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**THE MEANING OF ECOTOURISM**  
**'A NEW ZEALAND PERSPECTIVE'**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Philosophy in Resource and Environmental Planning at  
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## ABSTRACT

Growing recognition of the negative impacts of conventional mass tourism has been accompanied by an increasing number of tourists seeking tourism that provides opportunities for interaction with the environment. This has created a demand for ecotourism. Ecotourism has been promoted as a means of avoiding the negative environmental impacts while retaining the positive economic impacts of tourism.

The definition of ecotourism is far from straightforward. The literature identifies a variety of elements. A consistent definition of ecotourism is required to reduce debate about what ecotourism means, to distinguish between genuine ecotourism operators and those jumping on the ecotourism 'marketing bandwagon', and to inform planners about what is required for successful ecotourism. A 'core' definition of ecotourism has been developed in this thesis based on the common elements identified in recent literature. To test the relevance of these common elements, a selection of 30 people closely involved with tourism in New Zealand were surveyed. Their views support the following definition. Ecotourism is:

*'tourism that is environmentally responsible, fosters conservation of natural resources through increased exposure, understanding and education and takes place in the natural environment'.*

The survey enabled opinion to be gathered on what the ingredients are for a successful ecotourism product. This reinforced the emphasis on education, learning, interaction and participation. The support of local communities and cultures are considered important but secondary ingredients in successful ecotourism. Implementation of a code of ethics across the industry is also favoured by those surveyed.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. Despite its economic contribution during the last twenty years, people have become more aware of the adverse impacts tourism can create, particularly the impacts on the environment. This awareness has led to a demand for tourism that is environmentally sensitive and responsible. Tourism developers and planners are often left in a dilemma over how to reconcile the positive economic impacts with the negative environmental impacts of tourism. Some claim the answer lies in the development of ecotourism.

There is no commonly used definition for ecotourism but recent literature includes some common themes. These are that ecotourism is environmentally sensitive and responsible and provides its participants with an education about the natural environment. Some authors also cite aspects of cultural sensitivity and support for local communities.

In New Zealand the ecotourism industry is relatively new but is already experiencing rapid growth. The New Zealand natural environment is well suited to the requirements of ecotourism, but there are problems with its implementation and management. These include a lack of integration between the promotion of ecotourism and its management in the conservation estate, lack of infrastructure in some places, a lack of cohesion amongst ecotourism operators and the absence of any specific set of standards or code of ethics for ecotourism.

There is an opportunity in New Zealand to plan, develop and manage ecotourism to be successful in economic, social and environmental terms. For this to occur, there needs to be better understanding of what ecotourism is; a better understanding of what is

required to allow high quality ecotourism to develop; and a means to ensure that a high standard of ecotourism is maintained.

Resource and environmental planning requires a knowledge of the nature and impacts of tourism generally and because of its growing popularity, the nature and impacts of ecotourism specifically.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the components of ecotourism, with particular reference to New Zealand, in order to provide information about what is required for successful ecotourism in New Zealand in the future.

Chapter Two is a description of the development of the tourism industry and its economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts. Chapter Three explains the growing dissatisfaction with mass tourism and describes the associated development of alternative forms of tourism. Chapter Four describes ecotourism as one branch of the ever expanding alternative tourism market. It explains the definitions of ecotourism included in recent literature and derives a general definition of ecotourism from this review which can be applied to the sector in New Zealand. Chapter Five describes the New Zealand tourism product generally, the organisation of tourism in the country and the attributes and present situation of the ecotourism industry. Chapter Six describes the method and results of a survey that was undertaken to confirm and expand on the definition advanced in Chapter Four. Chapter Seven summarises the information presented in this thesis, draws conclusions and presents some recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BACKGROUND TO TOURISM**

‘Tourism: the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business, host government and host community in the process of attracting and hosting tourists and visitors’ (McIntosh & Goeldner, in Stanford 1992, p.195)

#### **2.1. Introduction**

The way that people have participated in the tourism phenomenon and in the tourism industry has changed over time. This chapter falls into three parts. Firstly, the history of the tourism phenomenon, from its Greek and Roman beginnings to its status today as an industry of economic significance is described. Secondly, a discussion is provided of the reasons why people travel and participate in the tourism phenomenon. Thirdly, tourism impacts are considered

#### **2.2 Historical Record**

There are records of long distance travel taking place very early in history. This travel was principally for conquest, religious or business purposes. The growth of the Greek and Roman empires furthered travel for purposes of trade. Holloway (1994) describes the tourism activity that took place during the Roman Empire, facilitated by the lack of foreign borders, safe seas owing to Roman patrols, and widespread acceptance of Roman coinage and the Latin language. These travellers were tourists in every sense of the word, purchasing guidebooks and souvenirs and hiring tour guides and accommodation.

The Roman era was also responsible for establishing a different cause for travel, to indulge in the believed therapeutic properties of the spa. The popularity of 'taking the waters' eventually spread across Europe and found particular favour in Britain, where it reached a fashionable peak in the eighteenth century. At this stage their use was predominantly for pleasure rather than health reasons.

'Bath in particular became a major centre of social life for high society during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; under the guidance of Beau Nash it became a centre of fashion for the wealthy, and deliberately set out to create a select and exclusive image. The commercial possibilities opened up by the concentration of these wealthy visitors were not overlooked; facilities to entertain or otherwise cater for these visitors proliferated, changing the spas into what we would today term holiday resorts rather than mere watering places.' (Holloway 1985, in Collier 1993, p.37)

The collapse of the Roman empire, and the following period known as the 'Dark Ages' led to a decrease in tourist activity, and the increasing danger and difficulty of travel meant that what tourism activity there was, was taken closer to home.

Travel during the eighteenth century was not confined to recreation and pleasure. An additional development was the growth of travel for education. In particular, the 'Grand Tour' was popular, where predominantly young upper class English men travelled to the continent to experience the delights of cultural and education centres, particularly Paris, Venice and Florence. The onset of the Napoleonic Wars across Europe brought an end to this trend.

The invention of the steam engine in the 1800's had a major impact on tourism. The availability of railway and steamship travel improved travelling times and enabled long distance voyages. Davidson (1993) notes the industrial revolution as a major force in



the sweeping technological and social changes that occurred in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries including an improved economy, more free time available and the introduction of laws that allowed people to take paid holidays. Increasing emphasis was placed on the family as a social unit during the 19th century, leading to an emphasis on family holidays. This occurred simultaneously with a rapid expansion in rail routes to seaside resorts. These events and the growing popularity of sea bathing, created a rapid rise in the numbers participating in the sea side holiday.

Tourism continued to grow in the early twentieth century, particularly in the capitalist countries of the west. This was a period of increasing national expansion and migration. Far away places that had suddenly become home to many European colonists inspired curiosity and the opportunity and desire to travel further. Increased political stability and advances in medical sciences made travelling safer. Technological changes, particularly those that occurred in communications and in the media, were instrumental in further arousing interest and increasing awareness of other places. Reports from those fighting in World War One also sparked curiosity. Increasing wealth, a result of social, political and economic changes, enabled people to travel.

Changes occurred after the Second World War. The development of the motorcar had an enormous impact on the ability to travel, particularly during the 1950s when prosperity increased and private car ownership became more common. Corresponding services were established including packaged holidays for the private motorist and the proliferation of motels and hotels along main transit routes. Travel by air was introduced in the 1930s but did not become common until 1958 with the introduction of Boeing 707 jets. Air travel for the masses created a huge difference in travel time and the costs of distance. International tourism increased accordingly.

Social and economic changes that occurred in the 1960s had an impact on tourism patterns. The growth of international business and trade resulted in an increase in

business people and conference delegates needing to travel and greater awareness and curiosity of other places. Tourists in the 1960s and 1970s rebelled to a certain extent against the constraining limits of package holidays and the accommodation available, creating a demand for an alternative market, further enhanced by the desire of many for holidays that provided value for money. An increasing shift of economic power to places such as Japan and the oil rich countries of the Middle East created new tourist markets. By the 1970's the annual holiday had become considered a necessity rather than a luxury by the majority, contributing to a significant improvement in conditions for employees.

During the 1970s air travel improved further. Particularly significant was the development of wide bodied jets able to carry over 400 passengers. This reduced the cost of carrying the individual passenger therefore providing the opportunity for cheaper travel. Networks of high speed roads, and enhancement of train networks in some countries further contributed to this growth. An increase in tourist numbers led to an increase in demand in some places for infrastructure required for travelling. Rapid development of accommodation and other tourist facilities and services including new destinations and attractions is now common (Inskeep, 1991).

Oil shortages during the 1970s affected tourism, as the price of petroleum products escalated. This energy crisis may have checked tourism growth, in particular international and long haul travel, more than any previous event. Burkart and Medlik (1984) note that international tourism still survived remarkably well. Only in 1974 did total tourist movements increase less than 3 percent over the previous year. In other years in, growth continued at 4 percent a year or more.

The numbers of people partaking in tourism and travel continued to increase in the 1980's and are continuing to increase in the 1990's. The East Asian and Pacific region was the fastest growing region during the 1980's with an annual average growth rate of

9.3 % in international tourist arrivals. Demographic and social changes that affected tourism during the 1980's and still do in the 1990's include:

- increases in numbers of women in paid employment;
- increases in double income households;
- increases in single adults; and
- increases in the length of paid leave entitlement.

Economic changes that have influenced the ability of people to travel include increasing Gross National Product world-wide, continuing trends of increasing real wealth and the continuing growth of personal discretionary disposable income. The cost of travel has risen at a rate less than inflation as a whole (World Tourism Organisation, 1993). The 1980's and the 1990's continue to bring deregulation of international borders, notably changes in Western and Eastern European countries resulting from European Community deregulation. Tourism in developing countries has continued to expand, with increasing recognition of the importance for planning to help ease the dichotomy of tourism bringing valuable foreign currency and employment yet potentially affecting traditional social systems, natural areas and creating a high level of dependence. The 1980's was a decade of increasing environmental awareness world-wide and realisation of the importance of the environment to tourism and the associated desire for sustainable tourism. This trend continues in the 1990's. The 1980's were also a period in which the beginnings of the alternative tourism market began to flourish. The demand for alternative tourism types has created increasing market diversification of tourism and travel options and increased specialisation in some tourism market segments.

World Tourism Organisation figures of international tourism receipts, show that:

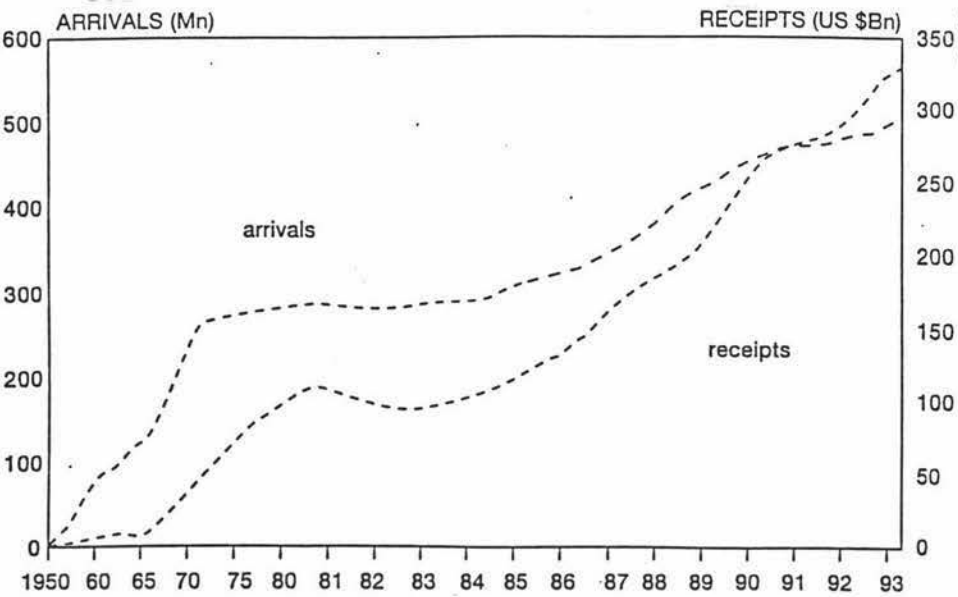
- tourism grew faster than world trade in goods and services in the 1980's; and

- tourism now ranks third in the list of global export categories (World Tourism Organisation, 1994)

This is ahead of electrical equipment, ores and minerals, non-ferrous metals, clothing/textiles and iron and steel.

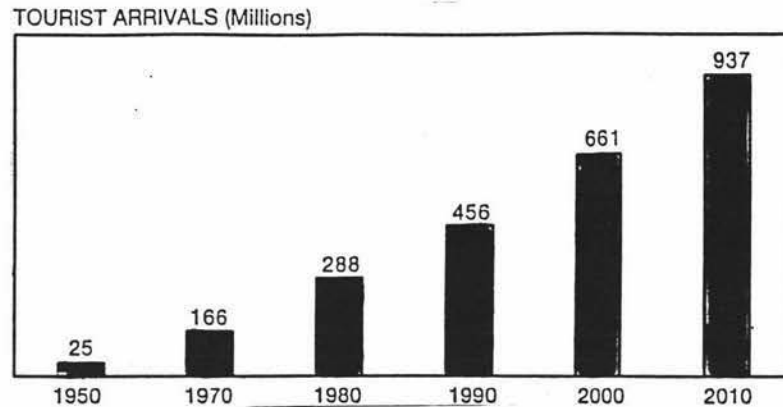
Figure 1 and 2 below are taken from Burns and Holden (1995). Figure 1 shows tourist arrival numbers in millions world-wide and international tourism receipts in US billions world-wide. Tourism numbers have increased by around 125 % between 1950 and 1993. Tourism receipts have grown from less than a billion dollars (US) to nearly 300 billions of dollars (US) at 1993. There was a rapid rate of increase for international arrivals between 1950 and 1975. Numbers stayed steady between 1970 and the mid 1980s, since when they have been increasing. Since the 1980's both arrivals and receipts have steadily and fairly consistently continued to increase.

**Figure 1**  
**International Tourism Arrivals and Receipts, 1950-1993 (excluding international fare receipts)**



Source: World Tourism Organisation (Burns and Holden, 1995)

**Figure 2**  
**International Tourist Arrivals World-wide: Trends and Prospects 1950-2010**



**Source: World Tourism Organisation (Burns and Holden, 1995)**

Figure 2 shows tourism arrivals from 1950 and a projection of tourism arrivals until 2010. Figure 2 demonstrates that between 1950 and 1990 tourist arrivals have almost doubled every 10 years. Projections for 1990-2010 show tourist numbers doubling in 20 years to an expected 937 million tourist arrivals in 2010.

The World Travel and Tourism Council (World Travel and Tourism Council, 1994) claim that tourism:

- is the world's largest industry;
- is the world's largest employer and creator of jobs;
- accounts for one in nine global jobs;
- represents 10 % of global wages;
- is responsible for 10 % of world GDP; and
- accounts for 11 % of non-food consumer retailing.

As Burns and Holden (1995) point out, these claims need to be treated with caution, as the World Travel and Tourism Council is an industry sponsored, pro-tourism pressure group. However they do provide some idea of the magnitude of international tourism.

Lathan (1990) (in Hunter and Green, 1995) notes that most international tourists today originate from developed countries. Germany, the United States, Britain and Japan are particularly significant. Europe is the most popular destination, followed by the United States, East Asia and the Pacific, Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia. Lathan notes the rapid growth of the East Asian and Pacific market share, particularly at the expense of the United States (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Regional market shares of international tourist arrivals, 1950-1992(%)**

Year	World	Africa	Americas	East Asia/ Pacific	Europe	Middle East	South Asia
1950	100	2.1	29.6	0.8	66.4	0.9	0.2
1960	100	1.1	24.1	1.0	72.5	1.0	0.3
1970	100	1.5	23.0	3.0	70.5	1.4	0.6
1980	100	2.5	21.3	7.3	66.0	2.1	0.8
1990	100	3.3	20.5	11.5	62.4	1.6	0.7
1991	100	3.5	21.4	11.8	61.1	1.5	0.7
1992 <sup>(a)</sup>	100	3.6	21.5	12.3	60.4	1.5	0.7

Note: (a) Preliminary estimates prepared in December 1992

Source: World Tourism Organisation (1994).

The history of tourism in the second half of the twentieth century can be summarised in the word *growth*. Political and economic constraints, including world wars and economic depression, have created only brief setbacks. Social, political and technological development have all played an important role in facilitating growth. The following section provides a discussion of some of the important factors in the development of tourism.

### **2.3 Tourism Determinants**

Collier (1993) believes the expanding travel industry can be explained by two factors. These are travel facilitators and travel motivators. Travel facilitators relate to extrinsic or external factors, and are those that allow or enable a person to engage in travel and tourism. The two most important travel facilitators are disposable income and leisure time. Disposable income has increased in the nineteenth and twentieth century. This has principally been a result of the industrial revolution which contributed to the creation of a large and wealthier middle class. Leisure time has also increased over the last two centuries. The principal reasons are considered to be legislative intervention and the introduction of paid holidays. Increased income and leisure time have both enabled people to take more holidays. Other changes which have taken place include rapid growth in transportation and accommodation, cheaper prices, improved political stability, including the deregulation of borders in many areas, the development of accepted mediums of exchange, free access to travel documents and developments, and improvements and innovations in technology.

Burkart and Medlik (1984) believe there are three major stimuli to travel. These are:

- wealth of industrial society;
- development in transport; and
- organisation and servicing of travel.

Demographic and socio-economic factors in a country influence the number of people who travel. These factors include age distribution, education levels, occupation structure and population concentration. Other social changes that may contribute to an increase in the amount of travelling taking place are earlier retirement, decline in

physical labour, shorter working weeks, greater mobility, growth of employee benefits and smaller families.

