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ASPECTS OF VISITATION TO EGMONT NATIONAL PARK

A Thesis
Presented to Massey University
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Ecology/Zoology

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1994

ABSTRACT

The need to protect New Zealand's natural resources in a sustainable way is introduced in a setting of growth in tourism and environmentalism and the paradox they present. Management information needs were identified and a questionnaire was developed and completed by 326 visitors to Egmont National Park between July 1993 and April 1994.

Visitor demographics, motivations and activities were found to be very similar to previous studies. Exceptions are generally explained by the unique characteristics of Egmont National Park.

Most concern expressed by visitors to Egmont National Park was over human impact on the natural environment, followed by visitor safety and the provision of weather information. Visitors displayed few other concerns. Services and facilities were considered generally good. A minimal amount of development is seen as desirable, but the areas that need to be further developed are guided tours by park staff, educational facilities (nature trails), visitor safety and signs marking tracks and their condition and walking times. More information on the ecology of the area and Maori history, culture and legend was also desired.

Conservation and recreation were considered important uses of New Zealand's national parks. Low impact "green" uses were viewed as desirable while exploitative or development uses were seen as undesirable. Visitors had a more favourable perception of guided tours run by the Department of Conservation than guided tours run by commercial groups.

Local Taranaki residents, non-local New Zealand residents and overseas residents displayed unique sets of trip characteristics, though few attitudinal differences were found. There were also differences in visitor characteristics at the three road-ends surveyed and at the parks huts. These differing sets of characteristics lead to a discussion on market segmentation as a management tool.

Major recommendations to improve visitor experience and management in Egmont National Park are:

- Maintain the pristine environment;

- Enhance the network of tracks and huts around which the recreational functions are based;
- Update and improve the provision of information, including; visitor centres, the audio visual displays, the availability of up-to-date safety and weather information and the systems of signs marking walks and tramps and their condition and times;
- Provide up-to-date information for visitors of the damage being done to the park by pests and humans and the efforts being made to remedy this damage.
- Develop self-guided and informative nature trails at the North Egmont and/or Dawson Falls road-ends; and
- Examine the provision of guided tours in the park.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Brian Springett for all his advice and input, thesis and otherwise, and Dr. C Michael Hall for his idea generation and editing. Also the staff and friends at Massey who have all assisted and supported me, especially Petra and Erica, the secretaries of the Department of Ecology.

Thanks to the Department of Conservation for advice and financial assistance, in particular Steve Horman in Wanganui and Dave Rogers, Rudy Tetteroo and the rest of the staff in Egmont National Park.

Thank you also to Dion Tuuta for advice on aspects of Maori legend and relationship with Egmont National Park and to Rick for his help with the statistics.

On a more personal level I would like to thank Dad and Mum and the rest of my family and friends for their support and distraction. Special mention to Karen and Trish for the moral support and also thanks to all my flatmates over the last couple of years.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF PLATES.....	xii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTALISM	1
1.2 TOURISM.....	1
Global Trends in Tourism	3
The New Zealand Growth Experience.....	5
1.3 ENVIRONMENTALISM.....	6
The Rise of Awareness	6
Our Common Future and the Concept of Sustainability.....	8
1.4 TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTALISM, THEIR INTERACTION.....	10
Why the Increase in Visitation to Natural Areas?.....	10
Ecotourism	11
Nature Based Tourism in New Zealand	13
1.5 THE PARADOX	16
Tourism and Sustainability.....	16
Management Practices	18
Changing the Viewpoint.....	20
1.6 INTERIM SUMMARY	23
1.7 ASPECTS OF VISITATION TO EGMONT NATIONAL PARK.....	24
1.8 PREVIOUS STUDIES IN NEW ZEALAND.....	25
1.9 ENSUING CHAPTERS.....	27

