The Urban public transport experience of Chinese tourists in Melbourne

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Abstract

Previous studies have found that public transport is important to tourism destinations, as successful public transport for tourists may increase the attractiveness of destinations, and create competitive advantages. This paper explores the use and experience of using urban public transport by international tourists in Melbourne via short intercept surveys and follow on interviews among Chinese tourists.

The intercept surveys and interviews were conducted mainly in Federation Square during October and December of 2014. 443 questionnaires were collected, and 52 follow on interviews have been recorded. Results help in understanding Chinese tourists' usage of public transport during their stay in Melbourne. The follow on interview identifies areas of good performance and service gaps perceived by Chinese tourists in Melbourne.

Key words: Public transport, Chinese tourists, intercept survey, follow on interview, Melbourne, tourism

1. Introduction

Previous studies have found that public transport is considered a core element in the tourism product (Becker et al. 2011). Successful public transport for tourists may increase the attractiveness of destinations, and create competitive advantages (Jepson et al. 1999, Lee et al. 2008, Becker et al. 2011, Aguilo et al. 2012). Users who have good experience with urban public transport will probably use the services again, while users who experience problems may not use urban public transport services the next time (Eboli et al. 2009).

China has become the most valuable international tourist market to Australia (Australian Trade Commission 2014). Visitors from China expend $8.3 billion, about 16% of total international expenditure (Tourism Research Australia 2016). China has been acknowledged as an important emerging market by the Australian inbound tourism industry (Pan et al. 2003, Lim et al. 2005, Tourism Research Australia 2008, Sparks et al. 2009). As a result, this paper focuses on the public transport user experience of Chinese tourists in Melbourne.

In order to explore the usage of urban public transport by Chinese tourists, an intercept survey and follow on interviews have been conducted. Surveys explore whether there is a gap between the user's expected and actual experience of these products, and also the reasons for any gap (Bramwell 1998). This paper uses short questionnaire surveys to explore the travel behaviour of Chinese tourists during their stay in Melbourne. This paper also reports on qualitative interviews conducted with Chinese tourists, to better understand their experience and thoughts about urban public transport services in Melbourne. The purpose of this paper is to fill in the knowledge gap of Chinese visitors' experiences of using urban public transport.

The paper takes the following structure. The next section contains a review of past literature on international tourists, which is followed by a description of the research method. The results of the surveys are then presented. The paper ends with a discussion and conclusion highlighting areas for future research.

2. Literature review

There is limited research examining the use of public transport by the tourist population (Thompson 2003, Lumsdon *et al.* 2006, Lumsdon 2006, Aquino 2008). The literature on tourism emphasises the role of well-planned public transport as an important contribution to destination satisfaction (Jepson et al. 1999, Lee et al. 2008, Becker et al. 2011, Aguilo et al. 2012). Tourism planners rarely influence public transport design during planning (Thompson et al. 2007).

Research shows where services are perceived to be adequate, there is a clear potential for using public transport in leisure time (Gronau et al. 2007). The following issues are regarded as important to improving the service to tourists (Edwards et al. 2008):

- understanding the tourists' experiences, perceptions and expectations;
- understanding of the service quality;
- understanding the tourists' public transport needs;

In order to better analyse the intercept survey results in this research, the following literature has been reviewed:

- the home travel behaviour of international tourists and mode choice in destination;
- return and first time tourists;
- Chinese tourists;

2.1 The home travel behaviour of international tourists and mode choice in destination

A key concern in transport mode choice is whether people compare car with public transport for unfamiliar trips such as those made as a tourist.(Farag et al. 2012). Travel behaviour research suggests visitors are more likely to choose a transport mode that they are familiar with or are accustomed to (Aquino 2008), hence it may be theorised that the home or domestic country travel behaviour of international tourists may influence mode choice in their overseas destinations.

Research also suggests that tourists who normally travel by car are prepared and willing to take public transport instead of driving (Bohler et al. 2006). Indeed it has been suggested that attracting visitors to public transport is easier than breaking the habits of local residents in cities (Jepson et al. 1999, Kinsella et al. 2011). For example, Schiefelbusch et al. (2007) suggested that leisure and event trips could be considered an opportunity to break car use habits. Dziekan (2008) suggested that it is easier to encourage tourists to use public transport when the right support is provided.

2.2 Return and first time tourists

Research has found differences between first time and repeat tourist visitors in terms of travel behaviour (Lew et al. 2006). Return visitors have a better understanding of the conditions to expect than first time users (Dilworth 2003). A first-time visitor to a destination would be expected to visit more regions than a return-visitor.(Tideswell et al. 2002). New visitors try to get to as many attractions as possible, whereas return visitors were more selective and focused.(Edwards et al. 2011). Return travellers were found to be more likely than first-time travellers to use car transport in one study (Hossain et al. 2004).

2.3 Chinese tourists

Cultural background has also been found to be influential in transport choice of international tourists (Masiero et al. 2013). Hough et al. (2010) found significant differences among Chinese and Australian tourists on pre-purchased transport choices during their trips in Scotland.

