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ASPECTS OF VISITATION TO EGMON 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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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.
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