

Young Peoples' Perceptions of Careers in the Tourism Industry



Contents

Introduction	3
Motivations for career choice	7
Views on career options	9
What does ‘tourism’ mean?	12
What job/career opportunities are people aware of?	13
What type of people are drawn to a career in tourism?	14
Why a career in tourism (motivations)?	15
Why <u>not</u> a career in tourism (barriers)?	16
Tourism as a secondary school subject	18
Key influences/influencers on career decision-making	21
Timeline of influences	27
How is tourism positioned currently?	29
Recommendations	30

Introduction

Background

The tourism industry in New Zealand is already experiencing labour and skills shortages and there is a need for more workers to meet rising demand: 18,000 job openings are forecast in the next five years alone. Tourism Industry Aotearoa's *People and Skills 2025* framework states that members rate 'People and Skills' the second most important issue for the wider tourism industry, and first equal in importance for their own business. The roles in which shortages are forecast are most commonly forecast are accommodation managers, chefs, waiters, baristas, taxi drivers, travel and tourism advisors, and tour guides – a range that reflects the diversity and complexity of the tourism workforce.

Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED) partnered with Tourism Industry Aotearoa to commission this research on how young people in New Zealand view tourism as a career option. This understanding of current perceptions will inform future work promoting tourism careers, particularly in introducing fresh perspectives on tourism as a viable and attractive career choice.

Objectives

The primary objective of this research was to establish a baseline understanding of young peoples' awareness of, and attitudes towards, careers in the tourism industry. Specific areas to be addressed included: -

- How young people learn about, and form opinions of, career options
- How a tourism career is viewed in general
- What specific perceptions young people have about a career in tourism

Findings will be used to inform the development of a package of initiatives to attract young New Zealanders to the industry.

Introduction (*continued*)

Methodology

This was a sizeable qualitative research study, involving: -

- 9 focus groups with **young people** aged 13-24 years (n=53 respondents in total)
- 2 focus groups with **parents** of young people aged 13-24 years (n=12 respondents in total)
- 6 individual interviews with **Careers Advisors**

The specific characteristics of the sample, and the locations in which the groups/interviews were conducted, are summarised in the following tables.

Young people

GROUP	LOCATION	AGE	SAMPLE (N=)	GENDER	ETHNICITY	SOCIO-ECONOMIC	OTHER
1	Auckland	13-15 year olds	6	n=26 male n=27 female	n=43 NZ European n=15 Māori n=2 Samoan n=1 CI Māori n=4 Other (Filipino, Sri Lankan, Vietnamese, Cook Islander) *some respondents identified with more than one ethnicity	n=14 high n=21 middle n=18 low	n=27 <u>secondary school students</u> who had thought about career options and had some idea of what they wanted to do n=6 <u>secondary school students</u> who are studying tourism at school n=3 <u>tertiary students</u> who are studying tourism n=4 people who are <u>employed full-time</u> and working in tourism and hospitality n=24 people <u>at any stage</u> who said they are familiar with tourism career options n=18 people <u>at any stage</u> who are interested in tourism as a career
2	Auckland	16-19 year olds	6				
3	Auckland	20-24 year olds	6				
4	Christchurch	13-15 year olds	6				
5	Christchurch	16-19 year olds	6				
6	Nelson	13-15 year olds	7				
7	Nelson	20-24 year olds	6				
8	Rotorua	16-19 year olds	6				
9	Rotorua	20-24 year olds	4				

Introduction (*continued*)

