



**Caravan
Industry**

Association of Australia



Chinese Visitors in Caravan Parks



Image: Visit Victoria

Cover Image: Destination NSW



WORKING COLLABORATIVELY WITH STATE ASSOCIATIONS

This research is undertaken in partnership between the National Association and the Individual State Caravan and Camping Industry Associations. This joint investment allows the Industry to undertake research at a level not seen previously to support advocacy, benchmarking and marketing initiatives across the country. Caravan Industry Association of Australia is proud to work collaboratively with each individual State Association to lead and champion a robust, compliant and sustainable Caravanning and Camping Industry.

Executive Summary

The dynamism of the Chinese outbound market has been a core source of growth for Australia's tourist arrivals in the last ten years, and with increased propensity for independent travel, the market is in the initial stages of connecting with the nation's caravan and camping product.

Unlike the traditional international markets of Europe and North America, the Chinese market are relatively 'new' to caravan and camping. This provides an exciting opportunity for the sector to introduce Chinese visitors to the enjoyment and benefits of a caravan and camping holiday, for which many are experiencing for the very first time in Australia.

This pilot study opens a window into the modern Chinese traveller and begins to explore their preferences and purchase behaviours when choosing a caravan and camping holiday in Australia. The research highlights key themes that need to be explored further so that the industry can better engage with our ninth largest and fastest growing international source market.

This includes:

- The need for improved communications such as information sheets and maps in Mandarin, as well as local information boards translated.
- The provision of driver and product education to better support Chinese visitors while travelling which can include 'how to guides' such as how to empty grey-water tanks as well as information on how to use the facilities in a caravan park.
- Creation of new services and products that specifically meet the needs of Chinese consumers. It may seem cliché, however the provision of a rice cooker, hair-dryer and chopsticks in a cabin are items many respondents indicated they wanted.
- The implementation of different marketing strategies tailored to communicating with Chinese consumers who don't use the more Western focused mediums of Facebook, Google or Instagram. Instead, WeChat and C-Trip are dominant, and are the key platforms for communication with the market.

This initial research highlights that Chinese visitors are seeking the flexible and the unique experiences that caravan and camping can offer, and although they are keen to embrace this style of travel, they are seeking additional services and engagement that will help them transition into a product that they have never experienced.

The quicker the industry can learn how to better cater for the Chinese traveller, the more engaged the market will become to caravan and camping which will fuel consumer content, positive reviews and increased use of caravan parks and rental companies.

The Typical Chinese Traveller Caravan and Camping in Australia

Female
(56%)

Aged 30-54
(69%)

Has never been
to Australia
prior to this trip
(73%)

Will likely return
to Australia
(70%)

Has a Bachelor
qualification
or higher
(85%)

Will spend
between 11-15
days in Australia
(51%)

Will Recommend Australia to friends and family at home (80%)

On return to
Australia will stay
in a Caravan Park
(77%)

Travelling in a mixed group
(family/friends/partner)
of 4 people or more
(66%)

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Introduction

The 2018 Chinese Visitors to Caravan Parks report is the first in a series of research that aims to provide advanced insights into Chinese consumer preferences and travel behaviours with a focus on caravan and camping. This research project was designed as a pilot study to undertake a nation-wide analysis of this important market which is reshaping Australia's visitor economy.

Interviews were conducted with Chinese caravan and camping visitors along the Great Ocean Road in Victoria at fifteen Caravan Parks, as well as at the major tourist attractions of the Twelve Apostles and Loch Ard Gorge. The research was conducted from February 10th until February 14th 2018 in the lead up to Chinese New Year, which historically is a peak season for Chinese visitation to Australia. A total of 214 visitors participated in the research.

In addition to the survey data, qualitative data was collected from interviewees which were supplemented with further commentary from a widely used 'WeChat'¹ group titled 'RV trips in Australia'. This group consists of approximately 350 members of past, current and future RV travellers in Australia.

This research can support your business by providing the following insights:

- An initial overview of Chinese caravan and camping visitor behaviour;
- An initial understanding of the purchasing patterns of Chinese consumers;
- Insights into Chinese consumers' perceptions of caravan and camping in Australia;
- Support future analysis of Chinese caravan and camping visitors that may be undertaken.

It should be noted that this is the first time globally that any sort of research has focussed on Chinese travellers who stay in caravan parks.

Limitations:

As with all research, limitations exist in this report that should be adhered to:

- As the research was conducted only in Victoria, any broader assumptions in relation to travel patterns across Australia should be taken with care.
 - The sample size of 214 is not representative of the entire market and therefore the findings should be inferred in relation to the sample surveyed.
 - The interviews were undertaken by Mandarin speaking interviewers and although all care was taken in the translation process, translation errors may have occurred.
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¹ WeChat is the largest messaging platform/app used in China.

The Growth of Chinese Travel to Australia

In 2017, the Chinese outbound market was worth an estimated US\$261 billion to the global economy with over 122 million Chinese tourists travelling internationally.² As a destination of high value to the Chinese market, Australia has benefited greatly from the growth in this market with 1.3 million visitors arriving in 2017 generating over 50 million nights around the country.³ This is an extraordinary growth of 276% and 235% respectively from 2008, with China now representing the largest inbound market to Australia.

In the initial stages of market development, Chinese visitors to Australia were primarily focused on urban based and iconic experiences, which positioned the capital cities and major attractions as honeypots for the market. However, as the market matures, Chinese visitors are seeking out more authentic experiences both in Australia and globally.

In fact, according to the 2017 ITB World Travel Trends report,⁴ more than 50% of Chinese travellers globally were independent travellers. Tourism Research Australia observed similar trends in Australia with the number of Chinese visitors to Australia on group and package tours declining by 8.4% in 2017, continuing the trend towards free and independent travel.⁵

Total Chinese Visitors and Nights to Australia 2008 to 2017

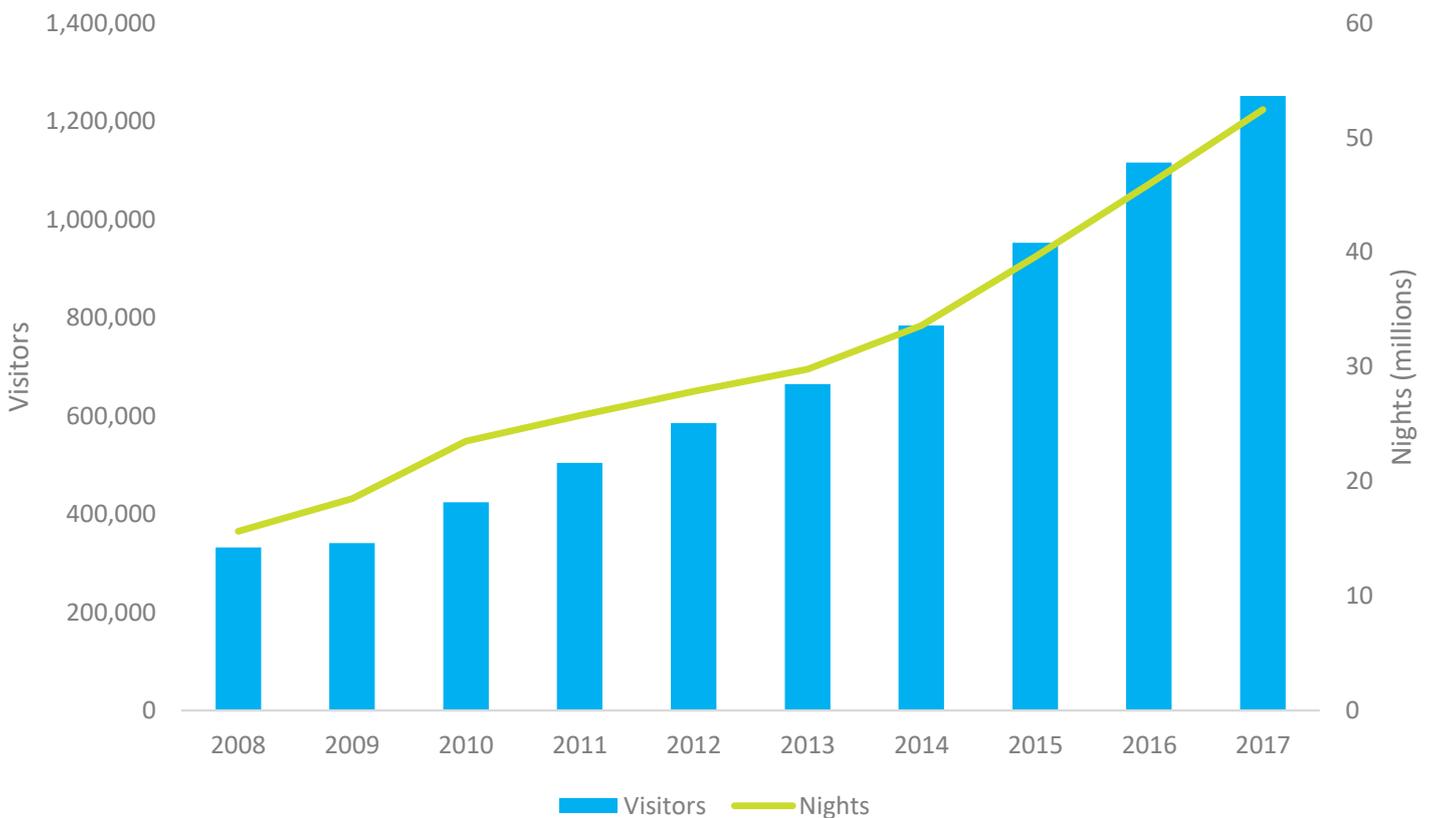


Figure 1: Chinese visitors and nights to Australia. Data Source: Tourism Research Australia, IVS, Year Ending December 2017.

