

Signage and wayfinding of the Northern Territory drive market

DEPARTMENT OF
TOURISM AND CULTURE

Executive Summary
July 2017

Introduction

The landscape of the Northern Territory (NT), provides an ideal opportunity for drive tourism. Tourists can: drive along sealed highways between cities or towns; follow themed routes and explore the natural wonders; go four-wheel driving to land a fish or two; or simply fly into a major gateway and get around in a hire car. Whilst on the journey, travellers seek information from a myriad of signs including directional, tourist information and amenities. Signs can provide reassurance that visitors are on the right track and facilitate safe experiences whilst on the journey. Lack of information could cause dissatisfaction with the overall visit – impacting on their NT experience and reducing the time spent enjoying attractions.

A key challenge is ensuring visitors are provided with the right level of information whilst on the journey to help with their experience, while at the same time, balancing the cost of providing such information.

The Department of Tourism and Culture – Tourism NT, commissioned Instinct and Reason to conduct strategic research that explored how the drive market “way find” in the NT and investigated the value of signage. This summary reports on the key findings from the study. The method undertaken for this project is outlined on the last page of this summary.



Key themes – the role of signage

Reminds

Acts as a reminder of places and attractions in and around the area they could experience. Often, visitors may have heard of the place before but do not realise it may be on their route.

Reassures

While technology and maps may be relied upon, signage helps reassure the driver they are on the right path. Provides a sense of comfort and certainty.

Broadens Experience

Helps make the trip more spontaneous by 'stumbling' upon experiences along the way. Unplanned experiences delight and add to overall satisfaction with the NT experience.

Safety

Knowing what you can and cannot do. Where you can and cannot swim.
Types of vehicles suited for the road.

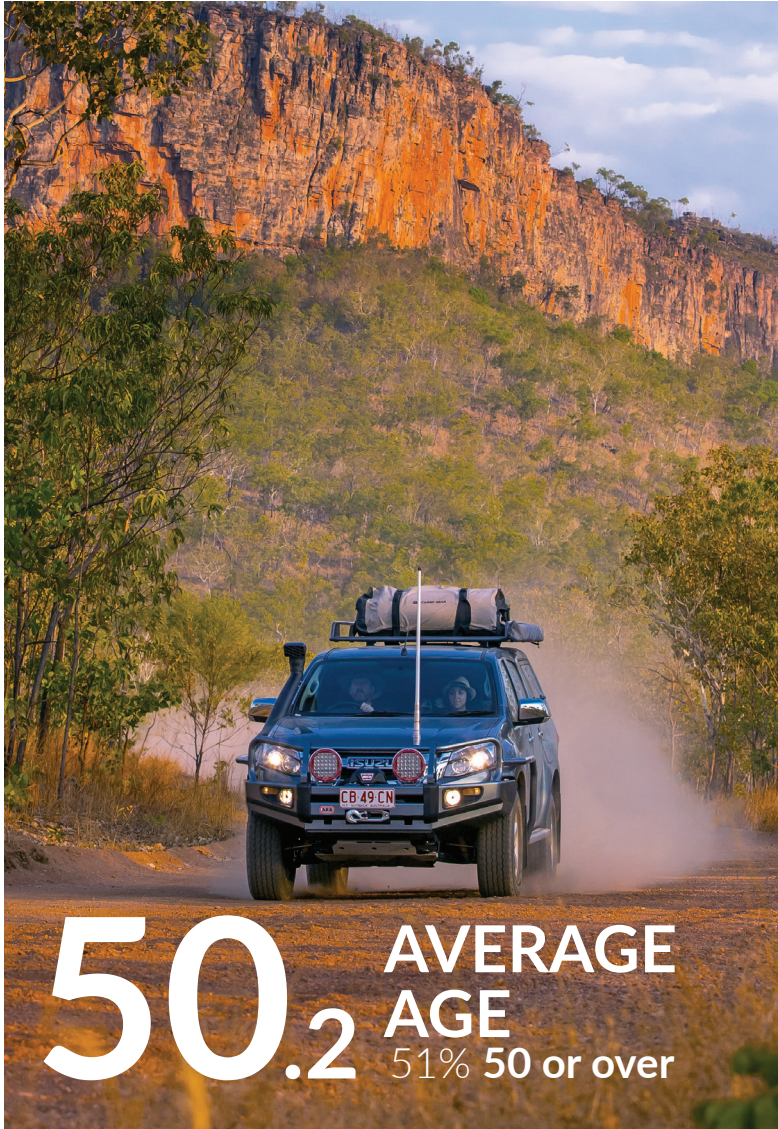
Services

Knowing when you will be able to access amenities next.
Plan journey based on the amenities available – i.e dump sites, petrol stations.

