

Satisfaction with Tourism Experiences. Influences and Measurement.

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Abstract

This study provides a preliminary investigation into tourist satisfaction in the New Zealand tourism industry. It examines the concept of satisfaction with tourism, looking in particular at defining satisfaction and its formation, the ways in which it can be measured and those factors which may influence it.

To this end, a survey was conducted on four sightseeing activities in the Queenstown-Te Anau area, one of New Zealand's primary tourist destinations. Data were collected from 2,302 self-administered questionnaires which included questions upon tourists' socio-demographic, general travel and purchase behaviour characteristics. Four different measures were used to assess the tourists' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the activities and their willingness to recommend them to others – a global satisfaction scale, the critical incidents' technique, individual attribute rating scales and a Likert Scale on willingness to recommend.

It was found that the socio-demographic characteristics of age, gender, nationality and occupation influence tourists' satisfaction with their tourism experience. The degree of control the tourist has over their general travel behaviour appears to influence their satisfaction with the experience. It was found that the product characteristics of length of the trip, number of other people on the trip, and the weather conditions affected the tourist's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the tourism experiences studied.

A split sample was used to test different measures of satisfaction. Strong evidence was found to support the two factor approach to tourist satisfaction in the data collected using the "critical incidents" technique.

Cluster analysis, based on respondents' levels of satisfaction with individual product attributes was performed and three distinct market segments were identified – 'Placid Excellents', 'Reserved Recommenders' and 'Critical Goods'.

The implications and applications of the findings of this study, for both individual tourism operators and the New Zealand tourism industry as a whole, are discussed in the concluding chapters.