² ITB World Travel Trends Report 2017/2018
<https://skift.com/2017/04/14/chinese-travelers-set-a-new-record-for-global-tourism-spending-in-2016>

³ Tourism Research Australia, IVS Year Ending December 2017

⁴ ITB World Travel Trends Report 2017/2018

⁵ Tourism Research Australia, IVS Year Ending December 2017

Chinese Caravan and Camping Visitors

The growth and divergence from packaged tours has begun to be felt in Australia's Caravan and Camping sector with 14,175 Chinese visitors spending more than 124,000 nights in caravan parks in 2017 to become the 9th largest international source market. This represents 180% increase in nights and a 126% increase in visitors from 2016.

In fact, a Chinese Traveller to Australia is 3.5 times more likely to choose a caravan/camping holiday compared to the same period 5 years ago.

As the market increasingly disperses into regional Australia, the opportunity it provides for caravan parks, rental companies and communities that can effectively engage with the market is of high value.

This is shown in the market's expenditure figures, with all Chinese visitors to Australia spending \$8.2Bn in 2017, four times higher than the next largest inbound market – the United Kingdom.⁶

Chinese Caravan and Camping Market in Australia
(3 Year Rolling Average)

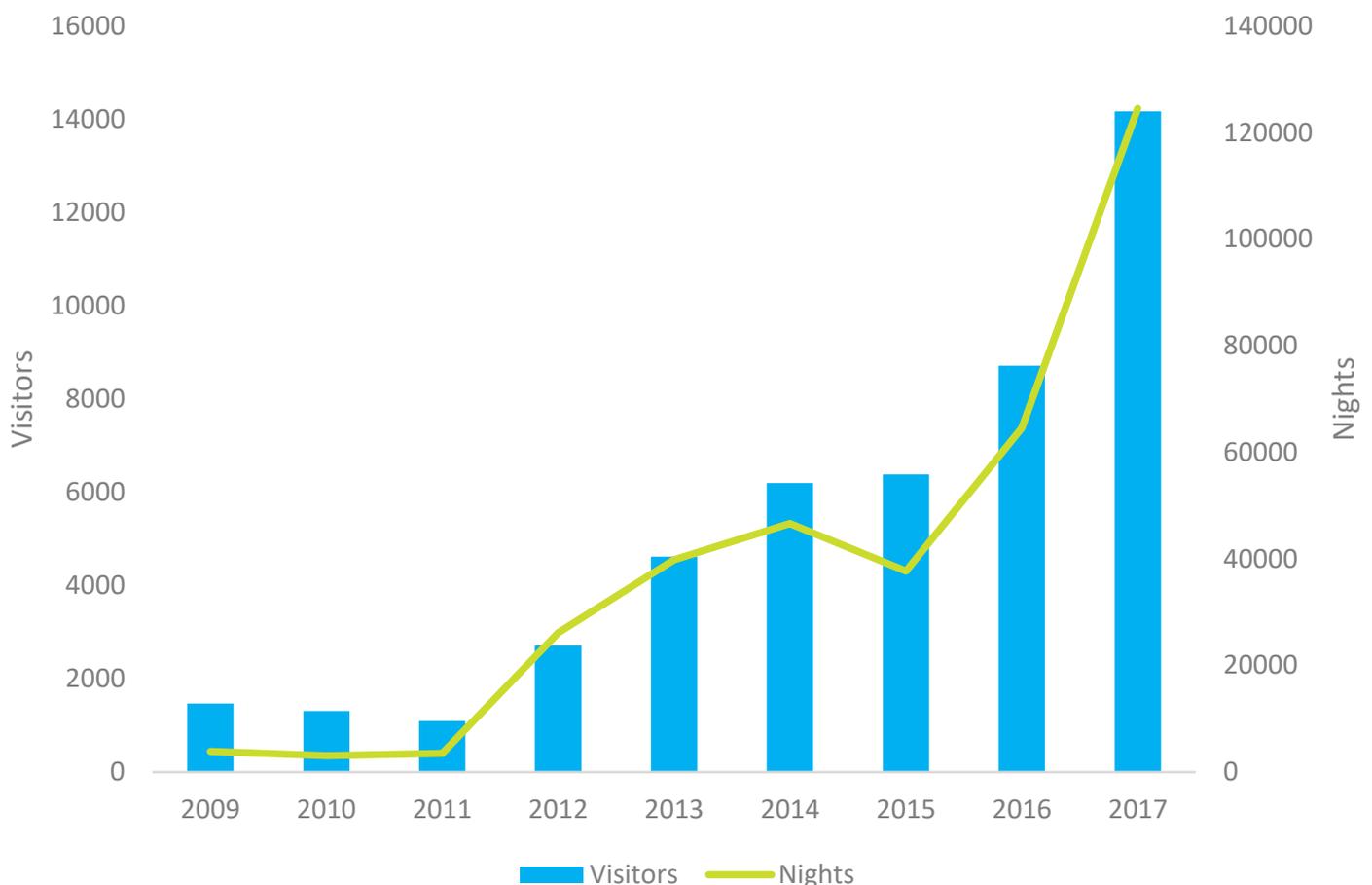


Figure 2: Chinese caravan and camping visitors and nights in Australia.
Data Source: Tourism Research Australia, IVS, Year Ending December 2017.

⁶ Tourism Research Australia, IVS Year Ending December 2017

Where Our Chinese Caravan and Camping Visitors Call Home



HOME CITY / REGION	% OF RESPONSES
Beijing City	27%
Guangdong Province	17%
Zhejiang Province	14%
Jiangsu Province	6%
Tapei, Taiwan	6%
Shanghai City,	6%
Szechuan Province	5%
Shandong Province	4%
Hong Kong	3%
Jilin Province	3%
Jiangxi Province	2%
Guiyang	2%
Chongqing City	2%
Hubei Province	2%
Hunan Province	1%
Liaoning Province	1%
Tianjin City	1%
Heilongjiang Province	1%

Figure 3: Map of Respondents home region. N=214.

In terms of place of residence for those surveyed, Beijing was the home city for more than a quarter of respondents. Other major population centres of Shanghai and Guangdong province were well represented, however as the above map demonstrates, Chinese travellers were from a variety of locations in their own country.

This trend aligns with external research that indicates travellers from second and third cities in China continue to be a major source of growth. This growth is especially notable in coastal regions where increased Chinese citizens are travelling from.⁷



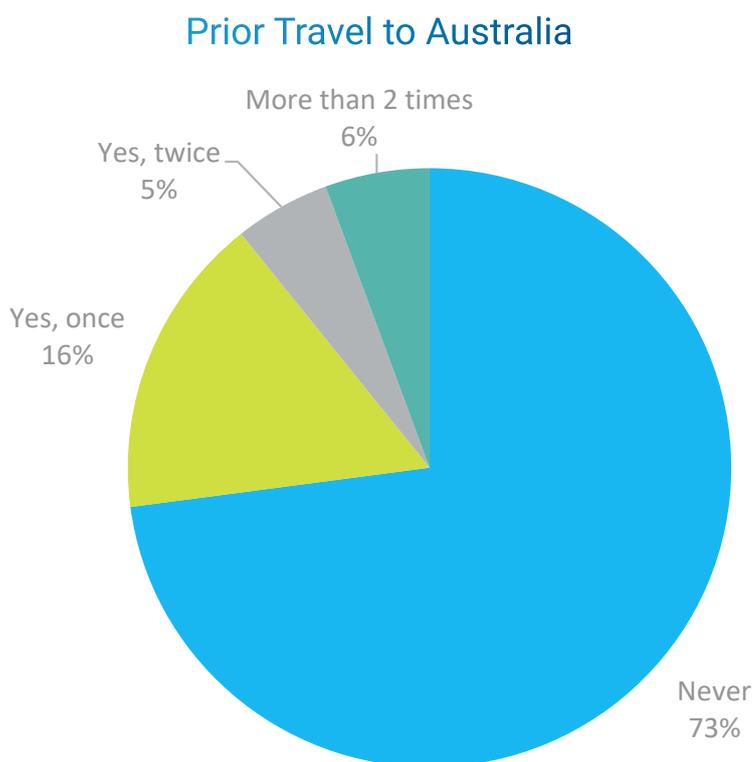
⁷ ITB World Travel Trends Report 2017/18 (https://www.itbkongress.de/media/itb/itb_dl_all/itb_presse_all/ITB_WTTR_A4_2018_interaktiv.pdf)

Caravan and Camping Holiday in Australia

Prior Travel to Australia

The majority of visitors surveyed (73%) indicated they had never travelled to Australia prior to their current trip, an additional 6% of travellers had visited Australia more than twice before. In comparison, Tourism Research Australia states that of all Chinese tourists to Australia, 52% were on their first trip in 2017.

This suggests that Chinese visitors to Australia are seeking unique accommodation experiences that caravan parks can offer and aligns with external research that highlights Chinese travellers are increasingly confident participating in new experiences when travelling internationally.⁸



“RV holidays give me a free and flexible travel schedule”
- Female

Figure 4: Prior to this trip, had you travelled to Australia? N=214.