Travel motivators are the reasons why people want to travel. Travel motivators are intrinsic values related to feelings, emotions and drive. They are generally considered to be the result of a complex system of relationships. Burkart and Medlik (1991) describe two major travel motivation types. The first motivation to travel is exchanging the known for the unknown, seeing different places, different cultures and people and relics of the past. These can be described as curiosity and education reasons. The second motivation is for health and recreation; to go somewhere where there are specific amenities that are unavailable to them at home. Examples include particular sports and climate requirements. Burns and Holden (1995) note that travellers can be divided into two motivational groups; the first are holiday tourists, searching for 'wanderlust' and 'sunlust'. Gray (1970) defines the attributes of wanderlust and sunlust travel as:

#### ***Sunlust***

- *Resort Vacation business;*
- *One country visited;*
- *Travellers seek domestic amenities and accommodation;*
- *Special natural attributes a necessity (especially climate);*
- *Travel a minor consideration after arrival at destination;*
- *Either relaxing and restful or very active;*
- *Relatively more domestic travel.*

#### ***Wanderlust***

- *Tourist business;*
- *Probably multi-country;*
- *Travellers seek different culture, institutions and cuisine;*
- *Special physical attributes likely to be man-made: climate less important;*
- *Travel an important ingredient throughout visit;*
- *Neither restful or 'sporty': ostensibly educational;*
- *Relatively more international travel.*

Gray, 1970, p.14 (in Pearce, 1995, p.22)



The second are travelling because they are required to. This group principally consists of business people and people who are travelling to visit friends and relatives. People in this group principally travel to a single destination, are not influenced by natural and climatic attributes, but still require transport and accommodation. People fall into different groups at different times.

Krippendorf (1982) provides a descriptive summary of holiday tourists motivations to travel:

‘the flight from the boredom of everyday life, the need for a change of environment, the search for something different, the concept of the holiday as a ‘contrast-experience’.’ (Krippendorf 1982, p.135).

## **2.4 Tourism Impacts**

‘Tourism is a mixed blessing. It can be a positive force. Or it can result in destruction of the environment, and degrade culture and existing social order’ (Anderson 1993, p.85).

Tourism usually involves bringing large numbers of people to a destination. There are potentially negative and positive tourism impacts that may affect the host community and the host environment. These impacts can be economic, social, cultural or environmental. This section is a description of potential tourism impacts.

### **2.4.1 Economic Impacts**

Tourism causes both positive and negative economic impacts. An important positive impact is the generation of substantial overseas income even though the products and services involved are not physically exported. This is particularly welcome in developing countries seeking large foreign exchange to finance development. Tourism

usually involves the creation of job opportunities. These may be a result of direct facilities serving the tourist or a result of businesses benefiting from the boost in local purchasing power. If available to local residents, employment will create further economic benefits in a region (Millman, 1989). Research shows that in New Zealand:

‘for a given increase in foreign exchange earnings, employment requirements of the tourism industry are higher than those of the manufacturing sectors and agricultural sectors’ (Business and Economic Research Ltd 1982, in Collier 1993, p.287).

Tourism can lift government revenue. Lim (1991) notes that in New Zealand provisional estimates show that tourism alone contributed 5.1% to the government tax revenue in the year to March 1989 (a total of \$950 million). Of total government revenue from tourism, Lim records that 46% is from taxes on salaries and wages, 43% is from indirect taxes (e.g GST), 8% is from gross operating surplus and 3% is from import duties.

Tourism activity will often stimulate other areas of the economy, including the production of physical goods, the retail sector, the food and beverage industry, energy, transport and construction.

Tourism has the ability to provide economic benefits that at the very least parallel those of other forms of resource consumptive industries. The following extract describes an example of where this has occurred, in the South Westland sector of the World Heritage Site, Te Wahipounamu in the South Island of New Zealand.

'Employment opportunities have increased significantly and, in contrast to the former logging industry, which employed mainly young and strong males, tourism offers employment opportunities for both sexes, regardless of age or physical condition. In the small gateway town of Whataroa, the whole economy used to be based on farming and timber milling: 33 men worked in the timber mill and about three women in the tourist industry during 1987. Today, the number of mill workers has dropped slightly, but 26 new jobs have been created in Whataroa and neighbouring tourist resort Franz Josef. Of these 26 jobs, 23 have been taken by women, injecting money into oft-struggling families and communities.' (Watson 1992, p.16)

Tourism can also create negative economic impacts. The increased expenditure of tourists in an area may result in inflationary pressure on food prices, transport and clothing. Building costs and land values may increase. Countries and regions may become exclusively dependent on tourism. This is undesirable, as tourism is typically seasonal and is vulnerable to social, political and economic changes. The Fijian political coup in 1987 provides an example of this. It took two years after this political and social unrest for the tourism industry in Fiji to get back on its feet (Collier 1993). If tourism investment is made from outside the region, particularly from another country, a loss of potential economic benefits can occur. The host community then loses some of the surplus by way of un-reciprocated profits.

The economic impact on a host community is not always even. Often only those people involved with tourism at an investment level will reap benefits of tourism activity. Encouraging community involvement in investment, planning, and managing can help produce a more even spread and retain economic benefits within the community.

### 2.4.2 Social Impacts

The question about the equity of tourism impacts is also related to social impacts. To some host communities tourism may seem an economic necessity, but a social evil.

Negative social impacts arise if tourism development creates overcrowding, especially of local resources and amenities, causing resentment amongst local residents. Tourism can cause dissatisfaction in local communities if residents find themselves paying for the construction and service of amenities that have been built principally to cope with the seasonal influx of tourists. This is exaggerated when the local community is small and the numbers of tourists visiting the region is high, potentially resulting in residents having to pay high property rates to finance services such as transportation and infrastructure required by tourists.

When tourists arrive in an area displaying higher consumption patterns than their host community, for example through the food eaten and the activities undertaken, a feeling of relative deprivation can arise amongst the host community, disrupting existing social relations.

The onset of increased tourism activity can create new opportunities for employment. Sometimes the benefits from increased tourism activity are focused on relatively few people. Also, tourism jobs may be poorly paid and if seasonal, can be associated with a reduction of permanent work and irregular income. When 'non-locals' compete with locals for jobs in tourism areas, locals may find themselves faced with lower wages or unemployment especially when increased tourism activity is associated with seasonal employment.

Tourism can also cause positive social impacts. The tourism industry is capable of producing socially satisfying jobs. It may also have the power to halt urban drift or even reverse it in some cases, encouraging people to move to rural or isolated regions

where there is strong tourism growth. This has been found to be the case in the New Zealand towns of Methven, Ohakune and Queenstown (New Zealand Tourism Council, 1984). Upgrading local amenities and infrastructure may improve the lifestyle of local people. This depends on how public amenities are funded, whether by users or by ratepayers, and, if the latter, what share of the rate burden is met by ratepayers who do not benefit from tourism.

### 2.4.3 Cultural Impacts

Tourism has the potential to degrade or enhance the local culture. Local cultural exposure is often superficial, designed to give the tourists entertainment rather than enlightenment. The result is an artificial, packaged cultural exposure, that is different to underlying cultural values. This will do little to help increase understanding amongst different cultural backgrounds and can cause breakdown in respect amongst locals for their own culture.

Conversely, tourism may increase understanding amongst people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This is most likely to occur if there is a sustained period of contact and an appropriate level of immersion. Warren and Taylor (1994) note that in New Zealand there is an increasing desire to ensure that marae-based tourism activities are authentic Maori cultural experiences. Maori who provide such activities talk of their desire to maintain their cultural integrity by inviting tourists to 'living marae'. They say that such activity provides a means to pass on their knowledge to younger hapu members.

Gee, Choy and Makens (1984) identify four possible outcomes resulting from the 'cultural collision' that occurs when tourism involves people of different backgrounds:

1. **'Accommodation** or toleration. The visitor and host coexist in a 'live and let live' fashion.

2. **Segregation.** The tourists and the host population maintain a social distance by means of avoidance or by the tourists remaining 'confined' to special tourist areas.
3. **Opposition.** Tourists are either rejected by the host community through the display of surly behaviour, discourtesy, etc; or the host population is rejected by tourists. Rejection of the host population usually manifests itself in terms of the tourists displaying condescending behaviour toward local service personnel or scoffing at local customs, traditions, or lifestyles.
4. **Diffusion.** The tourists, the host population, or both, borrow or adapt cultural traits or elements of the other.' (Gee, Choy and Makens 1984, in Collier 1993, p.319)

Tourism activity can create a revival in local customs and traditions, increasing pride in the local culture and community. Tourism may also be responsible for the conservation and restoration of important archaeological and historical sites and sites of particular architectural character. This occurs when there is a demand from tourists to visit such sites, resulting in the necessity to conserve and renovate sites and buildings to a standard suitable for large numbers of visitors to enjoy. Conversely, historic sites and buildings can literally wear away after prolonged exposure to human contact.

#### 2.4.4 Environmental Impacts

The environmental impacts are perhaps the most frequently described and have been discussed in tourism literature since the 1980's (Anderson 1993, Inskeep 1991, Mieczkowski, 1995). Tourism activity can lead to increased levels of pollution. Air and noise pollution can result from an increase in the number of transport facilities, particularly jet engines. Water pollution may be created by recreational and commercial boating and inadequate sewerage collection and treatment systems in tourism destinations. Visual pollution is an issue that is difficult to quantify. This is usually a

result of tourism development that is unsympathetic to the surrounding environment. Some believe there are examples of this occurring in New Zealand:

‘Queenstown is in danger of becoming so successful as a tourist resort that it risks losing itself as a town and irreparably damaging the landscape which not only draws its international clients but gives pleasure to locals and fellow New Zealanders alike.’ (McLauchlan 1994, p.90)

The introduction of tourism to an area may result in ecological destruction. This may involve disturbance of the flora, fauna and natural habitat, or the removal of items such as shells and plants for souvenirs. Soil erosion and dune destruction may also contribute to ecological damage. The fact that tourism operations often take place in fragile and sensitive natural environments means it has an increased potential to cause significant environmental damage.

Tourism development can contribute to the increased likelihood of environmental hazards. In the Alpine regions of Europe, there is increasing alarm that deforestation programmes, principally undertaken to service winter sports tourism, are a major cause of mud slides, floods, and avalanches (Inskeep, 1991).

Tourism can also have a positive impact on the environment. Evidence suggests that the potential for pollution may actually be reduced through higher standards of safety, sanitation and maintenance (Pigram, 1980). Tourism can also assist the cause of conservation of important natural areas. An example is the support, both economic and moral, that tourists give to the establishment of national and regional parks, and the conservation of marine life. In New Zealand the two functions of conservation and recreation are brought together by the Department of Conservation which has the dual mandate of conserving the country's natural resources and fostering the use of natural and historic resources for recreation, and allowing their use for tourism (Fyson 1991). Conservation of this sort, which is at least partially justified by tourism is especially



important in underdeveloped countries where economic resources may otherwise be directed to other areas.

Attracting tourists can be an incentive to clean up an area. Well designed tourist facilities have the potential to enhance the environment, especially in otherwise isolated and derelict areas. The improvement of infrastructure for tourism can assist in helping to reduce pollution in a region. Examples include the development of reticulated sewage and storm-water facilities.

Tourism has the potential to increase environmental awareness. This is especially the case when tourism to environmentally sensitive areas is combined with a well informed interpretation by tour guides, or as Pigram (1980) suggests, by revolutionary communication techniques. The potential for this kind of education is being increasingly recognised.

‘It is probably not too far fetched to say that a memorable experience in New Zealand could save a whale or dolphin on the other side of the world.’  
(Mansfield 1992, p.211)

In many areas tourism development is largely preferable to other more damaging consumptive industries such as mining, forestry, and manufacturing.

Cohen (1978) suggests the intensity of tourist site-use, the resiliency of the ecosystem, the time perspective of the developers, and the transformational characteristics of the developers may all have an influence on the degree to which tourism affects the environment. Other factors include the location and situation of tourist attractions as well as the numbers visiting.



## 2.5 Summary

Tourism activity has continually increased over time. Technological and social changes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have allowed more people to travel further. The invention of the steam engine, the predominance of the motor car and its associated development of highways, the introduction of wide bodied jets, improved communication, the emergence of international media and the evolution of information technology are all examples of technological and social changes that have contributed to increased tourism activity. Higher disposable incomes as a result of stronger economies and more recently double income families, the introduction of paid holidays and increased leave entitlements are also important. Political events including World Wars I and II and the colonisation drive by England and other European countries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries increased, peoples curiosity and knowledge of other places, and contributed to an increasing desire to travel. Tourism is now recognised as the world's largest industry and creator of jobs. Tourists today generally originate from developed countries and most often visit Europe and the United States, although Asian and African countries are receiving an increasing share. East Asia and the Pacific, including New Zealand, have experienced particularly strong growth since the 1970's.

The reasons why people travel can be simply described through reference to travel motivators and facilitators. Travel motivators can be broadly described as education and curiosity, and health and recreation. People travel either because they wish to experience new things or because they wish to spend their free time in an environment more preferable to their own, most commonly warmer and sunnier. Travel facilitators are the reasons why people travel. The major travel facilitators over the last century have been increases in the amount of disposable income and time available and the increased convenience of travel created by improvements in both the organisation and servicing of travel and in transport.

Tourism activity creates economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts. The economic impact of tourism in terms of foreign exchange earnings is widely sought after; in particular it is desired by developing countries who require foreign exchange to finance development. Tourism creates jobs and consequently increases the amount of money in local economies. Government revenue increases as a result of tourism activity through taxes on wages and salaries and indirect taxes (for example GST in New Zealand). Tourism can stimulate growth in other areas of the economy particularly the food, accommodation and travel sectors, further increasing local purchasing power. Tourism may have a negative impact when spending as a result of tourism contributes to inflation. Dependence on tourism in some countries creates economic vulnerability to political and physical change. Local communities involved in tourism activity may experience feelings of jealousy about lifestyles and more consumptive behaviour, annoyance when overcrowding occurs and dissatisfaction when required to pay rates for maintenance and construction of infrastructure required by tourists. Increased employment opportunities created by tourism will have positive social impacts, although because tourism activity is frequently seasonal, employment is often part-time or poorly paid.

Cultural exposure that is meaningful and provides a true representation of local values and concerns will increase understanding across different backgrounds. On the other hand, cultural exposure that is superficial and meaningless may reduce understanding or degrade or reduce local cultural knowledge and respect.

The potential impact of tourism upon the environment is well documented. Tourism activity can increase visual, water and air pollution as people arrive by buses and planes, stay in large hotels and dispose of their wastes. Ecological damage is possible when tourism activities take place in natural environments, particularly in ecologically sensitive areas. Native insects, birds, animals and fish are often affected when large numbers of tourists come to inspect them and their habitat. Tourism activity has even been held responsible for increased risk of hazards, for example the increased risk of

avalanche in the Swiss Alps owing to vegetation clearance for winter sports. Tourism activity can benefit the natural environment. Where standards of water supply, transport infrastructure and waste disposal are improved because of tourist activity, pollution potential may actually decrease. More well known is the great potential of tourism to educate people about the environment and indirectly contribute to the conservation cause. National Parks are often established in response to the demand for protected natural areas for recreation and educational uses. Tourism activity is often preferable to more resource consumptive industries such as logging and mining and can provide equivalent or improved economic returns with better equal employment opportunities.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FROM MASS TOURISM TO ALTERNATIVE TOURISM

Some tourists have begun to seek an alternative to 'mass' tourism (large numbers of tourists travelling to the same places, usually in groups, and pursuing the same activities). This is principally a result of an increasing dissatisfaction with mass tourism, and an increasing awareness and interest in environmental, social and cultural responsibility. This chapter describes the circumstances leading to this demand and discusses what alternative tourism means.

'For many years people fought for more leisure time and holidays for everyone. Today we have to fight the effects of their success. In my view what we have failed to do is develop forms of travel that are psychologically, socially, economically and ecologically compatible ...'  
(Krippendorf 1987, p.ix)

#### 3.1 Dissatisfaction with Mass Tourism

Tourism has been one of the most consistent international growth industries over the last few decades (Anderson 1993, Boo 1990, Millman 1989). It is perceived to bring many benefits, and in particular is viewed as an excellent economic investment bringing both private and public returns. Tourist dollars have the potential to provide new employment, additional income and overall regional development (Krippendorf 1987). With this potential in mind, strategies and investments to increase the number of tourists visiting an area have been actively pursued at many tourist destinations. Contributing to the impact of tourism on particular areas are the following characteristics:

‘The concentration of travel and holidays into just a few weeks and weekends, and the resulting congestion this creates when large numbers of people seek accommodation and transport services at the same times; Everybody travelling at the same time, for the same reason, to the same places’ (Krippendorf 1987).

Travellers in large numbers are often perceived as a threat by the host communities and, ironically, by the tourists themselves. Profit margins from this form of active tourism pursuit are actually decreasing while environments sustaining tourism are becoming degraded. Duncan *et al.* (1994) researching for the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, found that there has been a constraint on investment (on tourism capital stock in New Zealand) produced by poor returns. These have reflected over-capacity, the impacts of which they believe have been felt by New Zealand companies both locally and overseas. Over-capacity reflects the tendency to build capacity to cater for peak visitor numbers, leading to long periods of under-utilisation each year. Over-capacity is capable of diminishing the quality and demand of the tourism product, reflected in the profits of operators.