Chinese international travel will become a major source of growth for travel providers in destination countries (Harrill et al. 2010, Arita et al. 2011, Lui et al. 2011, Hsu et al. 2012). The China 2020 Strategic Plan is a core element in the Australian ten-year tourism strategy, aiming to ensure that the country remains competitive in the fast growing market for outbound travel from China (Hotels.com L.P 2013). China is Australia's fastest growing and most valuable inbound market (Australian Trade Commission 2014).

During the year ended 31 December 2015, there were 6.9 million international visitors in Australia. The total expenditure of the international visitors was $36.6 billion in the year ended 31 December 2015. As it is showed in table 1, the largest sources of visitors to Australia are New Zealand, China, United Kingdom and USA. Australia is the most popular destination amongst Chinese travellers in terms of places they would like to visit in the next 12 months. China is Victoria's largest international source market with more than 280,000 overnight visitors coming to Melbourne in (Melbourne 2013).

Table 1: International visitors in Australia during the year ended 31 December 2015

Source Country	Number (million)	Proportion	Total expenditure ($,Billion)
New Zealand	1.19	17.25%	2.6
China	0.95	13.77%	8.3
United Kingdom	0.65	9.42%	3.8
USA	0.57	8.26%	3.4

Source: Tourism Research Australia (2016). International visitors in Australia: December 2015 quarterly results of the international visitor survey. Australia, Tourism Research Australia.

In all, China has become one of Australia's most important inbound market (Australian Trade Commission 2014). It is important to learn the difference between the first time visitors and return visitors, and the home travel behaviour of Chinese tourists and mode choice in foreign destination. After studying these important aspects of international tourists, a short intercept survey and a follow on interview have been chosen as the main research instruments in this research.

3. Research method

3.1 Research Context

The project was conducted in Melbourne, the second most popular city for Chinese tourists in Australia (Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) 2008). Melbourne is Australia's premier destination for sporting events, attracting 92% of total expenditure by International visitors in Victoria (Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) 2008). Melbourne is often described as the sporting capital of Australia and attracts internationally significant events such as the Formula 1 Grand Prix and the Australian Open Tennis Tournament. The estimated daily interstate visitors are 28,000 and overseas visitors are 31,000 in the central city area of Melbourne (Hughes et al. 2010). Non-peak travel in the Melbourne CBD contains a significant number of visitor and tourist trips (The Urban Transport Institute et al. 2011). Tourism makes a significant contribution to the Melbourne economy, and China is the State of Victoria's largest international source market (Melbourne 2013). Melbourne has a well-developed public transport network including Australia's second largest heavy rail system and the world's largest tram network (Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) 2011).

3.2 Approach

Two main primary research instruments were adopted; a short intercept survey and a follow on interview.

The short **intercept survey** was conducted mainly in Federation Square as Federation Square is the most widely visited weekday attraction amongst overseas visitors (Hughes et al. 2010) and a major public venue in Melbourne CBD. In addition, the surveys were also conducted in selected travel agencies in China town and other tourism attractions known to be frequented by Chinese tourists.

The Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) reviews all research involving human participants at the university. Ethics approval was sought and granted (approval number CF14/2994-2014001661) in October 2014. In accordance with the ethics process, an explanatory statement and consent form were created to ensure participants were fully informed about the nature of the project and gave explicit consent to participate.

3.2.1 Recruitment

International Visitors in this research refer to those who are visiting Australia, and staying away from their home country for less than 12 months (Ruzzene 2011).

Chinese tourists were recruited by their appearance, and then asked if they are international tourists from China. If the participant was interested, the surveyor addressed terms of confidentiality, and explained the format of the survey. The introductory information provided a description of the study, respondent expectations and asked whether or not they would like to participate in the research. In addition, a full explanatory statement was provided. The surveyor (the first author) can speak fluent Chinese, so all the surveys were conducted in Chinese after confirming the participants are Chinese tourists to make the participants more comfortable and relaxed.

At the end of the intercept survey, the respondents were asked whether they are interested participating in the **follow on interview** about their experience of using urban public transport in Melbourne. Some survey respondents indicated they were willing to participate in a follow on interview and of those 52 interviews were conducted (each approximately 30 minutes in length).

3.2.2 Intercept survey design

In order to get enough responses, the short intercept survey made efforts to elicit the relevant information with fewest questions. It included 13 questions and can be delivered in 3 minutes. The key data collected from the intercept survey included:

- Socioeconomic characteristics in terms of gender, age, origin region

- the purpose of travelling in Melbourne

- features of their trips in terms of travelling companions, length of stay, return visitors or first time, independent or package travellers

- type of public transport ticket used

- the transport mode the tourist used to travel between Melbourne airport and central city

- the transport mode used during travelling in Melbourne

- the main transport mode used in home country

3.2.3 Follow on Interview design

Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face on site and recorded. Face-to-face site interviews can overcome many of the errors based on misunderstanding of questions in questionnaires. These semi-structured interviews included a number of 'probing' questions which were asked with the understanding that response are likely to be qualitative and vary between respondents. Participants were asked to describe their experience of using urban public transport in Melbourne and what characteristics stood out from their experience.

Data for each interview were coded based on interview transcripts. Transcripts were coded to identify good performance and any identified service gaps. The data analysis is to investigate the issues emerging for the Chinese tourists using urban public transport in Melbourne and their experience. The interviews were designed to collect the following information:

- How well does urban public transport in Melbourne do from the view of international tourists?