Image: Destination NSW



⁸ ITB World Travel Trends Report 2017/2018
https://www.itb-kongress.de/media/itb/itb_dl_all/itb_presse_all/ITB_WTTR_A4_2018_interaktiv.pdf

Length of Stay

A total of 210 visitors spent over 3739 nights in Australia with an average length of stay of 17 nights per visit.

Most respondents (51%) indicated that they were travelling between 11 to 15 nights.

When compared with total travel period, the data indicates that travel to Australia was the primary destination for respondents with only 3% of visitors surveyed indicating that they would be travelling to a second destination (Singapore, Thailand or Hong Kong).

Length of Stay in Australia Versus Total Trip Length (%)

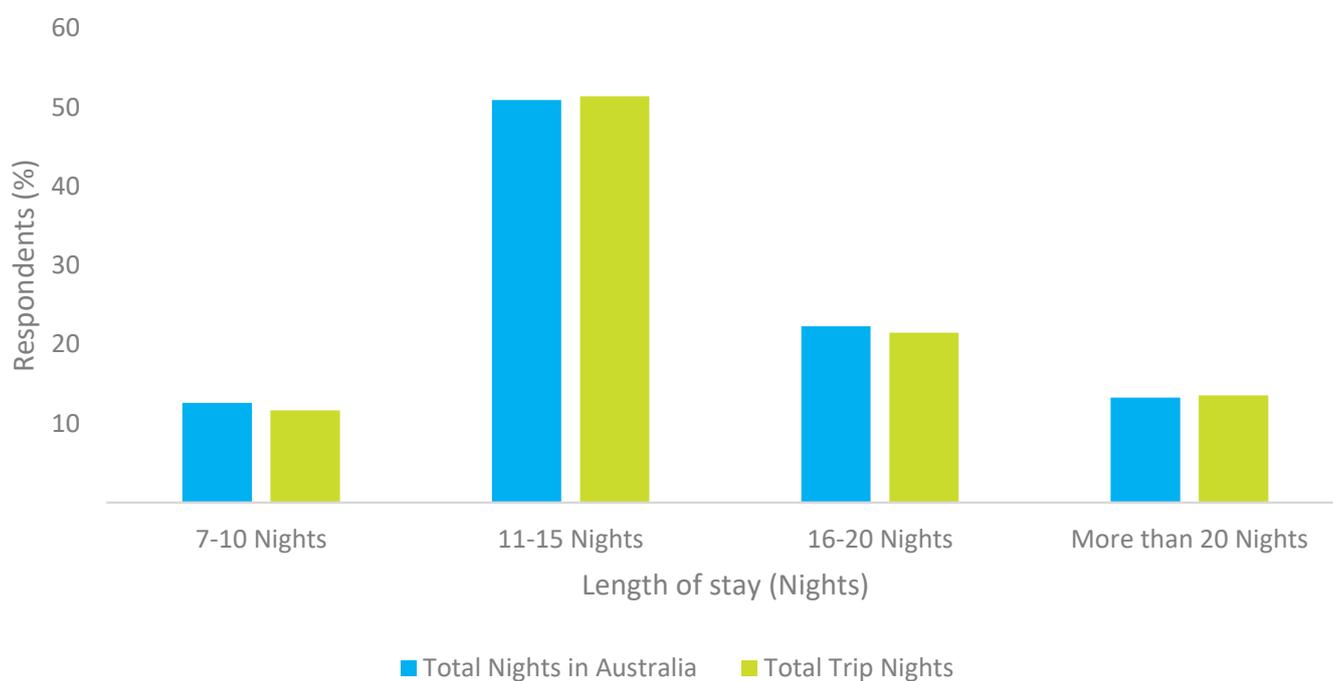


Figure 5: What is your total Length of Stay in Australia? N=210.

Does anyone have a good app for Australian maps?



There is a good app called Google Maps
- WeChat Comment



Brisbane, Gold Coast, Canberra, Sydney, Twelve Apostles and Melbourne in 15 days, not far?
- WeChat Comment



Everybody, 900kms a day of driving is too tiring
- WeChat Comment

Travel Companions

In terms of travel parties, family from home was the most common, accounting for 81% of all tourists surveyed. Within those travelling with a family, 80% were also traveling with their partners or friends from home.

The largest majority of respondents (25%) were travelling with three people (including themselves) with an average group size of 5.3 people across the population surveyed.

Observational research highlights that typically, travel groups were multi generational, diverse and sometimes travelling with two or three separate vehicles in tow.

Travel Companions

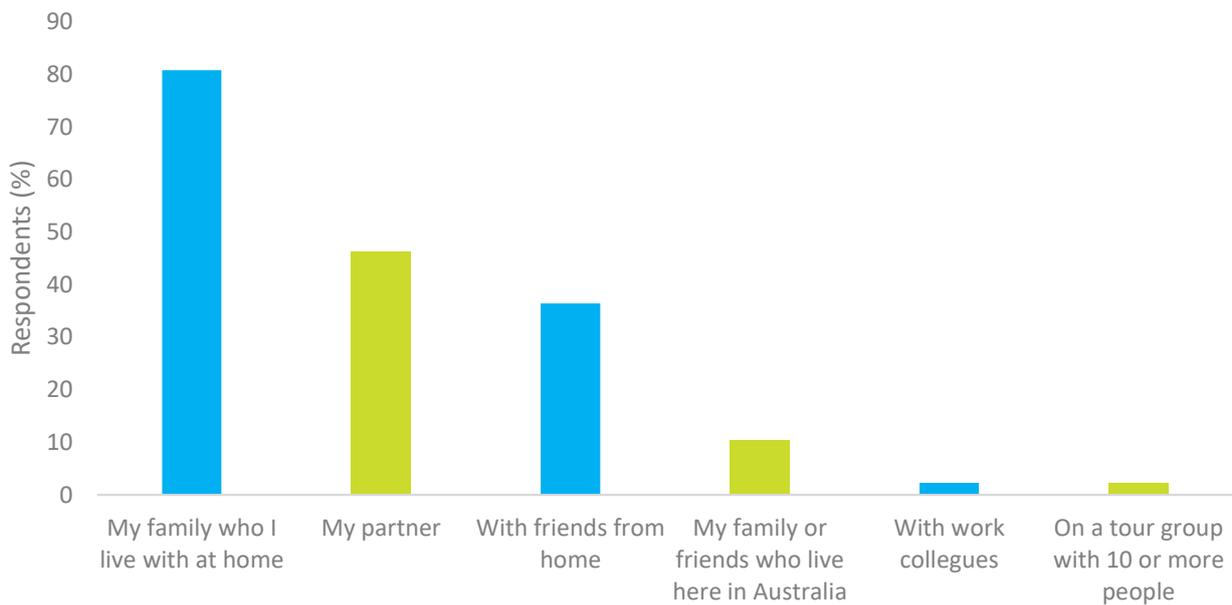


Figure 6: Who are you currently travelling with? Select all the apply. N=214.

Amount of People Travelling Together

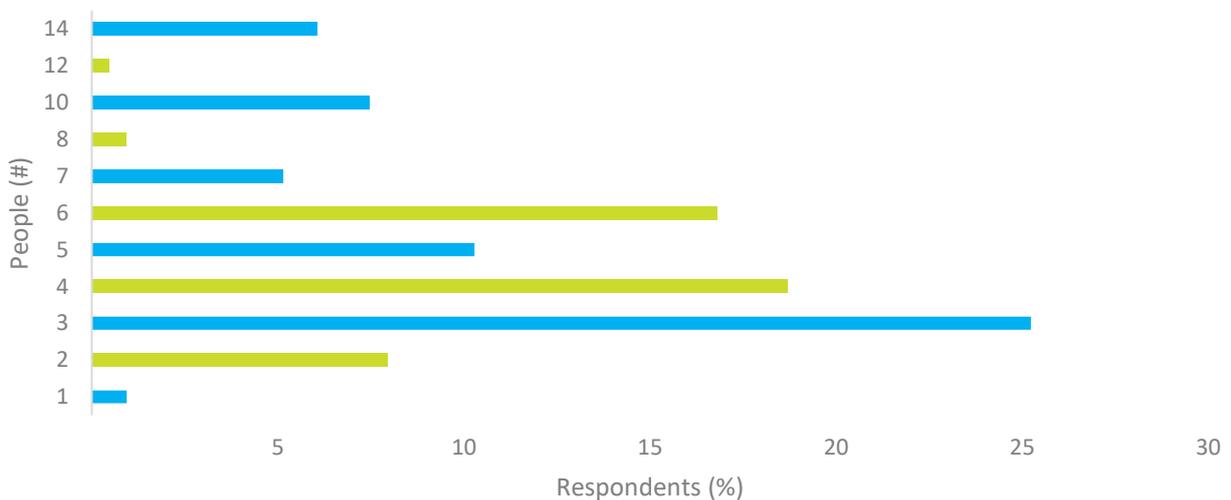


Figure 7: How many people are you travelling with? Including yourself. N=214.

City of Arrival and Airline Usage

As the data was collected along the Great Ocean Road in Victoria, it is skewed towards geographical location with 53.3% of respondents arriving at Melbourne International Airport. However, of importance, nearly half of those surveyed arrived into international airports outside of Victoria with 30.8% arriving into Sydney and 8.4% into the Gold Coast. This indicating that Chinese travellers are prepared to travel widely throughout the country over short periods of time.

