthens the discussion on developing packages directly for the family market, combining the activities of interest with

accommodation. They are an active group, spending many nights on the mountain, and thus are economically significant to the region.

Another popular activity undertaken by Mount Buffalo's summer tourism market was sightseeing in general. Sightseeing was especially enjoyed by both young and older visitors travelling as a couple or in a small group. According to the Tourism Victoria survey, bush walking is one of the top ten activities undertaken by visitors to the region, with sightseeing and visiting National Parks also very popular.

Mount Buffalo offers a wide range of activities and products for the summer visitor. The information obtained from this study is of value to the mountain tourism industry in that it could influence how activities and services are developed for visitors in the future. It seems logical that a marketing program be directed to families, with the widest range of activities undertaken and enjoyed by this group, many of whom stay up to a week. The day trip market enjoys the numerous bush walks available and visits the popular Horn and Gorge sites. While the identification of a visitor profile is important to understanding the nature of the summer tourism market, this information is only useful if the satisfaction of these visitors can be assessed. There is no point in attracting large numbers of visitors if they all leave the destination without their needs and expectations being met.

Satisfaction Levels

Respondents were asked to rank their overall satisfaction of their visit to Mt Buffalo. The ranking scale used is 1 = completely dissatisfied; 2 = very dissatisfied; 3 dissatisfied; 4 = satisfied, 5 = very satisfied, 6 = fully satisfied. Figure 8 shows the results of the satisfaction level of visitors to Mt Buffalo.

Figure 8: Satisfaction levels
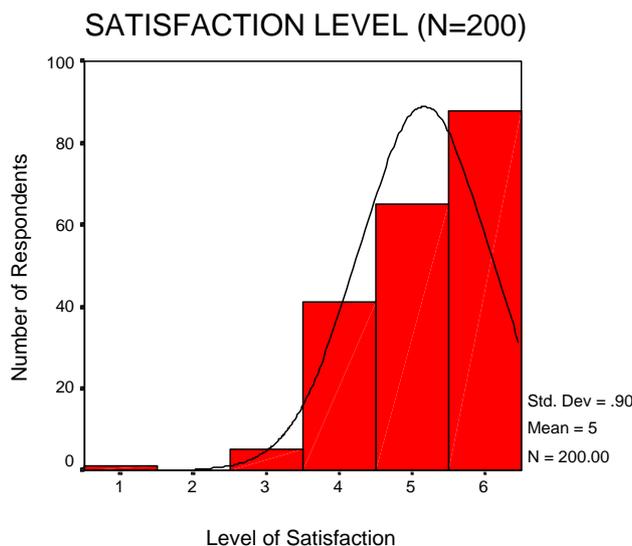
The results showed that most visitors were satisfied with their visit to Mt Buffalo with 44% indicating they were fully satisfied while only .5% indicating completely dissatisfied.

Visitor Motivations

While this result confirms the obvious it was thought that it was worth verifying mountain resorts as destinations that attract those wishing to enjoy nature and seeking relaxation. Figure 9 shows the motivations of the respondents for visiting Mt Buffalo.

Figure 9: Motivations for visiting Mt Buffalo

MOTIVATION FOR VISITING (N=200)
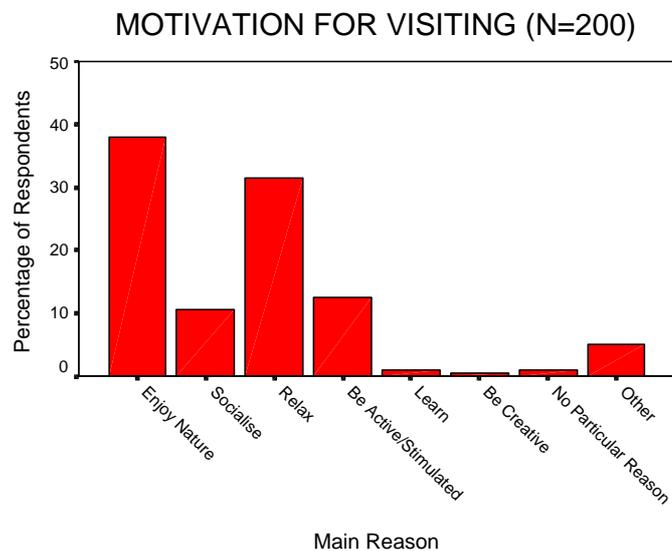
Conclusions

The following points summarise the findings from this study and relate specifically to the central aim and key objectives.

- Summer visitors to Mount Buffalo are:
    - aged between 30 and 54 years
    - highly educated, holding a tertiary education status.
    - families with children or young couples
    - travel from Melbourne, particularly from the more affluent eastern and southern suburbs
    - travel with an average of five other members
    - visit for one day, or for up to a week
    - use commercial accommodation
    - usually first-time visitors or visit every 2-3 years
    - mostly visit in the summer only.

- There were different sets of activities undertaken by different groups. Seven clusters of activities and groups were identified according to life cycle characteristics, length of visit, and number in travel party.

- Visitors were mostly satisfied with their visit but a number of concerns were raised under the following themes:

- Poor access and roads
    - Lack of cheaper accommodation
    - Limited range of food and beverages on offer
    - Limited parking availability

The predominant motivation for visiting Mt Buffalo in the summer is to enjoy nature. Although most visitors would not fall into the true 'nature' tourist category that seek true ecotourism experiences at every opportunity, they obviously enjoy being outdoors and enjoying the beautiful natural surroundings offered at Mt Buffalo albeit in a comfortable manner.

Recommendations

- Communication and cooperation between all stakeholders is paramount, specifically between the management of the resort and Parks Victoria. Communication ensures that visitors are fully informed about any changes that may alter their experience and will help to portray a coordinated image for the destination. Importantly, increased communication between the stakeholders can ensure that capacities are not exceeded.

- Develop packages for families combining accommodation with the activities of interest. Using the life-cycle analysis, packages can be tailored to fit the needs of the significant market groups.

- Develop and maintain a special event calendar that includes all scales of events. Clearly, the smaller scale events that have taken place on the mountain have been a success, drawing many visitors from local and regional townships. Again, co-ordination and involvement with other towns in the area that hold larger festivals and events can assist Mt Buffalo in capitalizing on visitors to the region. Events can provide an initial attractor to visitors to enable them to have a 'taste' of the mountains in the summer and hopefully start to overcome the perception barrier.

- Lobby for improved road surfaces and better tourist amenities. Basic services such as parking areas, rubbish bins and toilets need to be improved as this will detract from the visitor experience.

Chapter 2

MOUNTAIN RESORTS IN SUMMER: DEFINING THE IMAGE

Introduction

This chapter portrays the perceptions of visitors and non-visitors to alpine mountain regions in considering these traditional winter destinations as possible summer destinations. What is the 'destination image' that is portrayed? What are the perceptions of visitors and non-visitors of the mountains in the summer? And what perceptions prevent non-visitors from choosing the mountains as a summer holiday destination? The geographical region of this study is the Victorian 'alpine' mountains. This region includes: Mt Hotham, Dinner Plain, Mt Buller, Mt Stirling, Mt Buffalo, Falls Creek, Mt Baw Baw and Lake Mountain. In determining the image of Victorian 'alpine' mountains in summer, this study adopted a broad approach and did not focus on any individual mountain.

The impact of climate change is causing concern at national and state government level with the Victorian government recently releasing a discussion paper: *Alpine Resorts 2020* (DNRE 2002). This discussion paper was the first stage of a government strategy to ensure the sustainability of regional economies, recognising the value of the natural environment that provides the main attraction for tourists while considering the importance of the economic vitality of regions closest to these alpine resorts. Feedback from relevant stakeholder groups has subsequently been addressed in a strategy that seeks to address the major issues related to viability long term (DNRE 2004). A suitable 'starting point' in developing a strategic direction in the development of sustainable year-round mountain resorts is to assess the potential market's perception of summer tourism in the mountain regions.

Literature Review

Successful management of any destination, especially fragile environments, depends on comprehensive awareness of the impacts or potential impacts that may inhibit sustainability. Tourism has created a range of impacts on mountain environments – some positive and some negative. The type of visitors, the activities they undertake, how long they stay and how often they visit will dictate management strategies and operations. Taking the process back one step, it is useful to first understand how visitors and potential visitors *perceive* the destination. Strategies, particularly marketing plans can then be better directed and focused towards a select type of visitor. Significant differences are found when the market is created from responsible strategic marketing rather than from uncontrolled market demand. 'Mountains are not like chocolate bars: they are a complex arrangement of communities and ecosystems and marketing needs to reflect this as a product. More segmentation, niche approaches and sensitivity are required' (Bryden 1998).

