

## **Environmental Values, Attitudes and Behaviours: Issues of sustainability for New Zealand's international backpacker market.**

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### **Abstract**

Tourism in New Zealand is an important industry that relies heavily on the natural environment as its main resource. This has provided the impetus for government and industry to promote a sustainable approach to management and development. The backpacker market, in particular, is becoming increasingly important to New Zealand's tourism industry. This group of visitors is characterised by staying longer, spending more money per visit than other visitors and travelling more into New Zealand's regional communities. It is this desire to get 'off the beaten track' and experience the local communities and environments that has significant implications to the sustainable development and management of New Zealand's tourism industry. The thesis explores the environmental values, attitudes and behaviours of the international backpacker market visiting New Zealand and how this impacts on the sustainable management of the New Zealand Tourism industry. The aims of the research are to (i) determine the environmental attitudes of international backpackers visiting New Zealand, (ii) investigate how backpackers' environmental attitudes translates into behaviour in a travel context and (iii) investigate any constraints they may have experienced in realising their environmental attitudes while visiting New Zealand.

The research adopted a multi-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative data collection. in-depth interviews were conducted to gain a greater understanding of environmental issues especially within a travel context, facing the international backpacker visiting New Zealand. These interviews helped determine the survey instrument. The survey was distributed among 2000 backpackers visiting 20 hostels throughout the South Island of New Zealand, late in the summer season, 2000 and gained a 28.4% response rate.

The research found similar demographics to other Backpacker research based in New Zealand, that backpacker motivations in visiting New Zealand were educational and experienced based with main activities undertaken based on the natural environment and the New Zealand community. Backpackers also appeared to hold strong pro-environmental attitudes and raised concerns about pollution and the exploitation of New Zealand's natural resources. However, this research did raise concerns about the use of the New Environmental Paradigm as an effective tool to determine environmental values in a travel context. The thesis concludes that although the environmental attitudes of international backpackers to the South Island of New Zealand appear to be high, there are a number of factors that influence their environmental behaviour. These include time and money restrictions as well as a lack of awareness of appropriate behaviour and a reluctance to impose their own values and attitudes on the host community.