Chinese travellers surveyed arrived on a variety of airlines into Australia, however Air Asia X (21%), Cathay Pacific (14%) and China Southern Airlines (13%) were the three most used airlines. The use of Air Asia X is noteworthy as unlike Cathay Pacific and China Southern which offer more direct flights from China, there is a mandatory transit required in Kuala Lumpur. This suggesting that some Chinese visitors may be seeking low cost options for travel to Australia.

This is in addition to increasing route connectivity of low cost carriers to second and third tier cities in China providing more accessibility to travel.



Airlines that Respondents Used to Arrive to Australia

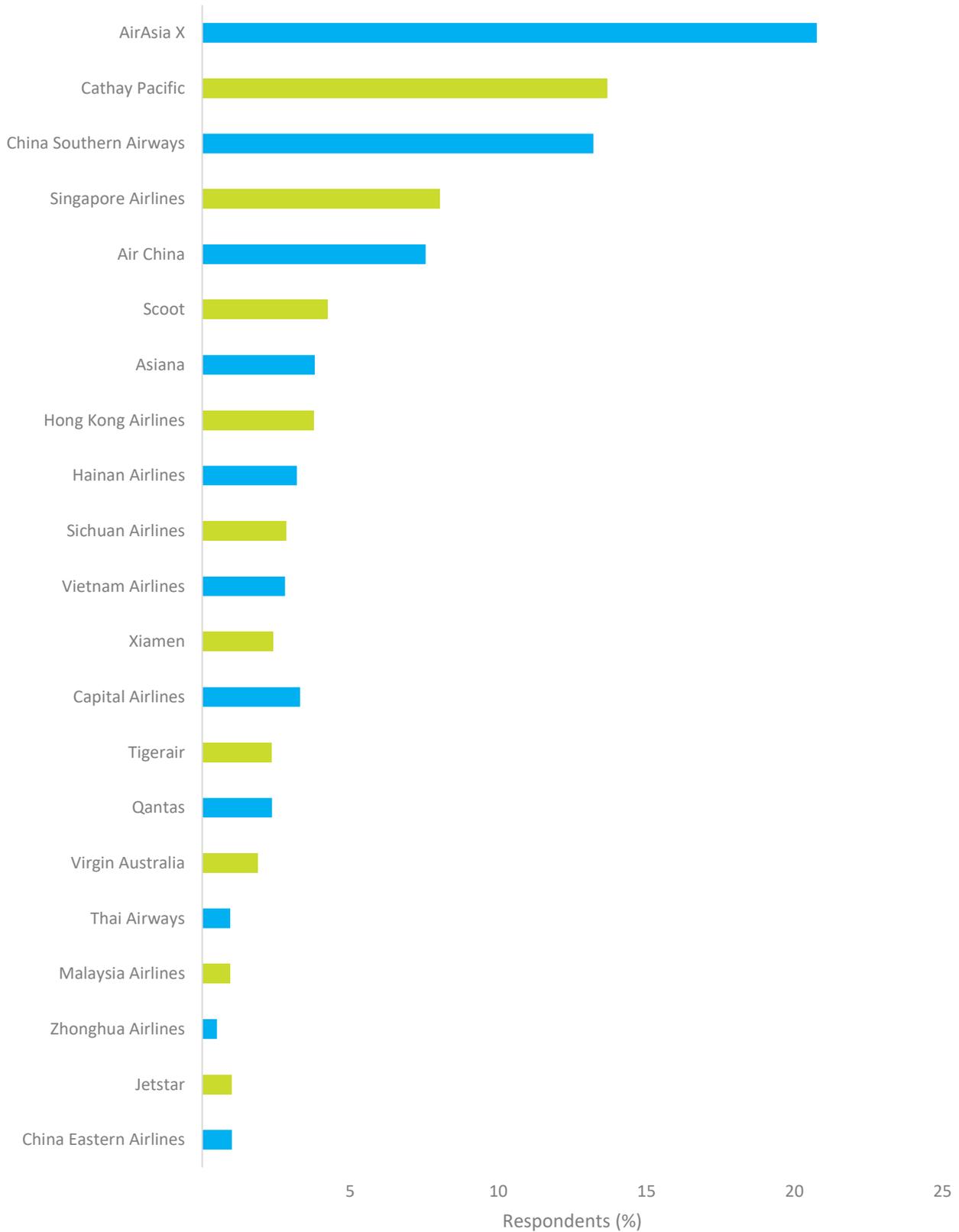


Figure 8: Which Airline did you fly into Australia with? N=214.

Accommodation Preferences

In terms of caravan park accommodation options, 32% of respondents chose to rent a recreational vehicle which they were staying in overnight, with motorhomes being the most popular choice (24%). In contrast, 67% chose a roofed accommodation option with 51% staying in cabins and 14% choosing on-site motel rooms.

Chinese travellers were incorporating a stay in caravan parks with other accommodations during their holiday with hotels and resorts representing the accommodation that many respondents (76%) had used in addition to staying in a caravan park. Of importance, 53% of all respondents indicated that they had already stayed in a caravan park on their trip prior to their current stay. This indicating that caravan parks were actively being sort as a preferred product of choice.

Usage of Accommodation in Caravan Park

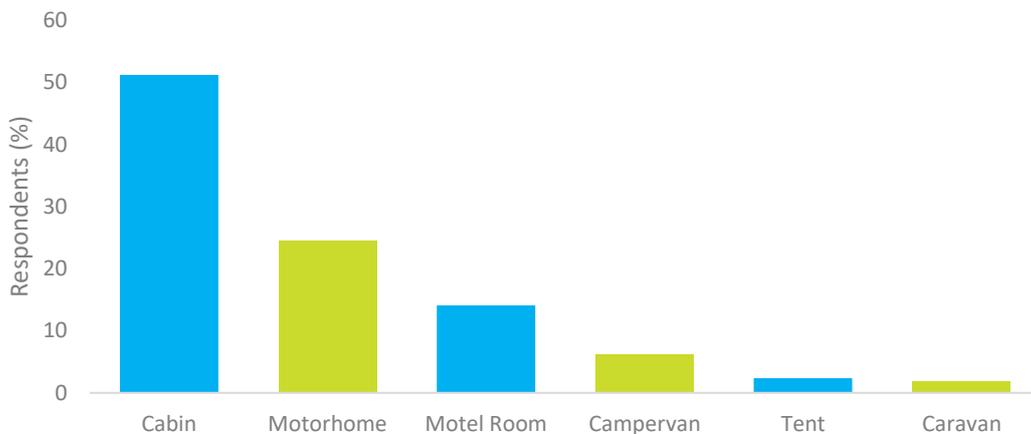


Figure 9: What Accommodation Type did you stay in last night? N=213.

Other Accommodation Used During the Same Trip



Figure 10: Aside from this Caravan Park, so far on this trip, have you stayed in any of the following? N=214.

“ Hope there are more price range for short stop guests only for water or sewage or electric supply
– Female, 44

“ An RV has the advantage of not having to pack your bags and having a fridge at the same time
– WeChat User

Expenditure

The average spend of respondents was AU\$163 per day with an average spend per trip of AU\$2,779 per person. Transport, accommodation and food/beverage represent the three highest areas of expenditure, accounting for 78% of all expenses.

It is worth noting that average expenditure on activities was significantly low (\$9.07) and this may be influenced by the destination the survey took place in as opposed to a low desire by the Chinese market to participate in activities. In addition, respondents were less forthcoming regarding expenditure, therefore a significantly reduced sample size (N=92) is noted.

As the average travel party size was 5.3 people, it can be broadly measured that each Chinese group that arrives into Australia intending on incorporating stays at caravan parks are worth approximately \$9,433 to the Australian tourism economy.