Destination Image

The importance of understanding a destination's image has been well established in the tourism literature over the last thirty years (Baloglu & Brinberg 1997; Baloglu & McCleary 1999; Crompton 1979; Chon 1990; Driscoll, Lawson & Niven 1994; Echtner & Ritchie 1991; Goodrich 1978; Hunt 1975; Jenkins 1999; Mayo 1975; Walmsley & Young 1998) with the general conclusion being that tourist behaviour can be better predicted if the destination image is known (Embacher & Buttle 1989).

However, destination image is a complex phenomenon and difficult to measure. Exacerbating the problem is the variety of meanings that have emerged from a range of disciplines that are attached to the term 'image'. In psychology 'image' implies a visual component whereas to behavioural geographers it encompasses a range of concepts including overall impressions, knowledge, emotions and values (Jenkins 1999). Most research papers on destination image have used Crompton's (1979) definition 'the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination' (p.18).

In the past, efforts have been made to measure the destination images of countries such as Mexico (Crompton 1979); Finland (Haati & Yavas 1983); India (Kale & Weir 1986); USA and Canada (Richardson & Crompton 1988). Others have investigated the image of different states in the USA – Montana, Utah, Colorado and Wyoming (Hunt 1975; Gartner 1989), Montana (Reilly 1990), Texas (Crompton & Duray 1985), Utah (Gartner & Hunt 1987).

However, as the tourism market is continually being sliced into smaller pieces, with niche products becoming more significant, it means that it is also necessary to become aware of the image of destinations within

destinations. To adequately serve these niche markets, tourism bodies are now challenged to produce separate marketing strategies for the same region highlighting different features and aimed at different markets (Bryden 1998). For example, through Tourism Victoria's successful marketing initiatives, Victoria, Australia has been promoted in a jigsaw segmentation campaign, where each region of this geographically small state has been broken into even smaller marketable pieces each with their own unique characteristics and image. A few researchers have assessed the destination image of regions: Walmsley and Jenkins (1993) and Young (1995) have studied the north coast of New South Wales and Ross (1991; 1993) measured the perceptions of backpackers in the wet tropics of north Queensland.

Before attempting to define a destination's image, we must be aware of the components that make up the destination image. A destination is comprised of both tangible and intangible elements. This means that some are easier to measure than others. The elements of the destination image that are largely intangible, fuzzy variables – individual beliefs, ideas and impressions, are attributes that are difficult to assess in a structured, quantitative manner. However, the majority of studies attempting to measure the image of a particular destination have employed quantitative techniques and have therefore focused predominantly on measurable items – the more tangible attributes of a destination such as price, infrastructure, and available services and have not been able to successfully capture the intangible elements of the image. These intangible elements can sometimes be the most important in terms of attraction and perception and by not using the most appropriate measuring techniques these significant variables are missed.

Gallarza, Saura and Garcia (2002) have undertaken a recent review and taxonomy of all destination image studies conducted over the last thirty years so their efforts will not be repeated here. All recent destination image studies agree that Echtner and Ritchie (1991; 1993) have presented the most comprehensive framework for measuring destination image. Echtner and Ritchie have devised a multi-dimensional framework that includes intangible psychological elements, holistic impressions and takes account of unique attributes as well as the common, functional characteristics of a tourist destination. They also advocate the inclusion of qualitative techniques to better identify the intangible elements.

In determining the image of the Victorian 'alpine' region as a summer destination, this study utilised Echtner and Ritchie's (1991) conceptual framework and found it to be a valuable tool, bringing to light a number of unique attributes that may have otherwise been missed.

The Destination Image Framework

Echtner and Ritchie (1991; 1993) sought to overcome the shortcomings of previous studies by including holistic and psychological components in their destination image framework. They suggest that every destination image can be divided into two major components: attribute-based and holistic, each of these containing functional (tangible) and psychological (intangible) characteristics (1993, p. 3). In addition, images can also contain common as well as unique functional and psychological characteristics. Figure 10 represents the conceptual framework diagrammatically, although the print medium does not allow full appreciation of its three dimensional form as intended by Echtner and Ritchie.

Figure 10: The components of destination image

(Echtner & Ritchie 1991)
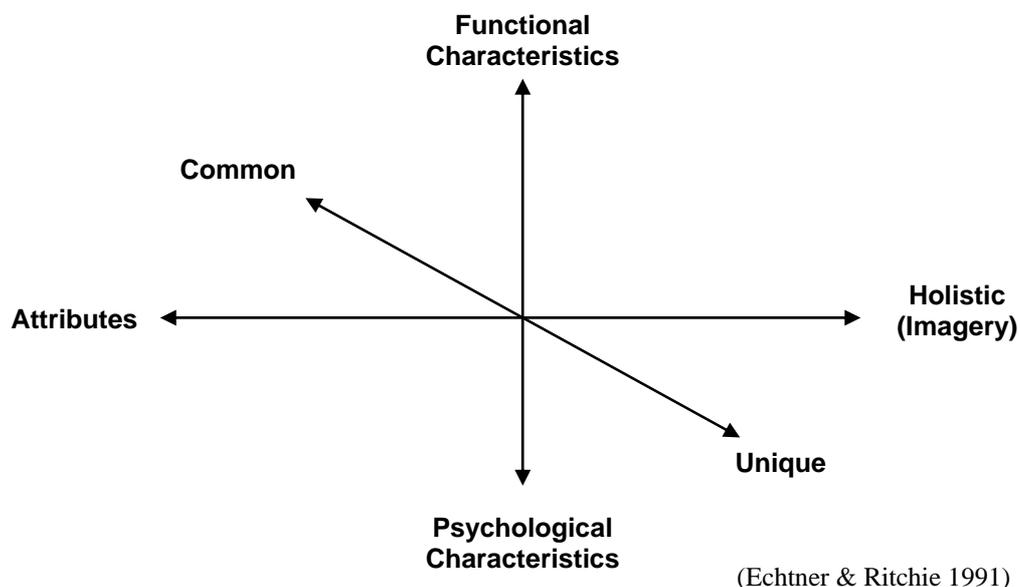
As depicted in the diagram, there are three continuums:
- attribute – holistic (horizontal),
- functional-psychological (vertical),
- common-unique (diagonal).

Echtner and Ritchie have drawn from the disciplines of psychology and consumer behaviour to suggest that any tourism product can evoke images of individual features or attributes (infrastructure, climate, local people etc.) in addition to the creation of more general feelings or holistic images about the destination or product – feelings that are hard to explain and cannot be pinpointed to any specific feature. Using these two major components, Echtner and Ritchie further distinguish the features of the destination by separating the functional or physical characteristics from the psychological or intangible elements of the destination. For example, the imagery that is produced by the physical scenery would be seen as functional/holistic while the mood or atmosphere would be psychological/holistic. More specific attributes such as the climate, prices, services provided would be functional attributes while the friendliness of the local people or staff would be seen as a psychological attribute.

Impact of Time, Market and Unpredictability on Destination Image

In conjunction with the framework and methodology advocated by Echtner and Ritchie, other factors have been found to be significant in the formation of destination image. Temporal considerations need to be taken into account as destination image has been found to change over time, even within short periods (Gartner 1986). Also, different market segments can have different perceptions of the destination. Hence, the destination image must be seen through the eyes of the desired market. Sociodemographic factors influence how the destination attributes are perceived (Baloglu & McCleary 1999). While peace and isolation may be attractors for some, the same attributes represent boredom to others.

Most importantly, destination image must be seen as dynamic – being affected by time, market changes, social trends and unpredictable events. The recent addition of Chaos and Complexity theories to the tourism discipline (Faulkner & Russell 1997; McKercher 1999; Russell & Faulkner 1999) can also provide valuable insight into the theoretical underpinnings of destination image. These perspectives highlight among other things the value of holistic viewpoints and the significance of unpredictability. One cannot help but notice the immediate impact September 11 had on the image of the USA, Afghanistan and the Middle East as potential tourist destination choices. More relevant to this particular study is the impact of a disaster such as the landslide in Thredbo, New South Wales in 1997 when the fragile nature of the environment became the focus of attention following eighteen deaths and lodge destruction in a very popular ski resort. Even more recently, the image of Australian 'alpine' mountains has been negatively affected by the devastating bushfires throughout the national parks in New South Wales and Victoria during the summer of 2002/003. While it is not suggested that these images are always permanent, unpredictable events do have or should have significant implications for strategic marketing efforts.

