

## **Undergraduate Student Perceptions of a Career in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry in New Zealand.**

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### **Abstract**

As the highest economic earner the tourism and hospitality industry in New Zealand is often plagued by negative employment characteristics. Previous research has found that tertiary students, seen as the next cohort of management level employees for these industries, tend to share the perception of many of these negative characteristics including low wages, poor working conditions, long working hours and high staff turnover. This thesis aims to highlight New Zealand tertiary students' perceptions of working in the tourism and hospitality industry. Using a mixed method approach this thesis seeks to distinguish what, if any, differences there are in students perceptions based on the type of institution they are enrolled at. Research was conducted at three different institutions; the University of Otago based in Dunedin, the Southern Institute of Technology based in Invercargill and the Pacific International Hotel Management School based in New Plymouth.

The findings of this thesis show that students from the different institutions have very similar perceptions of the tourism and hospitality industry. However, their work experiences, whether part of their curriculum or not, have a much greater influence on their perceptions. Yet, whether this experience is negative or positive seems to have little overall impact on the student's decision to enter the industry upon graduation. This thesis concludes by offering some recommendations to industry and education stakeholders on education methods as well as the need for greater communication between each stakeholder party.