CHAPTER 2. EGMONT NATIONAL PARK - AN OVERVIEW.....	28
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	28
2.2 GEOLOGY, FLORA AND FAUNA.....	29
2.3 MAORI LEGEND AND RELATIONSHIP WITH EGMONT NATIONAL PARK.....	31
2.4 EARLY EUROPEAN HISTORY OF THE PARK AREA.....	33
2.5 THE USE OF EGMONT NATIONAL PARK.....	35
2.6 EARLY MANAGEMENT OF EGMONT NATIONAL PARK.....	36
The Egmont National Park Act, 1900	36
The Egmont National Park Act, 1924	37
The National Parks Act, 1952	38
2.7 CURRENT MANAGEMENT OF EGMONT NATIONAL PARK.....	39
The National Parks Act, 1980	39
The Conservation Act, 1987.....	40
Wanganui Conservancy Conservation Management Strategy and the Egmont National Park Management Plan	41
2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	42
 CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	 43
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	43
3.2 DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS.....	43
Questionnaire Development	43
Pre-testing of the Questionnaire.....	45
3.3 APPROVAL TO UNDERTAKE SURVEY.....	46
3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES.....	47
3.5 DATA ANALYSIS.....	54
3.6 RELIABILITY.....	54
3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	56

CHAPTER 4. SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....57

SECTION ONE

4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	57
4.2	RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE.....	58
4.3	DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS.....	59
	Age.....	59
	Place of Residence.....	60
	Club Membership.....	62
	Level of Education.....	63
	Normal Occupation of Visitors.....	65
	Ethnicity.....	66
	Gender.....	66
4.4	TRIP CHARACTERISTICS.....	67
	Mode of Travel.....	67
	Length of Visit to Egmont National Park.....	68
	Group Size.....	69
	Group Composition.....	70
	Number of Previous Visits to Egmont National Park.....	71
	Visitation to Other Natural Protected Areas.....	72
	Activities of Visitors.....	72
4.5	VISITOR MOTIVATIONS.....	73
4.6	INFORMATION.....	75
	Information Sources.....	75
	Most Influential Sources of Information.....	76
	Information Activities Within Egmont National Park.....	77
	Amount of Information Offered Within Egmont National Park.....	78
	Additional Visitor Comments on Information in Egmont National Park.....	78
4.7	CONCERNS, SERVICES, FACILITIES AND DEVELOPMENT.....	81
	Concerns Expressed by Visitors to Egmont National Park.....	82
	Amount of Development Desired by Visitors to Egmont National Park.....	88
4.8	ATTITUDES TOWARDS USE OF NEW ZEALAND'S NATIONAL PARKS.....	92

4.9	CHARACTERISTICS OF VISITORS AND THEIR PLACE OF RESIDENCE.....	98
	Characteristics of Visitors Originating From Taranaki	98
	Characteristics of New Zealand Visitors Originating From Outside of Taranaki.....	100
	Characteristics of Visitors Originating From Overseas	101
4.10	CHARACTERISTICS OF VISITORS AND THE SURVEY POINT	101
4.11	CHARACTERISTICS OF VISITORS AND CLUB MEMBERSHIP.....	103
4.12	QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE ROUND THE MOUNTAIN TRACK.....	104
4.13	GENERAL COMMENTS MADE BY RESPONDENTS.....	104

SECTION TWO

4.14	SUMMARY.....	106
	Summary of Demographics, Trip Characteristics and Motivation	106
	Information.....	106
	Concerns, Services, Facilities and Development.....	108
	Use of New Zealand's National Parks	108
	Visitors Place of Residence and their Characteristics and Attitudes	110
	Characteristics and Attitudes at Survey Points	111
4.15	SAFETY AND WEATHER INFORMATION.....	111
4.16	GUIDED TOURS IN NEW ZEALAND'S NATIONAL PARKS.....	112
4.17	ECOTOURISM.....	114
4.18	INTERNATIONAL VISITORS TO EGMONT NATIONAL PARK.....	115
4.19	INCORPORATING THE FINDINGS INTO THE MANAGEMENT PICTURE	116
4.20	PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE - MARKET SEGMENTATION IN EGMONT NATIONAL PARK	118

CHAPTER 5 MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL SUMMARY.....	121
5.1 MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS.....	121
5.2 FINAL SUMMARY.....	123
 REFERENCES.....	 125
 APPENDIX ONE - Trail Questionnaire.....	 130
APPENDIX TWO - Questionnaire Used in the Final Survey	136
APPENDIX THREE - Covering Letter Attached to Each Questionnaire	142
APPENDIX FOUR - Letter Giving Permission from the Department of Conservation to Undertake Survey in Egmont National Park.....	143
APPENDIX FIVE - Coding Master for Questionnaires.....	144