This study has utilised the framework of Echtner and Ritchie to bring to light the valuable intangible elements of destination image, but is also working from the perspective of the destination and its image being an organic phenomenon and affected by constant change, time, unpredictability and therefore adapting accordingly. Stakeholders will also need to take these factors into account in their planning and management.

Methodology

This study utilised qualitative and quantitative methods. The first stage consisted of focus groups to determine the components that comprise the image of the Victorian 'alpine' mountains as a summer holiday destination. A total of eight focus groups (four of previous visitors; four of non-visitors) were conducted, consisting of approximately 70 participants in total.

The aims of conducting the focus groups were:
- To determine the images, ideas at the forefront of participants' minds when the following words were mentioned:
    - 'summer holidays'
    - 'high country'
    - 'alpine'
    - 'mountain'
- To determine the components of the destination image (for visitors and non-visitors) of Victorian mountain parks and resorts in the summer:
    - Functional / psychological characteristics
    - Holistic imagery
    - Common attributes

        o   Unique attributes

The second stage consisted of a survey to gauge the perceptions of the general public regarding the ski resorts as potential summer holiday destinations. The questionnaire was developed using the results of the focus group as the underlying constructs. The survey was administered randomly to 260 respondents in the Melbourne CBD. Face-to-face interviews were conducted and a 100% response rate was achieved.

Results

Determining the Image Components

The aim of conducting the focus groups was to determine the components (as indicated by Echtner and Ritchie's framework) of the destination image of the ski resorts in summer as determined by visitors and non-visitors. The focus groups were especially valuable in identifying the intangible elements of the image – the holistic and psychological components.

The images of the mountain resorts were categorised using the conceptual framework of Echtner and Ritchie (1991). As it is difficult to portray the three-dimensional view on paper, three diagrams, Figures 11, 12 and 13 will illustrate the various image components revealed in the study. A brief discussion follows on the elements that are the most significant.

Holistic Images

There were no marked differences between the images held by visitors and non-visitors of the mountain resorts in the summer. It was evident by the responses that many of the image elements were intangible and confirmed the findings of Echtner and Ritchie's study (1993). Indeed, if the study had focused only on the measurable qualities, many of the unique aspects of the destination image would have been overlooked. A significant part of the 'magic' of mountain destinations comes from the holistic characteristics or overall imagery. For example, focus group participants talked of simultaneous but contradictory images – feeling insignificant when faced with the vastness but also a sense of power and achievement from being 'on top of the world'. The spectacular 'views' from the mountains were a prominent positive image that is unique to mountain destinations. It is the 'views' that evoke the psychological elements of the image.

The 'Man from Snowy River' legend provides a strong association with the image of the mountains in the summer. Participants also envisaged empty chalets and cottages, non-crowded and 'ghost town' type of images. Visitors did mention that many of the facilities like restaurants and cafes were not open all the time during summer and while this was not a concern to some of the participants it could be a detractor for others.

Psychological / Unique Attributes

Most respondents revealed that visiting the mountains in the summer would be relaxing and stress-free. When asked how these psychological benefits would differ from taking holidays in other places, i.e. what would be *unique* about a summer mountain holiday, the most common responses from visitors were 'invigorating' and 'feeling healthy'. Some visitors felt they always experienced a sense of 'self-discovery' while they were in the mountains and learning was an important part of the holiday experience. It is these images that are of most value to stakeholders and the most difficult to measure.

Functional Characteristics / Attributes

Visitors and non-visitors found it easier to describe the functional attributes of mountain destinations with 'fresh air', 'wild-flowers', and 'water-falls' being the most common images revealed. Those who had visited the mountains previously found the cooler temperatures a relief during the often harsh Australian summers.

The findings revealed that even though the respondents described mostly positive images of the mountains in the summer, only older non-visitors and visitors said they would like to holiday in the mountains during the summer for more than two days. Most of the younger participants thought that it would be boring to spend extended lengths of time in the mountains without snow-based activities. The lack of nightlife and isolation was not appealing to younger visitors or non-visitors, most preferring the atmosphere of active beach resort destinations. This confirmed the findings from the Baloglu and McCleary (1999) study regarding the importance of market sociodemographic factors in the perception of destination image.

Visitors also commented on the lack of services and limited facilities available on the mountains in the summer. Many noted the outdated lodges, expensive tariffs for accommodation and high priced services and food. Camping was the favoured mode of accommodation and was often the only alternative for families. Visitors who had frequented the mountains in summer when their children were young found that as the children reached teenage years they changed holiday destination as they felt that the teenage /youth market is not well

catered for in the mountains. Often, parents returned to the mountains in the summer when their children left home and no longer holidayed with them.

Common Characteristics / Attributes

Many visitors holidayed in the mountains with family and friends, enjoying picnics and time spent together without the usual distractions of television and everyday life. The participants also mentioned the 'outdoors' element while not being unique to mountains it is one of the attributes that is represented by a mountain holiday. Activities such as hiking, camping and fishing are also not unique to these regions but are associated with the mountain destinations.

Figure 11: The attribute / holistic and functional / psychological components of the destination image of Victorian mountain resorts in the summer
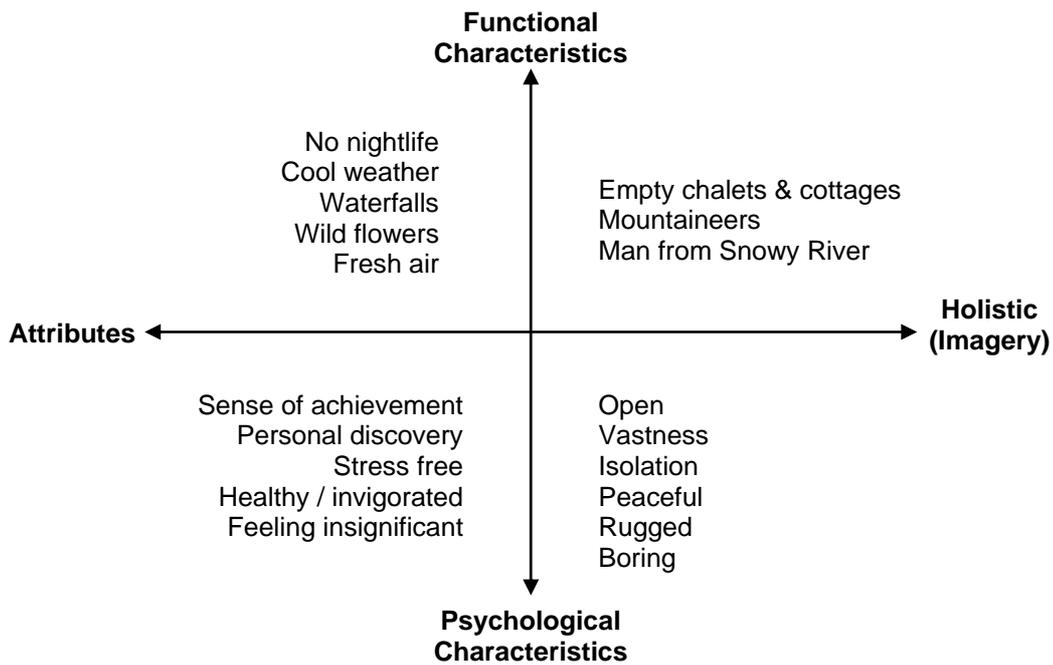
Figure 12: The common / unique and functional / psychological components of the destination image of Victorian mountain resorts in the summer
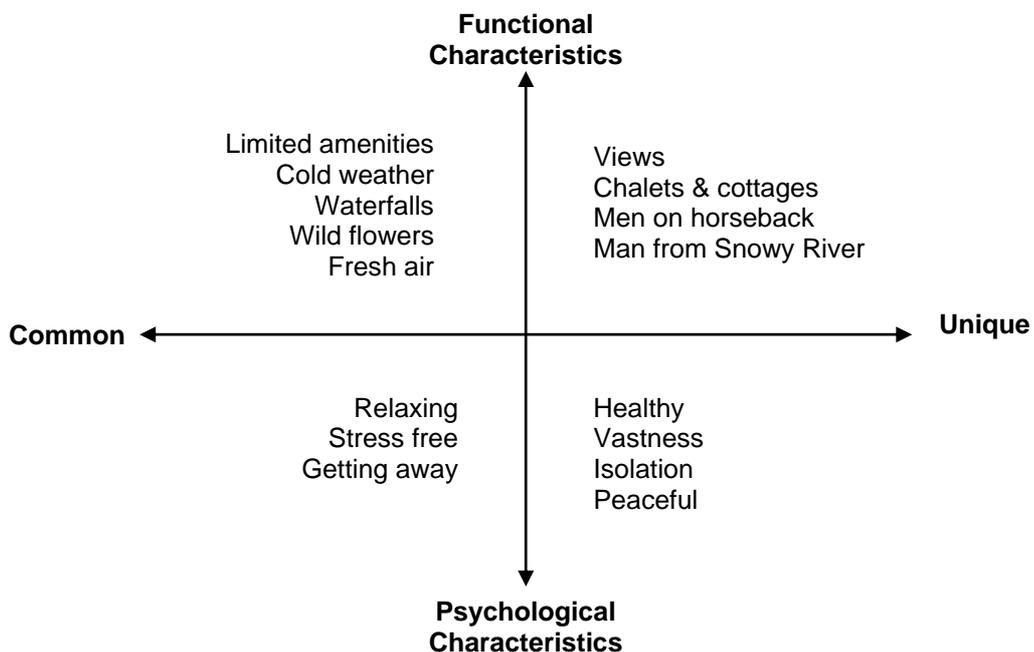
Figure 13: The attribute / holistic and common / unique components of the destination image of Victorian mountain resorts in the summer

