An Empirical Investigation of Tourist Crime in New Zealand: Perceptions, Victimisation and Future Implications

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Abstract

The tourism industry is one of the most significant economic industries for many countries including New Zealand. Indeed, tourism provides significant employment, incomes, taxes, investment and developmental benefits for destinations that would not otherwise exist. However, the development of crime in the industry threatens the attractiveness of the tourism product that first motivated to travel. Despite the significance of crime to tourism sustainability, the understanding of the nature of tourist crime is a comparatively under-researched area, particularly in New Zealand. To this end, there is a both the need and opportunity to understand the effect of crime and safety issues on tourist motivations, perceptions and experiences with travel. This study attempted to contribute to this understanding of tourism and crime and in doing so, applied two main methods of data collection. First, a survey of domestic and international tourists was conducted in Christchurch and Queenstown, New Zealand, at investigating crime and safety from the tourists' perspective. Secondly, police statistics of reported crime were used to identify the nature of crimes against tourists using Christchurch's, and indeed the country's only collection of suitable data. The study concluded that tourists appear to be the targets of a number of predatory crimes involving property. This is compounded by the finding that some tourists, for a number of potential reasons, have a relaxed attitude towards taking safety and security precautions. Furthermore, the role of culture was believed to have a potentially significant role in both the nature and level of crimes against tourists. The study also stresses that significant and immediate opportunities exist for tourism destinations, both in increasing the understanding of tourist crime as a social phenomenon and, in seeking ways to prevent and mitigate its development.