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**Dr. Madelene McWha (Blaer)**

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### **Emerging Scholar Profile**

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Dr. Madelene McWha (Blaer) is a Tourism Lecturer at William Angliss Institute and a specialist in tourism and the media. Prior to this position, she worked for La Trobe University in the Business School teaching tourism, hospitality and event studies. She has published in the leading A\* ranked academic tourism journals and been engaged as an expert speaker, panelist, and reviewer.

Awarded a PhD in 2016 from La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, Dr. McWha's doctoral dissertation focussed on the changing roles and experiences of contemporary travel writers in the digital age. The catalyst for this research was a personal interest in cultures, especially those different to her own, and how they were portrayed in travel texts. She is passionate about her research and was a grateful recipient of an Australian Postgraduate Award (APA), bestowed by the Commonwealth Government of Australia for students of exceptional research potential undertaking higher degree research in Australia. Her thesis highlighted that digital innovations in publishing have dramatically changed travel writing across the globe. After interviewing 47 professional travel writers, primarily from Australia, NZ, the UK and the US, a variety of issues affecting interviewees emerged, ranging from self-branding and interacting with readers through to managing social media platforms and ethics involving sponsorship. A theory of contemporary travel writers' experiences was developed in her thesis, which argues that these lived experiences are multifaceted and differ depending on the influence and intensity of ten dimensions. The research also found that contemporary travel writers feel an accountability to write responsibly and mindfully, yet to get published, they must cultivate and maintain relationships with sponsors, editors, and publishers, as well as adapt to digital spaces and online interactivity with their readers. Madelene has since focussed on actively disseminating her research and publishing her findings.

Her record of publication includes book chapters, refereed conference papers and articles in the top-tier academic journals, *Annals of Tourism Research* in 2018, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* in 2017 and *Current Issues in Tourism* in 2016. Madelene benefitted from great apprenticeship under highly experienced writers, her PhD supervisors, Dr. Warwick Frost, Dr. Jennifer Laing and Dr. Gary Best, who continue to mentor and support her in her academic career. While her published research is highly qualitative in nature, she also has familiarity with statistical analysis through teaching three different research methods subjects (at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels). She has also used statistical data as she was appointed project leader of a research team engaged in an ongoing project to explore the use of simulations as a teaching-learning tool in higher education. Most recently, she was the primary co-editor with Professor Sue Beeton of a Special Issue for *Tourist Studies* titled “Engaging with popular media through tourism”, which has been a new and interesting role for her.

To further disseminate and leverage the impact of her research findings, she also delivers guest lectures and presentations at various domestic and international universities and conferences. Through her research and travels, she has developed a keen interest in sustainable tourism development, management, and marketing. While she has published research on the concept of sustainable travel writing that promotes cross-cultural understanding, socio-cultural and environmental advocacy and the benefits of tourism to communities, she would like to conduct more research in this field and is interested in exploring how different destination management organisations manage, promote and contribute to sustainable tourism development.

Madelene previously completed a Bachelor of Business (Tourism and Hospitality Management) for which she received the Dean’s Commendation, and Master of Tourism (First Class Honours) from La Trobe University, for which she received the Dean’s Commendation and Dean’s Medal, awarded by the Vice Chancellor of La Trobe University to the outstanding postgraduate coursework student in the School of Management. She has great memories of her own under-graduate and post-graduate studies and hopes to inspire and engage the next generation of students. An advocate for scholarly and reflective teaching practices, she is proficient with new and engaging educational and teaching technologies and tries to use them to their full potential, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), interactive online lectures, apps, and simulations. She has received awards for her teaching and innovation at La Trobe University and William Angliss Institute.

Madelene sees connecting academia and industry as a key driver to foster applied research and relevant teaching. This interest led her to executive leadership positions on academic and tourism industry committees and boards. She was elected Treasurer of the Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA) Asia Pacific Chapter, which is a member-based association that unites the research community, including academics, professional practitioners, and users of research. In this role, Madelene has helped to coordinate and stage a number of conferences, including the TTRA Asia Pacific 2017 conference held at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the TTRA International 2018 conference held at Biltmore Hotel in Miami and the TTRA Asia Pacific 2018 conference hosted by RMIT University in Vietnam. Enjoying this role, she was pleased to accept an invitation to be the academic co-chair of the TTRA International conference to be held in Melbourne in 2019.

Having been a member for many years, she joined the Young Tourism Network (YTN) committee in 2016. YTN is a member-based association that develops and delivers programmes and professional development and networking events to bring students, tourism professionals and new entrants in the Victorian tourism industry together through engaging learning environments. She was elected onto the committee firstly as an Event Coordinator, and presently, as Deputy Chair. In this role, together with her team, Madelene helped to prepare a winning application for the Victorian Tourism Awards in 2017, where YTN won ‘Outstanding Contribution by Volunteers’.

Based in Melbourne, Madelene is a seventh generation Australian on both ancestral sides, with ties back to Ireland and Germany. Her maiden surname is Irish in origin and pronounced ‘Mc-War’. She was recently married and has started using another surname (which is German and pronounced like the English ‘Blair’). Outside academia, Madelene enjoys travelling overseas with her husband and finding dog-friendly places in regional Victoria to take their Schnauzer. Madelene is also an avid reader and her favourite authors and characters include Alain de Botton, Margaret Atwood, Tintin, and Snowy.