Average Daily Spending While Travelling

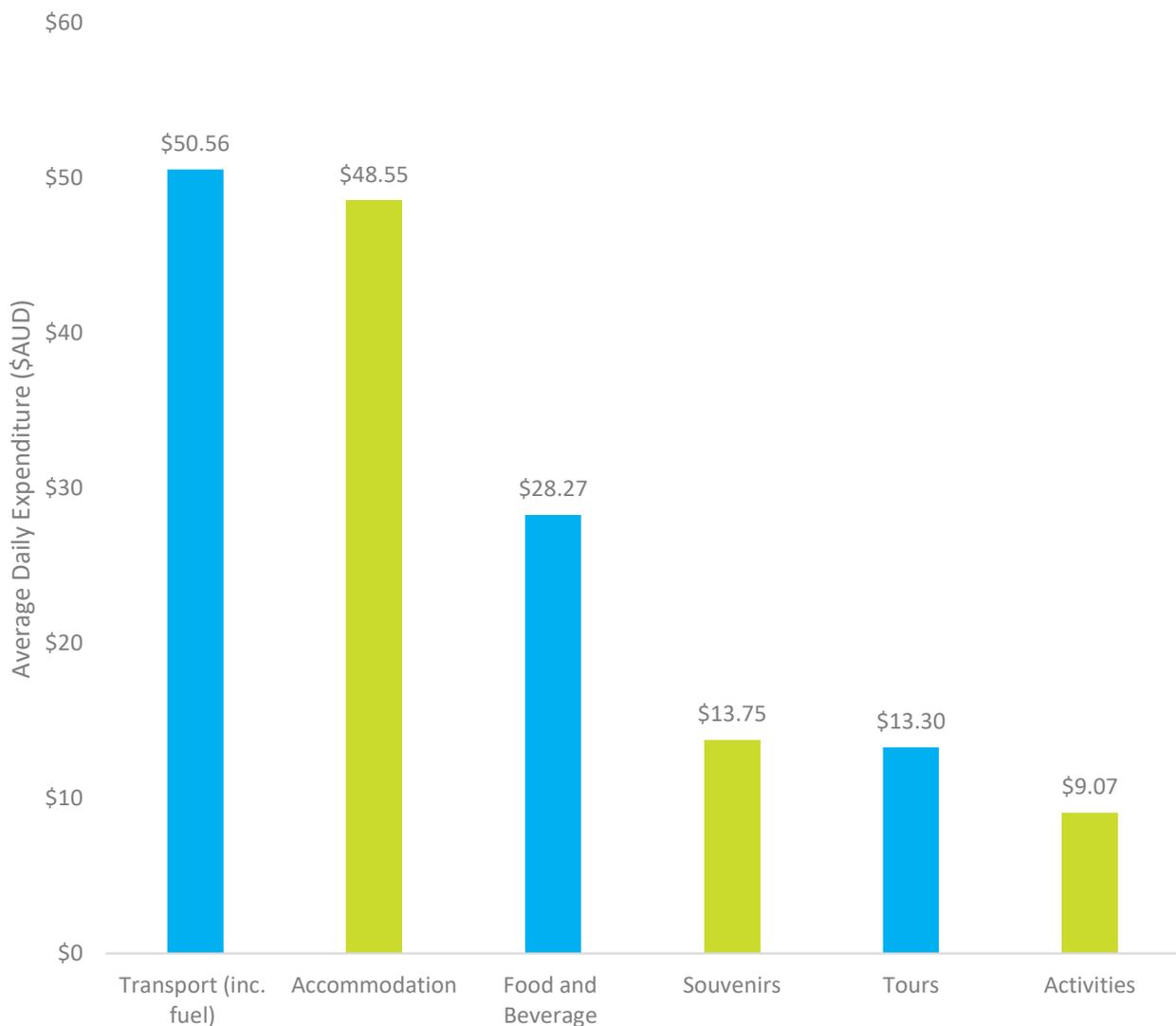


Figure 11: How much money did you, individually, spend yesterday on the following? (AUD\$) N=92.

Prior Caravan and Camping Experience

In total, 80% of participants surveyed had never stayed in a caravan park before arriving to Australia, further highlighting the infancy of the market.

Of those who stayed previously in a caravan park internationally, 44% had stayed in a caravan park in New Zealand and 41% had stayed in the USA. Switzerland, the UK and Canada were also other international destinations Chinese travellers had caravan or camped in prior to their current trip.

Prior Caravan and Camping

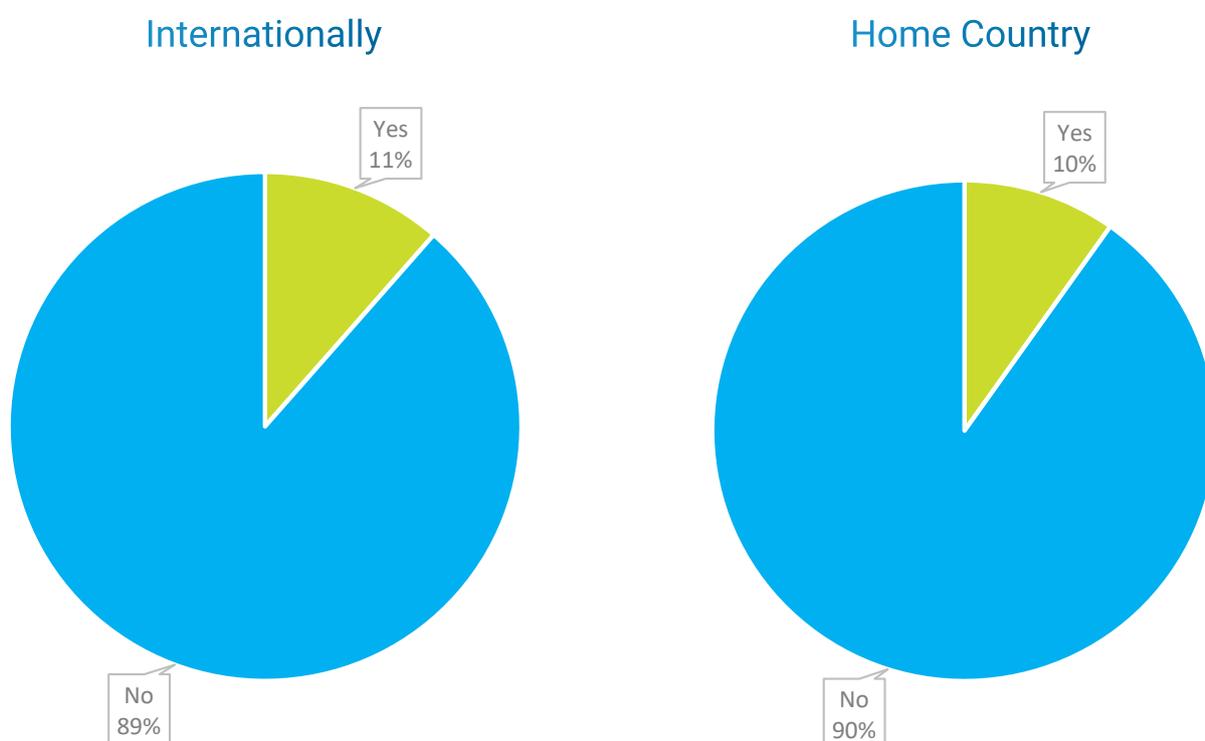


Figure 12: Have you been caravanning, camping or stayed in a caravan park in other international destinations? N=210.

Figure 13: Have you been caravanning, camping or stayed in a caravan park in your home country? N=210.



Image: Destination NSW



Purchase Process

Motivation

The desire for a flexible holiday was a strong motivator for Chinese travellers to choose to stay in a caravan park. This matches the rise of the independent Chinese traveller who is seeking a different holiday experience. Caravan Park operators mentioned that the booking lead times of Chinese travellers were often much shorter than others from Europe and the USA, highlighting this move towards flexibility. Other strong motivators were the attraction of getting closer to nature and having a unique holiday experience.

The social element of caravan parks was not a strong motivator in choosing a holiday in caravan parks. Similarly, there was little to no indication that staying in a caravan park was motivated by the fact it was part of a tour package with only 27% agreeing to this statement.

The perception of price revealed some interesting findings with 73% agreeing that staying in a caravan park offered good value for money, however only 53% identified it as a cheaper way to travel. Observations during the research revealed that Chinese travellers actively collected discounts to try and get more value for their holiday, including the use of loyalty cards and packaged options.



Sources of Information for Inspiration

In terms of sources of inspiration for Chinese caravan and camping visitors to travel within Australia, the top three were online sources led by accommodation booking websites.

Park Operators indicated that popular booking platforms for Chinese travellers include C-Trip and Booking.com. This trend aligns with findings from the Consumer Demand Report commissioned by Tourism Australia which found that online accommodation sites were the most popular source of inspiration for Chinese Travellers.⁹

Aside from online sources, 21% of travellers indicated that they were inspired by friends and relatives who have visited Australia previously.