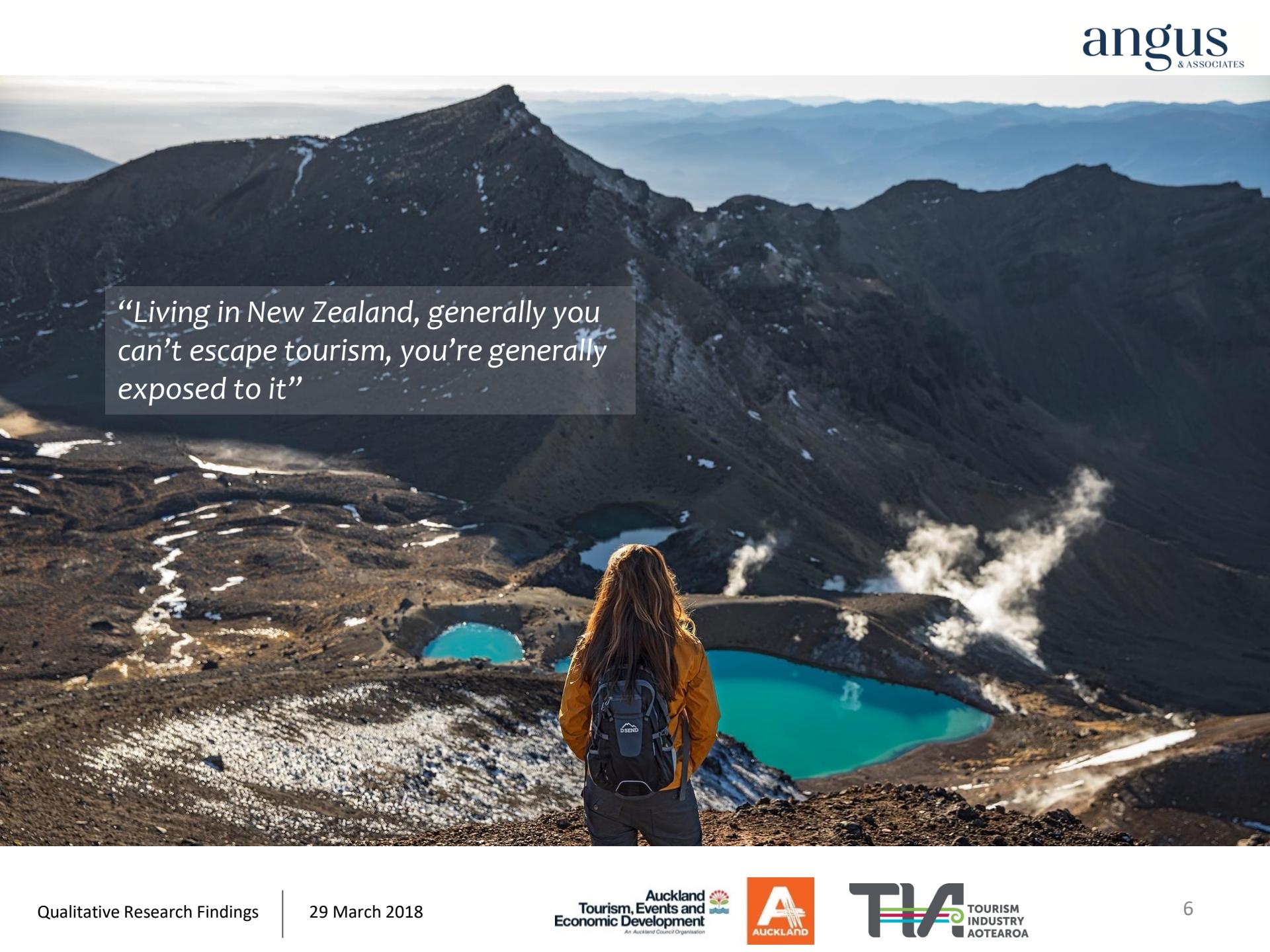
Methodology *continued*

Parents

GROUP	LOCATION	SAMPLE (N=)	ETHNICITY	SOCIO-ECONOMIC
1	Auckland	6	n=8 NZ European n=2 Māori n=1 Samoan n=1 Tongan n=1 Chinese n=1 Indian	n=4 high n=4 middle n=4 low
2	Christchurch	6	*some respondents identified with more than one ethnicity	