Other examples show how the pursuit of greater numbers can produce a form of tourism industry suicide:

‘...the Conservatoire du Littoral, the French agency charged with coastal protection, reported a reduction in tourism by 1/3 between 1989 and 1990 primarily as a result of the pollution (caused by the huge numbers of tourists).’ (Dingwall 1992, p.117)

Increasing dissatisfaction with mass tourism has contributed to the increase in demand for an alternative style of tourism. Quest and Miles (1990) note that the realisation of mass tourism came in the 1970’s and with it came a desire for change. Although people still get a great deal of pleasure from mass tourism, tourists are growing more

confident (for most, travel was still a new experience in 1973 !). As tourists have become more adventurous, there has been a corresponding increase in the amount of independent travel taking place. Statistics from the New Zealand Tourism Board (1993a) show that in the 1992-1993 tourism year, half of all international visitors to New Zealand were either free independent travellers or semi- independent travellers as opposed to package travellers.<sup>1</sup> Poon (1994) believes that consumers are growing more sophisticated and more demanding. They are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with mass market tourism products and resorts, and are consequently looking for new products, new destinations and a holiday that makes them feel special and unique.

### **3.2 Environmental Ethic**

In addition to the growing dissatisfaction with mass tourism, there has been another powerful force in the shift from mass to alternative tourism forms. Since the 1970's there has been a growing acceptance of an ethic that promotes the conservation of natural resources. This environmental ethic has increased in prominence as people have become increasingly aware of the damage the pursuit of economic growth has had in the form of resource exploitation and environmental asset stripping. Recent research has shown that 85% of the industrialised world's citizens believe that the environment

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#### ***<sup>1</sup> Free Independent Travelers***

*Holiday visitors who did not prepay any of their holiday, did not travel on a package, and did not travel on an organised coach tour.*

#### ***Semi-Independent Travelers***

*Holiday visitors who prepaid at least part of their holiday, but did not travel on a package.*

#### ***Package Travelers***

*Holiday visitors who traveled on a prepaid package or on a non-prepaid organised coach tour. (New Zealand Tourism Board, 1993, p.16)*

is the number one public issue (Carson and Mulder 1991, in Wight 1993). Problems that have come to the fore and resulted in this kind of response are many and varied. Some of the most urgent and pressing include:

- population growth,
- global warming,
- destruction of the ozone layer,
- degradation of the environment,
- loss of biological species and habitat, and,
- pollution in all its forms (Owen, Witt and Gammon 1993).

This new attitude has resulted in a number of international documents, conferences and declarations. The first of these, written in 1980, was produced by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and was named the World Conservation Strategy. This represented the first international effort to reach agreement about the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development was defined as development that takes account of the living and non-living resource base; and of the long term as well as the short term advantages and disadvantages of alternative actions. Development and conservation are brought together in a global context, In the IUCN document, with suggestions about the means of ensuring that development is sustainable at national and sub-national levels of government. A positive relationship between conservation and development was endorsed, with conservation embracing preservation, the maintenance of sustainable utilisation, restoration and enhancement of the natural environment and sustainable development options.

In 1987 the World Commission in Environment and Development (WCED) produced the document, *Our Common Future*, more commonly known as the “Bruntland Report”. This report reiterated the need for sustainable development, claiming that the world had already crossed the threshold of many natural systems. *Our Common*



*Future*, more than any document before, brought the environment to the forefront of the global agenda.

A third strategy was produced by the IUCN, plus the United Nations Environment Education Programme (UNEP) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) (now the Worldwide Fund for Nature) in 1991. Named *Caring for the Earth*, this strategy was designed as a follow-up to the World Conservation Strategy. It focused on developing action plans to implement the recommended policy on sustainable development first introduced in the World Conservation Strategy. Sustainable development was redefined as improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems. This definition recognised the existing needs of people in undeveloped areas, where sometimes maintaining a minimum standard of living is a more pressing concern than, as opposed to inter-generational resource conservation

### **3.3 Alternative Tourism**

‘Alternative tourism has been brought about primarily by people having a greater awareness of the threats to their country and the world's natural resources, a realisation of the potential negative environmental effects of uncontrolled tourism developments and the fact that all areas have ecological carrying capacities.’ (Anderson 1993, p.141)

Alternative tourism has become popular because of dissatisfaction with conventional mass tourism in combination with a growing environmental ethic. Alternative tourism may also fulfil a desire for further knowledge, particularly about other cultures and environments.

Poon (1994) describes a move from ‘old’ tourism to ‘new’ tourism.



“Old” tourism is the tourism of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. It is characterised by mass, standardised and rigidly packaged holidays, hotels and tourists. It was created and nurtured by a number of favourable post-war developments. These included the arrival of the jet aircraft; promotional fares; cheap oil; Keynesian inspired economic growth; paid holidays; sun-lust tourists; the entry of the multi-national corporations; vertical and horizontal integration; and the ubiquitous franchise. ‘Old’ tourism rapidly became the recipe for the best productivity and the most profits.’ (Poon, 1994, p.91)

In contrast, the ‘new’ tourism is the tourism of the future, distinguishable by its flexibility, segmentation and more authentic tourism experiences. Besides the frequently discussed negative impacts of mass tourism and the increasing environmental pressures, Poon cites changes in information technologies, deregulation of airlines and financial services, movement in attitudes from ‘sun-lust’ to ‘sun-plus’, and changes in leisure tastes, leisure time, work patterns and income distribution as all playing a role in the shift to ‘new’ forms of tourism. In saying this, Poon is postulating that the factors that facilitated the creation of mass tourism are themselves changing (Poon, 1994).

Butler (1990) believes alternative tourism to be ‘alternative’ to the most undesired forms of tourism, in other words, large numbers, tasteless development, environmental and social alienation and homogenisation. Butler also suggests that alternative tourism refers to small-scale, non-conventional, non-mass socialised forms of tourism that are environmentally and socially sensitive and respectful, as opposed to the more conventional forms of tourism associated with large resorts. Valentine (1993) suggests that alternative tourism is commonly accepted as tourism that allows tourists to directly experience the host culture and the environment in non-exploitative and respectful ways. Huie (1993) describes alternative tourists as those who are independent travellers and committed conservationists. They are visitors who are particularly

sensitive to their surroundings, both built and natural, and who wish to be a part of it rather than dominate it. Alternative tourism has been described as independent, drifter travel by small groups to remote destinations, principally in the 'developing' world (Jones 1992). Anderson (1993) describes alternative tourism as:

'environmentally aware, conservation oriented, appeals to the environmentally conscious traveller and is sustainable ... these alternatives are seen to be 'softer' and more 'humane' ...' (Anderson, 1993, p.139)

Alternative tourism can be summarised as taking a different approach from mass tourism because it is environmentally and socially responsible.

Alternative tourism promises a great deal. It has the potential to greatly reduce the impact of tourists on the natural and socio-cultural environment. It may help to educate the traveller and result in increased environmental awareness and respect for local indigenous populations. Alternative tourism may produce enhanced economic advantages if the economic benefits are received directly by the resident population who own and operate the tourist facilities and services. These small scale forms of tourism often do not require major infrastructure or high capital investment costs.

Not everybody supports alternative tourism. Butler (1990) cites two major obstacles. Firstly, many people enjoy being mass tourists, in so much as they can avoid making their own travel and accommodation arrangements, have no need to learn a new language, and can stay in considerable comfort. Secondly, mass tourism has very considerable economic value, and therefore strong commercial and institutional support.

Alternative tourism can include a variety of functions. Typically alternative tourism focuses on:

- Ecotourism;
- Adventure Tourism;
- Special Interest Tourism.

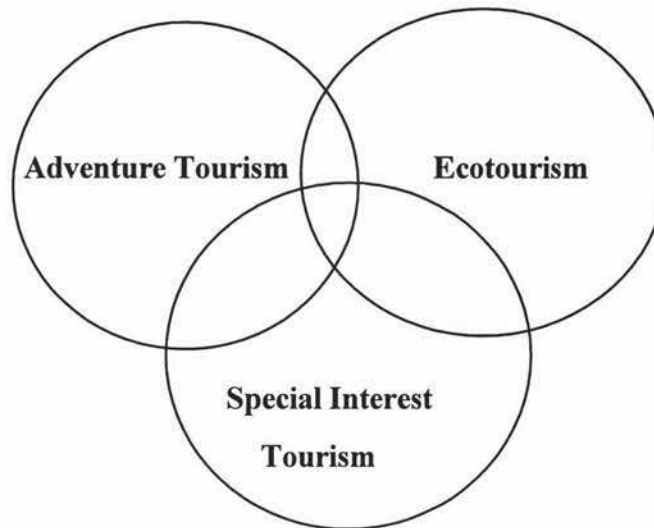
Ecotourism is the focus of the remainder of this thesis, with its focus generally on the environment and conservation. Adventure tourism is distinguishable by its focus on activity, participation and adventure. Special interest tourism is tourism undertaken in order to experience a particular feature or extend a particular interest. Examples include historic sites, bird watching, cycle touring or Antarctic tourism. There is often a fine line between these three styles of alternative tourism. Ecotourism may include moments of adventure, while some forms of special interest tourism would have similar features as ecotourism, and vice versa. While ecotourism is defined later in this thesis, true adventure tourism is distinguishable by its focus on adventure, and ability to provide a thrill, while special interest tourism has a focus on one particular feature of special interest. Figure 3 illustrates how the subsets of ecotourism, adventure tourism and special interest tourism are inter-related to make up the group called alternative tourism.

Alternative tourism sounds commendable but the concept needs to be treated with caution. It is important to consider alternative tourism critically because of the nature of the development process in general and because of the dismal past record of dealing with tourism by most communities and agencies (Butler 1990).

Jones (1992) notes that the relationship of alternative travellers to the destination is not always benign. Visitors may still have significant social and cultural impacts. This may in part be because their values and behaviour might reflect a rejection of western capitalism rather than a respect for indigenous populations and their social structures. Anderson (1993) describes how the increasing popularity of tourism alternatives has resulted in an accompanying commercialisation of opportunities. In many areas this

has resulted in significant pressure being placed on unique and important natural and cultural resources.

**Figure 3**  
**Alternative Tourism**



Usually the opportunity to undertake these activities exists in remote areas offering beautiful natural settings, with little existing tourist infrastructure. Frequently there has been little planning or management to allow for tourism in these places. Practical aspects of alternative tourism may be overlooked in favour of emotional aspects. Alternative tourism may be as damaging as mass tourism, especially if not treated with caution.

‘Mass tourism need not be uncontrolled, unplanned, short term or unstable. Green tourism is not always and inevitably considerate, optimising, controlled, planned and under local control ... to represent something in the way alternative tourism is often represented is in many ways more dangerous and problematic than other forms of tourism’ (Butler, 1990, p.41).

If alternative tourists are not replacing mass tourists, but are simply an addition to the already huge tourism phenomenon, alternative tourism will be doing little to reduce the impacts of tourism, and is probably increasing them. Despite these potential drawbacks, alternative tourism has promise to increase the sustainability of travel and tourism.

### **3.4 Summary**

Within the last 20 years, many tourists have begun to seek an alternative to ‘mass’ tourism. This demand is principally the result of dissatisfaction with ‘mass’ tourism and the increasing awareness, world-wide of environmental degradation. Alternative tourism includes a wide range of experiences that all differ in some way from ‘mass’ tourism. Alternative tourism generally includes small numbers of participants, visits to remote areas, education and conservation and preservation of natural, social and cultural values of the host environment. Alternative tourism includes the subgroups of ecotourism, adventure tourism and special interest tourism, which are individually distinct, but can have overlapping features. Alternative tourism will be environmentally more sustainable than mass tourism if participants are continuously conscious of their impact on all environments and if careful planning and management is undertaken to ensure these impacts are kept to a practical minimum.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ECOTOURISM

‘In the last few decades, the increase in and impacts of mass tourism have begun to change the conventional wisdom regarding tourism, leading to the emergence of a number of alternatives, one of those being ecotourism.’  
(Anderson 1993, p.137)

#### 4.1 Introduction

The word ecotourism was first conceived by Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, a Spaniard who, at the time, was performing the dual role of the director general of SEDUE, the Standards and Technology Department of the Mexican Ministry of Urban Development and Ecology, and a founding president of the conservation organisation Pronatura. In 1984 he began a joint venture travel agency specialising in ‘ecotours’ for people interested in Mexican culture. ‘Eco’ was taken to have the meaning *relations between living organisms and the environment* (Young 1992). Ceballos-Lascurain formally defined ecotourism in 1987 as:

‘Tourism that consists of travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery, its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas.’  
(Ceballos-Lascurain in Boo, 1990, p.2)

From these beginnings, this sector of the alternative tourism market has continued to flourish.

‘The theoretical concepts and practical strategies involved in ‘green’, ‘sustainable’, ‘low impact’ tourism are currently the subject of intense international scrutiny and debate, as the world's largest industry has recognised that the ‘challenge of the Nineties is to develop tourism in harmony with the countryside’ (Bramwell 1990), or more accurately, with each specific physical and socio-cultural landscape where it occurs.’ (Kearney 1993, p.153)

Mansfield (1992) describes the frequently documented experience in the Galapagos Islands where nature tourism has had such an enormous and detrimental effect that it threatens the very animals and ecosystems the tourists come to study and admire. Mansfield believes that ecotourism will create enormous challenges for agencies charged with safeguarding natural and historical resources. Many authors describe the recent shift to tourism that has the environment as its main focus rather than a tourism experience that has the environment as a backdrop. Mansfield (1992) believes trends in tourism are towards more participatory experiences, by way of adventure tourism and nature tourism. Huie (1992) believes the major influences in tourism today are:

- the high rate of stress in the community (a lot of which she believes can be attributed to financial insecurity);
- the growth of interest in cultural activities and all things related to self-development;
- the increase in the commitment to the environment, (which Huie believes to be the biggest influence of all).

D’Amore (1993) believes that the growth in ecotourism is a direct indication of growth in an environmental ethic. The shift in tourism patterns toward active participation in the environment is generally described as ecotourism. Ecotourism is now available in many areas and under many guises. Valentine (1993) lists the following examples of names given to variations on the nature-based tourism and ecotourism theme:

- Nature Travel
- Nature Oriented Tourism
- Green Tourism
- Environmental Pilgrimage
- Sustainable Tourism
- Alternative Tourism
- Ethical Tourism
- Nature Tourism
- Wildlife Tourism
- Environmentally Friendly Tourism
- Special Interest Tourism
- Appropriate Tourism
- Responsible Tourism
- Community Based Tourism

## **4.2 Green Marketing**

The expanding market for ecotourism has resulted in a simultaneous increase in the amount of 'greenwash' marketing targeting potential tourists. This involves marketing products as 'green', implying the product to be environmentally friendly. This initiative takes advantage of an increasing world-wide environmental awareness. A company selling its products in this way can expect increased sales as consumers attempt to play their role in helping to protect the environment. The tourism industry has joined the market greening bandwagon as vigorously as any other. Opportunities to participate in tourism advertised as environmentally sensitive are becoming very common.

Often there are no standards to determine which tourism products are truly 'green' and which are not. The impact of tourism operations that claim, without foundation, they are sympathetic toward the natural environment may be no different from the impacts of mass tourism. A particular disadvantage is that few tour operators have a direct financial investment in the destination, meaning that their commitment to the long term sustainability of the area is low (Ryan 1991, in Wight 1993, p.4). This is ironic as eventually all such tourism depends on the resource being sustained and when this does not occur all parties lose in the long term, including those looking to make a quick profit.



‘In any other branch of the economy, as Werner Kampfen once succinctly pointed out, capital can be lost and multiplied again. However, once the basic raw material of tourism, the land itself, is lost, it can never be reclaimed. It is unfortunately too easy to conclude that the tourist industry does not and will not recognise what is in fact the most important of its tasks, namely the preservation of the environment.’ (Krippendorf 1982, p.138)

The expanding market for ecotourism may also lead to over-marketing, potentially creating an ecotourism experience that very closely resembles mass tourism. Too many people in an ecotourism location will typically create adverse environmental impacts. Any detrimental impact will be heightened by ecotourism which frequently takes place in fragile or significant ecosystems and environments. These can result in a degraded product.

### **4.3 Ecotourism Standards**

In New Zealand, there is a wide variety of organisations responsible for setting and maintaining standards relevant to ecotourism. Some in the industry are looking for more centralised standards (Warren and Taylor, 1994). If a centralised standard was introduced, it would need be designed in a way that enables adaptability for different ecotourism types and to different local situations. A centralised standard should be prepared with input from DoC, local government, the New Zealand Tourism Board and a standards authority. Involving these organisations should provide consistency by ensuring all organisations have a common objectives, and should ensure each organisation retains responsibility for the ecotourism product in New Zealand. Some ecotourism operators incorporate an element of adventure tourism, involving an element of risk. Examples include kayaking, whale watching and snorkelling.

Sometimes ecotourism organisations will adopt other codes of practice such as the code of practice for sea kayaking organisations.

Voluntary pledges, environmental codes of conduct and guidelines are discussed in the literature. It has been suggested that these may be appropriate for distinguishing the authentic ecotourism operators from the green wash sellers (Blagey & Neilsen, 1993; Moore & Carter, 1993). The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has announced support for environmental codes of conduct for the tourism industry. UNEP representatives reason that the tourism industry above all others depends upon conserving and improving the environment. Because the industry is composed of a great many small and medium sized firms, UNEP argues for self-regulation, and voluntary codes of conduct. Codes should be positive, specific and action oriented. The benefits of a voluntary code are two fold. Operators can make their own decision about whether to join or not, voluntary codes are therefore empowering. Secondly, if the voluntary code is recognised as the bottom line in quality ecotourism, ecotourism operators will do everything they can to comply and be recognised as an operation that meets the requirements. An international analysis of existing codes in use showed common elements to be:

- *the need to make an overall commitment to the physical and human environment, to accept responsibility for environmental damage and take corrective action where necessary, and to promote and reward outstanding environmental performance;*
- *the need to develop policies and strategies that take account of land-use planning regulations and the need to protect some areas from further development;*
- *the need to develop management policies that enhance beneficial and minimise adverse impacts on the environment; and*

- *the need to co-operate with other firms, sectors and countries* (United Nations Environment Programme, 1993).

