

Session Title	
Date	Monday, 29 February 2016
Time	2:00 PM to 7:30 PM
MC	Jan Jacklin (Chair, Western Melbourne Tourism)
Organiser	Richard Ponsford (Executive Officer, Western Melbourne Tourism)
Scribe	Roopa Sreedhar, Student, Victoria University
Location	Eynesbury Homestead, Eynesbury
Attendees (#)	64

Program
Industry Forum
Professional development workshops
Networking Soiree – <i>Jazz on the Lawn</i>

Presenters	Job Title	Topic
Jan Jacklin	Chair, Western Melbourne Tourism	Welcome /Introductions
Nola Dunn	Councilor, City of Melton	Welcome - City of Melton
Nick Foa	CEO, Visit Victoria	Keynote Speaker
Will Flamstead	CEO, Grampian Tourism	Keynote Speaker
Richard Ponsford	Executive Officer Western Melbourne Tourism	Visitor Profile – Melbourne’s West (Sept 2015)
Paige Rowett	Tourism eSchool	Workshop
Bronwyn White	MyTravelResearch.com	Workshop

Jan Jacklin, Chair, Western Melbourne Tourism

The forum began with a welcome from MC Jan Jacklin, Chair, Western Melbourne Tourism. Jan highlighted what stakeholders can achieve collectively for tourism in the region. It was very important to build relationships, work together assisting each other. She also mentioned that Melbourne’s west had seen positive development in tourism infrastructure and activities in the last two decades. She mentioned that 3 hotels in the area operated from 80% to 90% occupancy. Jan congratulated Melton City Council on leading a wonderful tour of Melton in the morning which opened her eyes to attractions she was not aware of.

Cr Nola Dunn, Melton City Council (Western Melbourne Tourism Board Member)

Cr Dunn welcomed the attendees and acknowledged the guest speakers and workshop presenters. She emphasized the importance of regional collaboration and spoke about the *Melton City Much More* campaign. Open landscape and natural spaces, beautiful forests, food and wine grown locally, a rich history were some of the many hidden treasures of Melbourne's west. She mentioned that Melton Visitor Information Centre was in the architecturally significant, only surviving brick example of a Federation styled former court house building in Victoria, also citing that it was important to increase community pride.

This was followed by MC Jan Jacklin acknowledging the traditional owners of the region and this followed by a Welcome to Country from the Wathaurung people.

Nick Foa, CEO Victoria Tourism

Nick spoke about the role of digitized content in marketing and promotion of Victoria tourism. He discussed the newly launched *Wander Victoria* Television Media Campaign and explained its tag line 'Great To See You'. Regional campaigns were important to encourage Victorians dispersal of visitors to regional Victoria to share in the economic benefits. 1 out of 6 jobs can be attributed to the Visitor economy and Councils are recognizing of the local economic value of tourism.

Nick spoke about the many benefits of joint marketing and the importance of reshaping Victorian marketing to promote domestic regional tourism as well as to international visitation. He explained the recent visitor economy review and how this is leading to a restructure of tourism in State Government (bringing together key agencies including Melbourne Major Events and the Melbourne Convention Bureau)

In order to maximize visitor spending and yield, Nick emphasized the need to take full advantage of activities and major events. He explained as an example how the recent Asian Cup could have been leveraged/engaged far more strongly for the west, and tapped into its large multicultural communities.

Nick went on to speak about the following:

- Victorian content being produced in diverse languages including Chinese and Arabic;
- 3 direct airlines into Melbourne from 17 Chinese cities;
- *Wander Victoria* Campaign for Victoria to compete for short stay breaks - driving knowledge about Victoria beyond the CBD;
- Encouraging the development of 'locally acclaimed' experiences for visitors instead of the 'traditional' tourism offering, so visitors feel what it is like to be a Melburnian;
- Livability = Visitability - enhances , authentic visitor experiences;
- Positioning Victoria in Tourism Australia's Coastal/ aquatic campaign via the Murray region;
- Grow visitor spend with building length of stay one extra night stay not going outside the state equals and extra \$2 billion for the economy. Only be possible if the tourism products got deeper and richer; aggregate experiences travel interweaved the products into attractive packages and promoted through Agents and Travel intermediaries overseas - giving good stories to tell.

Nick encouraged the region to work with Tourism Victoria, Destination Melbourne to assemble these programs, and leverage online assets, events eg Melbourne Food and

Wine and product campaigns, PR channels – to grow the product beyond the Hoddle grid.

The Victorian government is actively involved in trade missions promoting Victoria in China and other OS markets. To do this, products need to be market ready. Focus on getting the narrative right for the target markets.

He spoke about using social media, video streaming on youtube, twitter as a good tools for promotional activity. He mentioned that at a regional level, it was important to cooperate to make a better product by working together and co-brand to take local tourism to the next level.

Nick clarified the new State Government department structure and the newly created entity *Visit Victoria*. Policy and the supply side (ie investment, trade, infrastructure, business engagement) remain in the economic development functions of State government. Visit Victoria is a separately incorporated marketing entity responsible for product development, marketing, branding and promotions for all visitors to Melbourne and regional Victoria including across events and conventions. The restructure includes the appointment of a new Visitor Economy Ministerial Advisory Committee.

Nick spent some time answering a few questions about the positioning of the greater Melbourne region, role of public transport, nature based attractions, influence of geopolitical boundaries of tourism regions, and visitor economy funding.