Careers Advisors

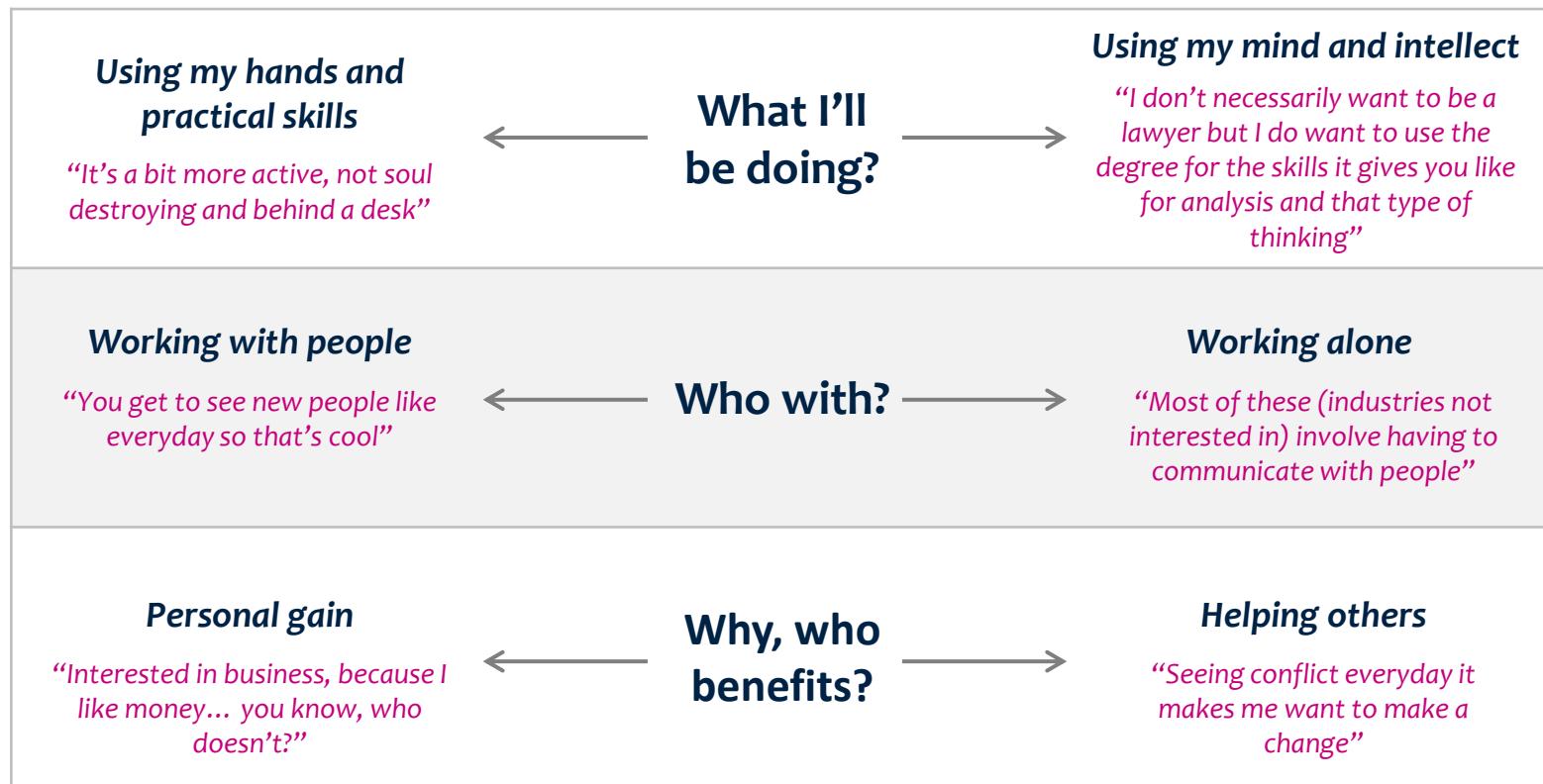
INTERVIEW	LOCATION	DECILE
1	Auckland	1, 3, 6, 8, 10
2	Christchurch	*decile within region has not been specified to preserve the confidentiality of individual respondents
3	Nelson	
4	Rotorua	
5	Wellington	



“Living in New Zealand, generally you can’t escape tourism, you’re generally exposed to it”