The second point the UNEP authors make is that it is essential to implement these codes. Implementation and monitoring should be considered from the very beginning of the code preparation process. Continuing evaluation is also a necessity. The authors conclude that there is a need to develop an overall management strategy to integrate all activities involved.

In New Zealand there are two codes of conduct for environmentally responsible tourism. The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) promulgated its 'Code for Environmentally Responsible Tourism', with the objective of providing guidance to members and other interested parties on what constitutes appropriate behaviour. The following philosophies were used in the formulation of this code:

- 'recognition that all forms and aspects of tourism have an impact on the environment;
- acceptance that tourism should be environmentally responsible;
- acknowledgement that to be environmentally responsible the tourism industry should ensure the impact of tourism does not adversely affect the environment;
- acceptance that both tourism and conservation can be valid and complementary uses of the environment;
- recognition that every part of the environment has limits beyond which development should not take place;
- recognition of the need to foster a greater understanding of the inter-relationship between tourism and the environment.' (Anderson 1993, p.196)

PATA subsequently launched its 'Green Leaf' programme in June 1994. This programme is designed to recognise and reward those who conform to their code of environmentally responsible tourism. The programme honours businesses and organisations that meet set criteria with a PATA 'Green Leaf' award. PATA eventually hopes to encourage consumers to identify the 'Green Leaf' as an indicator of good environmental behaviour and to purchase from holders of the 'Green Leaf' accordingly.

The New Zealand Tourism Industry Association (NZTIA), (formally the New Zealand Tourist Industry Federation) has a code of environmental principles for tourism operations in New Zealand. The guiding principles of this code are:

- 'to promote environmentally sustainable tourism development so as to ensure that the tourist industry can continue to be based upon the natural resources of New Zealand in the long term;
- to recognise that both development and conservation can be valid and complementary uses of New Zealand's resources.' (Anderson 1993, p.193)

There are two obvious benefits of codes of practice or conduct for environmentally responsible tourism. They help promote and maintain tourism that is environmentally sustainable and they help maintain tourism that is economically durable, by conserving the resource base upon which it depends, and by promoting improved standards of tourism generally.

#### **4.4 The Need to Distinguish Ecotourism**

There are diverse interpretations as to what ecotourism embraces and who ecotourists are (Bragg, 1992; Hall, 1993; Valentine, 1993; Wight, 1993; Orams, 1995). Wight (1993) believes there is as yet no consistently used definition because of the number of

stakeholders involved. Valentine (1992) believes it is important to define and clarify the term as there are now so many people using it. He states that some of the debate about ecotourism is a result of diverse definitions and lack of mutual understanding. He acknowledges attempts world-wide to identify a form of tourism that is especially concerned with the appreciation of nature as the primary motivation to participate, but with an essential element of zero negative impacts. Hall (1992) believes it is important to define what ecotourism is and what ecotourism is not because many tourism operators are beginning to jump on the ecotourism bandwagon, and there is a need to distinguish which of these are genuine. A definition of ecotourism may be useful to people who manage, plan or develop ecotourism by informing them of the key and critical elements of ecotourism, what works for ecotourism and what they should expect. This section examines a variety of definitions of ecotourism found in recent literature, identifying common elements.

#### **4.5 Definition**

Despite there being no single definition for ecotourism, there is a recurring allusion to 'environmental conservation' and 'responsibility' in recent literature. This is illustrated in the description of ecotourism given below.

The Ecotourism Society of the United States of America defines ecotourism as:

'Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well being of local people.' (Knack 1993, p.22)

Anderson (1993) believes that the primary concern of ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel with a commitment to respect and preserve the environment. Ryel and Grasse (1991) define ecotourism as purposeful travel that creates an understanding of cultural and natural history, while safeguarding the integrity of the ecosystem and producing economic benefits to encourage ecotourism. Stafford (1992) emphasises

interaction with the environment, in activity or learning rather than passive viewing. That activity should hold such a strong place in the definition of ecotourism suggests an overlap with adventure tourism. However, activity in adventure tourism is about the intensity of the experience, whereas activity in ecotourism is about 'hands-on learning'.

The Canadian Environmental Advisory Council workshop, in 1992, produced, by consensus decision, the following definition of ecotourism:

'Ecotourism is an enlightening nature travel experience that contributes to conservation of the ecosystem, while respecting the integrity of host communities.' (Wight 1993, p.3)

Participants who attended a conference held in New Zealand in 1992 reached a similar position. They suggested that ecotourism is:

'...non-damaging, non-degrading and ecologically sustainable ... it acknowledges with sensitivity to and protection of ecological and cultural values and the creation of an activist public to enhance environmental protection.' (Logan, 1992, p.233)

Hall (1992) cites a definition produced at a conference at the University of Queensland in 1991 that defined ecotourism as:

'ecologically and socially responsible nature-based tourism that fosters environmental appreciation and understanding.' (Hall 1992, p.154)

Quest and Miles (1990) point out the paradox that tourism has the potential to destroy or degrade the resources that attract tourists in the first place. These authors reason that the tourism industry should therefore be in the business of attempting to maintain environmental quality. They also propose that it is in everybody's best interests to

allow tourism to contribute to economic growth while conserving and preserving the environmental resource. Young (1992) believes that ecotourism business has achieved success if it has been able to motivate the tourist, tourism operator or local community to become active in the conservation of natural resources. This idea is also advanced by Valentine (1992) who uses a number of criteria to define ecotourism. One is that it contributes directly to continued protection and management of natural areas. Bragg (1990) suggests that ecotourism should exhibit a two way interaction with the environment. It can therefore contribute to conservation and enable participants to enjoy nature. Logan (1992) states that ecotourism must acknowledge ecological and cultural values and should involve the creation of an activist public to promote environmental protection.

Appreciating and understanding the environment is an important aspect of ecotourism. Many authors have suggested that ecotourism should educate and inspire the traveller. Ecotourism is often linked with a desire to promote conservation through increased exposure of the ecotourist to, and understanding of, the natural and cultural systems. Anderson (1993) states that beyond the primary concern of ecotourism (she believes this to be environmentally responsible travel) there should be an emphasis on development of a symbiotic relationship with nature, support of nature conservation and the fostering of environmental and cultural understanding. Orams (1995) believes ecotourism operators should use education-based management strategies to prompt their customers to adopt more environmentally sensitive attitudes and more environmentally sound behaviour. Fennell and Engles (1990) believe that the key characteristic of ecotourism is the potential it has to educate and inspire the traveller. Education and inspiration are achieved through participation. This leads to appreciation, enjoyment and understanding of natural features. Grant and O'Brien (1992) believe the higher quality of product content is the distinguishing factor of ecotourism with respect to mass or commodity-driven tourism. Content is primarily the subject matter that consists of information, interpretation and the total learning experience. Ecotourism should be distinguishable by these features.



‘Ecotourism is hands on learning, it's the smell of a wildflower, the feel of a bird's heart on your hand as you release it from the mist net, it's the leech crawling up your leg in the rainforest.’ (Grant and O'Brien, 1992, p.71)

Wight (1993) also stresses education and participation. She believes ecotourism should exhibit the following characteristics:

- ‘it should provide first-hand, participatory, and enlightening experiences;
- it should involve education amongst all parties - local communities, government, non-government organisations, industry, and tourists (before during and after the trip); and
- it should encourage all-party recognition of the intrinsic values of the resource.’ (Wight, 1993, p.3)

Two major components are consistently used to define ecotourism, it is environmentally responsible and it fosters conservation of natural resources through increased exposure, understanding and education.

Other properties are, however, associated with ecotourism. For example the Ecotourism Society of the United State's gives weight to sustaining ‘the well-being of local people’. Other authors (e.g Ryel and Grasse, 1991; Wight, 1993; Hall, 1992) include cultural and social responsibility, a responsibility that extends to the local community. Often tourism operations expose the tourist to a cultural environment that is limited by the tour itinerary or restrictions in time and places the tourist is able to visit. Meaningful and mutually beneficial exposure between the tourist and the local culture and community should be a part of the ecotourism equation.



Some authors have extended this idea to financial interaction. Ecotourism should provide support to the community by sustaining economic well-being. This may be through direct donation or economic rewards created by the local community owning or possessing some form of controlling interest in the tourism operations in their community. Not only does this ensure that the community has an increased incentive to operate a successful and sustainable industry, it can also result in increased local job creation and pride. Hector Ceballos-Lascurain (1993) notes that the involvement of local communities in the appropriate form of ecotourism, could help to alleviate poverty in rural areas in many parts of the world.

Laarman and Durst (1987) propose two characteristics of ecotourism. First, that it directs economic activity to remote communities and second, that the economic benefits are sustained (Laarman and Durst 1987, in Boo 1990, p.26). Fennell and Engles (1990) state that ecotourism should safeguard the economic and cultural well-being of indigenous people through employment, entrepreneurial opportunity and job sharing.

Young (1992) believes that local communities need to be involved in all levels of ecotourism development from planning to management. This will assist in preventing over-development, excessive economic leakage and adverse social impact. To do this, business needs to be redefined at the community level, which may mean including family ties and notions of collective responsibility and benefits and solidarity. Young believes conservation will probably be most successful where it is profitable and satisfies the local people. Valentine (1993) states that incorporating cultural heritage protection into a definition for ecotourism is particularly important in the Pacific where 'people and nature have evolved together', and includes in his definition that ecotourism should be of obvious benefit to the local people.

Stewart and Sekartjakrarini (1994) take a different perspective. They believe ecotourism should be viewed firstly from an activity-based perspective, representing

the activities that the tourists undertake. In this manner they see ecotourism as being linked to :

‘non-consumptive enjoyment of natural habitats and as less erosive than other types of land uses.’ (Stewart and Sekartjakrarini 1994, p.840)

Secondly, Stewart and Sekartjakrarini think ecotourism should be viewed from an inquiry-related perspective. This means looking at ecotourism as an industry, examining the host community and its relationship with the resource base. In this way ecotourism is associated with value-based travel directed at a minimum impact and appreciation of host cultures. Thirdly, ecotourism should be considered from the supply side of the tourism industry. This rests upon the theory that a close working relationship between the local community and the tourism industry provides the necessary mechanisms to support conservation efforts.

Kearney (1993) believes the concerns of ‘green tourism’ operators can be divided into three objectives that require reconciliation. These are: (i) the conservation of natural and built environments; (ii) the opportunity for individual tourist fulfilment; and (iii) the protection of local community welfare. This author sees the resolution of conflicts between the local community, the visitors and the environment as the core of a “green” philosophy. The advantages of local operation to a local community are obvious. However, the importance of external operators needs to be recognised. Local operators may not have the capital or expertise to undertake successful ecotourism operations, in which case operators that are not local may become involved. The existence of a non-local operator should not be automatically associated with a loss of benefits to the local community. The potential for positive benefits exists through the creation of jobs, experience and indirect benefits through increased spending.

There are additional, intangible aspects of ecotourism that cannot be defined easily. Kearney (1993) notes that providing the opportunity for individual tourist fulfilment

should be a priority for a green tourism operator. Ecotourism provides the tourist with an enlightening natural experience. Ecotourism involves a learning process and even a spiritual experience. Above all, ecotourism is associated with the overall philosophy of environmental sustainability. Ecotourism can be a form of tourism that is environmentally sustainable when it is environmentally sensitive and educates people therefore indirectly encouraging them to conserve the natural environment.

This section has examined opinions of a number of authors about what ecotourism means. Table 2 below provides a brief summary of common elements identified by each author. Table 2 particularly illustrates the diversity of opinions about what ecotourism means, highlighting the need for a common definition.

**Table 2**  
**Common elements of ecotourism**

	Environ. protection	Comm. involvement	Econ. benefits	Tourist education	Cult. responsibility	Environ. interaction
Ecotourism Society	✓	✓				✓
Anderson	✓			✓		✓
Ryel & Grasse	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Stafford						✓
Canadian Council	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
NZ conf. participants	✓			✓		
Univ. of Queensland	✓			✓		✓
Quest & Miles	✓		✓			
Young	✓	✓				
Valentine	✓				✓	
Bragg	✓					✓
Logan	✓			✓	✓	
Fennel & Engles		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grant & O'Brien				✓		✓
Wight		✓		✓	✓	✓
Hall		✓			✓	
Laarman & Durst		✓	✓			
Kearney	✓	✓				
Stewart et al	✓	✓			✓	
Orams	✓			✓		

## 4.6 Summary

Ecotourism is one form of the increasingly popular alternative tourism. The demand for ecotourism has arisen out of a demand for environmentally sustainable tourism and tourism that emphasises visitor participation.

The popularity of ecotourism has led to the temptation to advertise tourism ventures as 'ecotourism' when in reality the environmental impact of these ventures are no different to the mass tourism alternatives. This leads to the need for standards, or codes of ethics or conduct for ecotourism. Standards or codes can help to promote and maintain environmentally sustainable tourism and indirectly can help maintain commercially sustainable tourism by conserving the resource base upon which it depends and raising ecotourism standards generally. While there are currently two voluntary codes of conduct for ecotourism in New Zealand, one for the Pacific Asia Travel Association and one for the New Zealand Tourism Industry Association, there is no centralised organisation or standards. Some authors believe a centralised standard is required to regulate the tourism industry as it contains a wide variety of business sizes and operations. Support is also given for standards that are voluntary, therefore allowing self regulation.

There is a variety of literature recording opinions on what ecotourism means.

The elements of these that are specific to the New Zealand situation need to be brought together in one description so that the term ecotourism does not mean different things to different people. An analysis of these key elements and common themes renders a definition that is comprehensive and succinct. This is

'Ecotourism is environmentally responsible, fosters conservation of natural resources through increased exposure, understanding and education, takes place in the natural environment and involves the local community.'

Secondary characteristics of ecotourism are respect of local culture and the ability to generate economic benefits.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **ECOTOURISM IN NEW ZEALAND**

‘Although ecotourism may be new, resource based tourism is not. In New Zealand, the proclaimed ‘clean green’ environment has been the tourism industry’s greatest asset for some time, with visitors being attracted here by our relatively untouched and un-crowded natural environment and friendly population.’ (Warren and Taylor, 1994, p.1)

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The emergence and demand for ecotourism is occurring world-wide. New Zealand has a natural environment that is suited to the requirements of ecotourism. This chapter is an examination of the tourism industry and the possibilities and emergence of ecotourism in New Zealand.

#### **5.2 History**

Prior to the late nineteenth century, it was difficult to travel to New Zealand, and those who did, or were already resident, experienced difficulty getting from place to place, because of the lack of infrastructure development and services.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries interest in tourism began to increase. This was a result of a more settled society and expansion of the railways. The principle motivation to travel were the thermal waters and curiosity about Maori culture. An increasing recognition of the abundance of fish in our lakes and rivers also became a factor. Rare natural phenomena, such as the pink and white terraces near Rotorua, heightened the early tourism experience.

Tourism expanded up until the 1930s and although experiencing a brief lull during World War One, has continued to expand until today. Australians were the mainstay feeding New Zealand's tourism market during this period. New Zealand's scenic attractions were also becoming increasingly known in Europe and North America. The spread of the motor coach and car was instrumental in facilitating the development of recreational pursuits such as mountaineering and skiing, further enhanced by ever increasing developments in access as roads were constructed. The 1930s were largely a time of restrictions in spending as a result of the world wide economic depression. The Second World War was a further setback, bringing tourism to a standstill. By the 1950s the increase in numbers of tourists made the lack of accommodation facilities apparent. In the late 1960s the importance of tourism as a generator of foreign exchange receipts, income and employment had been recognised in New Zealand, and the arrival of relatively cheap air travel, courtesy of the jumbo jet, pushed tourist numbers significantly further. While the market continued to expand in Australia through the 1970s, new markets were beginning to gain momentum in the 1980s, including Japan, the United States and South East Asia. A healthy tourism industry was maintained in New Zealand partly through an aggressive marketing campaign.

The 1980s brought continued growth and diversification. A trend during this period was the increasing demand for travel that provides an "an experience" rather than just a holiday. Pearce and Wilson (1995) note that an increase in more active independent travel occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This development reflected the beginnings of the alternative tourist market. A number of international hotel operators opened accommodation in the main centres during the 1980s, reflecting a faith in New Zealand as a secure tourist destination.