- What factors influence the quality of urban public transport for international tourists?

- What are the most commonly used performance indicators for the service quality of urban public transport?

- What are the key performance indicators of the service quality of urban public transport which can be applied uniformly for most countries?

- What are the knowledge, criteria and methodologies that must be addressed when aggregating the indicators into one single index measuring the service quality of urban public transport?

- How can the applicability (usefulness) of this index be checked and evaluated?

- What factors influence people to choose urban public transport when they travel overseas?

- The service quality of urban public transport affecting the urban mode choice of international tourists;

- The home travel behaviour of international tourists and its links to international tourists' mode choice in overseas trips.

4. Results

4.1. Short intercept survey results

The short intercept surveys took place during October and December of 2014. Some 443 questionnaires were completed, 226 (51.0%) questionnaires were answered by males, 217 (49.0%) questionnaires were answered by females.

4.1.1 Participant Characteristics

Table 2 presents the characteristics of respondents. Results are consistent with previous studies.

Table 2: Participant Characteristics

	Characteristics	Independent tourists		Group tour tourists		Total	
Age	Younger than 30	259	79.0%	60	52.2%	319	72.0%
	31-60	67	20.4%	51	44.3%	118	26.6%
	Over 60	2	0.6%	4	3.5%	6	1.4%
	Total	328	100.0%	115	100.0%	443	100.0%
Length of stay	one day	6	1.8%	22	19.1%	28	6.3%
	overnight and less than one week	73	22.3%	36	31.3%	109	24.6%
	one week to two weeks	20	6.1%	11	9.6%	31	7.0%
	two weeks to one month	34	10.4%	18	15.7%	52	11.7%
	more than one month	195	59.5%	28	24.3%	223	50.3%
	Total	328	100.0%	115	100.0%	443	100.0%
Travel companion	Alone	71	21.6%	6	5.2%	77	17.4%
	With family	102	31.1%	44	38.3%	146	33.0%
	With friends	126	38.4%	27	23.5%	153	34.5%
	Other	29	8.8%	38	33.0%	67	15.1%
	Total	328	100.0%	115	100.0%	443	100.0%
First travel /return	First time visiting Melbourne	142	43.3%	70	60.9%	212	47.9%
	Return travel	186	56.7%	45	39.1%	231	52.1%
	Total	328	100.0%	115	100.0%	443	100.0%

Table 2 indicates that:

- 72% of the respondents are young tourists (under 30), and independent travellers of respondents are younger (79.0% under 30)

- The surveyed Chinese tourists sample are more likely to travel independently (74.0%), though group tours remain popular (26.0%).

- Among the respondents, independent travellers stay longer (59.5% stayed more than one month), group tour tourists are more likely to stay shorter (19.1% stayed just one day, 31.3% stayed overnight and less than one week)

- The Chinese tourists sample are more likely to travel with family or friends (67.5%). Chinese tourists who travel alone are more likely to be independent tourists (93.4%)

- Among the respondents, independent travellers are more likely to be return visitors (56.7%), and return visitors are less likely to be group tour tourists, only 24.2% return visitors are group tour tourists

In general, the sample of Chinese tourists includes a high share of young independent travellers. This is thought to result from the sampling approach notably the sampling locations in the city which is thought to favour participation by independent tourists.

4.1.2 Home/domestic travel behaviour and mode choice in Melbourne

Table 3 and Figure 1 present the home travel behaviour and mode choice in Melbourne of respondents. The survey also investigated transport mode used to travel from Melbourne city to Melbourne airport. However the results are similar to the results in table 3, so the transport mode used to travel from Melbourne city to Melbourne airport are not present.

Table 3 and 4 indicates that public transport is the most commonly used mode for travel in Melbourne; almost 40% of the Chinese tourists sampled used local public transport. The next most commonly used mode was a car 24%, walking 18% and tour buses; 12%. Public transport is clearly a significantly important means of access for the Chinese international tourist market in Melbourne.