Motivations for Career Choice

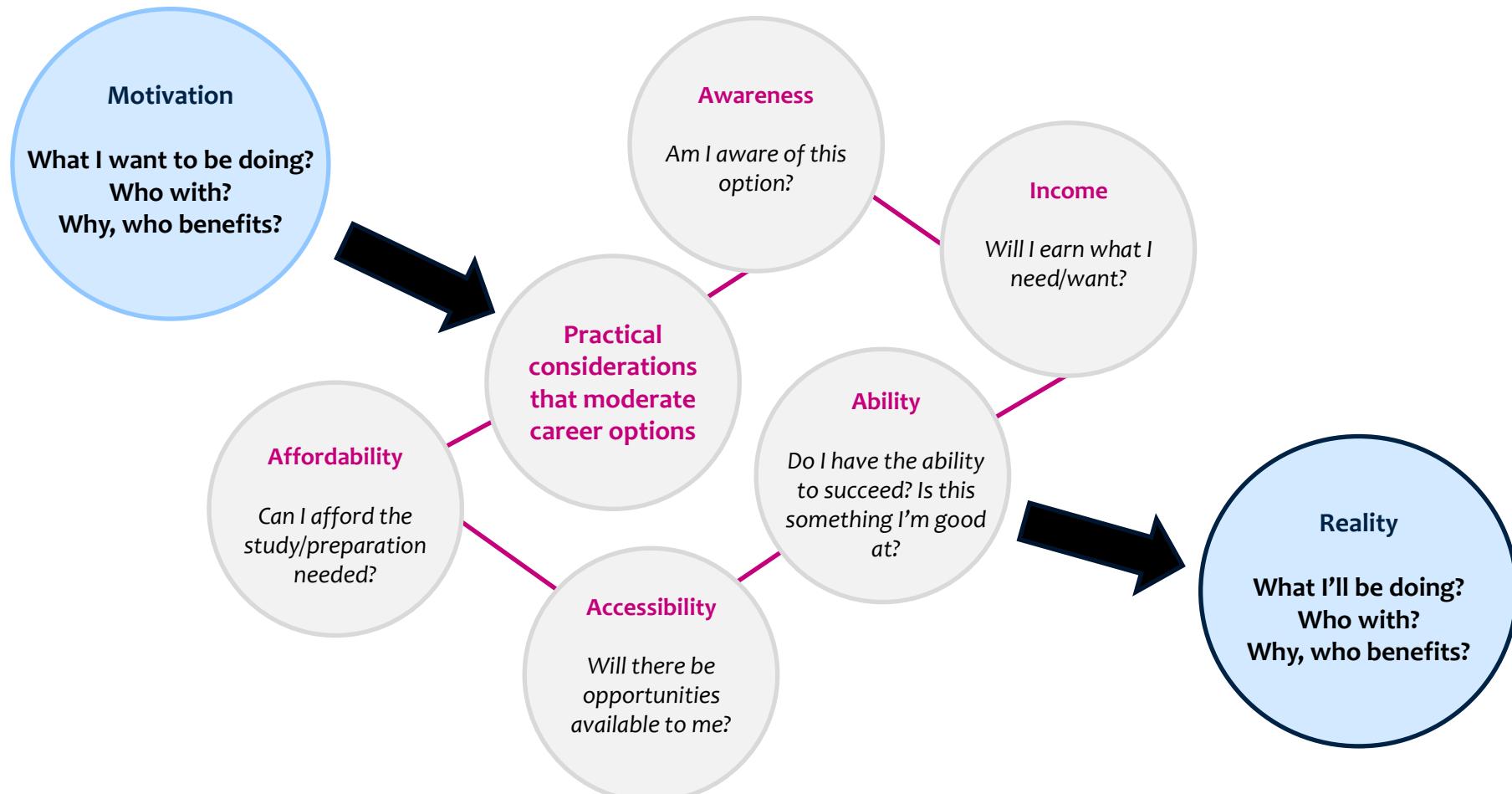
As context for the following discussion of tourism as a career option, it is useful to understand the range of motivations that apply to career choice. These motivations vary by individual and personal circumstance but can be broadly grouped as follows.



Young people talk of making choices based on a combination of these factors: their desire to work alone or with others; their desire to work in a field that's practical or more academic; the extent of their desire to help others or to work instead for personal gain.

Motivations for Career Choice (continued)

These factors (previous page) are moderated by more practical considerations of **awareness** (of options), perceived **ability**, **affordability** (of the study or other background preparation needed) and **accessibility** of opportunity - that dictate thinking on career options and eventual choices. **Income potential** is also an important factor, although more important to some young people than to others.