“ We hope to have more info on Baidu as we cannot use Google in China
- Male, 40

Information Sources Used for Inspiration

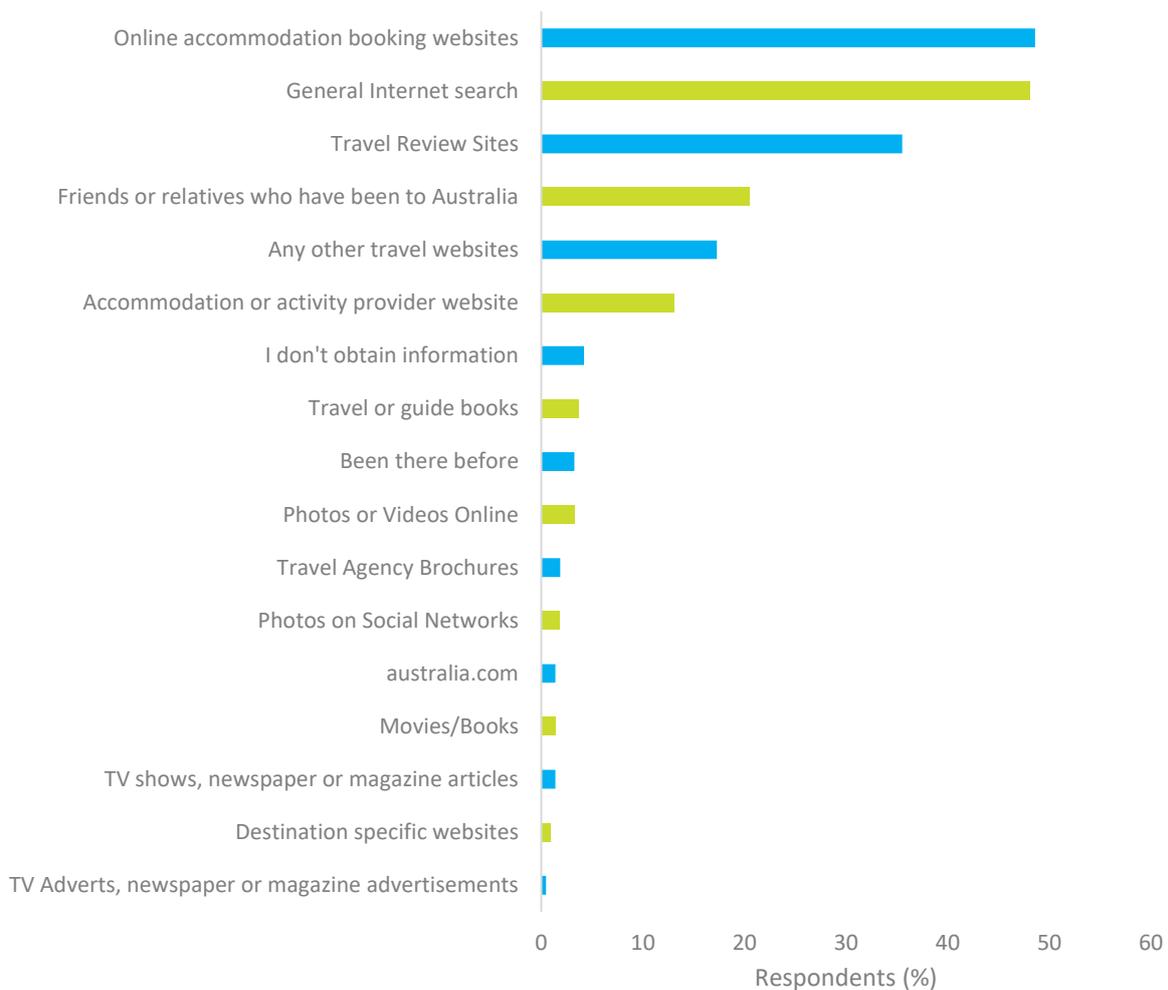


Figure 14: What information sources inspired your travels within Australia? Select all that apply. N=214.

⁹“Understanding the Chinese Market”, Tourism Australia, 2016.

Length of Research and Planning

The most common time it took to research and plan a trip to Australia was between one and two months for respondents (44%), while 26% of travellers researched for between three to five months.

A total of 18% of respondents researched their trip for less than three weeks before traveling to Australia.

Research and Planning Time

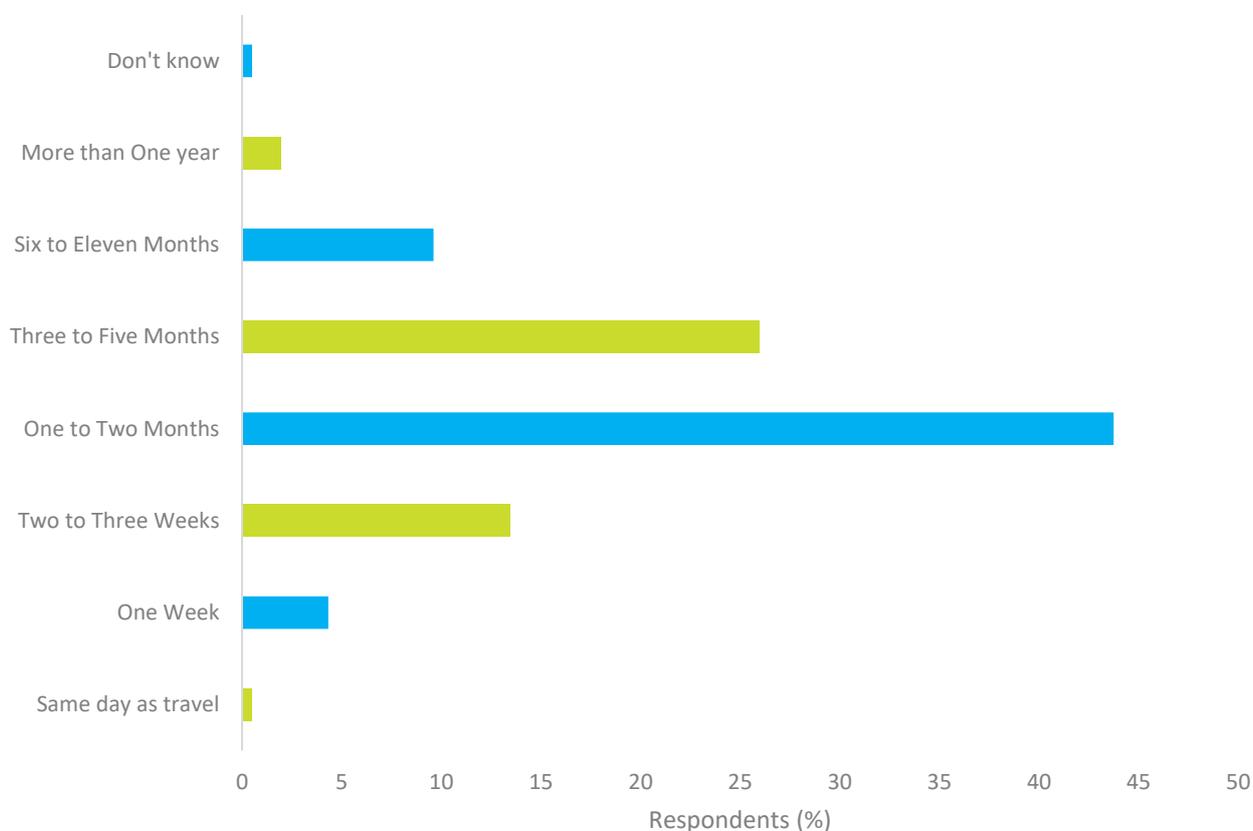


Figure 15: How long did you research and plan this trip to Australia before departing? N=214.



Image: Visit Victoria

Purchasing Channels

Overwhelmingly, Chinese travellers (87%) purchased products online through travel websites for their trip in Australia while only 5% of respondents indicated that they had booked directly with a business in Australia.

This indicates the importance of online travel agents for the Chinese market and the need for businesses to have a presence on these distribution outlets.

How Did You Purchase Components of Your Trip?

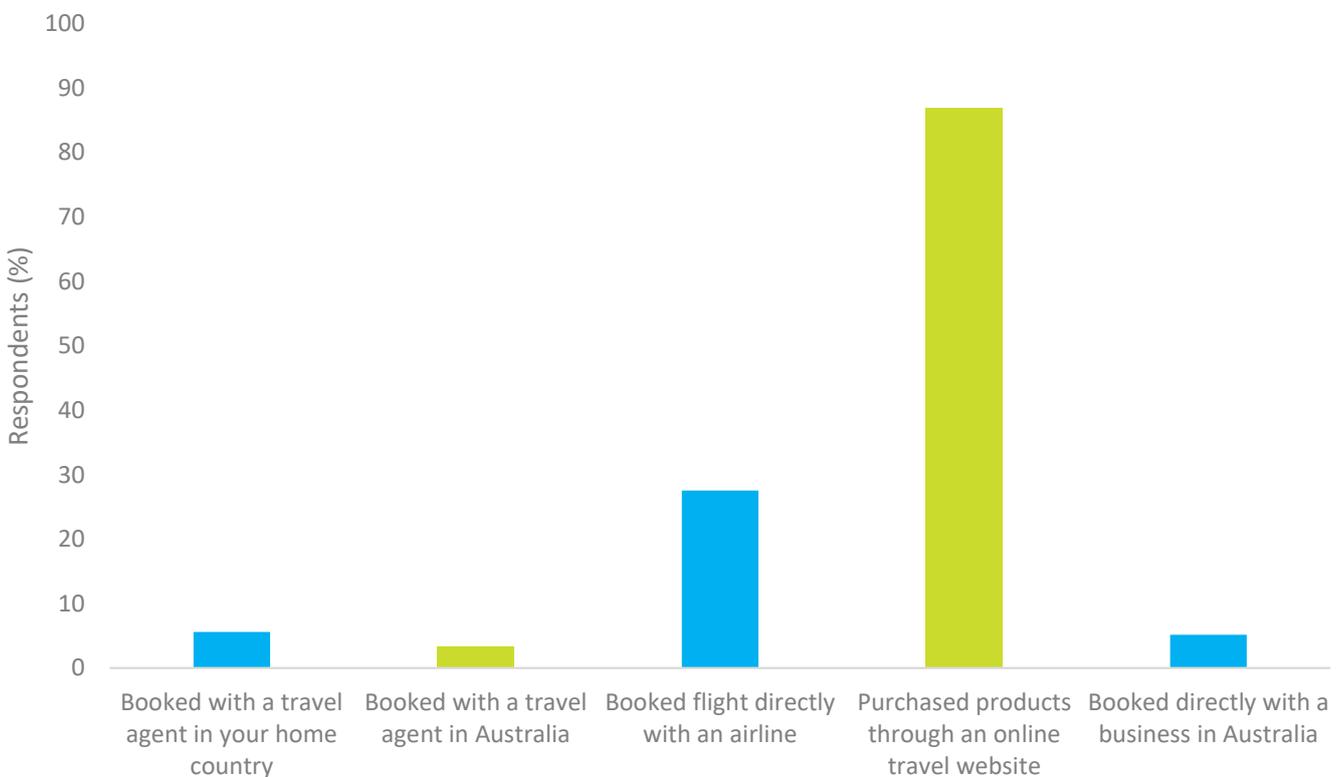


Figure 16: Regarding this trip, did you make any purchases using the following providers? Select all that apply. N=214.

“
We would prefer to book our Motorhome and nights through one provider
– Female, 37

“
In high season it was hard to book a caravan park
– Female, 38

Digital Activities Respondents Undertook while Caravan and Camping

Delving deeper into the below results, of those who connected to a free WIFI service, 81% uploaded content to social media. However, of those who did not connect to a free WIFI service, only 68% uploaded to social media.

This highlights the value that businesses who provide access to WIFI can have in creating ambassadors for their products.