Tourism has continued to expand and grow in this country. New Zealand Tourism Board figures from 1994 show that overseas visitor numbers increased by 14 per cent between 1993 and 1994. More than 1.32 million people visited New Zealand during 1994. This represents an increase of 160,000 people from 1993. During the calendar



year 1995, tourism in New Zealand generated \$4.8 billion in foreign exchange from 1.4 million visitors (New Zealand Tourism Board and New Zealand Tourism Industry Association, 1996). Tourism is now considered to be New Zealand's biggest single foreign exchange earner, ahead of meat, dairy and forestry (New Zealand Tourism Department, 1991b). A recent World Tourism Organisation report also showed New Zealand to be the most successful tourism country within the fast growing East-Asia Pacific region (World Tourism Organisation, 1994). In the optimistic words of Chris Ryan, the Tourism Board's public affairs manager:

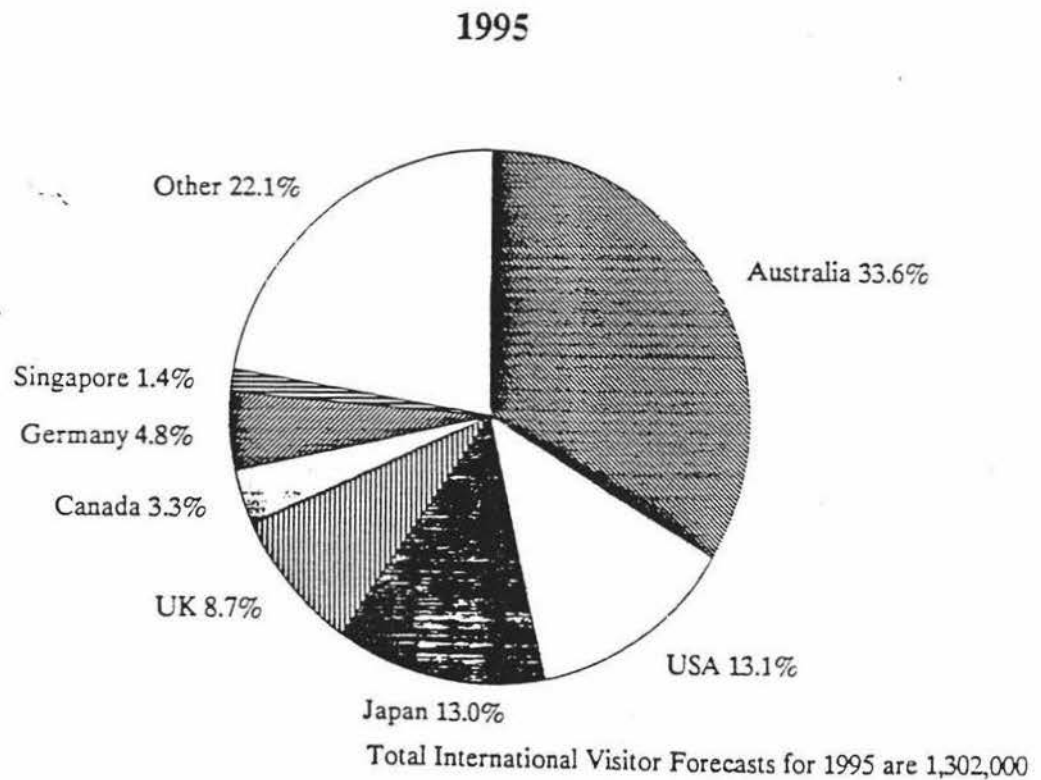
‘New Zealand tourism is at the cutting edge of one of the world's biggest and fastest growing industries, earning more than 10 percent of the world's gross domestic product and generating over 10 per cent of the world's jobs.’ (Ryan, in *The Dominion*, 1995a)

While Germany, the United States, Britain and Japan generate the greatest numbers of tourists world-wide, the biggest source of visitors to New Zealand is Australia, followed by Japan and Britain (Figure 4).

### **5.3 The New Zealand Tourism Product**

Warren and Taylor (1994) suggest that the “clean and green” environment has been the New Zealand tourism industry’s greatest asset for some time. Although New Zealand is small in land area, nearly one third of this is managed as conservation land. This land includes a world heritage area, national and maritime parks, forest parks, wilderness areas and more than 1,000 reserves of different kinds scattered throughout the country. Local government also administers a variety of land as parks and reserves (Howden, 1992). The Department of Conservation (DoC), is responsible for managing these areas and has a mandate to preserve the conservation estate for future generations while ensuring as many as possible can enjoy this natural heritage today (Mansfield 1992).

**Figure 4**  
**Country Profile of International Visitors to New Zealand (Visitor Numbers)**



**Source: New Zealand Tourism Department (1991b)**

Other attractions for tourists are the cultural heritage of the Maori, large tracts of coastline, the unique geothermal activity in the central North Island, an array of opportunities for recreational pursuits, including skiing, water sports, tramping, mountaineering. New Zealand people are marketed as a friendly population.

## 5.4 Organisation

The promotion of tourism in this country is the responsibility of a number of organisations. These include both private and public sector groups.

### 5.4.1 Public Sector

The New Zealand Tourism Board was established in 1991 to bring the tourism industry and government into a partnership, aimed at revitalising the international marketing effort (Cheyne-Buchanan 1992). The Board's functions are set out under the New Zealand Tourism Board Act 1991, and are as follows:

- 'to develop, implement and promote strategies for tourism, and
- to advise the Government and the New Zealand tourism industry on matters relating to the development, implementation and promotion of these strategies.' (New Zealand Tourism Board 1991a, in Cheyne-Buchanan 1992)

The Tourism Board is charged with international marketing. The members of the Board are appointed primarily by Government from the private sector. An Audit Office report in April 1995 showed a potential conflict of interest among Board members, many of whom are involved in the tourism industry, and the joint ventures which the Board funds. Although the Tourism Board is one-step removed from the Government, its appointments are made via the Minister of Tourism, and the Government continues to fund the Board. The Board had, until early 1995, a target of 3 million visitors to New Zealand a year by the year 2000.<sup>2</sup> The Board were criticised for single-mindedly promoting tourism in New Zealand without considering or

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<sup>2</sup> In 1991, the total population of New Zealand was recorded as 3, 434, 950, not significantly greater than the planned Tourism Board target of 3 million.

researching the impact of increased tourist numbers on the environment. Critics were also sceptical about the ability of New Zealand's national parks to cope with the continuing increase in tourism numbers.<sup>3</sup>

Ecotourism operators were particularly concerned about this goal for two reasons:

- It was not based on consultation with local operators or with local host communities;
- There was a lack of consideration of the effects of such growth on eco-tourism.

(Warren and Taylor, 1994).

The Board has now revised its target to \$9 billion in foreign exchange earnings from tourism by 2000. The Public Affairs Manager of the Board, Chris Ryan, notes that the 3 million by the year 2000 target is no longer a priority as tourists are spending more and therefore fewer tourists are needed to reach the \$9 billion mark. There have been claims that the Board does not take the environmental impacts of tourism into sufficient account. Ryan claims that the Board has recently changed its direction to encourage environmental conservation and sustainable tourism. The Board has employed staff to focus specifically on conservation issues (New Zealand Herald, 1995).

Since 1989, the government has attempted to take a more pro-active approach, including development and implementation of a strategic plan for tourism in New Zealand.

Other government ministries play a role in the tourism industry in New Zealand. These include the Ministry for the Environment, the Ministry of Transport, and the Ministry of Commerce.

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<sup>3</sup> In 1992/1993 more than half of all visitors to New Zealand visited a national, forest or maritime park (New Zealand Tourism Board, 1993)

The Department of Conservation (DoC) is responsible for managing all protected crown land. The function of DoC in relation to tourism and ecotourism activities is explained above in Section 5.5.1.

In addition to these government bodies there is the New Zealand Tourist Industry Association (formally the New Zealand Tourist Industry Federation). This association is the main industry lobby group. Its objectives are:

‘to serve as the voice of the industry, to stimulate tourism to and within New Zealand, to encourage research into, education and training for and development of the industry.’ (Cheyne- Buchanan, 1992)

#### 5.4.2 Local Government

Local government plays a role in the implementation and development of tourism in New Zealand. In 1991 the Resource Management Act (RMA) was introduced. Its stated purpose is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. The Act sets out the resource management responsibilities for central, regional and territorial government. These responsibilities are to be implemented via a set of policy statements and plans. In formulating the Act, the Ministry for the Environment set the following objectives:

- to distribute rights to resources in a just manner;
- to ensure good environmental management; and
- to be practical.

The Act has been designed to move away from prescriptive criteria for resource allocation and move toward a focus on the effects of activities rather than the activities

themselves. The emphasis is therefore on environmental outcomes (New Zealand Tourism Board, 1994).

Regional councils and territorial authorities are responsible for undertaking resource management under the Act. Local government is therefore involved in managing the resources upon which ecotourism operations are based. Regional councils are required to prepare a regional policy statement to provide an integrated framework for resource management for their region, and may prepare regional plans for any function for which they are responsible under the Act. Territorial authorities are required to prepare a district plan to assist them to carry out their functions according to the Act. These policy statements and plans can include objectives, policies and methods that address environmental effects.

Tourism activities may be affected in two ways. Firstly, these plans can include methods to achieve objectives that are beneficial for tourism. For example, they may restrict discharges of contaminants to air, therefore contributing to New Zealand's 'clean green' image of clear skies with high visibility. Secondly, the plans may include methods that affect tourism directly, for example resource consents may be required for certain activities, or zoning restrictions may be imposed that prevent or allow some commercial activities in certain areas. Environmental issues that the tourism industry must consider to be consistent with the Resource Management Act include ecosystems, Maori, the coastal environment, community values, heritage, amenity values, water quality and noise (New Zealand Tourism Board and New Zealand Tourism Industry Association, 1996).

Local authorities are required to gather information and undertake research as necessary to undertake their functions under the Act. Local authorities are also required to monitor the state of the environment, and the exercise of any of their functions under the Act. They must therefore monitor the effects of development in order to manage the resource base.

Territorial authorities have functions under different legislation to provide and maintain utilities and infrastructure including sewage facilities in urban areas, water supply, rubbish collection and disposal. Territorial authorities also have some functions for transport and roading. Provision of utilities and infrastructure affects the feasibility of ecotourism in some areas, and may help improve tourism numbers to an area. Territorial authorities have a responsibility to promote tourism under the provisions of the Local Government Act, 1989.

In November 1994, the New Zealand Tourism Board issued a Discussion Document called *Tourism Investment and the Resource Management Act* (New Zealand Tourism Board, 1994). The authors of the report concluded that the RMA contributes to investment uncertainty. The authors acknowledged that this uncertainty is unavoidable to an extent, given the emphasis of the Act on anticipated effects, and its open standing with regard to public participation in the planning process. The report made twelve recommendations to improve certainty for tourism investors. These recommendations were directed toward local authorities, the tourism sector and the Planning Tribunal (now called the Environment Court). Five amendments to the Resource Management Act were proposed. The recommendations that received a majority of submissions in support of the suggested changes and that will be further pursued by the New Zealand Tourism Board include:

- Elected Councillors of local authorities should be up-skilled in professional conduct, ethics and decision making;
- Elected officers and staff of local authorities should be up-skilled in procedures and processes under the Resource Management Act;
- Local authorities should be able to more readily account for their performance under the Resource Management Act, and to make relevant information freely available both to the public and to other local authorities;

- The quantity and quality of tourism industry input into the preparation and review of policies and plans prepared under the RMA should be increased;
- A resource kit that provides operators, investors and developers in the tourism sector with information on the workings and procedures of the Resource Management Act, particularly with respect to the resource consent and plan change process should be produced; and
- The alleged delays and time required to gain a hearing before the Planning Tribunal should be investigated.

(New Zealand Tourism Board, 1996)

## **5.5 Ecotourism in New Zealand**

New Zealand already supports a number of ecotourism operations. This section is an examination of the ecotourism industry in New Zealand, its potential and problems.

### **5.5.1 Attributes**

New Zealand's natural characteristics are well suited to the tourism industry. The natural environment includes waterways, mountain chains, areas of accessible native and indigenous forest and remote coastal areas. New Zealand has a variety of climates and a diversity of geological formations. The variation in climate and geology contributes to a wide variety of plants and introduced animals.

New Zealand has a distinctive cultural heritage of indigenous Maori and later European influences. Recently, increasing immigrant arrivals have contributed further to New Zealand's cultural diversity. New Zealanders have a reputation for friendliness and a 'laid-back' pace of life.

Warren and Taylor (1994) note that ecotourism has some infrastructure requirements that are specific to the nature of the activity. These relate to accommodation, transport



and activity needs. Infrastructure required for ecotourism can be lacking for three reasons. Firstly, ecotourism often takes place in areas that have a limited population to pay rates, creating a low rating base. Secondly, local residents are often ambivalent toward ecotourism because they live in the area for agricultural or lifestyle purposes, and are therefore unwilling to support development of infrastructure for ecotourism. Thirdly, ecotourism, by its very nature usually takes place in remote, untouched areas that have little or no existing infrastructure.

Accommodation needs for ecotourists vary. Usually they are seeking accommodation that is a little different to the usual motel or holiday lodge options. There have been increases in the numbers of backpacker hostels, bed and breakfast and home-stay accommodation suppliers in New Zealand. These types of accommodation are suited to ecotourism requirements. Increasingly ecotourism operators are including accommodation in part of the whole package.

Ecotourism operations frequently rely on crown land administered by DoC and therefore use facilities provided by DoC. These facilities include 10,000 km of tracks, 1,000 km of walkway, over 1,000 road and track bridges, 973 huts and shelters and 274 campsites (Department of Conservation, 1996). The reliability of structures in DoC managed land was suddenly thrown into the spotlight in early 1995, when fourteen people were killed after a viewing platform they were standing on collapsed (the Cave Creek tragedy). Subsequent inspections of DoC structures nation-wide revealed that one million dollars needed to be spent to make other DoC facilities safe (King, 1996). DoC has since launched an *'Integrated Framework for Visitor Safety Management'*. This system has been designed to train staff in quality assurance, project management, risk management and construction guidelines. DoC plans to eventually expand this system to take in every aspect of their operation. Such measures should go some way toward improving the facilities within the conservation estate.

DoC goals and objectives are subject to some conflict. The organisation is trying to ensure people have access to New Zealand's natural heritage and at the same time protect this natural heritage for future generations. DoC is also looking for ways to increase revenue. Revenue is needed to maintain and improve existing facilities and operations and develop and maintain aspects of the conservation estate for the future. The inquiry undertaken into the Cave Creek tragedy highlighted the lack of financial resources at DoC's disposal. The following statement is Justice Noble's conclusion in the report of the inquiry:

'Society always likes to feel it is progressing, but there are lessons for society in all of this. No government organisation can do its job without adequate resourcing. In my opinion, it is up to governments to ensure that departments charged with carrying out statutory functions for the benefit of the community are provided with sufficient resources to enable them to do so. Here, the evidence is clear that the department lacked and continues to lack those resources. For future safety that must change.' (Noble, 1995)

Government funding for DoC dropped 23 % from 1988 to 1996, although revenue gained has kept this loss to 9 %. In May, 1996 the government announced a "green package", that will give the Department of Conservation \$68.4 million over a period of three years. Half of this money will be spent on visitor services, the rest on protection of threatened species, and pest and weed control. In addition, the package includes extra funding for the environment, agriculture and fisheries ministries. Money spent on visitor services, threatened species, and pest and weed control should benefit ecotourism. This amount should be viewed, for example, against the total cost of DoC provision of services in 1995 of \$31 million (Department of Conservation, 1996).

DoC runs a system of concessions (permits) for those wishing to establish a business within the conservation estate, which is effectively owned by the crown, therefore a 'common property' resource for all New Zealand. DoC administered 679 concessions

in 1995 (Department of Conservation, 1996). Examples of concession types include guided nature tours, kayaking tours, seal and penguin watching and bird watching. These concessions apply to anyone wanting to run a trade or business within a national park, reserve (including marine reserves) or conservation area. In holding these concessions, concessionaires must abide by rules and regulations set by DoC that are designed to protect the conservation estate. Specifically, DoC wishes to protect the following qualities:

- largely unmodified and natural habitats;
- uncommon or unique or natural and historic features;
- undisturbed wildlife, especially during breeding;
- endemic or threatened species;
- dense seabird populations;
- domination of natural setting over human activity;
- absence (or close to it) of introduced pests (Mansfield, 1992).

The costs of concessions vary. Some operators pay on a per-tourist basis, others pay a percentage of gross income, others pay a percentage of net income. Rates may vary from conservancy to conservancy. This means that ecotourism operators in different conservancies may pay different amounts for the same 'service' from DoC and for similar levels of access to and utilisation of DoC resources. For those who pay more, this appears an unfair burden that can add pressure to business fragility. DoC revenue does not always get spent in the area that it comes from. Some operators think that it should, and that doing so may ease local pressures (Warren and Taylor, 1994). A recent Commerce Committee inquiry that included an examination of DoC's concession policy gave support to the philosophy that tourism operators who derive economic advantage from activities on the conservation estate should contribute to its management, maintenance and protection, and that there should be reasonable cost recovery where such operations are publicly funded activities. The Committee recommended that the revenue from tourism concessions and contributions be used for

the management and protection of those parts of the conservation estate from which they were derived. They suggested there is a need for a closer co-ordination between DoC and the New Zealand Tourism Board, recognising the close relationship between the market development of tourism in New Zealand and the management of the conservation estate (Commerce Committee, 1994).

DoC is beginning to take a more proactive approach to the development of tourism within land under its jurisdiction. The recent requirement for Conservation Management Strategies for the 14 DoC conservancies is intended to provide a proactive style of conservation management. A Conservation Management Strategy is a statutory document, required under the Conservation Act 1987, that implements general policies and establishes objectives for the integrated management of natural and historical resources. The conduct of some activities on land administered by DoC can only take place in accordance with the relevant Conservation Management Strategy. When preparing regional plans and district plans, local authorities must have regard to any relevant Conservation Management Strategy. A Conservation Management Strategy is a statement of general intent, and does not over-ride the provisions of legislation, general policy and agreements. The introduction of Conservation Management Strategies may help provide certainty for users of resources in the Conservation Estate, including ecotourism operators.

Ecotourism can benefit DoC in three ways. DoC gains revenue through the operation of concessions. Ecotourism may promote increased conservation awareness. Allowing ecotourism operations to take place enables DoC to encourage recreation and foster tourism opportunities in the conservation estate as required under the Conservation Act 1987. On the other hand, ecotourism may hinder DoC objectives because it involves people moving around the conservation estate, placing increased pressure on fragile ecosystems and requiring facilities to be constructed and maintained.

Bill Mansfield, DoC's Director General made the following comments in 1992 concerning DoC and ecotourism:

'DoC and ecotourism should make good bedfellows. Ecotourism operators, if they are to succeed, need to be heavily dependent on conservation land and ethics. In turn, conservation can benefit immensely from ecotourism. A well managed ecotourism venture provides the ideal vehicle for delivering the conservation message to visitors. By working closely with ecotourism operators, I see exciting possibilities and immense benefits for the cause of conservation.' (Mansfield 1992, p.209)

If there is a continued increase worldwide in the number of travellers seeking a clean green image, then New Zealand tourism has the potential to benefit. The natural environment is a vital ingredient of the tourism product, especially in New Zealand where tourism greatly depends on natural attractions. The Resource Management Act promotes the sustainable management of natural resources. There is potential in its implementation, to complement the development of environmentally sustainable tourism.