View on Career Options

Young people form views on career choices from their own personal experience – for example, whether they know someone who works in that field, how that career choice is viewed by friends, family and the young person’s wider network of contacts (including teachers and other key influencers) - and how those career choices are portrayed in social media, film, music, books and other expressions of popular culture*.

While typically having more than one defining characteristic, some careers are strongly associated with a specific motivation. For example:

Using my hands and practical skills: Builder, chef, plumber, farmer, driver, fitness instructor

Using my mind and intellect: Lawyer, writer, scientist

Working with people: Hospitality worker, customer service agent, tour guide

Working alone: Computer programmer, artist, researcher

Personal gain: Business manager, stockbroker, real estate agent

Helping others: Doctor, nurse, teacher

* See pages 21 - 26 for more on career influences/influencers



Some career options are also seen as more accessible than others; because of the number of jobs available, their geographic distribution, and/or because there are few barriers to entry (qualifications and/or experience). In general, there is seen to be an inverse relationship between number of job opportunities and educational qualifications, and between number of job opportunities and income potential.

Views on Career Options (*continued*)

The following examples show how these factors play out in relation to a range of career options.

Business

For people motivated by money/personal gain, and those with an interest in working with others (albeit from a position of authority). Characterised as ambitious, goal-oriented, often money-motivated but also outgoing and socially adept.

Requires **tertiary education or work experience**, Extent of opportunity: **moderate**
Income potential: **high**

Law

Depending on the type of law (commercial, criminal, family), for people motivated by money/personal gain, by a desire to work with their mind/intellect, and/or by a desire to help others. Characterised as strong-minded, independent, smart (and sometimes caring).

Requires **tertiary education**
Extent of opportunity: **moderate**
Income potential: **high**

Education

For people who enjoy working with people and who are motivated by a desire to help others. Characterised as family men/women, kind, honest and caring.

Requires **tertiary education**
Extent of opportunity: **moderate**
Income potential: **moderate/low**

Health

For people who have a desire to use their knowledge and skills to help others. Characterised as private, responsible, studious, serious, caring, committed to helping others.

Education qualifications, extent of opportunity and income potential **vary based on job type**: e.g. doctor vs age care worker

Science

For people wanting to work with their mind/intellect and preferring to work alone. Characterised as intellectually curious, hard-working, introverted, a bit of a “geek”.

Requires **tertiary education**
Extent of opportunity: **limited**
Income potential: **moderate/high**

Tourism

For people who enjoy working with people. Characterised as fun, outgoing, friendly, sociable (“a people person”), easy-going, adventurous, young (with few ties), “living in the moment” with few ambitions and no clear direction.

Requires **little education or prior experience**.
Extent of opportunity: **high**
Income potential: **low**

"I've always considered myself a real kiwi and tourism in New Zealand is very specific to that and the outdoors culture, Māori culture, loving New Zealand landscapes. That's influenced me in terms of my thinking about tourism as a career option"



What does ‘tourism’ mean?

The top of mind association with ‘tourism’ is “*travelling*” internationally and all that it entails (adventure, exploration, excitement, fun, freedom).

“Tourism can be like a hobby”

In a career context, ‘tourism’ is most often associated with the **organisation of travel** (travel agents, tour operators), **transport services** (air hostesses, tour bus drivers, pilots) and **activities and attractions** (adventure tourism, museums).

“I just think of travel agents and people travelling”

When prompted a little further, young people speak of **hospitality** (primarily linking accommodation services to tourism – e.g. hotels, motels – and fewer food and beverage services such as bars, restaurants, cafes), **conferences and events**, and **supporting products and services** (e.g. web design/apps, data analysis).

It is only on reflection that young people arrive at a definition that includes “*anything tourists use when they go to a country would be tourism, wouldn’t it? Airports and shops*” although it is clear that, even then, there remains some ambiguity as to what constitutes ‘tourism’.

“Anything like the warehouse, dealing with tourists, is that tourism?”

“I wouldn’t consider retail tourism – people buy clothes and stuff but I wouldn’t call it tourism. I guess it’s about the type of shop and where it’s located, like people go to Milan to buy clothes... Glassons isn’t exactly a tourist attraction.”

