

Seasonality in New Zealand: Perceptions of Tourism Operators in Queenstown.

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Abstract

Although the effects of seasonality on the tourism industry and associated businesses are well known, research into the causes, characteristics, and implications of seasonality as it pertains to tourism remains very much in its infancy. Rather than evaluating the more traditional external indicators of seasonality, this research explored the concept of seasonality from the perspective of the tourism operator, using the Queenstown, New Zealand tourism industry as a case study area.

Understanding the perception of the business owner and operator with respect to the impact of seasonality was crucial to determining the effectiveness of strategies implemented to manage and/or counteract seasonality negative impacts. This examination highlighted the principal strategies adopted by the tourism industry in five business sectors to manage the negative effects of seasonality. A qualitative research approach, in the form of semi-structured interviews, was the method chosen to be most effective at assessing perceptions of seasonality in Queenstown.

Resultant data was analysed using framework analysis techniques in order to identify patterns and common themes within the data, leading to the uncovering of four themes in the seasonality perceptions of Queenstown tourism operators: staffing, infrastructure, monetary/management of business, and seasonal peaks. These results and the ensuing discussion were intended to facilitate further communication and consultation among the operators to delineate their challenges and solutions, thus contributing to better planning and sustainable tourism for all operators and stakeholders. The main recommendation is that business plans must not be rigid and inflexible and must be broad enough to cope with change inherent in seasonality.