Activities Undertaken During the Trip

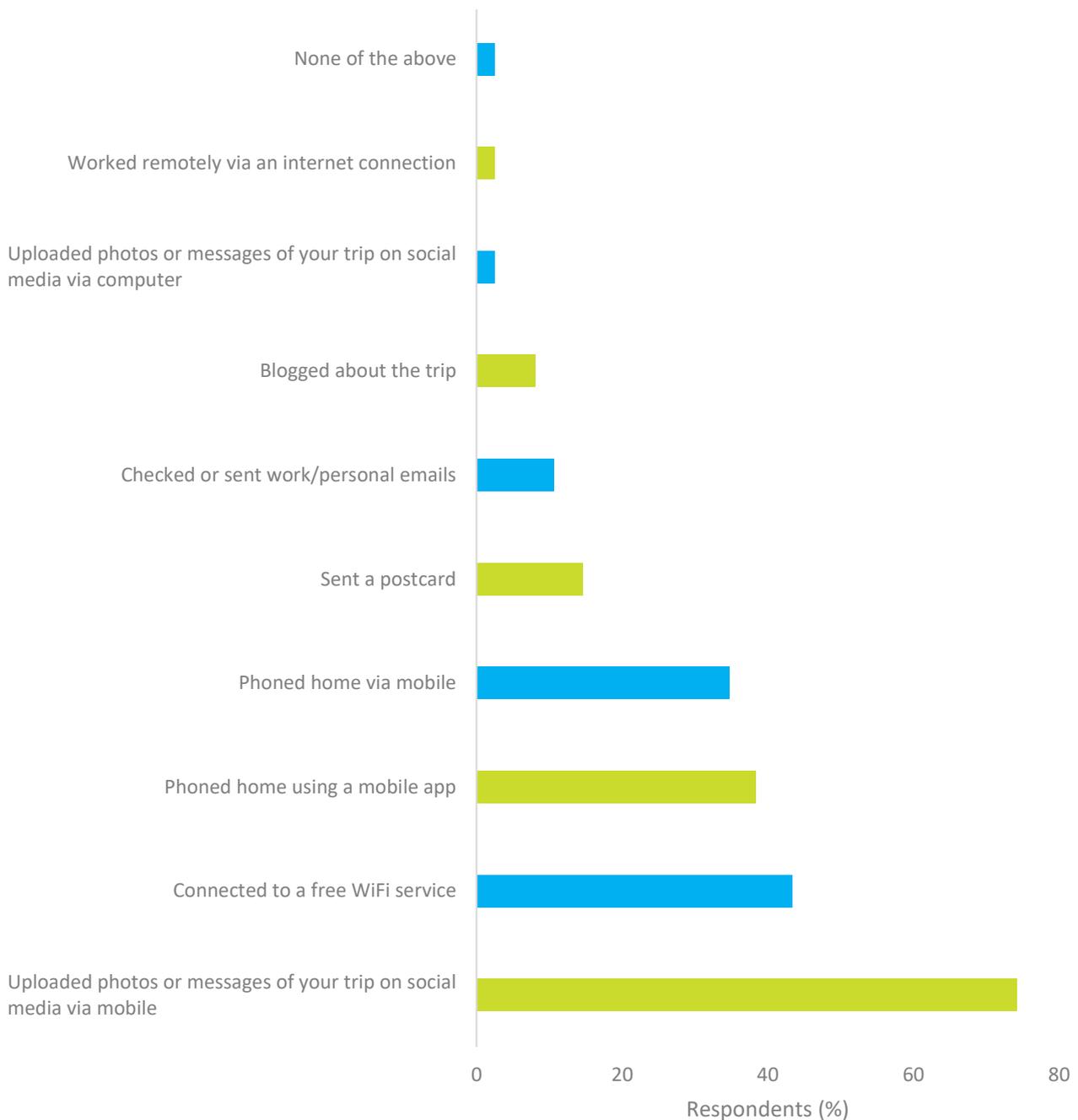


Figure 17: During your holiday did you undertake any of the following? Select all that apply. N=210.

Social Media Usage While Travelling

WeChat, a Chinese mobile messaging application that also encompasses features common to Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp, was the most used channel with 95% of respondents using the application on their holiday.

In general, this finding highlights the difference in social media mediums that are used by Chinese visitors in comparison to Western markets.

WeChat also has a group function, and it was revealed that there is a specific group titled "Australia, RV country discussion group". This included approximately 350 users posing questions/images or ideas regarding RV holidays in Australia. Some users were already in Australia, and others were in the process of planning the trip and asking questions of the community.

Social Media Channel Usage

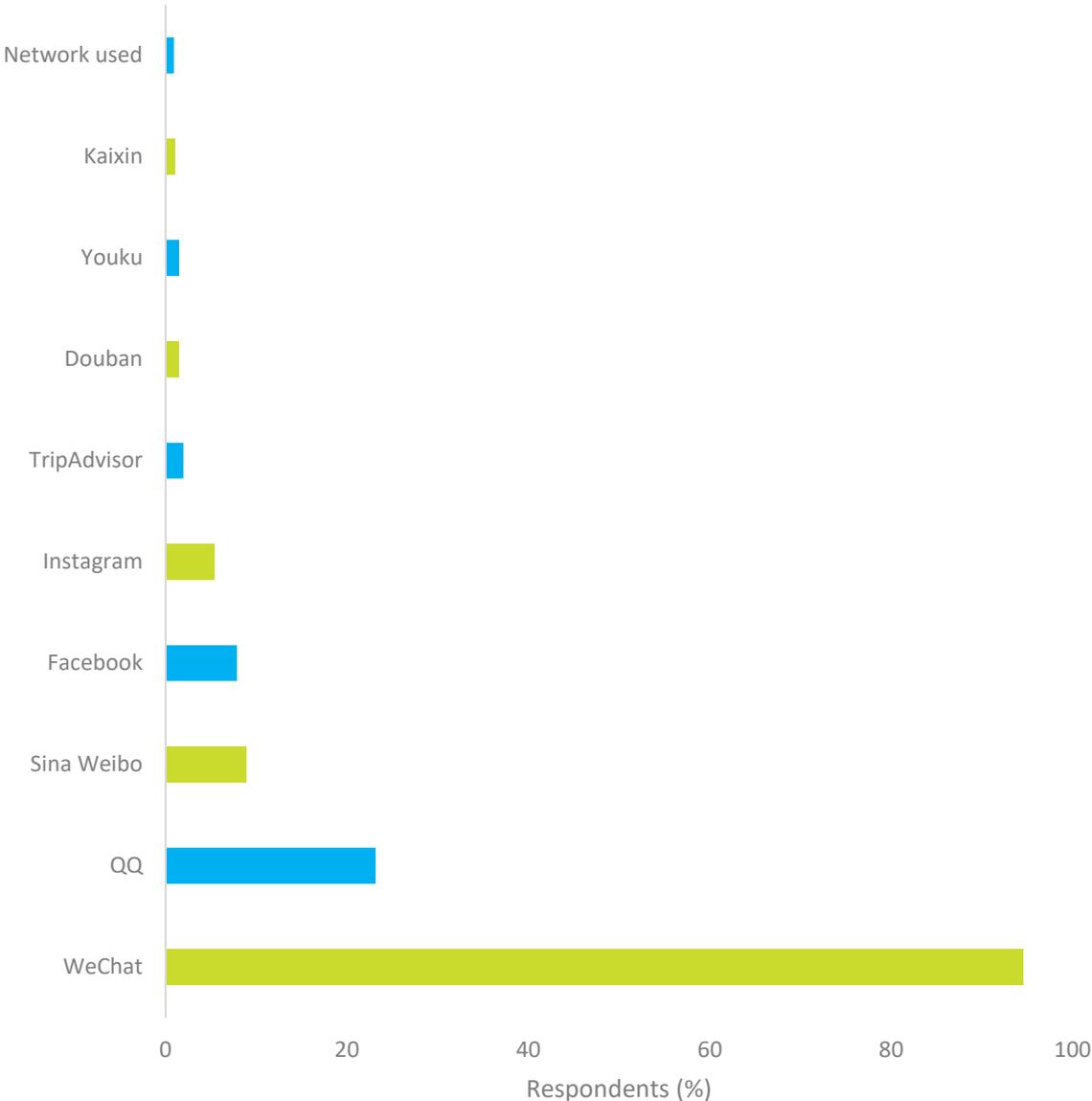


Figure 18: During your holiday, which of the following social networks did you use? N=203.

Attitudes Towards Caravan Parks

Overwhelmingly, positive feedback regarding caravan parks were received from respondents with 80% saying they enjoyed their experience and would recommend it to friends and family. However, most travellers (92%) stated that they were unable to access quality food and beverages from caravan parks. This highlights the opportunities presented for caravan parks that provide on-site food options.

This was linked to comments surrounding opening times and available services. It was common for travellers to arrive late into a site – which often resulted in local eateries being closed nearby. Generally, caravan parks catered for travellers with 85% being satisfied with the facilities. Communication and information provided at caravan parks were rated as good without being excellent – comments reflected that improved signage within caravan parks would assist Chinese travellers.

Other facilities that are sought after but sometimes lacking in caravan parks include hair-dryers, rice cookers in kitchens and later opening hours for cooking facilities. Additionally, nearly a quarter of suggestions regarding what could have been improved for their experience in a caravan park referred to improving WIFI connectivity.

