

Accommodation: Much More than Just a Place to Stay?. An Investigation of the Motivations and Accommodation Use Patterns of International Independent Tourists Staying at Hotels and Bed and Breakfasts in Queenstown, New Zealand.

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Abstract

This study sought to gain insight into the motivations and accommodation use patterns of international independent tourists staying at hotels and B&Bs. An understanding of the needs and wants of tourists is fundamental to an accommodation provider's ability to attract and satisfy customers. However, while much customer-based, behavioural research has been conducted by tourism researchers regarding different types of tourists and various tourism experiences, such a focus appears to have been largely neglected in accommodation studies.

A two-part methodology was employed to meet the study's aim and objectives. Informal interviews were held with six hotel and seven B&B travel parties to elicit from guests, in their own words, the motivations for their accommodation choice and to explore the possibility that some tourists are beginning to favour B&Bs over hotels. The insight gained from these interviews was incorporated into the design of a self-administered questionnaire, which was used to investigate the study's objectives in relation to a larger sample of guests.

In terms of key findings, the results indicate that for many tourists accommodation is seen as much more than just a place to stay, being viewed as an integral part of the wider tourism experience. The importance of experiential motivations relating to tourists' desires for learning and interaction with others, social approval and novelty is suggested in addition to motivations involving tourists' concerns for a convenient location, efficient service, comfortable surroundings and the like. The results also suggest that the patronage of hotels by independent holidaymakers when travelling overseas may be declining, coupled with an increasing use of B&Bs. The seemingly limited ability of hotels to presently offer tourists the wide range of experiences many appear to desire and the possibility that hotels are less well placed to provide guests with perceived good value for money when compared with B&Bs, are discussed as potential explanations for this. In light of the research findings it is suggested that hotels, like B&Bs, may be able to benefit from an experiential management approach, whereby focusing on providing guests with a range of beneficial experiences rather than a sole emphasis on amenity and service provision. Such attention throughout New Zealand hotels could seemingly provide them with the ability to more successfully fulfil the motivations of some independent tourists, hence ensuring the continued patronage of hotels by this customer segment.