Figure 1: Home travel behaviour and mode choice in Melbourne of respondents
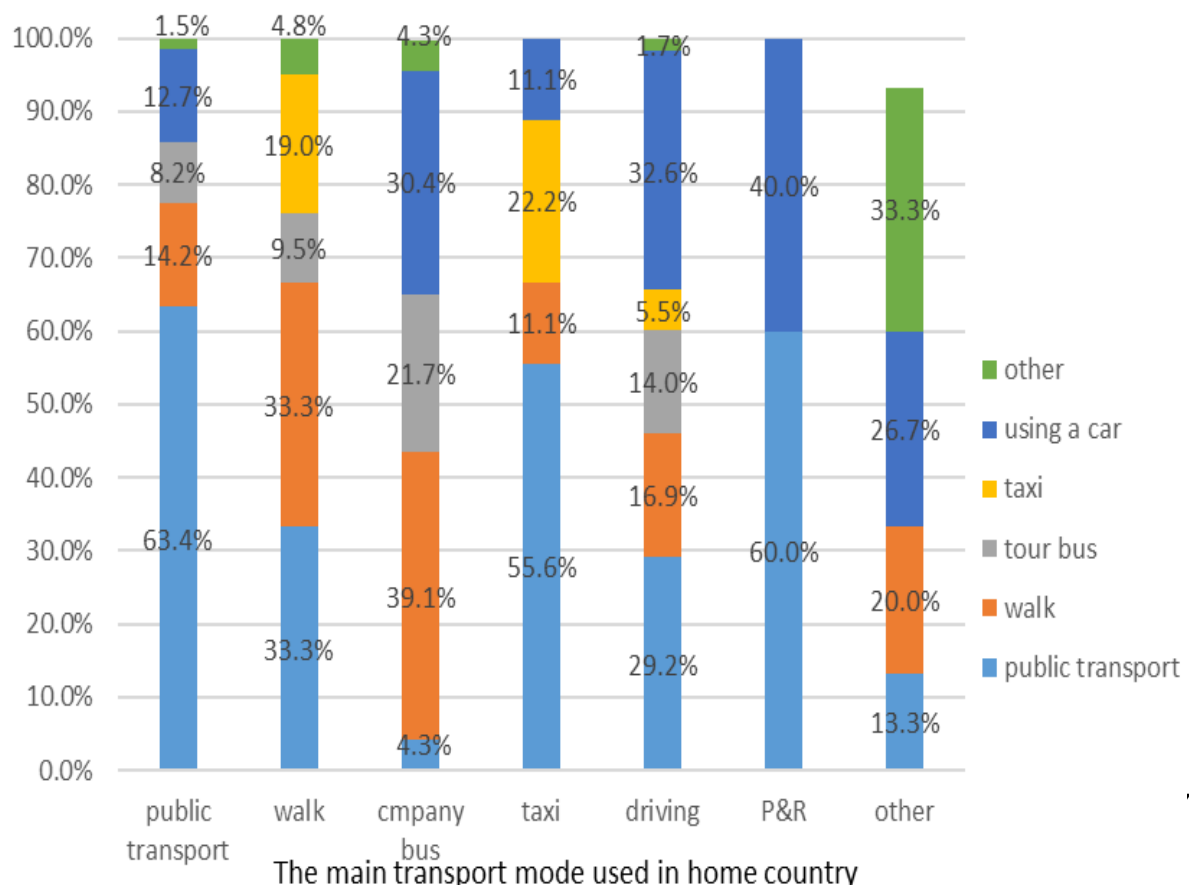
Table 3: Home travel behaviour and mode choice in Melbourne

		The main transport mode used in Melbourne													
		Public transport		Walk		Tour bus		Taxi		Using a car		Other		Total	
The main transport mode used in home country	Public transport	85	49.4%	19	24.1%	11	21.2%	0	0.0%	17	15.7%	2	15.4%	134	30.2%
	Walk	7	4.1%	7	8.9%	2	3.8%	4	21.1%	0	0.0%	1	7.7%	21	4.7%
	Company bus	1	0.6%	9	11.4%	5	9.6%	0	0.0%	7	6.5%	1	7.7%	23	5.2%
	Taxi	5	2.9%	1	1.3%	0	0.0%	2	10.5%	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	9	2.0%
	Driving	69	40.1%	40	50.6%	33	63.5%	13	68.4%	77	71.3%	4	30.8%	236	53.3%
	P&R	3	1.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.9%	0	0.0%	5	1.1%
	Other	2	1.2%	3	3.8%	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	4	3.7%	5	38.5%	15	3.4%
	Total	172	100.0%	79	100.0%	52	100.0%	19	100.0%	108	100.0%	13	100.0%	443	100.0%
Transport mode used to travel from Melbourne airport to Melbourne city	Skybus	79	45.9%	30	38.0%	3	5.8%	5	26.3%	29	26.9%	3	23.1%	149	33.6%
	Hotel shuttle bus	2	1.2%	10	12.7%	2	3.8%	3	15.8%	5	4.6%	3	23.1%	25	5.6%
	Shuttle bus from travel agency	6	3.5%	12	15.2%	40	76.9%	1	5.3%	13	12.0%	1	7.7%	73	16.5%
	Public buses & other buses	20	11.6%	1	1.3%	4	7.7%	3	15.8%	2	1.9%	3	23.1%	33	7.4%
	Taxi	32	18.6%	16	20.3%	2	3.8%	7	36.8%	20	18.5%	0	0.0%	77	17.4%
	Using a car	20	11.6%	7	8.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	29	26.9%	0	0.0%	56	12.6%
	Other	10	5.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	2.8%	1	7.7%	14	3.2%
	Not arrived at airport	3	1.7%	3	3.8%	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	7	6.5%	2	15.4%	16	3.6%
	Total	172	100.0%	79	100.0%	52	100.0%	19	100.0%	108	100.0%	13	100.0%	443	100.0%
Age	Younger than 30	136	79.1%	53	67.1%	20	38.5%	14	73.7%	87	80.6%	9	69.2%	319	72.0%
	31-60	34	19.8%	26	32.9%	32	61.5%	5	26.3%	17	15.7%	4	30.8%	118	26.6%
	Over 60	2	1.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	3.7%	0	0.0%	6	1.4%
	Total	172	100.0%	79	100.0%	52	100.0%	19	100.0%	108	100.0%	13	100.0%	443	100.0%
Length of stay	one day	2	1.2%	4	5.1%	22	42.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	28	6.3%
	overnight and less than one week	29	16.9%	40	50.6%	19	36.5%	2	10.5%	16	14.8%	3	23.1%	109	24.6%
	one week to two weeks	15	8.7%	3	3.8%	4	7.7%	4	21.1%	5	4.6%	0	0.0%	31	7.0%
	two weeks to one month	23	13.4%	8	10.1%	5	9.6%	6	31.6%	7	6.5%	3	23.1%	52	11.7%
	more than one month	103	59.9%	24	30.4%	2	3.8%	7	36.8%	80	74.1%	7	53.8%	223	50.3%
	Total	172	100.0%	79	100.0%	52	100.0%	19	100.0%	108	100.0%	13	100.0%	443	100.0%