**Common
Characteristics**

Family / friends
Picnics
Camping
Outdoors

Beautiful scenery
Back to nature
Relaxing

Attributes ◄─────────────────────────────► **Holistic
(Imagery)**

Winding roads
Views
Hiking
Stars
Crisp, clean air

Vastness
Isolation
Peaceful
Wilderness
Rugged

**Unique
Characteristics**
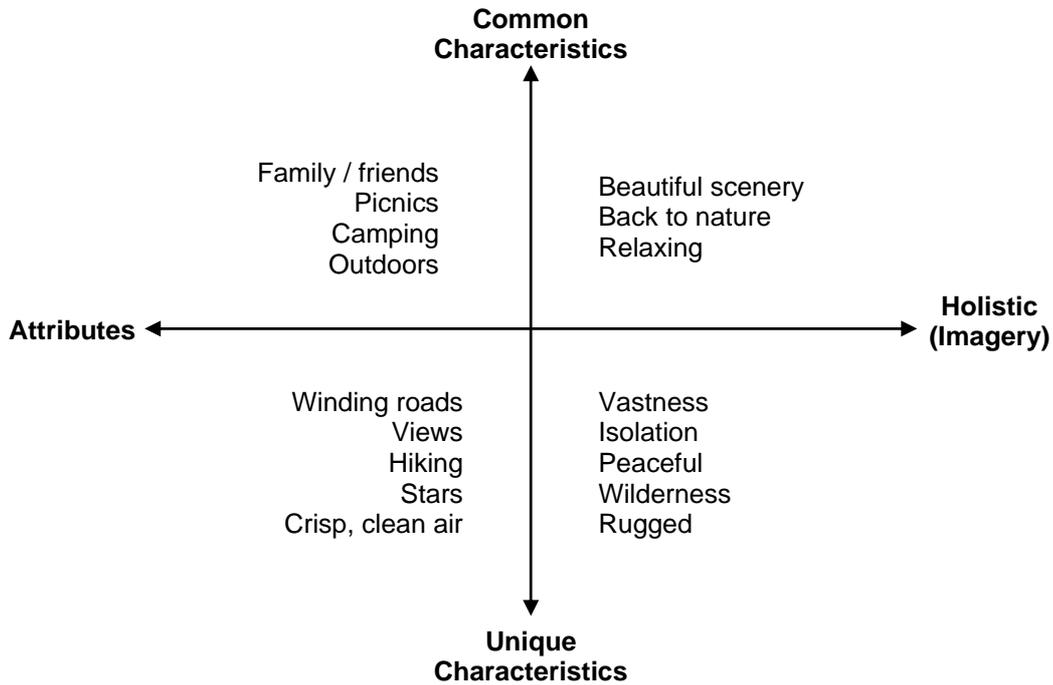
Significant Destination Attributes

In order to explore further the image of the ski resorts as a possible summer holiday destination, it was important to find out what the respondents desired and looked for in a destination (Litvin & Ling 2001).

What were the attributes that were significant in the decision making process? Table 5 provides a snapshot of elements that were preferred when choosing a destination. There were no significant differences between the preferences of those who had previously visited alpine mountains and those who had not. Most preferred the beach, a warm climate, peaceful atmosphere and expected to learn something while on holidays.

Table 5: Desired holistic attributes of summer holiday destinations

HOLISTIC ATTRIBUTES		VISITORS	NON-VISITORS	OVERALL
Climate	Cool	29.9%	27.0%	27.8%
	Warm	**70.1%**	**73.0%**	**72.2%**
Arousal level	**Peaceful**	**81.8%**	**81.0%**	**81.2%**
	Busy	18.2%	19.0%	18.8%
Destination	**Beach**	**68.4%**	**65.7%**	**66.5%**
	Mountain	31.6%	34.3%	33.5%
Learning expectation	**Yes**	**65.0%**	**60.6%**	**61.9%**
	No	35.0%	39.4%	38.1%

The focus groups were also a valuable means for exploring the viability of the alpine mountain resorts becoming part of the possibilities of choice for a summer holiday. The answer was quite clear. To Australians, summer holidays are equated with the beach. Both visitors and non-visitors immediately related the image of summer with the beach and beach activities like surfing and swimming. It is apparent that the beach and coastal destinations are ingrained in the Australian psyche - history will prove to be a challenging opponent in attempting to introduce alternative summer destinations. Mountains were only mentioned by a few who regularly visit the mountain areas in the summer. Activities like camping and hiking were mentioned more frequently, which alludes to more inland destinations. However the most popular Australian destinations that hold a more prominent summer image to the participants are places like: Byron Bay in northern New South Wales, Gold Coast, Queensland, Wilson's Promontory, Victoria, Great Ocean Road, Victoria.

Functional Destination Attributes

In addition to the broader, holistic attributes of a destination there are more specific functional attributes that come into play when choosing a holiday. Pricing and accommodation are usually of primary importance; other facilities like nightlife, activities, restaurants and shopping can also be critical to the image of the destination. Respondents were asked to rate, in terms of importance, a number of destination attributes they considered important or desirable in choosing a summer holiday destination. The scale ranged from 1 (least important) to 7 (most important). Table 6 shows the overall mean scores for each attribute along with a comparison for previous visitors and non-visitors to alpine resorts. These mean differences were examined using independent t-tests, and three significant differences were observed. Non-visitors rate night entertainment venues, scheduled events and organised tours or activities as being significantly more important than do visitors.

Table 6: Importance ratings of functional holiday destination attributes

ATTRIBUTES	OVERALL	VISITORS	NON-VISITORS	DIFFERENCE
Pricing of accommodation	5.40	5.01	5.57	
Luxury of accommodation	4.09	3.90	4.18	
Night entertainment venues	**4.27**	**3.84**	**4.47**	**t = -2.7, p < 0.05**
Scheduled events	**3.98**	**3.63**	**4.13**	**t = -2.3, p < 0.05**
Organized tours or activities	**3.92**	**3.05**	**4.31**	**t = -4.9, p < 0.05**
Wide variety of restaurants	4.34	4.16	4.42	
Views and scenery	6.13	6.16	6.11	
Shopping	3.66	3.49	3.74	

Negative Destination Images

A useful method of discovering negative perceptions about a destination is to identify reasons why people would *not* visit there. What are the perceptions that inhibit the choice of mountains for summer holidays? The respondents to the survey were asked what would prevent them from taking a summer mountain holiday. Table 7 shows that cost was a significant factor for non-visitors and visitors alike. Other significant perceptions amongst non-visitors were the lack of activities (fear of being bored); difficulty in access, transportation; and climate (either too hot or too cold).