### 5.5.2 Present Situation

New Zealand already has a number of ecotourism operations. The Ministry of Tourism (1992) has recorded the increasing range of niche market tourist activity in New Zealand as well as the increase in demand for independent travel. A consequence of this trend is the increasing number of travellers venturing off the main trunk route of Auckland, Rotorua, Christchurch and Queenstown to areas such as Northland, Coromandel, the North Island's East Cape and the South Island's West Coast. Independent travellers typically seek ecotourism experiences. An increase in the numbers of independent travellers means an increase in the demand for ecotourism. A conference was held in Auckland in 1992 by the University of Auckland and the East-

West Centre in Hawaii specifically to discuss issues concerning ecotourism business in the Pacific. Ecotourism and heritage tourism are now beginning to be given considerable prominence in New Zealand Tourism Board marketing strategies. The image of New Zealand as a 'clean green' destination is being used to embark on a green tourism strategy to further encourage overseas visitation.

The numbers of ecotourism operations in New Zealand is increasing. There is a wide variety of operations throughout the country offering a range of differing levels of immersion, isolation and interpretation. A well known example is Whale Watch Kaikoura, run by Ngai Tahu iwi in Kaikoura. Visitors are taken on boats to within metres of ocean mammals including giant sperm whales, killer whales and humpback whales. In 1994, Whale Watch Kaikoura was accredited with the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow award, above a record 120 other international entries. Other examples around New Zealand include Kapiti Island nature sanctuary, the Northern Royal Albatross colony at Tairoa Head, the Okarito White Heron colony on the West Coast, plus a large number of small ventures throughout the country that include guided educational bush and coastal walks, sea kayaking and special interest tours to look at specific aspects of the natural environment.

The potential for problems in the ecotourism industry exists as it does for all business ventures, including other forms of tourism. A survey undertaken in 1994 showed that about half of all small tourism businesses fail. These failures were principally a result of lack of business planning and insufficient market information. Failures of small tourism businesses were found to be affecting New Zealand's ability to offer a stable service to tourists (The Dominion, 1995b). The New Zealand Adventure Council executive director made the following statement:



‘There are few barriers to entry in to the tourism market and there will be always be waves of new operators flocking to the industry...but increasingly visitor numbers are more likely to mean more small operators in the same challenging environment rather than competition remaining static and existing operators growing their market share.’ (Gabites. G, in The Dominion, 1995b)

As a result of these findings there have been moves to run workshops to help small business operators and to publish a bi-monthly newsletter. This issue is especially relevant to ecotourism as the large majority of all ecotourism operators are run as small businesses. These findings show that there is work to be done in co-ordinating and establishing such businesses.

Warren and Taylor (1994) note that ecotourism operators in New Zealand are widely dispersed and there is no professional umbrella group covering them. Businesses are typically small, run by owner operators, many of these employ family members. Often ecotourism operators are inexperienced and many have been motivated to go into the industry for lifestyle reasons. As a consequence, a significant proportion of operators enter the industry undercapitalised and without fully anticipating all the costs of running a business. Turnover is often low, especially in the first years of operation. These aspects make ecotourism operations vulnerable to failure.

The codes of ethics that exist in New Zealand are designed to promote environmentally responsible travel. They have not been designed for ecotourism specifically. The lack of any formal organisation for ecotourism and the lack of a nationally accepted definition of ecotourism would make implementation of an ecotourism code of ethics difficult. A code of ethics for ecotourism in New Zealand would improve decision making for tourists wishing to embark on ecotourism in this country and would increase the quality of the ecotourism product in this country. The quality of the

product would improve as a result of increased competitiveness and by following standards in a guideline.

## **5.6 Summary**

New Zealand tourism began to become popular around the early 1900's. By the 1960's the importance of tourism in New Zealand as a generator of foreign exchange was recognised. Today, tourism is the largest earner of foreign exchange in New Zealand, coming in ahead of meat, dairy and wool exports. The New Zealand tourism product is based on our perceived 'clean and green' environment. Secondary features are the opportunities for outdoor activities and the cultural heritage.

Two government organisations in New Zealand are directly concerned with tourism. The New Zealand Tourism Board is principally a marketing and promotional organisation. The Board is focused upon encouraging as many visitors as possible to this country. The Tourism Policy Group is involved with the implementation of tourism policy in New Zealand, and advise government on all aspects of tourism. This group is aware of the benefits of increased tourist numbers and the need for sustainable management as required by law under the Resource Management Act 1991. In addition the Department of Conservation manages the conservation estate in which the vast majority of ecotourism operations will occur. DoC has a primary mandate to protect the estate for future generations while allowing as many as possible to benefit from it at present. DoC are also charged with fostering recreation and tourism and educating people about the natural environment. Ecotourism operators wishing to run their business within the conservation estate (the vast majority do) are required to obtain a concession from DoC. DoC receives a percentage of the income earned while the concession is operated. Some operators have expressed dissatisfaction with this system, principally its inconsistency in implementation. While the New Zealand Tourism Board has a responsibility to promote tourists to New Zealand, DoC is responsible for maintaining the conservation estate in which these tourists travel. The



'Cave Creek' tragedy highlighted the inadequacy of DoC's level of government funding and the associated negligence of conservation estate facilities. Recently, steps have been taken to try and rectify this situation. The Tourism Board has begun to encourage environmental conservation and sustainable tourism, presumably in recognition that the environmental impacts of large numbers of tourists can outweigh and eventually impinge on the economic impacts. DoC's budget has recently been increased by the government through the introduction of a 'green package'.

Local government also plays a role in the administration of ecotourism in New Zealand. Tourism operations that have a potential effect on the natural environment are subject to the requirements of the Resource Management Act, administered by local government. The emphasis of the Act on sustainable management should benefit the ecotourism industry by helping to protect the natural resource base. Local authorities also have responsibilities for monitoring effects on the natural environment, for the delivery of utilities and infrastructure, and for local promotion of tourism.

There is a variety of ecotourism operations in New Zealand. Some have enjoyed success. Research shows, however, that over half of all small tourism businesses in New Zealand fail.

For ecotourism businesses the reasons often include a lack of initial capital and business skills. The wide dispersion of operations throughout the country and the relative infancy of the industry contribute to a lack of cohesion amongst operators. An ecotourist in New Zealand inevitably faces relatively high costs, sometimes less than ideal travelling distances and conditions, and occasionally a lack of necessary infrastructure.

There are two codes of conduct for environmentally responsible tourism in New Zealand, however the lack of cohesion and organisation in the industry makes implementation difficult. There is no one method of accrediting 'true' ecotourism

operators or discrediting 'false' ones. The Pacific and Asia Travel Association aims to reduce this uncertainty with the introduction of the 'Green Leaf' programme. Determining the authenticity of the ecotourism industry is also difficult without the establishment of a nationally accepted definition. The establishment of a professional umbrella organisation for ecotourism operators, with a standardised definition of ecotourism and a set of standards, may go some way toward rectifying these problems.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **ECOTOURISM SURVEY**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In Chapter Four, the core characteristics of ecotourism were identified from the literature. This review identified some divergent definitions. The risk from the absence of consistent definition is that ecotourism comes to mean all things to all people. This is particularly relevant when considering 'greenwash' and its impact on the ecotourism market. To expand on this work and provide further guidance, a survey was undertaken of a group of New Zealand tourism industry experts drawn from a range of organisations (Annex B). This group consisted of people with sufficient experience and knowledge of the nature and development of ecotourism to provide informed opinion. It would have been useful to match this survey with a survey of ecotourists and perhaps an in-depth survey of ecotourism operators. This research design was beyond the resources of this thesis. This leaves two relevant areas of research for further study.

#### **6.2 Rationale**

The survey was undertaken to test the conclusions derived from the literature review in Chapter Four, to provide material in order to expand on these conclusions, and to gain a New Zealand perspective. In addition to the questions about the meaning of ecotourism, survey participants were also asked questions about quality, about adding value, and about a code of ethics for ecotourism. The information from responses to questions on these matters should further refine our understanding of ecotourism, informing operators, planners and managers involved in ecotourism. A code of ethics for ecotourism has been suggested (Blagey, 1993 and Carter, 1993) as a method of maintaining a consistent standard of ecotourism, important for the consumer and the

promotion of New Zealand ecotourism generally. An ecotourism standard is also important to help eliminate 'greenwash sellers' and therefore to protect the natural resource on which ecotourism depends.

### **6.3 Design**

Questions were divided into four sections based on the themes discussed above. To determine 'what is ecotourism?', a list of six possible characteristics that could be used to define ecotourism was prepared. These characteristics were based on the literature review described in Chapter Four. In addition to gathering opinions on appropriate definitions this section was used to introduce respondents to the 'domain' of ecotourism, thereby setting the scene for subsequent sections. Survey participants were asked to indicate how important they thought each of the six characteristics were for defining ecotourism, based on a five point Likert scale. Participants were then required to identify and rank which three of the characteristics most contribute to a definition. This step requires respondents to prioritise properties. Finally, participants were given the opportunity to list any characteristics they considered important that were not identified in the questionnaire.

To answer the question 'what is high quality ecotourism?', 18 characteristics that may contribute to high quality ecotourism were listed. Survey participants were asked to indicate the importance of each characteristic for high quality ecotourism, again based on a five point Likert scale. They were then required to indicate and rank the three characteristics they considered most important for high quality ecotourism.

The question 'how can we add value to an ecotourism experience?', was examined by describing an hypothetical ecotourism operation and asking participants to imagine they were the customers. A list of 14 possible additions was set out and participants were asked to indicate which would add value to the hypothetical operation.

Participants were required to rationalise their choices by selecting the three additions that would most add value.

To examine whether ‘there should be a code of ethics for ecotourism ?’, eight statements about a code of ethics for ecotourism were listed. Survey participants were asked to consider each statement, and then indicate the extent to which they agreed with each, based on a five point Likert scale. Annex A contains a copy of the survey.

#### **6.4 Despatch, Response and Analysis**

A list of forty two ‘tourism informants’ was drawn up. This list included:

- tourism operators;
- people working for tourism support industries;
- people working for government organisations involved with tourism;
- academics studying tourism;
- people belonging to non-government organisations involved with tourism; and
- people who work for companies that examine or study tourism.

Annex B contains a list of organisations included. Knowledgeable individuals within these organisations were identified and personally targeted. A survey, covering letter and stamped, self-addressed envelope was mailed to each of the forty two individuals. The covering letter explained the survey and requested the individual to complete and return the survey within two weeks. A phone call was used in some cases as a reminder to complete the survey. Forty two surveys were despatched. Thirty, or 71 %, were completed and returned.

## 6.6 What is Ecotourism ?

The responses to this question are presented below in Table 3, ordered from highest to lowest score. The distribution of modal scores for each characteristic is illustrated in Figure 5.

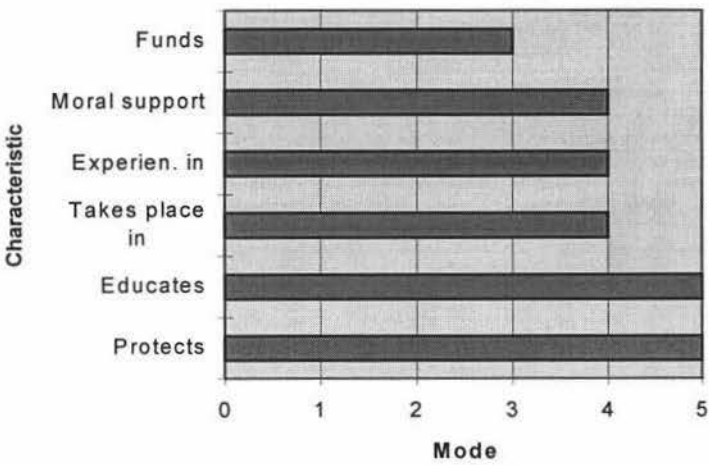
Not surprisingly, all characteristics were considered to be important, consistent with the results of Chapter Four. Virtually all respondents agreed that the most important aspects of ecotourism are that, first and foremost, it protects, enhances and educates people about the natural environment. Most respondents agreed that other important characteristics of ecotourism are that it takes place in and emphasises experience in the natural environment. While the difference is minor, it is consistent with the earlier literature review that protection and education rank ahead of interaction.

**Table 3**  
**Characteristics that define ecotourism**

<b>Question 1</b>	<b>Imp. 5 or 4</b>	<b>Some Imp. 3</b>	<b>Unimp. 2 or 1</b>	<b>Modal Score</b>
That it protects and enhances the natural environment	27	3	0	5
That it educates people about the natural environment	27	3	0	5
That it takes place in the natural environment	26	2	2	4
That it emphasises experience in the natural environment	20	9	1	4
That it provides moral support for nature	16	9	5	4
That it funds the enhancement of the natural environment	11	16	2	3

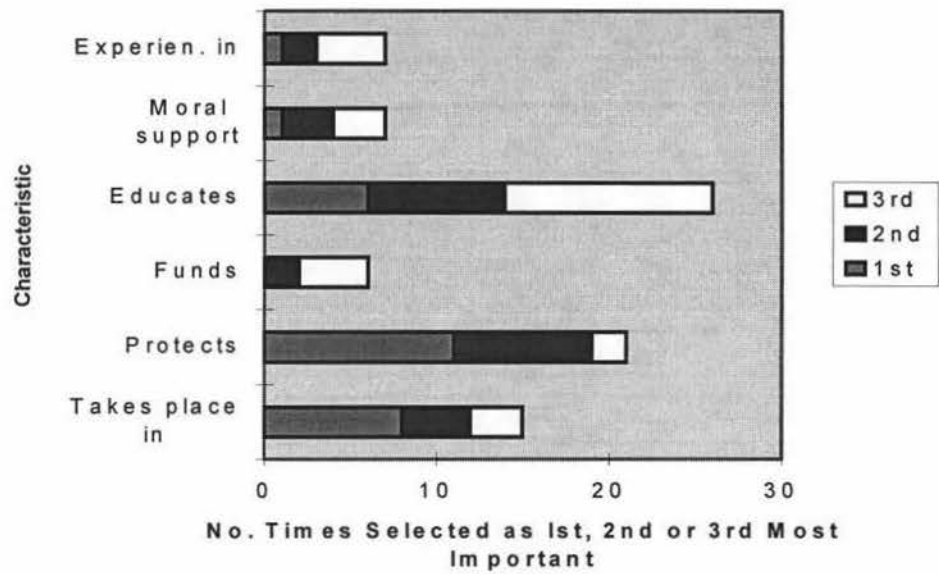
Interestingly, only two respondents considered that taking place in the natural environment is not important for ecotourism. This is in spite of the opportunity that ecotourism in artificial environments provides to sustain higher tourist numbers with lower impacts. Most respondents considered the fifth statement, that ecotourism should fund the enhancement of the natural environment, to be of some importance.

**Figure 5**  
**Characteristics that define ecotourism (Mode Distribution)**



Participants were asked to record what they considered were the first, second and third most important characteristics for defining ecotourism (Figure 6). This simply reinforces the preceding conclusions. When forced to trade off definitions, respondents most frequently selected protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Educating people about the natural environment was second most frequently selected, the emphasis on protection and education.

**Figure 6**  
**Characteristics that define ecotourism**



Participants were also asked to record any defining characteristics of ecotourism they considered more important than those listed in the survey. Nine participants took this opportunity and their responses are listed below.

**Table 4**  
**Additional characteristics**

<b>Conservation</b>	<b>2</b>
Generation of conservation values;	
Inclusion of conservation issues, e.g waste management	
<b>Involve Local Communities</b>	<b>2</b>
Particularly include local culture and history.	
<b>Cultural Dynamics</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>About Feelings and Emotions</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Volume of People</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Sustainable Operation</b>	<b>1</b>



The generation of conservation values is an aspect of ecotourism that is included in the definition established in Chapter Four, i.e. 'fosters conservation of natural resources through increased exposure, understanding and education'. The aspects of this definition used in the survey were more simplistic. The inclusion of conservation issues (e.g. waste management), the involvement of local communities, cultural dynamics and the volumes of people are all characteristics that received positive responses as adding value or contributing to quality. This suggests cultural and community aspects are not defining characteristics but do contribute to value or quality. These results differ from the emphasis given in recent literature on the local community and to a lesser extent local culture. This suggests that cultural and community aspects of ecotourism in New Zealand are not considered as important as they are in other places. There may be an opportunity to develop cultural and community aspects of ecotourism in New Zealand.

The inclusion of 'feelings and emotions' is interesting. Feelings and emotions are difficult aspects of ecotourism to define. Kearney (1993) attempted to explain this by noting that ecotourism should provide individual tourist fulfilment. Individual tourist fulfilment will presumably occur when the other defining characteristics of ecotourism are met.

The sustainability aspect of ecotourism was also mentioned in Chapter Four. A sustainable ecotourism operation should be sustainable in terms of the impact on the environment and the survival of the business. Presumably a business will survive where its customers feel it provides value and quality. These concepts are explored in the next two sections. If the business is successful, and the operation of the business meets the criteria of the definition being established in this thesis, i.e. education leading to conservation, and responsible use of natural resources, then the operation would be sustainable. Sustainability is therefore not a defining characteristic of ecotourism, rather it is a result.

Overall, responses to all parts of this section suggest that the most *important* characteristics are that it *protects and enhances, educates people about and takes place in the natural environment*. This is consistent with and largely confirms the definition proposed in Chapter Four, that ecotourism is environmentally responsible, fosters conservation of natural resources through increased exposure, understanding and education and takes place in the natural environment. This is with the exception of the involvement of local communities, which along with respecting local culture and accruing economic benefits are given less emphasis.

