

## **Community Involvement in Tourism Planning in the Catlins, New Zealand.**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines residents' attitudes towards tourism and tourism planning within the Catlins, New Zealand. This rural peripheral area on the lower coast of the South Island has received significant tourist growth over the past decade, resulting in a host community instigating tourism planners to manage this growth. A case study approach was adopted that focused on the community involvement in tourism planning in the Catlins. This increasingly emerging tourist destination in New Zealand presents itself as an ideal case study for this project.

In undertaking planning-related research within a tourism context this project adopts local knowledge as a central method of data collection. Combined with issues identified by eminent planning and tourism literature, this thesis has collected and analysed perceptions on tourism-derived impacts in the Catlins from its residents. The research identified the uniqueness of the community and endeavoured to assist in the long-term sustainability of tourism in the region.

The research discovered that the nature and characteristics of the Catlins community, including demographics and length of residence, make it unique, which may also have a bearing on the attitudes towards tourism. The tourism planning process was found to include a wide variety of stakeholders, who within this study were deemed to have differing levels of importance. Generally tourism is perceived to be a positive influence upon the economic environment while having negative connotations towards the social and physical environments. The need for planning was highly evident, indicating that the host community was integral to the process. In the course of the research, a new model was suggested which offers both a theoretical and practical recognition of the issues facing tourism planners, hence offers new insights into community involvement in tourism planning.

A need for a more collaborative approach was identified, which includes an effective monitoring system and encouragement of the community to participate throughout the tourism planning process.