Table 3 and Figure1 explore home/domestic travel vs travel in Melbourne during their visit. This indicates that:

- Home travel behaviour of respondents influences mode choice during overseas trips. Some 85 out of 134 (64.9%) respondents who took public transport as the main transport mode in China also took public transport as the main transport mode in Melbourne. Only 17 out of 134 (12.7%) respondents who took public transport as the main transport mode in China used cars as the main transport mode in Melbourne. Some 77 out of 236 (32.6%) respondents who used cars as the main transport mode in Melbourne also took driving as the main transport mode in China.

- Some 77 out of 108 (71.3%) respondents who used cars as the main transport mode also took driving as the main transport mode in China. Some 85 out of 172 (49.4%) respondents took public transport as the main transport mode also take public transport as the main transport mode in China.

- Some 69 out of 236 (29.2%) respondents who used cars as the main transport mode in China took public transport as the main transport mode in Melbourne. This indicates that tourists who normally travel by driving car are prepared and willing to

take public transport instead of driving during their visit which is consistent with previous research findings (Bohler et al. 2006)

- Some 108 out of 443 (24.4%) of the respondents used cars as their main transport mode in Melbourne (In Australia, a translated Chinese driving licence is accepted).

- Younger respondents are more likely to choose public transport as the main transport mode in Melbourne, as 79.1% of the respondents who took public transport as the main transport mode are younger than 30.

- Using a car in Melbourne is also very popular among young respondents, as 80.6% of the respondents who used a car as the main transport mode in Melbourne are younger than 30.

- Some 57.5% of respondents who take public transport as the main transport mode in Melbourne take sky bus or other public transport to travel between Melbourne airport and the centre of Melbourne.

- Some 76.9% of respondents who use tour bus as the main transport mode in Melbourne take a Shuttle bus organised by a travel agency to travel to/from Melbourne airport

- Among the respondents, who organised by a car as the main transport mode in Melbourne are likely to stay longer, as 74.1% of the respondents who took driving as the main transport mode in Melbourne stay longer than one month.

- Some 59.9% of the respondents who took public transport as the main transport mode in Melbourne stay longer than one month.

- Some 172 out of 443 (38.8%) respondents took public transport and 108 out of 443 (24.4%) respondents used a car as the main transport mode in Melbourne.

4.1.3 Transport mode choice: independent VS group tour tourists

Table 4 presents the transport mode choice of respondents. The survey also investigated transport mode used to travel from Melbourne city to Melbourne airport. However the results are similar to the results in table 4, so the transport mode used to travel from Melbourne city to Melbourne airport are not present.

This table indicates that:

- Among the respondents, independent travellers are more likely to use Skybus to travel between Melbourne airport and Melbourne city,

- Among the respondents, shuttle bus organised by a travel agency is the main transport mode for group tour tourists to travel between Melbourne airport and Melbourne city

- Among the respondents, who used a car to travel to/ from Melbourne airport only comprise 16.8% of independent travellers

- Among the respondents, independent travellers are more likely to choose public transport as the main transport mode than group tour tourists. 46.0% of independent travellers used public transport as the main transport mode, while 18.3% of group tour tourists used public transport as the main transport mode

- Among the respondents, independent travellers are more likely to use a car as the main transport mode than group tour tourists. Some 28.4% of independent travellers use a car as the main transport mode, while 13.0% of group tour tourists use a car as the main transport mode

- Overall, 172 out of 443 (38.8%) respondents took public transport as the main transport mode in Melbourne

Table 4: Transport mode choice of respondents: independent tourists VS group tour tourists

	Transport Mode	Independent tourists		Group tour tourists		Total	
Transport mode used to travel from Melbourne airport to Melbourne city	Skybus	134	40.9%	15	13.0%	149	33.6%
	Hotel shuttle bus	8	2.4%	17	14.8%	25	5.6%
	Shuttle bus from travel agency	17	5.2%	56	48.7%	73	16.5%
	Public buses & other buses	21	6.4%	12	10.4%	33	7.4%
	Taxi	68	20.7%	9	7.8%	77	17.4%
	Using a car	55	16.8%	1	0.9%	56	12.6%
	Other	13	4.0%	1	0.9%	14	3.2%
	Not arrived at Melbourne airport	12	3.7%	4	3.5%	16	3.6%
	Total	328	100.0%	115	100.0%	443	100.0%
The main transport mode used in Melbourne	Public transport	151	46.0%	21	18.3%	172	38.8%
	Walk	65	19.8%	14	12.2%	79	17.8%
	Tour bus	2	0.6%	50	43.5%	52	11.7%
	Taxi	12	3.7%	7	6.1%	19	4.3%
	Using a car	93	28.4%	15	13.0%	108	24.4%
	Other	5	1.5%	8	7.0%	13	2.9%
	Total	328	100.0%	115	100.0%	443	100.0%