## **6.7 Quality Ecotourism**

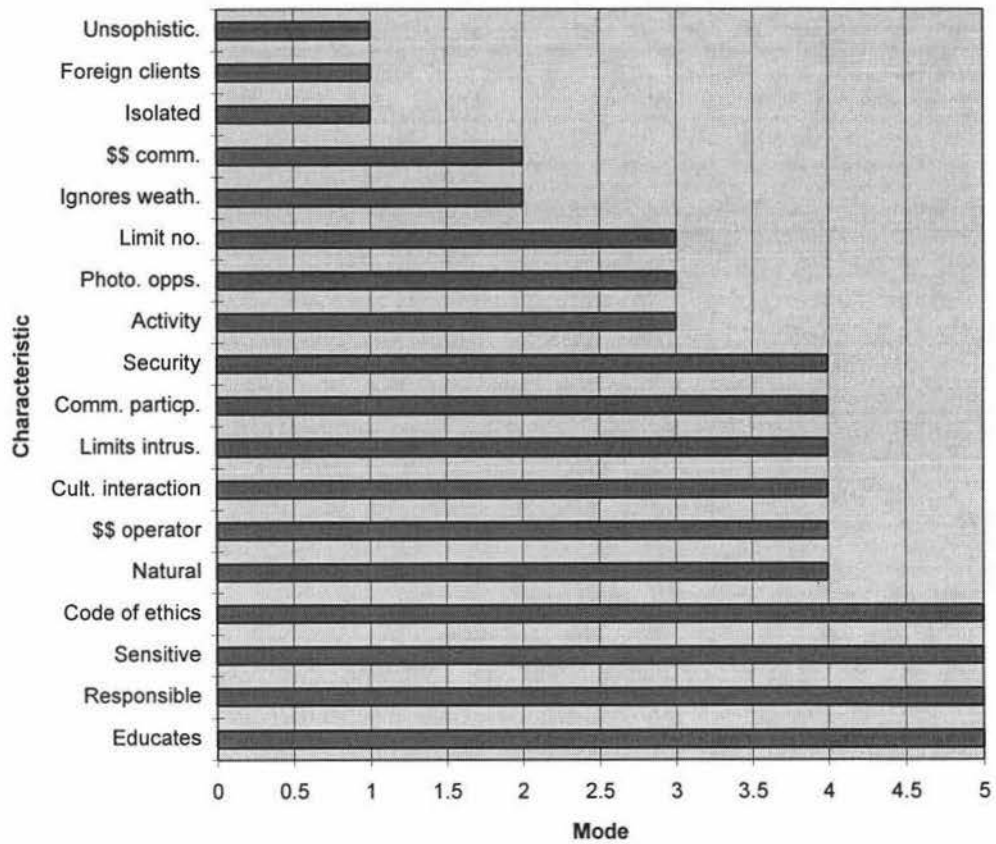
Survey participants were asked to respond to 18 characteristics that might contribute to high quality ecotourism. Possible responses ranged from ‘very important’ to ‘of no importance’. The results are listed below in Table 5, ordered from highest to lowest importance. The distribution of modal values for each characteristic is illustrated in Figure 7.

**Table 5**  
**Characteristics that contribute quality to ecotourism**

<b>Question 2</b>	<b>Imp. 5 or 4</b>	<b>Some Imp. 3</b>	<b>Unimp. 2 or 1</b>	<b>Modal Value</b>
Educates the tourist about the natural environment	27	1	0	5
Includes responsible use of resources such as appropriate waste disposal, recycling and energy use	26	3	1	5
Is sensitive toward local customs, values and concerns	28	2	0	5
Abides by an ecotourism code of ethics	23	6	0	5
Emphasises the natural setting	26	3	1	4
Earns a good return for the operator	18	9	3	4
Facilitates inter-cultural interaction	16	11	3	4
Discourages tourists from intruding on local culture and customs	14	9	7	4
Allows the local community to participate in the venture directly	14	11	4	4
Ensures that tourists feel secure in the care of their guide	17	10	3	4
Requires the tourist to undertake some form of activity	5	14	11	3
Provides good photographic opportunities	9	13	8	3
Caters for few tourists at any one time	8	11	11	3
Is not influenced by bad weather	1	9	20	2
Generates income for the local community	14	7	9	2
Is isolated from the local community	1	0	29	1
Caters mainly for foreign visitors	7	3	20	1
Gives the impression of a lack of sophistication	2	2	26	1

Figure 7

**Characteristics that contribute quality to ecotourism (modal distribution)**



Four characteristics were most frequently selected as *very important* for high quality ecotourism. These were that ecotourism:

- *educates the tourist about the natural environment;*
- *includes responsible use of resources, (such as appropriate waste disposal and recycling);*
- *is sensitive toward local customs, values and concerns; and*
- *abides by a code of ethics.*

The consistent selection of the education characteristic serves to reinforce the selection of education as the key defining characteristic of ecotourism in the first part of the survey.

Respondents selected six characteristics as being *important* for high quality ecotourism. These were:

- *emphasis on the natural setting;*
- *earning a good return for the operator;*
- *facilitating inter-cultural interaction;*
- *discouraging tourists from intruding on local culture and customs;*
- *allowing the local community to participate in the venture directly; and*
- *ensuring tourists feel secure in the care of their guide.*

Respondents considered three characteristics to be of *some importance* for high quality ecotourism. These were:

- *catering for few tourists at any one time;*
- *providing good photographic opportunities; and*
- *requiring the tourists to undertake some form of activity.*

Respondents considered five characteristics were *not important* for high quality ecotourism. These were:

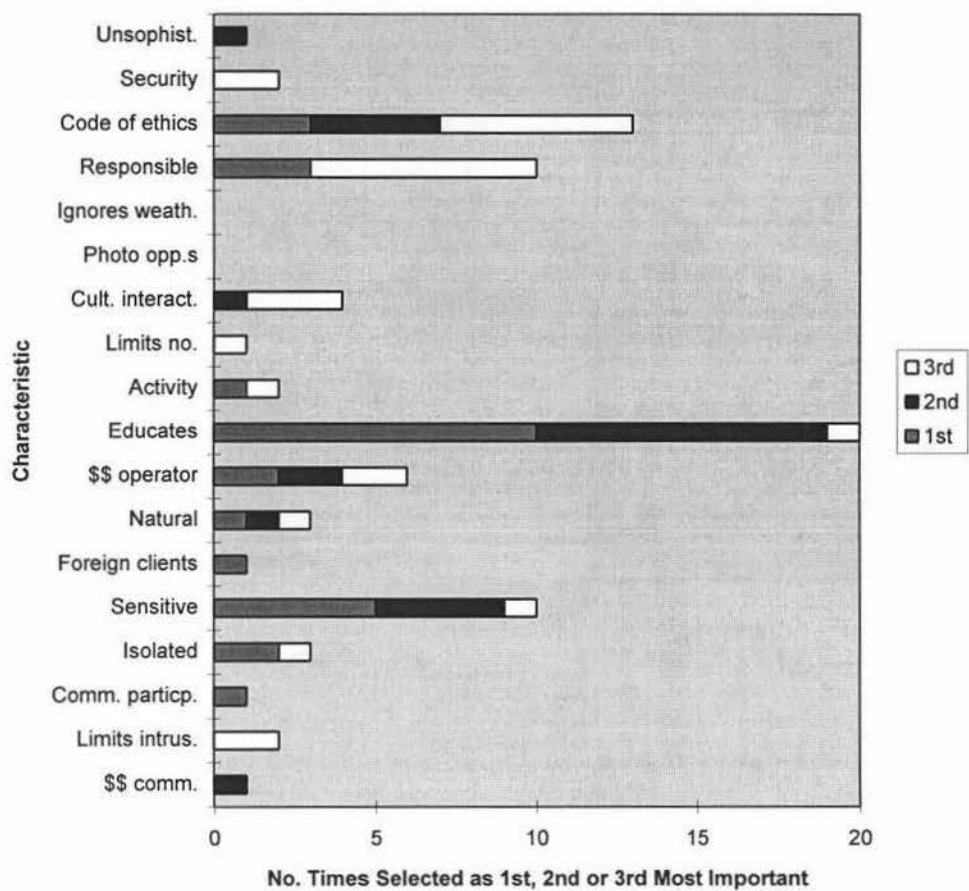
- *generating income for the local community;*
- *isolation from the local community;*
- *catering mainly for foreign visitors;*
- *giving the impression of a lack of sophistication; and*
- *not being influenced by bad weather.*

The responsible use of resources, sensitivity toward local customs, inter-cultural interaction, sensitivity toward local culture and participation of the local community are all similar to characteristics listed by survey participants in the previous section as being of secondary importance for defining ecotourism. The more positive response of participants to these characteristics in the second question suggests that they are not determining characteristics of ecotourism, but that their presence does add to the quality of the ecotourism experience.

The characteristics which respondents ranked in this section included characteristics that relate to the nature of the ecotourism product, the behaviour of the ecotourism enterprise, and characteristics that are indirect attributes of ecotourism. Respondents rated characteristics that relate to the behaviour of the enterprise and the nature of the ecotourism product highly. Indirect attributes were largely considered not important.

When respondents were forced to rank the characteristics (Figure 8) the focus again fell very clearly on the role of education, well clear of most other areas proposed for defining ecotourism.

**Figure 8**  
**Characteristics that contribute quality to ecotourism**



Also important were the responsible use of resources, and sensitivity toward local customs. This suggests that the initial basic product is defined and largely qualified. In terms of its education value, this value can be extended by a number of secondary characteristics, the consistency of standards associated with a code of practice being the most obvious.

**6.8 Adding Value to the Ecotourism Experience**

Participants were asked to indicate which from a list of fourteen additions they thought would add value to a hypothetical ecotourism operation. In the case of seven proposals, respondents anticipated a gain in value added than did not (Table 6). There

was complete agreement among respondents that interpretation adds value, reinforcing the role of education in defining ecotourism and determining its quality. Other additions that included an educational aspect also received strong support. These were a visit to a visitors centre, initiation of discussion and debate, and commentaries about the cultural and management environment.

In the opinion of a majority of respondents, although without the same consensus, limiting numbers and additions that would extend the experience (i.e. a visit to a local craft co-op and the requirement to walk a reasonable distance) would add value. By contrast, a number of options were largely dismissed (Table 7). Ownership of the ecotourism enterprise seems relatively unimportant. Funding conservation, adding excitement and additions not directly related to the experience (such as the thrill of crossing a suspension bridge, or the provision of food) were not selected.

**Table 6**

**Additions that would add most value to an ecotourism experience**

		Yes	No
<b>A</b>	the tourists are given an interpretation as they travel through the forest. The flora, fauna and geological history of the environment is explained	30	0
<b>G</b>	at the completion of their journey, the tourists are taken to a visitor centre where they can view a visual display providing a background to the area they have just visited and the opportunity to purchase souvenir items	28	1
<b>F</b>	the ecotourism guide frequently initiates discussion and debate amongst the participants	24	5
<b>J</b>	the tourists are given a full description of the cultural environment they are in	25	1
<b>L</b>	the tourists are given a brief, informative explanation of the management regime that operates in the area they are visiting	23	6
<b>H</b>	this ecotourism experience has a limit of 12 people per trip	17	11
<b>C</b>	at the end of their walk, the tourists are given an invitation to visit a local craft co-operative	15	13
<b>E</b>	tourists are required to walk a reasonable distance, through varied terrain that typically takes around 40 minutes to complete	15	10

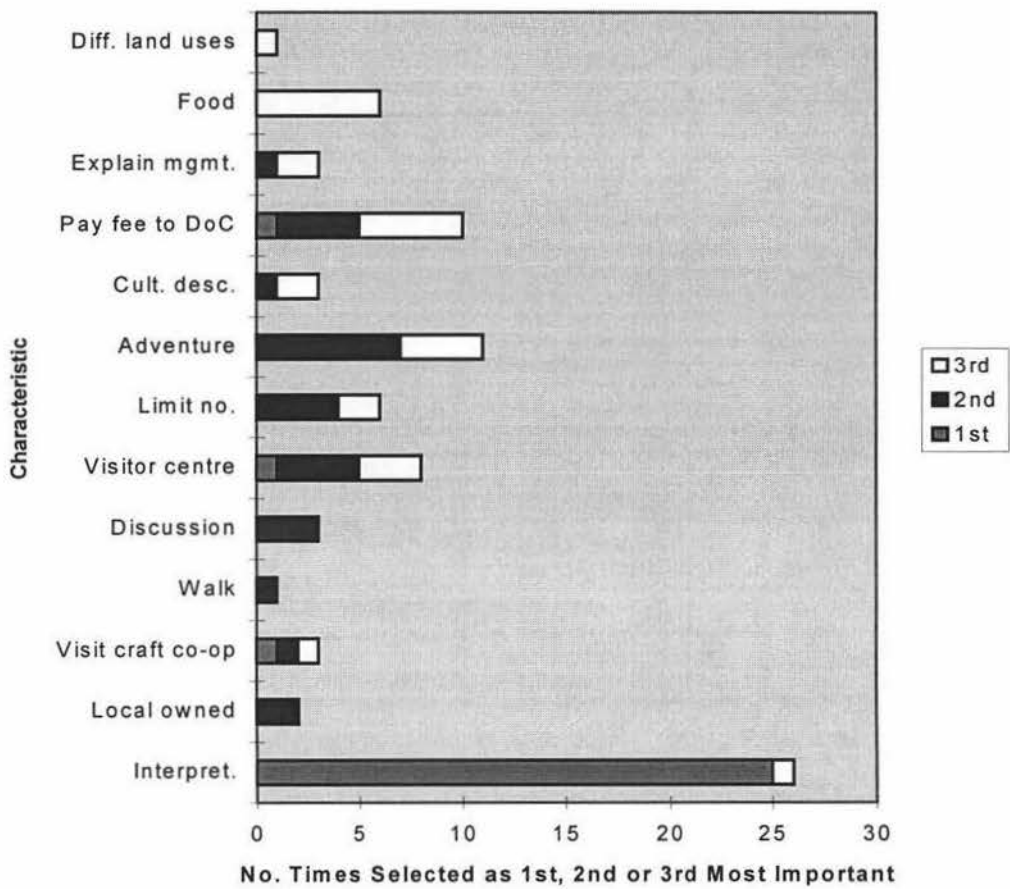


**Table 7****Additions that would add least value to an ecotourism experience**

		Yes	No
<b>B</b>	the tourists are assured that they are participating in a locally owned and operated enterprise	10	17
<b>K</b>	the tourists must pay an additional 5% of their fee to the Department of Conservation	7	17
<b>N</b>	after travelling through the native forest, the tourists are taken to an area of exotic forest to demonstrate competing land uses	9	16
<b>I</b>	the walk includes an exhilarating detour to cross a large river by suspension bridge	12	15
<b>M</b>	the tourists are provided with food en-route to be eaten picnic style	10	15

Respondents were required to refine the choices they made among added value options by selecting those they perceived to be the most, the second most and the third most valuable. The results of this selection (shown in Figure 9) further highlight the weight given to interpretation as the best means of adding value to the ecotourism experience.

**Figure 9**  
**Characteristics that add value to ecotourism**



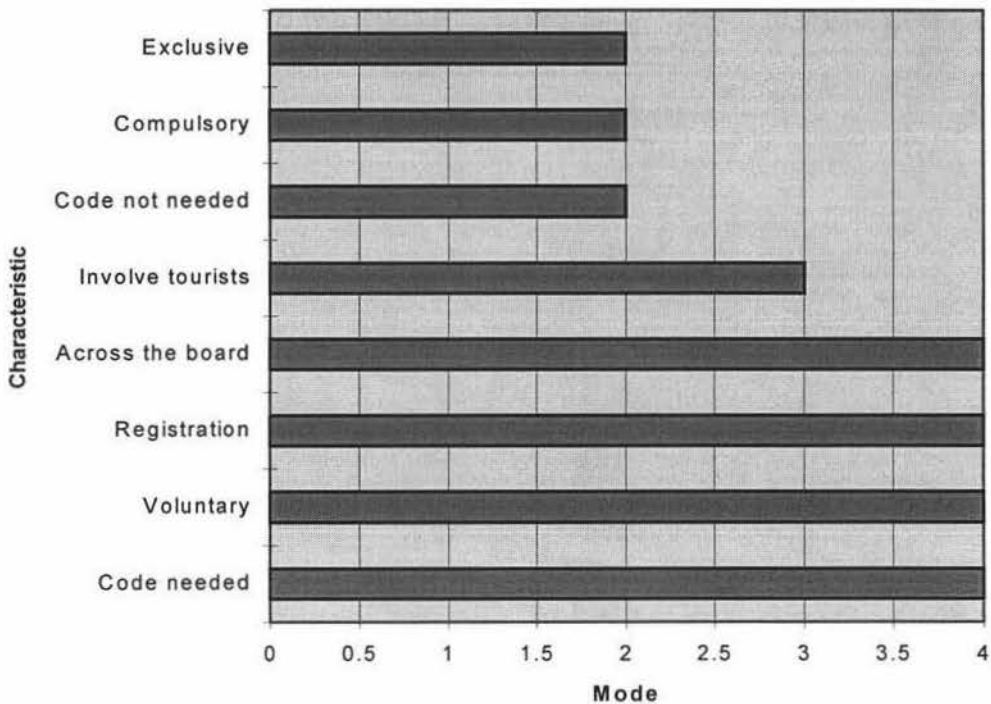
**6.9 A Code of Ethics for Ecotourism ?**

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with eight statements about the need for application of a code of ethics for ecotourism. Results are illustrated, in Table 9, ordered from highest to lowest. The modal distribution is illustrated in Figure 10.