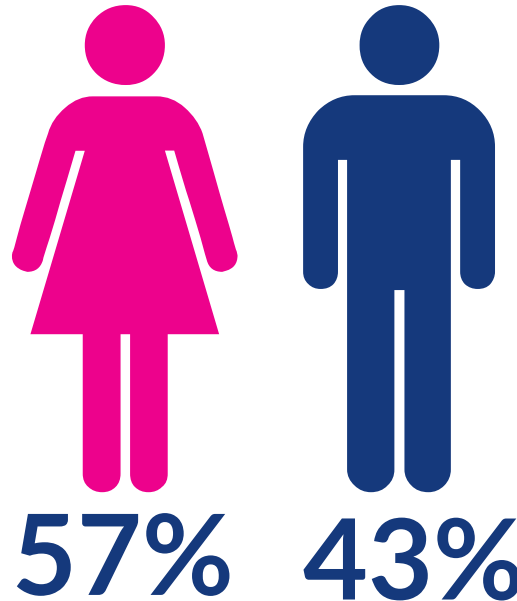
Wayfinding

Knowing what is around and nearby.
Helps locate you on a map.
Not a waste time if road is closed.

Respondent profile



Only 17% travel on the road for a week or less, the majority of which are overseas visitors (28%)



20% Overseas Visitors,
80% Domestic Visitors



Domestic visitors likely to travel for longer – often part of a grey-nomad multi-destination trip, with 26% anticipating a trip of 1 to 3 months

Journey path

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The research found that Darwin and Alice Springs were both popular start and end points of the road trip – with many visitors driving to these locations from interstate. When it came to interstate – Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales were key starting points.

Fourteen percent of those surveyed indicated they did not have a destination in mind.



30% of all drive holidays started in the NT



Key findings

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Over half, start and finish their road trip in the NT. Victoria, Queensland and NSW are both key starting points and key destinations – indicating a round trip pattern.

Only 17% travel on the road for a week or less, the majority of these being overseas visitors (28%). Domestic visitors are likely to travel for longer – often part of a grey-nomad multi-destination trip, with **26% anticipating a trip of 1 to 3 months.**

Younger visitors are more likely to travel with friends (47% compared to 18% overall). Those travelling with friends typically travel in a party of 5 people (26% compared to 10% overall). **Average travel party size was 3.5.**

Way and information finding are the key signs used on the road [Distance to towns (74%), attractions in the area (72%), and visitor information signs (70%)], with no significant differences by country of origin.

On the road, Visitor Information Centres (VICs) are a key source of information (72%) followed by tourist road signs (69%) and Maps (54%). **Technology based sources like social media are typically relied upon less.**

97% do some prior research before the trip – relying on Google Maps (55%), Maps (52%) and word of mouth (47%).

Domestic visitors report a greater reliance on signs than overseas road trippers (24% vs. 12% for high reliance). **The most important signs were distance to petrol, road conditions and VIC signs.**

Less than one in ten (7%) visitors believed in-language signage should be provided. Suggested languages were Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) and European languages.

33% want signs with a detour and are happy to detour on average 92.9 km for an attraction.

Prioritisation of tourism signs

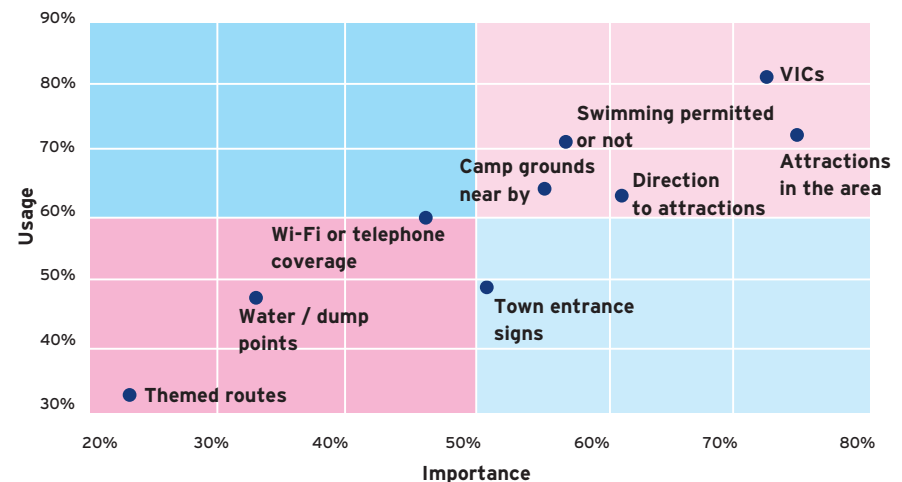


Signage used most often and considered to be most important includes:

