

## Destination Image of New Zealand as Perceived by Dutch University Students and the General Dutch Population.

Debby van der Scheer – *Graduated 1999*

### Abstract

Image plays a vital role in the selection process of a tourist destination. Research into destination image provides tourism marketers with valuable information. This information can be used to develop more effective and efficient marketing strategies. The Netherlands is New Zealand's second largest tourist generating market from Central Europe. In addition, trends indicate an increasing world-wide dominance of the youth tourism market. These market factors, together with New Zealand's suitability to the Dutch student market, constitute an important area for research.

This research aimed to examine the images the Dutch have of New Zealand as a holiday destination. This information provides destination marketers with an insight into the effectiveness of past promotional efforts in the Netherlands, New Zealand's competitive position, and the basis on which to develop future campaigns. More specifically, this research aimed to differentiate the images of Dutch University students from the general Dutch population. These two market segments were examined separately to see whether the student market, as a segment, exhibited more potential for New Zealand tourism, compared with the general Dutch market. Marketing campaigns can thereby be tailored to target and attract this important student population.

The methodology in this research was a mall-out questionnaire, incorporating a combination of structured and unstructured questions. The results show that New Zealand is perceived to provide a large number of attributes that the Dutch seek when selecting a holiday destination. This finding indicates that New Zealand is well suited to the Dutch market and that this market is aware of what New Zealand has to offer. The results also highlighted a number of aspects important to the Dutch, which are not perceived to be provided for in New Zealand. These aspects, which could be emphasised in future promotions, include New Zealand's culture, value for money, cultural history and arts and crafts. The Dutch view New Zealand as a distant, warm, peaceful and relaxing place, with a friendly atmosphere. They envisage a vast, beautiful, uncrowded landscape, and conjure associations with sheep, kiwifruit and Maori. Compared to the general population, the students placed greater importance on opportunities for adventure, and perceived New Zealand to provide more outdoor activities.

New Zealand was perceived favorably compared to its key competitor destinations, however, Australia was found to be very similar to New Zealand. The main disadvantages in travelling to New Zealand were considered to be the associated distance and cost.

The image of New Zealand as a holiday destination was not sufficiently differentiated between the two study populations to warrant separate promotional campaigns. However, when the Dutch are selecting a tourist destination, the importance ascribed to certain destination characteristics, significantly varies between the two population segments. If marketers plan to specifically target the student population, this aspect should be considered.

In conclusion, the findings of this research provide a baseline of images the General Dutch and Dutch University students have of New Zealand as a holiday destination. These images can be utilised in developing future marketing campaigns to the Netherlands.