**Table 9**  
**Opinions on a Code of Ethics for Ecotourism**

	<b>Question 4</b>	<b>5 or 4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2 or 1</b>	<b>Mode</b>
<b>A</b>	The quality of New Zealand's collective ecotourism should be protected by an appropriate code of ethics	23	4	1	<b>4</b>
<b>B</b>	A code of ethics for ecotourism should be a voluntary agreement for tour operators	19	3	5	<b>4</b>
<b>G</b>	A code of ethics would be enforced by registration of complying operations	12	5	10	<b>4</b>
<b>E</b>	A single code of ethics should be produced that would be applicable to all persons involved with the ecotourism industry	9	6	3	<b>4</b>
<b>C</b>	Tourists participating in ecotourism operations should be prepared to sign an agreement to state that they will endeavour to ecotourism at all times	4	9	12	<b>3</b>
<b>F</b>	There is no requirement for a code of ethics for ecotourism	1	2	25	<b>2</b>
<b>H</b>	A code of ethics for ecotourism should be compulsory for all tour operators to abide by	8	6	12	<b>2</b>
<b>D</b>	Only businesses that abide by a code of ethics for ecotourism should be allowed to operate in ecotourism	11	4	11	<b>2</b>

**Figure 10**  
**Opinions on a code of ethics for ecotourism (mode distribution)**



There is widespread agreement among respondents of the need for an appropriate code of ethics (23/28). This was supported by general (but not complete) agreement that a code of ethics should apply universally, but that it should also be voluntary. Marginally more respondents agreed that a code should be supported by registration of complying operators than disagreed. A majority of respondents disagreed that a code of ethics should be compulsory for tour operators. Respondents were largely undecided if ecotourists should sign a statement of compliance with a code of ethics. An equal number of respondents agreed and disagreed that only businesses abiding by a code of ethics should be allowed to operate in ecotourism.

It can be concluded from these results that there is support in New Zealand for a code of ethics for ecotourism that applies across the board and is voluntary. No conclusions can be drawn about the requirement for registration of complying operations from the

survey responses, although the notion of complete compliance in Section D tended to polarise opinion and would difficult to implement.

## **6.10 Summary**

A survey was undertaken to test the conclusions derived from the literature review in Chapter Four, to provide material in order to expand on these conclusions and to gain a New Zealand perspective. Survey participants were asked questions about the meaning of ecotourism, quality in ecotourism, adding value to ecotourism and a code of ethics for ecotourism.

The response to the survey largely reinforced the findings of the literature review discussed in Chapter Four. In both cases, the most important characteristics of ecotourism were identified as:

1. Being environmentally responsible;
2. Fostering conservation of natural resources through increased exposure, understanding and education; and
3. Taking place in the natural environment.

In particular, survey respondents placed a strong emphasis on education and protection of the natural environment.

Survey respondents reinforced their enthusiasm for education as a component of ecotourism when asked about how to contribute quality. Other characteristics considered to contribute quality were responsible resource use, sensitivity toward local values and culture, local community participation, security, abiding by a code of ethics and earning a good return for the operator.

Some authors surveyed in the literature review included cultural sensitivity and community support and participation as defining characteristics of ecotourism. The results from the survey suggest that in New Zealand, rather than being essential for ecotourism, cultural and community aspects are secondary considerations, although they do contribute to ecotourism quality.

Survey respondents considered that interpretation is most important for adding value to an ecotourism operation. Along the same lines, visits to a visitors centre, initiation of discussion and debate and commentaries about the cultural and management environment were also considered to add value. These results further reinforce the earlier findings about the importance of education as a component of ecotourism. Limiting numbers and 'extending the experience' were also considered to be characteristics that would add value to ecotourism.

When asked about a code of ethics for ecotourism a majority of respondents agreed that there should be a code of ethics, that it should be able to be applied across the board, and that it should be voluntary. These results are consistent with the observations of Warren and Taylor (1994) who noted that those in the ecotourism industry are looking for more centralised standards. The choice of a voluntary code of ethics is also consistent with the United Nations Environment Programme (1993) who noted that because the tourism industry is composed of a variety of small and medium sized firms, it makes sense to opt as far as possible for self regulation, making voluntary codes of conduct ideal. Applying a code of ethics across the board allows for all organisations involved with ecotourism, and all ecotourism operators, big and small to operate under the same conditions. A professional umbrella organisation to implement such a code would be useful. Use of a consistent standard or code also has the advantage of eliminating the 'green wash sellers' from the ecotourism market.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY

The ecotourism industry is experiencing increasing popularity as the demand grows for tourism that is environmentally sensitive, informative and interactive. Recent tourism literature has not demonstrated any consistent explanation of what ecotourism really means. This has led to a blurring of boundaries which, at best constrain relevant policy and planning, and at worst blurs the distinction between green marketing of mass tourism and ecotourism. People who develop, plan and manage ecotourism need to know what ecotourism is, what makes it successful and how a high quality product can best be maintained.

In New Zealand there is a historical emphasis on 'clean and green' tourism, making this country an ideal destination for the ecotourism market and calling therefore, for the careful definition of ecotourism at an early stage. Because the product is relatively new, there is an excellent opportunity to develop ecotourism in New Zealand that is successful and of high quality.

This thesis has been written with the aim of producing a thorough and critical analysis of the components of ecotourism, with particular reference to New Zealand, in order to provide information about what is required for ecotourism in New Zealand in the future.

To achieve this aim, the following parameters have been considered:

1. tourism development and its impacts;
2. the development of the ecotourism market as part of a move towards 'alternative tourism';
3. definitions of ecotourism included in recent literature;

4. potential for ecotourism in New Zealand;
5. opinions of people involved with ecotourism in New Zealand.

The remainder of this chapter summarises the main findings of this thesis.

Tourism has become a successful industry world-wide. The success of the industry has created the phenomenon of 'mass tourism'. As the tourism industry has grown, so have its impacts. The economic impacts of tourism, particularly its potential to earn foreign exchange and create jobs are well known. Unfortunately, tourism also creates negative impacts. The adverse effects of tourism on natural and cultural environments are frequently documented. An increasing dissatisfaction with mass tourism, and a growing awareness of environmental issues generally and the impact of tourism on the environment specifically, has led to the demand for ecotourism.

Recent literature records a variety of opinions on what ecotourism means. A consistent definition is needed because:

- it will reduce the debate about ecotourism, and hence about policy and investment responses, stemming from diverse definitions and a lack of understanding (Valentine, 1994);
- ecotourism is becoming increasingly popular, it is therefore important to distinguish which operators are real and which are jumping on the 'ecotourism bandwagon';
- a clear understanding of the meaning and nature of ecotourism is essential to plan for ecotourism and to manage its impacts in the future.

In order to provide a consistent definition of ecotourism, recent literature was examined and the common elements were identified. This produced the following definition:



*Ecotourism is environmentally responsible, fosters conservation of natural resources through increased exposure, understanding and education, takes place in the natural environment and involves the local community.*

Secondary characteristics of ecotourism are respect of local culture and the ability to generate economic benefits.

Ecotourism, therefore has the potential to reconcile the negative environmental impacts of tourism with the positive economic impacts, while protecting and promoting the resources upon which it is based. This is particularly so when the local community is involved, therefore creating jobs and generating income without creating environmental degradation.

In New Zealand the traditional emphasis on natural scenery lends itself to the development of ecotourism. Ecotourism also fits nicely into the requirements of the Department of Conservation who must preserve the environment for future generations while allowing its use today. The New Zealand Tourism Board, responsible for promoting tourism in this country, have recently attempted to place more emphasis on the environmental impacts of the tourists they are seeking. The Board should therefore be encouraging ecotourism as a means of reconciling the positive economic and negative environmental impacts of tourism.

New Zealand tourism informants largely agreed that ecotourism should be environmentally responsible, should foster conservation of natural resources through increased exposure, understanding and education and take place in the natural environment. What is distinctive is their particularly strong focus on education, interpretation and learning. In considering quality of ecotourism they emphasised responsible resource use, sensitivity toward local values and customs, support of local communities, an ability to earn a good return for the operator and a limitation on numbers. This differed slightly from the opinions of the (largely international) authors

included in the literature review. These authors gave greater emphasis to community involvement.

Ecotourism in New Zealand lacks any specific set of standards or code of ethics. Standards or a code of ethics should help to improve the overall quality of ecotourism in New Zealand by ensuring that operators offer a safe, environmentally responsible and educational product.

The idea of standards is supported by the tourism informants surveyed, who agreed that there needs to be a code of ethics for ecotourism in New Zealand, that it needs to be applied across the board (to all involved with ecotourism) and that it should be voluntary.

This raises questions about an appropriate organisation structure. A nation wide organisation to implement and accredit a set of standards for ecotourism as opposed to a region wide body would have the advantage of providing a consistent approach for advocacy and for integration with the Department of Conservation and the New Zealand Tourism Board. Such an organisation may also create more cohesion amongst ecotourism operators that are spread throughout the country, providing an opportunity to share ideas and marketing efforts.

Work undertaken for this thesis has contributed to identification of areas of further research required. A survey of ecotourists is required to identify what the 'customers' think ecotourism should be. A successful ecotourism industry ultimately depends on the enthusiasm of the tourists sampling the ecotourism product. There is an absence of qualitative data of this sort for ecotourism in New Zealand. This thesis has also raised questions about the role of the local community and of local culture in ecotourism in New Zealand. A stronger emphasis (particularly on the local community) appears to exist in ecotourism operations in other countries. Should New Zealand culture

(particularly Maori culture) be incorporated into ecotourism operations, or is it better left to develop as a unique form of New Zealand cultural tourism in its own right?.

The development of ecotourism in New Zealand that limits environmental impacts, educates people about the natural environment, while still earning a profit for the operator has the potential to be the best method of providing tourism dollars while protecting our environment.

ANNEX A

Ecotourism Survey

1. What is ecotourism ?

1a. This question is based on a number of different definitions used for ecotourism.

Please indicate how important you think each of the following characteristics is for defining ecotourism, by circling the appropriate number according to the scale below:

Scale

- 5 = Very Important
- 4 = Important
- 3 = Of some importance
- 2 = Of little importance
- 1 = Of no importance

		Very Impt.	Impt.	Of some Impt.	Of little Impt.	Of n impt.
A	That it takes place in the natural environment.	5	4	3	2	1
B	That it protects and enhances the natural environment	5	4	3	2	1

<b>C</b>	That it funds the enhancement of the natural environment.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>D</b>	That it educates people about the natural environment.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>E</b>	That it provides moral support for nature.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>F</b>	That it emphasises experience in the natural environment.	5	4	3	2	1

- 1b. From the items listed above (A, B, C, D, E and F), please choose the three characteristics that you think are most important for defining ecotourism. Please indicate the order of importance you would place them in, by listing them by letter in the spaces below.**

**Importance:**

First \_\_\_\_\_

Second \_\_\_\_\_

Third \_\_\_\_\_

- 1c. Do you think there are any defining characteristics of ecotourism that I have not included in the list above that you consider are more important than those you have listed in 1b. If so, please write them below**

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2      **What is high quality ecotourism ?**

2a.    **Now, I would like to know what you think is required for high quality ecotourism.**

**The following list identifies characteristics that may contribute to high quality ecotourism. Please tick the box that reflects your views according to the scale below:**

- Scale**
- 5 =    Very Important
  - 4 =    Important
  - 3 =    Of some importance
  - 2 =    Of little importance
  - 1 =    Of no importance

**High quality Ecotourism:**

		Very Impt.	Impt.	Of some Impt.	Of little Impt.	Of n impt.
A	Generates income for the local community.	5	4	3	2	1
B	Discourages tourists from intruding on local culture and customs.	5	4	3	2	1

		100				
<b>C</b>	Allows the local community to participate in the venture directly.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>D</b>	Is isolated from the local community.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>E</b>	Is sensitive toward local customs, values and concerns.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>F</b>	Caters mainly for foreign visitors.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>G</b>	Emphasises the natural setting.	5	4	3	2	1



		Very Impt.	Impt.	Of some Impt.	Of little Impt.	Of n impt.
<b>H</b>	Earns a good return for the operator	5	4	3	2	1
<b>I</b>	Educates the tourist about the natural environment	5	4	3	2	1
<b>J</b>	Requires the tourist to undertake some form of activity.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>K</b>	Caters for few tourists at any one time.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>L</b>	Facilitates inter-cultural interaction	5	4	3	2	1
<b>M</b>	Provides good photographic opportunities.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>N</b>	Is not influenced by bad weather.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>O</b>	Includes responsible use of resources such as appropriate waste disposal recycling and energy use.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>P</b>	Abides by an ecotourism code of ethics.	5	4	3	2	1

<b>Q</b>	Ensures that tourists feel secure in the care of their guide.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>R</b>	Gives the impression of a lack of sophistication.	5	4	3	2	1

- 2b. Now, from the list A to R above, could you please choose the three characteristics that you believe are the most important in distinguishing a high quality ecotourism operation. Please list the appropriate letters in order of importance below.

**Importance:**

First \_\_\_\_\_

Second \_\_\_\_\_

Third \_\_\_\_\_

3. How can we add value to an ecotourism experience ?

This question seeks to identify activities that could enhance the experience of tourists visiting an ecotourism attraction, so that they may be prepared to pay more than a basic entrance charge.

**Imagine you are participating in the following hypothetical ecotourism operation.....**

*“You have paid to be taken on a guided walk through a distinct area of outstanding native forest, forty minutes from the nearest town”*

**How would you add more appeal and value to this experience ?**

**3a. Please indicate, by circling yes or no in the appropriate spaces below, if you think each of these additions would add value to this product.**

<b>A</b>	The tourists are given an interpretation as they travel through the forest. The flora, fauna and geological history of the environment are explained.	yes	no
<b>B</b>	The tourists are assured that they are participating in a locally owned and operated enterprise.	yes	no
<b>C</b>	At the end of their walk, the tourists are given an invitation to visit a local craft co-operative, featuring work by local artists.	yes	no
<b>D</b>	Tourists participating are required to walk a reasonable distance through varied terrain that typically takes around 40 minutes to complete.	yes	no
<b>E</b>	The ecotourism guide frequently initiates discussion and debate amongst participants.	yes	no
<b>F</b>	At the completion of their journey, the tourists are taken to a visitor centre where they can view a visual display providing an excellent	yes	no

	background to the area they have visited, and the opportunity to purchase souvenir items.		
<b>G</b>	This ecotourism experience has a limit of 12 people per trip.	yes	no
<b>H</b>	The walk includes an exhilarating detour to cross a large river by suspension bridge.	yes	no
<b>I</b>	The tourists are given a full description of the cultural history of the environment they are in.	yes	no
<b>J</b>	Tourists participating in this ecotourism experience must pay an additional 5% of their fee to the Department of Conservation.	yes	no
<b>K</b>	The tourists are given a brief but informative explanation of the management regime that operates in the natural area that they are visiting.	yes	no
<b>L</b>	The tourists are provided with food en route, to be eaten picnic style.	yes	no
<b>M</b>	After travelling through the native forest the tourists are also taken to an area of exotic forest or farmland, or to view a nearby open-cast mine to demonstrate competing land uses.	yes	no

- 3b. Please consider the list above again. Would you please list below, the three additions that you believe would be the most valuable to enhance an ecotourism experience.**

**Order of value;**

First      \_\_\_\_\_

Second    \_\_\_\_\_

Third      \_\_\_\_\_

4. Should there be a code of ethics for ecotourism ?

Should the quality of New Zealand’s collective ecotourism be protected by a code of ethics ?

If so, how might this operate ?

The following list makes some statements about a possible ecotourism code of ethics. Please tick the appropriate box according to your opinions for each statement below:

- 5 = Strongly agree (SA)
- 4 = Agree (A)
- 3 = Neither agree or disagree (N)
- 2 = Disagree (D)
- 1 = Strongly disagree (SD)

		SA	A	N	D	SD
A	The quality of New Zealand’s collective ecotourism should be protected by an appropriate code of ethics.	5	4	3	2	1
B	A code of ethics for ecotourism should be a voluntary agreement for tour operators.	5	4	3	2	1
C	Tourists participating in ecotourism operations should be prepared to sign an agreement to state that they will endeavour to ecotourism at all times.	5	4	3	2	1

D	Only businesses that abide by a code of ethics for ecotourism should be allowed to operate in ecotourism.	5	4	3	2	1
E	A single code of ethics should be produced that would be applicable to all persons involved with the ecotourism industry.	5	4	3	2	1
F	There is no requirement for a code of ethics for ecotourism.	5	4	3	2	1
G	A code of ethics would be enforced by registration of complying operations.	5	4	3	2	1
H	A code of ethics for ecotourism should be compulsory for all tour operators to abide by.	5	4	3	2	1

**On a final note .....**

Would you like to receive a copy of the results of this survey ?

NO

YES

NAME

ADDRESS

**Thank you very much for your time.**



## ANNEX B

### **Organisations Included in Ecotourism Survey**

Tourism Industry Association

Mountain Safety Council

Travel Agents Ass. of N.Z

Conservation Concessionaires Ass.

Department of Marketing, Massey University

Department of Management, Massey University, Albany Campus

University of Canterbury

University of Otago

Camp and Cabins Ass. of N.Z

N.Z Farm and Home Host Ass.

N.Z Federation Bed and Breakfast

N.Z Maori Arts and Crafts

Youth Hostels Ass of N.Z

Camp and Cabins Ass

Royal Forest and Bird

Federated Mountain Clubs

Air New Zealand

Maui Tours of N.Z

Hertz

Deloitte Touche and Tohmatsu

Ernst and Young

Tourism Resource Consultants

NZIER

McDermott Fairgray and Assoc.

Kiwi Dundee Adventures

Whalewatch Kaikoura  
Kiwi Experience  
The Helicopter Line  
Ruapehu Alpine Lifts  
Hollyford Tourist and Travel  
Danes Shotover Rafts  
Southern World Vacations  
Fullers Northland  
Mt Cook Group  
Shotover Jet  
McCulloch and Partners  
Department of Marketing  
Massey University  
Ministry of Commerce  
Department of Conservation  
Ministry for the Environment  
New Zealand Tourism Board

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