Will Flamsteed, CEO Grampian Tourism

Will was the second key note speaker. Will explained the Grampian's Master plan created in 2014, and the development of the Grampian Peak Trails with indigenous guided tours, visiting ancient rock formations, hiker's camps, raised walkways, and different other products to encourage group tours, soft adventure, day experiences that could be created to strengthen regional economy.

He spoke about the importance of partnerships in tourism to get more accomplished and cited the Wander Victoria as an example. He also spent some time explaining the new regional website as another example of positive collaboration between the five Councils and industry in the Grampian region. He spoke about the value of tourism in term of revenue and jobs and increasing visitation despite bushfires. Partnerships would help not only in creating opportunities but also reducing overhead costs, such as collaborating to create the website.

Will answered a few questions about managing access for visitors, successes and challenges in partnerships, creating new business model for others to partner with and position their products. He said that working collaboratively was the key to success.

Richard Ponsford, Executive Officer, Western Melbourne Tourism

Richard presented an overview of visitor data as at Sept 2015 on various parameters including type of tourism, visitor's age profile, motivators, activities, country/region of origin, travel partners, length of stay and accommodation choice. He mentioned that while day trips show some slight decline, overnights domestic and international visitors are trending upwards.

Two workshops followed the forum presentation.

**Workshop 1 'Telling and Selling Our West Side Story'
Paige Rowett, Tourism eSchool**

In this practical workshop, Paige covered the critical components of a tourism website that tells and sells destination's story, and the story of Melbourne's west. She shared strategies on writing new and leveraging existing content, and collaborating together online to build a more engaging picture of Melbourne's west, making it a must visit destination for Melbourne locals and out-of-towners alike.

Paige explained four different yet inter-dependent concepts that were very important in building tourism customer base

1. Would-be customers and how they purchased
2. Website must haves
3. Content creation
4. Optimizing and sharing the content

She spoke about identifying the profitable customer, and mentioned that an ideal customer should align with what the destination has to offer. It is important to invest efforts in ideal customer profiling for customer conversion to attract new customers for more business. The stakeholder had to be very clear about the content for profiling different customers, backgrounds, stories and specific messaging.

Paige then shed light on how people conducted research and purchased tourism products on online platforms. She discussed how ecommerce on mobile had fractured the consumer journey with short bursts of hundreds of real time, intent driven micromoments. She described 4 important micromoments that became a new battleground for brands viz., (1) Want-to-know micromoment, (2) Want-to-go micromoment, (3) Want-to-do micromoment, (4) Want-to-buy micromoment. She said that it was important to brainstorm about ideal customers micromoments in-order to create highly relevant, useful and quality content.

It was also very important to optimize the website for mobile user experience. Having a solid presence on Google Search Engine would increase the result pages for relevant search queries with Search Engine Optimization.

With the current scenario, where customers used smart phones and device to search for contents instead of desktops and laptops, Paige spoke about website-must-haves for optimal promotion of tourism content, citing the importance of mobile optimized websites, landing pages, delivering one important message per page, clear call to action buttons on each page, whole purchasing experience optimized for mobiles including external booking engines and three step checkout process while capturing as much customer information as possible.

**Workshop 2 Actioning the latest trends – Travel like a Local, Mobile and 'Micromoments'
Bronwyn White, MyTravelResearch.com**

The focus of this workshop was about the hot new emerging trends and what the tourism business owners and stakeholders could do to operationalize the hot mobile and 'micromoment' trends to increase visitation, revenues and length of stays.

In continuation with the Workshop 1 theme 'Telling and Selling Our West Side Story', Bronwyn spoke about the importance of creating blogs enriched with visual content. She discussed the advantages of having the blogs included into the primary website instead

of creating a separate blog site. She examined the topics of content marketing, repurposing content, leveraging hash-tags, having a strong presence online. She explained the Inspire-Help-Stories Strategy. it was possible to *inspire* with images and videos; *help* with itineraries, new products, events, must-do's and don'ts, blogs, maps, etc., and *Stories* with blogs, interviews of the locals, legends, visitor experiences etc.

She took the participants through a basic primer on visitors to the region, and then explained some of the latest digital trends and easy ways to action the trends instantly.

Keeping in mind that the mobile technology was overtaking the desktops in tourism business searches, she advised planning for mobile first and desktop next. She explained the micromoments Dreaming, Planning, In Destination.

She mentioned with statistical data that 11% of mobile uses that would go elsewhere if they did not find relevant content during their searches. Providing further details on three ways of enticing more customer, she spoke of three trends:

- *Trend #1: Local Love* – connecting visitors with local people through local designs, art, local culture, farmers market, local produces, local way of life etc.
- *Trend #2: Hyper Local* – tuning into what was going on around the destination in real-time
- *Trend #3: Infolust* – using semantic search to tap into customer's desires

She explained new trends of digital marketing in tourism citing the example of use of Quick Response Codes or QR Codes on Footpaths of South Korea to assist tourists with relevant information.

Emphasizing the usefulness of Google products in Tourism searches, she explained about Google Analytics and Google 'local guides' services. *Google Analytics* provided with hit counter, free analysis and info graphics based on various parameters about visitors to respective websites.

Google Local Guide service provided the opportunity to registered users to add, review and rate information about tourism destinations, accommodations, events, food and wine, culture, etc. This would help in increasing location specific, personalized and credible content on google search engine.

Both the workshops were extremely engaging and provided ample learning experiences to the participants.

Wrap Up

Richard Ponsford explained the features of the new soon to be launched website www.melbourneswest.com.au This was followed by thankyou's from the MC, Jan Jacklin and a prize draw.

The program ended with a networking function including a jazz trio and wine from local wineries, Galli and Whichmount.