- Signage indicating visitor information centres
- Signage indicating if swimming is permitted or not
- Camp grounds near by
- Direction to attractions
- Attractions in the area

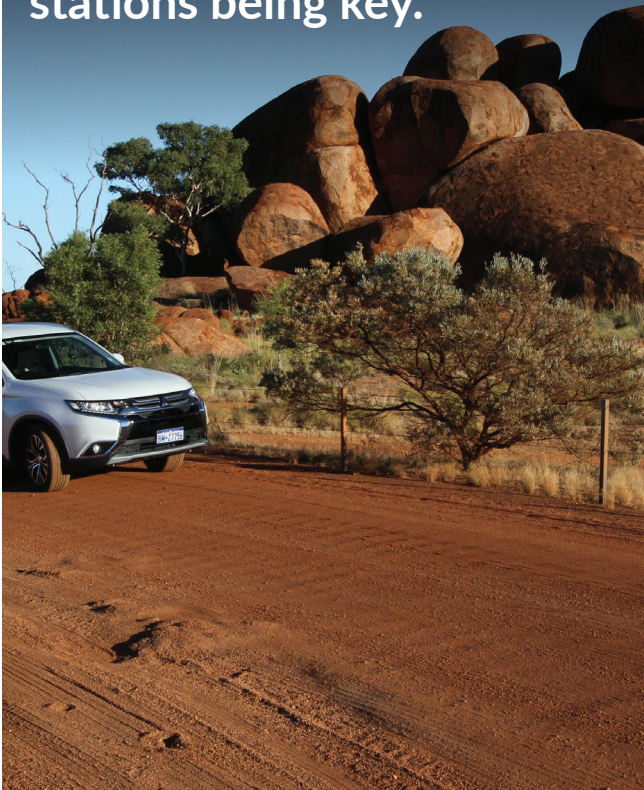
Overall feedback on signage

- Signage is effective in supporting the need to explore and discover
- Consistent colours (brown) make it easy to identify ones you need to pay attention to – “clearly identified points of interest”
- Distance - “green markers” were useful to place yourself on the map
- Use of consistent and internationally recognised symbols helps make way finding easy – especially for overseas visitors. Symbols transcended language barriers that may exist.



Opportunities to enhance signage

INDICATION OF AMENITIES in the area and distance to amenities – toiletry facilities and petrol stations being key.



Provide SIGNS WELL IN ADVANCE OF TURNOFFS – a minimum of 1 kilometre to warn the driver so they can slow down.

SIGNAGE OF ROAD CONDITIONS – if the road is open or closed, types of cars you can drive on it.



MAKE SIGNS FUN by integrating general knowledge, local art, birds and wildlife.

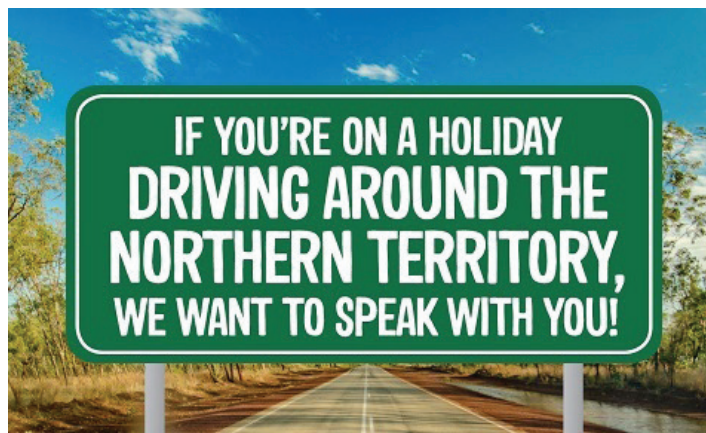
Research approach

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The findings from this study were obtained through two phases including a qualitative and quantitative component.

Novel to this particular project was the use of a coordinated network of free WiFi hotspots across the Territory which made it possible to invite travellers to participate in the online discussion panel and questionnaire whilst on their journey. This allowed for experiences with signage and way finding to be in real time rather than remembering them after the fact.



QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

- 5 minute online questionnaire
- n=491 - data not weighted
- Currently are, or have recently been on a road trip in the NT
- Do not live in the NT

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- 7 day online discussion forum
- n=29 participants
- Travellers currently on the road in the NT