In thinking about tourism, there is an almost exclusive focus on international markets/inbound visitors.

What job/career opportunities are people aware of?

Top-of-mind jobs are frontline, operational roles – travel agents, tour operators and guides, customer service, chefs, concierges, cleaners, event co-ordinators, waitresses – many of which are seen as casual, short-term roles and often “*not the most reliable jobs*”. Many of these jobs are also seen to be low pay jobs.

“It’s a very flat pyramid, there’s many jobs down the bottom”

This, and the sheer diversity of the industry, where “*there are so many paths you can take*”, make it difficult for people to imagine what a career in the tourism industry might look like. There are few concrete examples on which to draw – unlike careers in law, medicine or business, for example.

“I’ve been studying tourism for two years and I still don’t know that many jobs. It’s like uncertain territory, if you study medicine there’s one path, you become a doctor. If you study tourism there’s no set job at the end. You can start your job as tour guide and end up as general manager”

There are seen to be few barriers to entering tourism because “*you don’t need to study travel and tourism to work in travel and tourism*”. Instead, tourism is seen as an experience-based industry.

“It’s an industry where you need experience and you work your way up.”

“It’s quite DIY, there’s no specific theory around it, it’s more experience-based”

Added to this are perceptions of tourism as a subject at secondary school level being a “*bum subject*”. This makes a career in tourism difficult to imagine and undesirable to many.

What type of people are drawn to a career in tourism?

Tourism is seen to attract extroverts; people who enjoy face to face interaction and strong communicators who thrive in social situations. It is also seen to attract people who enjoy travelling, have an interest in the outdoors, and a pride in their country; people who want to share these passions with others.

Tourism is seen to attract practical, hands-on people; those who don't want to be stuck in an office and behind a desk all day; people who are doers, not so much those who are thinkers.

"I've always considered myself a real kiwi and tourism in New Zealand is very specific to that and the outdoors culture, Māori culture, loving New Zealand landscapes. That's influenced me in terms of my thinking about tourism as a career option"

Tourism jobs are for people who love life, live in the moment, enjoy adventure, are easy-going, and value fun and flexibility. Tourism jobs are seen as suitable for people who are happy not to be tied down to a specific location or are able to travel wherever the job takes them. Tourism careers are not for those who dislike people contact, or for those who need certainty, structure and routine.

"I think the perceived perks like travelling offset the low pay"

Most worryingly, a career in tourism is not seen to be for the ambitious – a job in tourism is a short-term option, one you do for the enjoyment or immediate income and not for the career prospects.

Why a career in tourism (motivations)?

Young people see benefits in a tourism career:

The opportunity to be involved in a growing/significant industry

I can be sure of employment and there are lots of opportunities looking forward

The opportunity to be involved in an industry that showcases the country

I'm able to share my passion of New Zealand

Tourism is a global industry

I'll get to travel myself and work in other countries

Tourism offers variety, something different every day, the work is fun/exciting/interesting/ flexible

I won't be bored, stuck in an office everyday and doing the standard nine to five desk job

Tourism involves working with people, delivering potentially life-changing experiences

