

Day Trip Travel in New Zealand: An Exploratory Study of the Invercargill Region.

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Abstract

Tourism is an integral component of New Zealand's economy with tourism expenditure reaching levels of more than \$13 billion (Statistics New Zealand, 2001). Within the overall tourism industry in New Zealand there are two main sub sections: international inbound tourism and domestic tourism. International inbound tourism in New Zealand has been investigated and monitored extensively due, in part, to the ease through which data can be collected and also the attractiveness of the high levels of foreign exchange earnings gained. Despite the fact that domestic tourism is regarded as the backbone of the local tourism industry in New Zealand (Forsyte Research, 2000), research into this sector of the tourism industry has been severely overlooked. Day trip travel is an activity that is enveloped by the domestic tourism sector and, until recently, has not been widely regarded as a tourist activity. However, with the line between recreational and tourism activities becoming increasingly blurred (Hall & Kearsley, 2001), day trip travel and the activities undertaken whilst carrying out these trips are now recognised as part of the tourism industry.

It is the purpose of this study to create an accurate representation of the characteristics, behaviours and motivations of day trip travellers from Invercargill and to provide an accurate base for further research into the domestic day trip travel sector in New Zealand. This will enable tourism providers to maximise their profitabilities whilst also developing their facilities for use by all tourist types. For the purpose of this thesis the definition used for domestic day trip travel declared that it is "travel of at least 40km in one way from home (or travel by aeroplane or ferry service), outside the area in which respondents usually live or work in day by day for a period of no longer than 24 hours" (Forsyte Research, 2000).

A questionnaire survey was created, developed and distributed to 1,000 residences randomly selected from the Invercargill area. Due to a low response rate a second wave of questionnaire distribution was used to another 1,000 randomly selected residences in Invercargill. The data gained from the 316 correctly completed and returned surveys proved to be extremely useful in investigating the respondents' domestic day trip travel behaviours. The key findings from this primary research indicated that there were many different day trip traveller types in terms of demographics, motivation for travel and levels of expenditure. The main motivation for undertaking day trip travel was that of those wishing to take part in a holiday and/or leisure activity. However, in terms of the levels of expenditure distributed, those travelling for the main purpose of visiting friends and relatives (VFR) were recorded as the highest, with the greatest level being spent on shopping. The trends and findings discovered will have implications for New Zealand's tourist providers in regard to the products and services that they provide and also the manner in which these are marketed and advertised to potential customers. The requirements of those undertaking day trip travel will differ from those of all other tourist types, thus the tourist providers must be aware of these variances and act upon them accordingly in order to maximise the potential of their businesses. The information that has been gained through the research into this topic area of

domestic day trip travel and the subsequent trends, findings, conclusions and recommendations for further research will go some way to reversing the problem of the lack of understanding of this sector and should be used as an extensive and solid base for further and more in depth research.