97% Said that Australians had been welcoming and friendly

65% Were happy with the customer service they received at the caravan park

87% Felt safe during their stay in the caravan park

64% Were happy with the information they were able to receive at the caravan park

85% Were happy with the facilities provided in the caravan park

62% Could communicate easily with Australians

80% Enjoyed staying in the caravan park and would recommend it to their family and friends

8% Felt able to access good quality food and beverage whilst staying at the caravan park

“ We do not want the service and quality to improve because then too many Chinese would hire motorhomes!

- Male, 43

“

Maybe extend the facility times to cater for the Chinese habit of cooking later

- Male, 35

“

Signage in the park needs to be clearer

- Female, 32

“

Australia has a well-developed RV travel environment

- Female, WeChat User



Future Intentions to Return to Australia

Generally, respondents expressed a positive intention on returning to Australia at some point after their current trip with 70% indicating that they were likely to return to Australia. Only 7% expressed that they were unlikely to return to Australia.

Future Intentions to Return to Australia

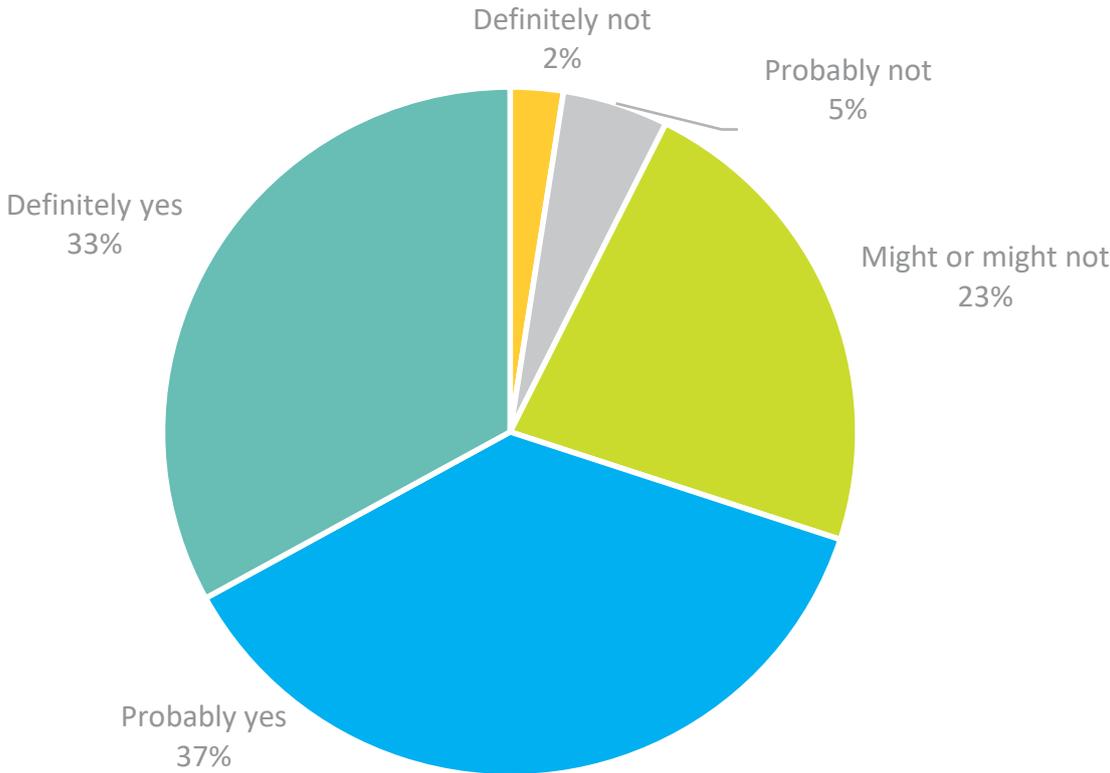


Figure 19: Do you intend on returning the Australia after this trip? N=203.



Future Intention to Stay in a Caravan Park

Respondents who expressed a positive return intention to Australia were then asked their thoughts on a repeat stay at a caravan park with 77% responding positively to this statement and only 6% rejecting the idea.

Future Intention to Stay in a Caravan Park

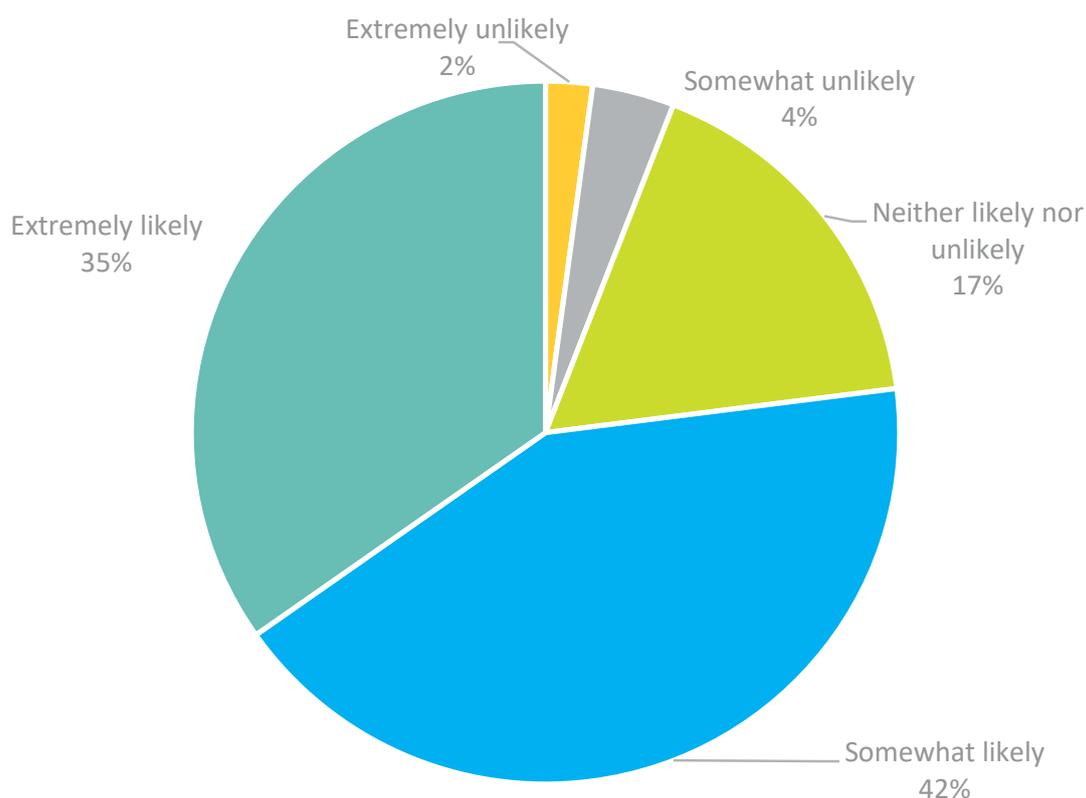


Figure 20: How likely would you be to stay in a caravan park if you were to return to Australia? N=187.



Future Intention to Stay in a Caravan Park

Among those that didn't intend on staying in a caravan park, but intended on returning to Australia, these were some of the responses:

““

The Road Tolls and traffic penalties are too strong

- Male, 45

““

Too difficult to drive and stop a motorhome

- Female, 30

““

Not convenient for parking

- Male, 40

““

Wifi is no good!

- Male, 16

““

Language problem

- Female, 60

““

I want a different experience next time

- Female, 39

““

I don't like bunk beds, lack of space and especially soft mattress'

- Female, 39

““

I would like restaurants in caravan parks – longer hours – better language assistance

- Male, 35

““

It's hard to get into the city

- Female, 50

Sample Profile

		% OF RESPONDENTS
Age	15-19	3%
	20-29	15%
	30-54	69%
	55+	13%
Gender	Male	44%
	Female	56%
Average Monthly Household Income	0 - 5,000 RMB (<AUD \$1017)	8.3%
	5,001 - 10,000 RMB (AUD \$1018 - \$2035)	6.3%
	10,001 - 20,000 RMB (AUD \$2036 - \$4071)	35.4%
	20,001 - 30,000 RMB (AUD \$2037 - \$6107)	20.8%
	30,001 - 40,000 RMB (AUD \$6108 - \$8143)	22.9%
	More than 40,000 RMB per month (> AUD \$8144)	6.3%
Passport used to enter Australia	China	92.5%
	Taiwan	5.6%
	Hong Kong	1.9%



Have you been using CaravanStats to help your business?

CaravanStats is an online portal of all major research within the Industry, specifically allowing users to navigate postcode data, trade registration data and accommodation data reports.

These reports, built off data from the ABS, State Government and Park Operators are useful for businesses especially if you are looking to identify business opportunities, RV purchase trends in specific areas or understand occupancy and revenue takings.



Since its launch in 2015, CaravanStats has been providing businesses with relevant data to assist in a variety of business needs:

Park Chain

"The Postcode Data and Trade Registration reports are very useful. The density of caravan and campervan registrations and the registrations growth, better enables us in targeting our marketing efforts."

Manufacturer

"I have logged in a couple of times now and find the Caravan Stats website an extremely useful resource. The first time I logged I was impressed with the level of content. Being able to compare market/industry sales information with our warranty registrations to see patterns is a large help. It's also beneficial to see where possibilities exist to potentially expand service agent requirements in areas densely populated with caravan owners. It's quite eye opening to see how many units are out there and the general state of play the Industry is in."

If you are yet to visit the site, head to www.caravanstats.com.au today and begin using this great free-to-access resource to advance your business.



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