

# How to improve attitudes towards tourists



## RESEARCH

‘Beyond social exchange theory. Attitudes towards tourists’

by Professor Colleen Ward and Tracy Berno (2011)

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## Background

International tourist expenditure accounts for \$9.6 billion of New Zealand’s total export earnings. Tourism directly contributes \$6.2 billion to New Zealand’s GDP and the industry employs 120,000 people.

Tourism is a considerable contributor to the New Zealand economy, however not all New Zealanders are tolerant of the tourist market.

The Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research, part of Victoria University of Wellington, undertook a study about the positive and negative attitudes towards tourists in New Zealand.

## Main research findings

People who work in the tourism sector have better attitudes about tourists than those who work in other areas.

People who see the benefits of tourism across a variety of domains e.g. social, cultural, and economic have a more positive attitude toward tourists.

Frequent and satisfying contact with tourists leads to positive attitudes towards tourism.

The perception of tourists as a threat, e.g. increasing cost of living or environmental damage, leads to negative attitudes towards tourism.

Negative stereotyping and the fear of not being able to interact and communicate with people from other cultures exists in New Zealand.

## Relevance of findings to New Zealand

New Zealanders need to learn more about the different cultures of tourists to reduce the insecurity that is inherent in some interactions.

More freely available information about the tourists’ cultures will prevent negative stereotyping, and lead to increased attitudes about tourists.

The benefits of tourism need to be emphasised and publicised in a wider forum. E.g. tourism provides a considerable contribution to the New Zealand economy and creates jobs.

Tourism provides the opportunity to portray New Zealand as a hospitable, friendly country. This can have a ‘spill over’ effect into other parts of the economy, and may assist in attracting more businesses and skilled migrants to New Zealand.