Table 7: Reasons preventing respondents from taking a summer mountain holiday

REASONS	VISITORS		NON VISITORS	
	F	% OF RESPONDENTS	F	% OF RESPONDENTS
Too expensive/money	**21**	**26.25**	**60**	**33.33**
Friends/family don't want to go	6	7.5	22	12.22
Lack of activities/poor variety/boring	4	5	**32**	**17.78**
Climate/temperatures/weather (i.e. cool warm, etc.)	10	12.5	**54**	**30.00**
Time/work/school	**23**	**28.75**	**34**	**18.89**
Injury/health problems	10	12.5	12	6.67
Distance/accessibility/transportation	14	17.5	**35**	**19.44**
Other more appealing options (beach)	6	7.5	30	16.66
Lack of info/promo's (i.e. don't know about it, etc.)	2	2.5	15	8.33

Ideal Length of Time for Summer Mountain Holiday

Summer mountain holidays are considered to be 'short break' holidays. As shown in Table 8, the most common response for both visitors and non-visitors was *'up to a week'*.

Table 8: Ideal length of time for a summer mountain holiday

LENGTH OF TIME	VISITORS		NON VISITORS	
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**
1 day or less	0	0	2	1.11
1 day/night	0	0	1	0.56
2-3 days	11	13.75	22	12.22
Up to a week	**38**	**47.50**	**58**	**32.22**
1-2 weeks	12	15.00	35	19.44
2 weeks +	10	12.50	16	8.89

Feelings Associated with Mountain Holidays in Summer

Often the most important attributes of a destination image are intangible and cannot easily be explained. The feelings that a destination evokes in a visitor can often be a significant component in destination choice. These intangible elements should be capitalised on especially given the increasing volume of holiday choices available to the market. The following table identifies the most positive intangible attributes indicated by the respondents. The feelings of '*relaxation* and sense of '*peace*' and '*tranquillity*' were most commonly associated with a summer mountain holiday.

Table 9: Feelings associated with mountain holidays in summer

FEELINGS	VISITORS		NON VISITORS		TOTAL
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	
Relaxing	**31**	**38.75**	**65**	**36.11**	**96**
Tranquillity (quietness, peace, serenity, etc.)	**27**	**33.75**	**69**	**38.33**	**96**
Happy/fun/excitement/optimistic/positive (etc.)	17	21.25	37	20.56	54
Fitness/healthy/vitality	18	22.5	16	8.89	34
Fresh/refreshing/fresh air	19	23.75	45	25.00	64
Freedom/Escape	8	10	24	13.33	32
Exhilarating/rejuvenating/invigorating/energising	9	11.25	19	10.56	28

Implications

These results indicate that currently in Victoria Australia, traditional ski resorts portray a mixed image as summer holiday destinations. Following are some implications of the findings:

- The Victorian mountains do not hold a strong image as a summer destination. Most of the non-visitor respondents admitted that they had not visited the mountains in the summer because it had never occurred to them to do so. The lack of awareness coupled with the strong beach culture in Australia creates a non-image effect for the mountains in the summer. This presents severe challenges to stakeholders in the resorts and those wishing to extend the winter season to summer.

- There is a need also to overcome perceptions of remoteness, cost and unpleasant weather. The threat of bushfires has in recent times become a major negative component of the mountains' image in summer. Although in most cases the effects of unpredictable natural disasters are temporary, they need to be addressed so that the perception of danger is removed from the potential visitor's mind. Further research needs to investigate more specifically the effect of unpredictable events on a destination's image, how long they last and the most effective strategies in overcoming negative perceptions.

- The most positive attribute of the image of the mountains in the summer is the 'uniqueness'. There is enormous potential for resort managers to capitalise on the psychological and holistic attributes. In order to compete with the usual beach holiday, there needs to be emphasis given to the feelings that are experienced when visiting the mountains in summer that are not so easily found at crowded beach resorts. The 'self-discovery', feelings of 'vitality', 'tranquillity' and 'health' are very much in demand by holiday seekers – especially those wanting a nature-based or mountain adventure experience. In particular, this market is usually from higher socio-economic sectors and is more likely to be

appreciative and protective of the fragile environment (Beedie & Hudson 2003; Triandos & Russell 2001; Whelan 1991; Wight 1996).

Conclusion

The Victorian 'alpine' mountain resorts have traditionally been snow-based holiday destinations and are now becoming popular in the summer. However while the mountains portray a clear and positive image in relation to their physical and natural features, there are somewhat negative images associated with infrastructure and available services. .

Importantly, for resort managers, responding to the negative images held by prospective markets may hold the key to improving the available 'product' as well as shaping a message for the market that counters the negative perceptions of that market. The key concerns of non-visitors included difficulty of access (long, winding roads and distance from the city), the variable weather (some considering it to be possibly too hot or too cold) and the concern that there would be few activities available.

In terms of Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle model, some of the Victorian resorts are at the point of either rejuvenation or decline as possible year-round resorts. Many of the lodges were constructed in the 1970s when the ski industry was booming and are now at the stage where they are looking tired and run-down. Outdated infrastructure can be extremely detrimental to the image of any destination (Warnken, Russell & Faulkner 2003) and long-term strategies need to be implemented to prevent this. In the summer particularly, without the forgiving snow cover, the infrastructure is more visibly exposed and can detract from the natural beauty of the destination. Some of the resorts, however, have begun to implement strategies to gain a competitive advantage over other mountain resorts. For example, Mt Buller has had an active rejuvenation program over the last few years where many of the old lodges have been replaced by architect designed self-contained apartment blocks.

Echtner and Ritchie's (1991; 1993) conceptual framework provides a valuable tool for assessing the destination image of the mountains in the summer. This chapter also recommends that the determination of a destination image also needs to take into account factors such as time, the market and unpredictability. The qualitative techniques advocated by the framework, brought to light many intangible elements of the destination image including holistic and psychological characteristics. These elements will be of particular benefit to resort managers wishing to promote the unique characteristics of the mountains to a select market. In essence, this increasingly competitive environment requires destinations to create an image that highlights the unique aspects rather than the common to attract the desired market. In addition, heightening the awareness of the unique attributes of destinations with fragile environments will hopefully ensure better-directed efforts in protecting that which is valuable.

APPENDIX A: MT BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK QUESTIONNAIRE

Summer Mountain Tourism Mount Buffalo National Park

1. Have you just arrived at Mount Buffalo today?

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No

2. Think of those activities you have taken part in, and your general experience while at Mount Buffalo, overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your visit?

Completely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Fully satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	6

3. Can you offer any suggestions that would make you fully satisfied with your visit?

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Is this your first visit to Mount Buffalo?

1 ☐ Yes (Go to Question 7)
2 ☐ No

5. If NO, how often do you visit Mount Buffalo?

1 ☐ Every 2 – 3 years
2 ☐ Annually
3 ☐ 2 – 3 times a year
4 ☐ Over 3 times a year
5 ☐ Other (please specify) _____

6. If you answered NO to question 4, in what year was your last visit?

_____

7. Are you a visitor to Mount Buffalo in the winter period?

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No

8. Do you ever visit other resorts in the region?

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No (Go to Question 10)

9. (a) If YES, which one/s? (please tick yes or no respectively)

	YES	**NO**
MT HOTHAM		
MT BULLER		
FALLS CREEK		
MT STIRLING		
Other (please specify) _____		

(b) When would you visit these resorts?