4.1.4 Transport mode choice: first time VS return tourists

Table 5 presents the transport mode choice of return and first time tourists. The survey also investigated transport mode used to travel from Melbourne city to Melbourne airport. However the results are similar to the results in table 4, so the data Transport mode used to travel from Melbourne city to Melbourne airport are not present in this paper.

This table indicates that:

- Among the respondents, return travellers are more likely to use Skybus to travel between Melbourne airport and Melbourne city,

- Among the respondents, tourists who take taxi between Melbourne airport and Melbourne city are mainly first time visitors

- Among the respondents, return travellers are more likely to choose public transport as the main transport mode than first time tourists. 42.0% of return travellers used public transport as the main transport mode, while 35.3% of first time tourists used public transport as the main transport mode

Table 5: Transport mode choice of respondents: first time tourists VS return tourists

	Transport Mode	First time visitors		Return visitors		Total	
Transport mode used to travel from Melbourne airport to Melbourne city	Skybus	40	18.9%	109	47.2%	149	33.6%
	Hotel shuttle bus	12	5.7%	13	5.6%	25	5.6%
	Shuttle bus from travel agency	52	24.5%	21	9.1%	73	16.5%
	Public buses & other buses	15	7.1%	18	7.8%	33	7.4%
	Taxi	52	24.5%	25	10.8%	77	17.4%
	Using a car	30	14.2%	26	11.3%	56	12.6%
	Other	6	2.8%	8	3.5%	14	3.2%
	Not arrived at Melbourne airport	5	2.4%	11	4.8%	16	3.6%
	Total	212	100.0%	231	100.0%	443	100.0%
The main transport mode used in Melbourne	Public transport	75	35.4%	97	42.0%	172	38.8%
	Walk	44	20.8%	35	15.2%	79	17.8%
	Tour bus	38	17.9%	14	6.1%	52	11.7%
	Taxi	9	4.2%	10	4.3%	19	4.3%
	Using a car	44	20.8%	64	27.7%	108	24.4%
	Other	2	0.9%	11	4.8%	13	2.9%
	Total	212	100.0%	231	100.0%	443	100.0%

4.1.5 The public transport tickets used by respondents

Table 6: The public transport tickets used by respondents

	Myki tourists package	Myki	None of these	Total
First time tourists	27	130	55	212
Return tourists	23	171	37	231
Total	50	301	92	443

This table indicates that only 50 respondents had chosen a Myki Visitor Value Pack, comprising 11.3% of all respondents.

4.2 Follow on interview results

This section describes the key results from the in depth interviews with regards to Chinese tourists using urban public transport in Melbourne. Two key areas are reported in this section; general impressions and positive experiences. Secondly problems and issues experienced using public transport. In each case, verbatim comments made by respondents are quoted to illustrate key points. Links to previous published research in this field are also quoted to place the comments made in the context of previous research.

4.2.1 Positive Experience

① Positive experience on trams

Previous research suggests that for tourists, public transportation service is not only a transit mode, but also an experience that integrates social and cultural activities (Hall 1999). Transport experience can actually 'be' the tourism experience (Lamb et al. 1996). The experience of a tourist using public transport could be seen as the aggregate of sensual impressions during the journey in an urban destination (Schiefelbusch 2012). Using public transport can help tourists experience how locals go about their activities (Ruggles-Brise 2009). From this aspect, cars don't have obvious advantages compared to public transport (Gronau et al. 2007).

Compared to the normal public transport service in China, the tram is very different and rare in their daily life. Respondents frequently states they feel it is interesting and convenient to travel on trams. According to the results of short intercept surveys, trams are very popular with respondents. Some 282 (63.7%) respondents had used trams during their stay in Melbourne. As all trams are new to them, the specialist free 'city circle' tourist tram (using older heritage vehicles) doesn't particularly stand out very much.

Feedback on tram during interview included:

"Great service" What an interesting service this is. I haven't used or even seen a tram in China before. Travelling on trams makes me feel I am travelling as local residents (female, aged 31-60).

I like the red tram. The heritage tram vehicles look nice (female, aged 31-60).

It feels so different having a tram passing you slowly. It feels like you are walking with the tram (female, aged under 20).

High frequency service. The bell sounds like there is a tram arriving at the stop every minute (female, aged 21-30).