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
1. The Interaction of Critical Variables Contributing to the Scenario of Future Trends in Leisure and Tourism	4
2. Dynamic Behavioural Model of a Complex Common Property Resource.....	19
3. Model of the Heritage Visitor Management System	22
4. Location of Egmont National Park	29
5. Standardised Residuals.....	55
6. Percentage of Surveys Collected at Study Locations.....	58
7. Surveys Collected Shown as a Percentage of the Ten Month Survey Period	59
8. Age Structure of Visitors to Egmont National Park	60
9. Normal Place of Residence of Visitors to Egmont National Park	61
10. Club Membership of Visitors to Egmont National Park.....	63
11. Highest Educational Qualification Achieved by Visitors to Egmont National Park.....	64
12. Normal Occupation of Visitors to Egmont National Park.....	65
13. Travel Mode of Visitors to Egmont National Park.....	67
14. Length of Visit to Egmont National Park.....	68
15. Number of People in Visitor Groups to Egmont National Park.....	69
16. Group Composition of Visitors to Egmont National Park.....	70
17. Number of Previous Visits to Egmont National Park	71
18. Location of Other Protected Natural Areas Visited by Respondents.....	72
19. Activities Undertaken by Visitors to Egmont National Park	73
20. The Most Important Influences for Visiting Egmont National Park	74
21. Sources Though Which Visitors Have Seen or Heard Information About Egmont National Park	75
22. Most Influential Information Source for Visitor Decision to Visit Egmont National Park.....	76
23. Information Activities Completed by Visitors Within Egmont National Park.....	77

24.	Responses Expressed as a Percentage to the Question "Did Any of the Following Cause You Concern During Your Visit to Egmont National Park ?"	83
25.	Ratings on Concern Scale of Visitors to Egmont National Park.....	85
26.	Responses Expressed as a Percentage to the Question "How Would You Rate the Following Services and Facilities in Egmont National Park ?"	86
27.	Rating on Services and Facilities Scale by Visitors to Egmont National Park.....	88
28.	Responses Expressed as a Percentage to the Question Do You Think Egmont National Park Should Be Developed to a Greater Extent to Cater For Visitors? How Much Development Would You Like to See in the Following Areas?"	89
29.	Level of Development Scale Desired by Visitors to Egmont National Park.....	91
30.	Visitor Responses to the Question "New Zealand's National Parks Should be Used for the Following ?"	95

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
1. International Tourist Arrivals - Trends in Regional Market Share 1950 - 1992.....	5
2. Data Collection Calculations For Visitors to the Three Major Road-Ends in Egmont National Park.....	48
3. Calculations of Surveys to be Collected Each Month at North Egmont.....	49
4. Calculations of Surveys to be Collected Each Month at East Egmont.....	49
5. Calculations of Surveys to be Collected Each Month at Dawson Falls.....	50
6. Planned Number of Surveys to be Collected Each Month at the Park Huts	51
7. Percent Response to the Question "The Department of Conservation Offers Information About a Variety of Topics in Egmont National Park. As a Park Visitor What Did You Think of the Amount of Information on the Following Topics?"	79
8. Length of Visit to Egmont National Park by Place of Residence (%).....	99
9. Survey Point by Place of Residence (%)	99
10. Previous Visits to Egmont National Park by Place of Residence (%).....	99
11. Level of Education of Visitors to Egmont National Park by Place of Residence (%).....	100
12. Number of Previous Visits to Egmont National Park by Survey Point (%).....	102
13. Length of Visit to Egmont National Park by Survey Point (%).....	102
14. Number of Previous Visits to Egmont National Park by Club Membership (%).....	103
15. Length of Visit to Egmont National Park by Club Membership (%).....	104
16. Summary of Characteristics Displayed by Visitors to Egmont National Park.....	107

LIST OF PLATES

	Page
1. An Example of New Zealand's International Marketing Efforts and Promotion of it's "Green" Image.	14
2. Mt. Egmont/Taranaki.....	30
3. The North Egmont Road-End.....	52
4. The Dawson Falls Road-End	53
5. The East Egmont Road-End.....	53