1 ☐ Summer only
2 ☐ Winter only
3 ☐ Summer and winter

10. Including you, how many people are in your travel party on this visit to Mt Buffalo? That is, the people you will spend time with at Mt Buffalo.
_____

11. How would you describe your travel party?

1 ☐ Travelling alone
2 ☐ With a spouse or partner
3 ☐ A group of immediate family members – parents and children
4 ☐ Friends or relatives travelling together – with children
5 ☐ Friends or relatives travelling together – without children
6 ☐ Educational group
7 ☐ Other (please specify) _____

12. How would you describe your visit to Mount Buffalo?

1 ☐ A day trip from home
2 ☐ A day trip from the valley
3 ☐ A holiday/excursion lasting one night
4 ☐ A holiday/excursion lasting up to a week
5 ☐ A holiday/excursion lasting longer than a week
6 ☐ Other (please specify) _____

13. If your visit lasted longer than a day where did you stay?

1 ☐ Mount Buffalo Chalet
2 ☐ Mount Buffalo Lodge
3 ☐ Catani Camping Ground
4 ☐ Alpine Shire i.e. Myrtleford, Porepunkah, Bright & Mt Beauty etc.
5 ☐ In The Region i.e. Wangaratta, Albury/Wodonga, Beechworth etc.
6 ☐ Other (please specify) _____

14. What activities did you undertake on your visit to Mount Buffalo? (Multiple response - please tick yes or no respectively)

	YES	NO
Visit to the Horn		
Visit to Mount Buffalo Gorge		
Visit to the cathedral		
Sightseeing - general		
Bushwalking (short walk: up to 1 hour)		
Bushwalking (medium walk: 1 – 4 hours)		
Bushwalking (long walk: more than 4 hours)		
Bushwalking (overnight hike)		
Horse riding		
Abseiling / Climbing		
Mountain biking		
Trout fishing (n/a)		
Canoeing (n/a)		
Underground river caving		
Mt Buffalo Lodge – audio visual		
Mt Buffalo Chalet – tea rooms		
Swimming (n/a)		
Lake Catani Precinct		
Other (please specify) _____		

15. Thinking of all the possible locations where you could have undertaken these activities, what made you choose Mount Buffalo? (Multiple response – please tick yes or no respectively)

	YES	NO
Icon		
Heard about the park and wanted to see what it was like		
Good place to take visitors from outside the local area		
Convenient		
Live nearby		
Driving through the area		
Regular Visitor		
Tradition		
Come here a lot		
Natural Beauty		
I like this park particularly for its scenery		
Spiritual connection		
Ease Of Access		
Park is easy to get to		
Can come here for a short visit		
Remote / Wilderness		
Get away from people		
Peace and quiet		
Amount of open space		
Suggested By Others In The Group		
I personally was not involved in the choice of destination		
Marketing		
Saw park in a tourist brochure		
Recommended by a tourist information centre		
Saw park on the Internet		
Heard about a special event at the park		
Other (please specify) _____		
Facilities		
Good facilities for picnics / bbqs		
Good facilities for camping		
Suitability of tracks and trails		
Other reasons		
Great weather to be outdoors		
Only venue accessible to me where I can undertake the activities I am interested in		
Nostalgic reasons		
Other (please specify) _____		

16. What was the main reason for your visit to Mount Buffalo? (one response)

1. ☐ Enjoy nature
2. ☐ Socialise
3. ☐ Relax
4. ☐ Be active / stimulated
5. ☐ Learn
6. ☐ Be creative
7. ☐ No particular reason
8. ☐ Other (please specify) _____

17. How did you find out about this park? (Multiple response – please tick yes or no respectively)

	YES	NO
Local knowledge / always been there / live nearby		
Friends / relatives / other people		
Seeing signs from road while passing		
Parks Victoria information line (131963)		
Radio		
Tourist papers		
Metro newspapers		
Television program		
Television commercial		
Internet site		
In other national parks		
Tourist Information Centre		
Brochure		
RACV		
NRMA		
Window display		
Direct mail		
Other (please specify) _____		

18. Please record your gender:

1 ☐ Male
2 ☐ Female

19. Which of the following age groups are you in? (please tick)

18 – 19 years		50 – 54 years	
20 – 24 years		55 – 59 years	
25 – 29 years		60 – 64 years	
30 – 34 years		65 – 69 years	
35 – 39 years		70 + years	
40 – 44 years		Declined	
45 – 49 years			

20. Which would best describe your level of education received?

1 ☐ Secondary
2 ☐ Tertiary
3 ☐ Neither

21. Which life cycle group best describes you?

1 ☐ Young single
2 ☐ Young couple / no children
3 ☐ Young family (youngest child <6 years)
4 ☐ Middle family (children 6 – 15 years)
5 ☐ Mature family
6 ☐ Older couple / No children at home
7 ☐ Mature single
8 ☐ Single parent

22. Where is your usual place of residence?
Town: _____
Postcode: _____

Thank you very much for your help.

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NON-VISITORS TO MOUNTAINS IN SUMMER (PERCEPTION STUDY)

Q1. What are your top three favourite Australian destinations as a summer holiday? (if mountain destination, skip to Q.2) *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. Great Ocean Road
2. Great Barrier Reef/Gold Coast/Queensland/NSW
3. Tasmania
4. Mountains (i.e._____)
5. Mornington Peninsula
6. Western Australia
7. Other _____

Q2.When I say 'summer holidays', what words come to mind? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. Beach
2. Mountains
3. Sun, warmth
4. Camping
5. Bush walking, hiking
6. Relaxation, holiday, no pressure
7. Wild life
8. Fresh air
9. Other _____

Q3.When on holidays do you prefer to*: (only specify first 2 responses)

1. Relax (skip 3b.)
2. To be active (go to question 3b.)
3. Both (go to question 3b.)
4. Other: _____ (skip 3b.)

Q3b. What are the types of activities you like to participate in during summer holidays? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. Swimming
2. Hiking/bushwalking
3. Climbing
4. Extreme sports i.e. rafting, kayaking, abseiling, etc. specify: _____
5. Tennis
6. Golf
7. Mountain biking
8. Beach sports
9. Fishing
10. Horseback riding
11. Other: _____

Q4. When you hear the term 'high country', what words/images come to mind? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. Snow
2. Winter sports (i.e. skiing, snowboarding, etc.)
3. Swiss Alps/Europe
4. Australian mountains: i.e.: _____
5. Man from snowy river
6. Summer
7. Hiking/bushwalking
8. Other summer activities (i.e. horse riding, fishing, etc): _____
9. Grass, rocks, green fields (physical images): _____
10. Forest/trees
11. Wild flowers: _____
12. Wild life: animals _____
13. Views/scenery
14. Fresh air/clean waters
15. Camping/bushfires
16. Abandoned ski runs/car parks
17. Cool temperatures (positive)
18. Cool temperatures (negative)
19. 'Close by'
20. Relaxing
21. Terms not interchangeable
22. Bungalows, cottages, huts
23. High altitudes
24. Cheaper in summer than winter
25. Boring, nothing to do
26. Winter lodging converted into summer
27. Isolation
28. Winding roads
29. City/busy life escape
30. Other: _____

Q5. When you hear the term 'alpine', what words/images come to mind? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. Snow
2. Winter sports (i.e. skiing, snowboarding, etc.)
3. Swiss Alps/Europe
4. Australian mountains: i.e.: _____
5. Man from snowy river
6. Summer
7. Hiking/bushwalking
8. Other summer activities (i.e. horse riding, fishing, etc): _____
9. Grass, rocks, green fields (physical images): _____
10. Forest/trees
11. Wild flowers: _____

12. Wild life: animals _____
13. Views/scenery
14. Fresh air/clean waters
15. Camping/bushfires
16. Abandoned ski runs/car parks
17. Cool temperatures (positive)
18. Cool temperatures (negative)
19. 'Close by'
20. Relaxing
21. Terms not interchangeable
22. Bungalows, cottages, huts
23. High altitudes
24. Cheaper in summer than winter
25. Boring, nothing to do
26. Winter lodging converted into summer
27. Isolation
28. Winding roads
29. City/busy life escape
30. Other: _____

Q6. When you hear the term 'mountains', what words/images come to mind? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. Snow
2. Winter sports (i.e. skiing, snowboarding, etc.)
3. Swiss Alps/Europe
4. Australian mountains: i.e.: _____
5. Man from snowy river
6. Summer
7. Hiking/bushwalking
8. Other summer activities (i.e. horse riding, fishing, etc): _____
9. Grass, rocks, green fields (physical images): _____
10. Forest/trees
11. Wild flowers: _____
12. Wild life: animals _____
13. Views/scenery
14. Fresh air/clean waters
15. Camping/bushfires
16. Abandoned ski runs/car parks
17. Cool temperatures (positive)
18. Cool temperatures (negative)
19. 'Close by'
20. Relaxing
21. Terms not interchangeable
22. Bungalows, cottages, huts
23. High altitudes
24. Cheaper in summer than winter
25. Boring, nothing to do
26. Winter lodging converted into summer