② Acceptable cost

The cost of public transport is more acceptable to respondents, as they are not a very price-sensitive buyer for public transport. Feedback about the cost/price during interview included:

I feel it is OK to me, not very expensive. (male, aged 31-60)

It is expensive, but fine to me. We already find everything is expensive in Australia. (female, aged under 30)

Not expensive as I expected, so no problem about it. (male, aged 31-60)

It's unavoidable that you will spend more in oversea trips than in hometown, so it is OK. (male, aged 31-60)

③ Cordial attitude and helpfulness of staff

Previous research suggests that visitors using public transport will come into contact with a large number of transport staff, be it ticket offices, information desks, drivers or conductors. Staff attitude is important to influence tourists' experience (Schiefelbusch 2012, Anable 2005). Compared to normal public transport service in the respondents' home country, respondents gave high praise for the service attitude and helpfulness of staff. The general impression of public transport staff is friendly, patient and very helpful. Feedback on public transport staff service during interview included:

They are so patient. My oral English is poor but they still try their best to understand my question and try to help me. (male, aged 31-60)

It is useful to ask help from the staff in train station. I would like to ask them directly instead of finding ways myself. (female, aged under 30)

④ Perception of crowding lower than in China

Previous research suggests that tourists are likely to compare their visiting travel experiences with other alternative destinations they have visited before or their travel experience in their home country. They are likely to use past experiences to form a norm to evaluate their experiences at the new destination to determine whether it was a satisfactory experience or not (Neal et al. 2008). Some respondents reported that they perceived less crowding on Melbourne public transport than in their home country.

There are so many available seats. I feel like I can get a seat every time I get on the train. I don't know whether it is because that it is not during peak hours. (female, aged 31-60)

Not like in China, always full of people everywhere. There is enough space in trams and I don't need to worry that I couldn't get on the trams (female, aged under 30)

4.2.2 Problems and Issues

① Not enough on board information

Compared to online information, respondents complained about availability of information on board public transport vehicles.

There is broadcast information about which stop it is on trams or buses. I have to look very hard to find out whether it is the stop I should get off or not. It is very inconvenient. (male, aged 31-60)

I used my mobile phone on bus to google information every time I travel on bus (female, aged 21-30).

There is no information about service disruption at the stop! I waited for over 40 minutes at the bus stop until another passenger told me there is no service of that bus line on that day. Over 40 minutes! (male, aged 31-60)

② Confusion about the fare and Myki tourists package

Myki is the public transport ticket to travel on Melbourne's trains, trams and buses. There are two options when passengers top their Myki cards; one is 'Myki money' and the other is 'Myki pass'. With myki money, passengers 'pay as you go'. Myki pass is suitable for passengers who travel regularly. Passengers can buy a 7-day myki pass, or anywhere between 28 and 365 consecutive days of travel. Myki pass cannot be suspended and passengers must use consecutive travel days only. For example, a seven-day myki pass activated on Monday is valid for travel until Sunday.

Some tourists complained about the confusion of Myki, especially Myki pass and Myki money.

I still don't understand the Myki Pass and Myki money. I stay for about two weeks. It looks like Myki Pass would be cheaper, but I still choose Myki money when I top up my myki as I don't quite understand them. (female, aged under 30)

I don't know there is a difference between weekdays and weekends. I arrived on Sundays and I found the public transport was cheap on that day. Then I found the money went away much quicker than I thought. I thought there was some problem with my Myki when I found it cost more than the first day I arrived. I asked passengers nearby and then found out the differences between the weekdays and weekends. I feel embarrassed when others looked at me as I should know it. How can I know it? No one tells me about it. (female, aged under 30)

I don't know what is Myki pass. It is too complicated to me. (male, aged 31-60)

Studies show that some types of transport ticket, marketed for tourists, have a potential to offer a more sustainable modal choice to visitors, and could promote public transport for tourists (Lumsdon et al. 2006). However, it is important to make tourists aware of these special tickets (Gronau et al. 2007, Dubey 2011). In Melbourne, Myki tourists package is designed specifically for tourists. A myki visitor pack that includes a ready-to-use card, a map of Melbourne and about $140 of discounts to the city's major attractions. However, very few Chinese tourists interviewed knew about it. According to the results of the short intercept surveys, only 50 (11.5%) Chinese tourists had used Myki tourists package.

Feedback on this during the interviews were illustrative:

I ordered my Myki on the PTV website, but there is no choice of Myki tourists package. If it is designed for tourists, why don't they include it for sale? (female, aged under 30)

I know nothing about Myki tourists package. Is there any advertisement in Chinese? I haven't seen any information about it in Chinese. (male, aged under 30)

Why don't they promote it in a foreign language since it is target for international tourists? (female, aged under 30)

I don't know it before. As it doesn't cost more and provide lots of discount at attractions, why don't I buy it? Why do I buy the normal Myki? (male, aged 31-60)

There should be information about it on home page of PTV and tourism Victoria website. In that case, everyone would know about it. (female, aged under 30)

5. Conclusions

This research builds upon the findings of short intercept survey and follow on qualitative interviews. The aim of this study is to fill a notable gap in the existing literature by examining the use of urban public transport by international tourists. The research examined the users' experience, highlighting dimensions of urban public transport which may be of particular relevance to overseas visitors.

A number of key findings of short intercept survey were identified including:

- Public transport is the most common mode for access of Chinese Tourists in Melbourne

- The home travel behaviour of respondents influences mode choice in respondents' overseas trips. However, the respondents who normally travel by driving car are prepared and willing to take public transport instead of driving

- Younger respondents are more likely to choose public transport as main transport mode in Melbourne.