27. Isolation
28. Winding roads
29. City/busy life escape
30. Other: _____

Q7. When you hear the term 'high country in the summer' what thoughts/images come to mind? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. Hiking/bushwalking
2. Other summer activities (i.e. horse riding, fishing, etc): _____
3. Grass, rocks, green fields (physical images): _____
4. Wild flowers: _____
5. Wild life: animals _____
6. Views/scenery
7. Fresh air/clean waters
8. Camping/bushfires
9. Abandoned ski runs/car parks
10. Cool temperatures (positive)
11. Cool temperatures (negative)
12. 'Close by'
13. Relaxing
14. Terms not interchangeable
15. Bungalows, cottages, huts
16. High altitudes
17. Cheaper in summer than winter
18. Boring, nothing to do
19. (winter lodging converted into summer)
20. Isolation
21. Winding roads (imp.?)
22. City/busy life escape
23. Other: _____

Q8. When you hear the term 'alpine in the summer' what thoughts/images come to mind? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. Hiking/bushwalking
2. Other summer activities (i.e. horse riding, fishing, etc): _____
3. Grass, rocks, green fields (physical images): _____
4. Wild flowers: _____
5. Wild life: animals _____
6. Views/scenery
7. Fresh air/clean waters
8. Camping/bushfires
9. Abandoned ski runs/car parks
10. Cool temperatures (positive)
11. Cool temperatures (negative)
12. 'Close by'
13. Relaxing

14. Terms not interchangeable
15. Bungalows, cottages, huts
16. High altitudes
17. Cheaper in summer than winter
18. Boring, nothing to do
19. (winter lodging converted into summer)
20. Isolation
21. Winding roads (imp.?)
22. City/busy life escape
23. Other: _____

Q9. When you hear the term 'mountains in the summer' what thoughts/images come to mind? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. Hiking/bushwalking
2. Other summer activities (i.e. horse riding, fishing, etc): _____
3. Grass, rocks, green fields (physical images): _____
4. Wild flowers: _____
5. Wild life: animals _____
6. Views/scenery
7. Fresh air/clean waters
8. Camping/bushfires
9. Abandoned ski runs/car parks
10. Cool temperatures (positive)
11. Cool temperatures (negative)
12. 'Close by'
13. Relaxing
14. Terms not interchangeable
15. Bungalows, cottages, huts
16. High altitudes
17. Cheaper in summer than winter
18. Boring, nothing to do
19. (winter lodging converted into summer)
20. Isolation
21. Winding roads (imp.?)
22. City/busy life escape
23. Other: _____

Q10. Which of the following would you say relates to summer holidays most? Please rate each on a scale of 1 - 5; 1 being least related and 5 most.

	Least Related			**Most Related**	
High Country	1	2	3	4	5
Alpine	1	2	3	4	5
Mountain	1	2	3	4	5

Q11. If given a choice which of the two would be your preferred summer destination? (Specify only the first two responses)
1. Beach
2. Mountain
3. Other: _____

Q12. What <u>physical images</u> come to mind when you think of a mountain area as a summer destination?

1. Forest, trees
2. Cabins, log cabins, cottages, huts, chalets
3. Camping
4. Bush walking, hiking
5. Views, scenery
6. Nature: Fresh water, waterfalls, lakes, clear blue skies etc: _____
7. Grass, rocks, green fields (physical images): _____
8. Wild flowers: _____
9. Wild life: animals _____
10. Forest/trees
11. Fresh air
12. Cold weather
13. Winding roads
14. Backpack
15. Food, delicious food (?)
16. 4WDs
17. Whitewater rafting, fishing, etc. _____
18. No city distractions (noise, pollution, etc.): _____
19. Abandoned ski lifts/car parks
20. Other: _____

Q13. List any distinctive/unique tourist attractions that come to mind in relation to a mountain destination during summer? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*
1. Vacant car parks/ abandoned ski lifts
2. Skiing and winter sports
3. Bushwalking/hiking
4. Snow
5. Limited service in the summer, abandoned, few people
6. Flora, fauna; wild life (i.e. Mountain goats)
7. Alpine vegetation
8. Different, weird
9. View
10. Fresh air, crisp
11. Paragliding
12. Cleanliness, refreshing, no pollution, undamaged
13. Cable cars
14. Waterfalls, waterholes, (but could go to botanical gardens and still find similar vegetation, greenery etc)
15. Bungee jumping
16. Hiking tracks
17. Untouched, natural, open

18. Walking tracks
19. Outdoorsy type of people

Q14. How would you imagine the <u>atmosphere or mood</u> if you had visited a mountain area in the summer?
(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)

1. Freedom
2. Solitude
3. Clean air
4. Challenging
5. Energizing
6. Views scenery have an impact
7. Space, vastness, overwhelming (feeling of insignificance)
8. In touch with nature
9. Achievement/on top of the world
10. Active
11. Healthy
12. Relaxation, Invigorating
13. Meditation
14. Different from other holidays
15. Powerlessness, humbling, makes you feel small
16. Unpredictable, uncertainty, frightening because unknown
17. Intrigue
18. Emotional, spending time with people
19. Cold
20. Stress free environment
21. Far away from every day life/city
22. Boring – not enough to do
23. Slow paced
24. No night life
25. Other: _____

Q15. What kind of facilities/amenities would you expect to be available in the summer at Victorian mountain destinations? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. Huts, cottages,
2. Camping
3. Group lodging
4. Poor condition of facilities (specify: _____)
5. Good condition of facilities
6. Walking tracks, picnic facilities
7. Clearly marked paths
8. Not clearly marked paths
9. Low density accommodation
10. Poor entertainment facilities i.e.: _____
11. Good entertainment facilities
12. Poor customer service/hours of operation
13. Good customer service/hours of operation
14. Other: _____

Q16. What kind of activities would you expect to be available to you on a holiday in a mountain area during summer? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. Bushwalking/hiking
2. Swimming
3. Climbing
4. Extreme sports: Paragliding/hang gliding/kayaking/abseiling/white water rafting
5. Horseback riding
6. Mountain bike riding
7. Fishing
8. Organized tours
9. Tennis
10. Golf
11. Barbecues/picnic
12. Camping
13. Relax with family
14. Personal experiences, reconnect with people
15. Cooking
16. Gold panning
17. Other: _____

Q17. When deciding on a holiday destination, how important is each of the following. Please rate it on a 1-5 scale, 1 being least important and 5 being most important? (Circle the response)

		Least				Most
1.	Pricing of accommodation	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Luxury of accommodation	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Camping facilities	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Night entertainment venues/facilities	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Scheduled events (i.e. a festival)	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Organized tours/activities	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Wide variety of restaurants	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Views, scenery	1	2	3	4	5

Q18. Which of the following would you prefer, when choosing a holiday destination? Please rate it on a scale of 1 – 5; 1 being least desirable and 5 being the most. (Circle the response)

		Cold				Hot
1.	**Climate/temperature**	1	2	3	4	5

		Isolated				Busy
2.	**Congestion of destination**	1	2	3	4	5

Q19. Who influences your decision, when choosing a destination for your holiday? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. Friends
2. Family
3. Parents
4. Children
5. Media
6. Travel Agent
7. Other: _____

Q20. Which of the following mediums would you say would have the greatest influence on you, when choosing a summer holiday destination? *(Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

1. TV Advertisement
2. TV Program
3. Radio
4. Newspaper
5. Magazine: specify: _____
6. Internet
7. Brochure
8. Travel Agent
9. Other: _____

Q21. Do you expect to learn anything when you go on a holiday? (Circle the response)

1. No
2. No, but usually do/accidental learning
3. Sometimes, but usually go to relax
4. Yes
5. Yes, learn more about people I am with
6. Yes, learn about the environment/culture
7. Other: _____

Q22. Would you consider a mountain as a summer destination?

1. Yes   2. No (**skip to q.23**)

Q23. What would encourage you to take a summer holiday on a mountain?

1. Planned activities i.e. (horseback riding, hiking, etc) specify: _____
2. Surrounding attractions
3. Chairlifts running
4. Golf course
5. Tennis court
6. Lower pricing
7. Friends/family influence

8. Advertising specify: _____

9. Targeted towards younger age group

10. Renovated facilities

11. Luxurious accommodation/spas

12. Something different i.e. bungee jumping… specify: _____

13. Other: _____

14. Don't know/nothing

Q24. Can you give me some reasons as to why you wouldn't want to take a summer holiday on a mountain?

1. The Beach

2. Limited activities/boring

3. Distance, remoteness

4. Too expensive

5. Winding roads – car sickness

6. Limited choice of price ranges for accommodation

7. Limited choice of accommodation

8. Poor variety/state of facilities

9. Would only go with a partner or group, never alone

10. Limited service/hours of operation

11. Lack of support services

12. Habit

13. Easy to get lost

14. Limited access

15. Winter perception of a mountain

16. Other: _____

17. Don't know/nothing

Q25. What would be the ideal length of time you would want to spend on a mountain as a summer holiday?