- Among the respondents, independent travellers are more likely to choose public transport as the main transport mode than group tour tourists

- Among the respondents, return travellers are more likely to choose public transport as the main transport mode than first time tourists.

- Respondents who take public transport as the main transport mode in Melbourne are more likely to take public transport to travel between Melbourne airport and the centre of Melbourne.

- A low proportion of respondents use the Myki Visitor Value Pack which is designed for tourists.

These findings present great potential to improve the visitor experience and encourage more Chinese tourists to visit Melbourne by improving their experience of using urban public transport.

In order to encourage Chinese tourists to use urban public transport in Melbourne, the service quality and users' experience need to be improved. A number of positive aspects and problems of urban public transport in Melbourne have been identified during the follow on interviews.

Positive aspects of urban public transport in Melbourne:

- Positive experience on trams

- Acceptable cost

- Cordial attitude and helpfulness of staff

- Perceived less crowding than in respondents' home country

Problems of urban public transport in Melbourne:

- Not enough on board information

- Confusion about the fare

- Not enough information about Myki tourists package

These findings present a new challenge and opportunity for transit operators, as policies attempting to improve the service quality and tourists' experience using urban public transport. The challenge is to find ways and means on how to overcome these challenges in the most effective and efficient manner. For example, getting more on board information and promote Myki tourists package in foreign language could improve the tourists' experience.

There is some limitation in this research, such as the sample in this research is not representative for Chinese tourists in Melbourne or Australia. According to international visitor survey, in the year ending June 2014, 59% of Chinese visitors to Victoria were for holiday, 19% of Chinese visitors to Victoria were for visiting friends and relatives purpose, 8% of Chinese visitors to Victoria were for business, 11% of Chinese visitors to Victoria were for education, 1% of Chinese visitors to Victoria were for employment, 3% of Chinese visitors to Victoria were for other reason (Australia 2014). In this research, 33% of Chines visitors in Melbourne were for holiday, 9% of Chinese visitors in Melbourne were for visiting friends and relatives purpose, 11% of Chinese visitors in Melbourne were for business, 39% of Chinese visitors in Melbourne were for education, 5% of Chinese visitors in Melbourne were for employment, 3% of Chinese visitors in Melbourne were for other reason. In the year ending December 2014, 61% of overnight leisure visitors from China to Victoria were visiting Australia for the first time (Tourism Victoria 2016). However, in this research, 64% of Chinese visitors in Melbourne were visiting Melbourne for the first time. Group travel accounted for 46% of the Chinese leisure visitor market in the year ending December 2014 (Tourism Victoria 2016), while in this research group travel only accounted for 35%.

Although this research provides some important insights into Chinese visitors' experience using urban public transport in Melbourne, further research is needed to quantitatively measure the service quality of urban public transport service from the view of international tourists.

Appendix: Chinese tourists intercept survey questionnaire

ID	Gender	Age
	F/M	younger than 30/ 31-60/ over 60

1. Are you an international tourist from China?
a. Yes   b. No.

2. Which city in China are you from?   **Answer: _____**

3. Is this your first time visiting Melbourne?
a. Yes   b. No

4. Have you used, or will you use, any of the following forms of transport in Melbourne during your trip? (Multiple choice)
a. Metropolitan Train   b. Metropolitan Bus (not including Skybus)   c. Skybus
d. City Circle Tram   e. Tram (not including City Circle Tram)   f. Melbourne Visitor
Shuttle Bus   g. None of the above   h. All of the above

5. Which of the following ticket do you use?
a. Myki Visitor Value Pack   b. Myki
c. Free Travel Pass (e.g. Companion card, Free Travel voucher)   d. None of the above

6. How did you travel from the Melbourne airport to Melbourne city?
a. Skybus   b. Hotel shuttle bus   c. Shuttle bus from the travel agency
d. Public Buses & Other Buses   e. Taxi   f. Self-driving car
g. Other   h. I haven't arrived at Melbourne airport.

7. How will you travel to the Melbourne airport from Melbourne city?
a. Skybus   b. Hotel shuttle bus   c. Shuttle bus from the travel agency
d. Public Buses & Other Buses   e. Taxi   f. Self-driving car
g. Other   h. I won't leave from Melbourne airport.

8. Could you tell me the purpose of your visit to Melbourne?
a. Holiday   b. Business trip   c. Education
d. Visiting friends & relatives   e. Employment   f. Other

9. Are your trips within Melbourne organized by a tour guide or have you organized your trips in Melbourne by yourself?
a. A tour guide organized my trips within Melbourne for me
b. I organized my trips within Melbourne myself

10. Which of the following best describe the total length of your stay in Melbourne?
a. one day   b. overnight and less than one week
c. less than one week   d. one week to two weeks
e. two weeks to one month   f. more than one month

11. When you travel around Melbourne, do you travel alone or with someone?
a. alone   b. with family   c. with friends   d. other

12. Which of the following best describe your main transport mode during your stay in Melbourne?
a. Public transport   b. Walk   c. Tour bus
d. Taxi   e. Using a car   f. Other

13. Which of the following best describe your main transport mode when you travel in your home country?
a. Public transport   b. Walk   c. Company bus   d. Taxi
e. Using car   f. P & R   g. Other

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