1. 1 day

2. 1 day/night

3. 2-3 days (weekend)

4. Up to a week

5. 1-2 weeks

6. 2 weeks +

7. Other: _____

Demographics

Age

1. Under 18   3. 25-34   5. 45-60
2. 18-24   4. 35-44   6. 60+

Gender

1. Male   2. Female

Family life cycle stage

1. Young single
2. Young couple
3. Young family (youngest child 0-5yrs)
4. Middle family (children 6-15 yrs)
5. Mature family (children 16+)
6. Mature couple (no children at home)
7. Mature single
8. Single parent
9. Other: _____

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1. Elementary
2. Secondary
3. Tertiary
4. Other: _____

Personal Annual Income

1. Under $20,000   4. $50,000 – $64,999
2. $20,000 – $34,999   5. $65,000 - $79,999
3. $35,000 - $49,999   6. $80,000 and up

Postal code

_____

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR VISITORS TO MOUNTAINS IN SUMMER (PERCEPTION STUDY)

Q1. Have you ever visited an Australian alpine region in the summer?

Yes – 1 **(go to next q)**   No – 2 **(go to next questionnaire)**

I will now mention three different words and would like to know what words or images come to mind when you hear them.

Q2. When you hear the term 'high country', what words or images come to mind?

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

Q3. When you hear the term 'alpine', what words or images come to mind?

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

Q4. When you hear the term 'mountains', what words or images come to mind?

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

Q5. Which ONE of the following would you say relates to summer holidays most? (Read the responses)

    1. High Country

    2. Alpine

    3. Mountain

Q6. What 'physical images' do you see when you think of a mountain area in the summer?

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

Q7. Compared to other holidays you take, what specific 'feelings' come from your mountain holiday experience?

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

Q8. When deciding on a summer holiday destination, how important is each of the following? Please rate it on a 1 – 7 scale, 1 meaning not important and 7 meaning very important.

		Least						*Most*
1.	Pricing of accommodation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Luxury of accommodation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Night entertainment venues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Scheduled events (i.e. a festival)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Organised tours / activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Wide variety of restaurants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Views, scenery	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Shopping	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q9.When choosing a summer holiday destination, would you prefer the climate to be:

1. Cool
2. Warm

Q10. When choosing a summer holiday destination, would you prefer the destination to be:

1. Peaceful
2. Busy

Q11. If given a choice which of the following would be your preferred summer destination?

1. Beach
2. Mountain

Q12. Which of the following sources would have the greatest influence on you when choosing a summer holiday destination? Please rate them on a scale of 1 to 7.

		Low						**High**
1.	TV Advertisement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	TV Program	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Radio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Newspaper	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Magazine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Brochure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Travel Agent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	Family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q13. Do you expect to learn anything from your holiday?

1. Yes
2. No

Q14. Would you visit a Victorian mountain resort in the summer again?

    1.   Yes

    2.   No **(go to q# 17)**

Q15. Why would you go again? (Reasons)

    1.   _____

    2.   _____

    3.   _____

Q16. What is the ideal length of time you would want to spend on a mountain for a summer holiday?

1. 1 day or less	5. 1-2 weeks
2. 1 day/night	6. 2 weeks +
3. 2-3 days (weekend)	7. Other: _____
4. Up to a week	

Q17. What would prevent you from taking another summer holiday on a mountain? (Reasons)

    1.   _____

    2.   _____

    3.   _____

Q18. Which resort or park do you usually visit in the summer? (*Put a star next to their first response and circle the rest)*

    1.   Mt. Buller

    2.   Mt. Hotham

    3.   Mt Buffalo

    4.   Falls Creek

    5.   Dinner Plain

    6.   Mt. Baw Baw

    7.   Kosciusko/NSW resorts

    8.   Other _____

Demographics

Q19. Age

    1.   Under 18

    2.   18-24

    3.   25-34

    4.   35-44

    5.   45-59

    6.   60+

Q20. Gender

1. Male
2. Female

Q21. Family life cycle stage

1. Young single
2. Young couple
3. Young family (youngest child 0-5yrs)
4. Middle family (children 6-15 yrs)
5. Mature family (children 16+)
6. Mature couple (no children at home)
7. Mature single
8. Single parent
9. Other: _____

Q22. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1. Primary
2. Secondary
3. Tertiary
4. Other: _____

Q23. Postal code
_____

Thank You for your time.

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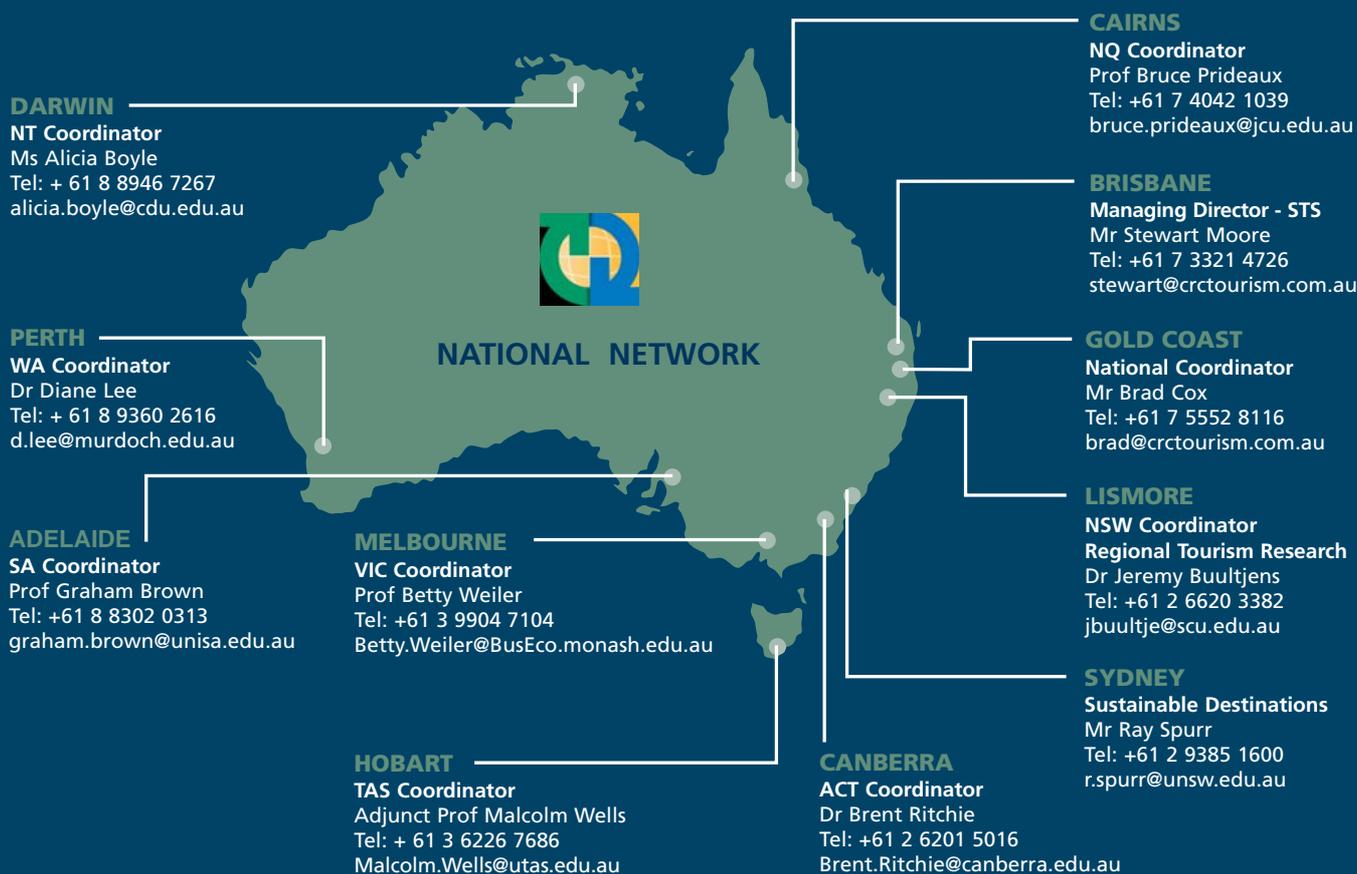
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