I enjoy working with people and making other people happy

Tourism is inspirational to others

Others will see my career in tourism as fun and exciting

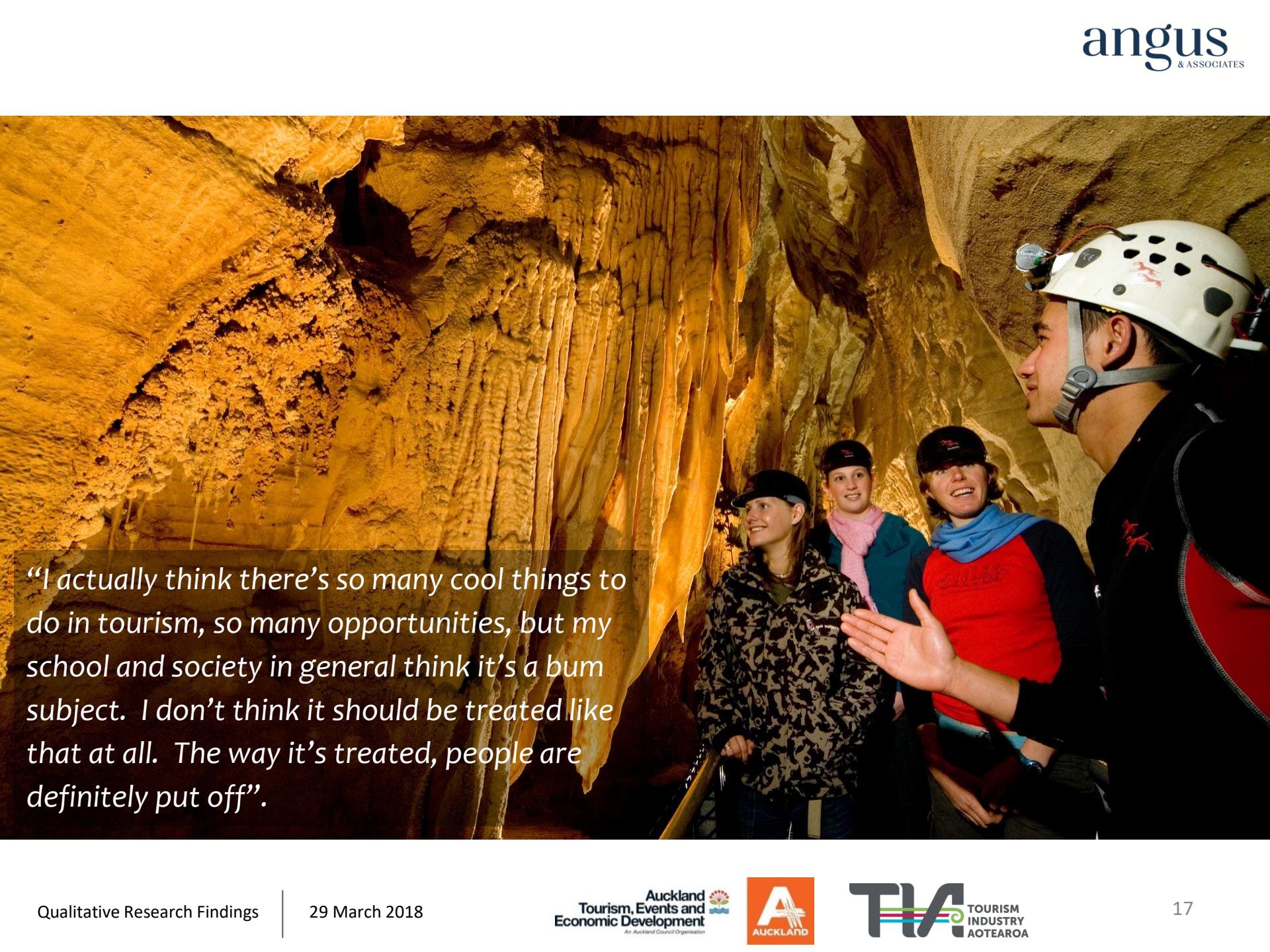
Tourism offers opportunities to all

I am able to work hard and move my way up in the industry

Why not a career in tourism (barriers)?

A range of barriers exist when considering tourism as a career option:

People aren't aware/don't immediately think of a career in tourism as an option	<i>I just didn't know about the opportunities available</i>
People focus primarily on the frontline, operational roles and don't understand the range of opportunities that exist	<i>I just didn't realise there were so many things you could do</i>
Tourism jobs are seen as short term	<i>I would eventually need to move on to another industry to start a career</i>
Tourism is seen as easy - it's for those without the skills to make it elsewhere, and for those without ambition	<i>This isn't me, I can do better</i>
Tourism jobs are poorly paid and there are few opportunities to advance/earn more in the future	<i>I want to be well-paid for what I do</i>
People in tourism and hospitality work antisocial hours	<i>I want to spend time with my friends and family when they're not working too</i>
People in tourism have to live where the work is	<i>I don't want to constantly move, I want to decide where I live</i>
Tourism jobs have a low status; they involve serving others and not being served	<i>I want people to think I'm important</i>
Tourism is a second-class subject at secondary level	<i>I didn't want to take tourism, it's only unit standards, not university-approved and it would just narrow my options</i>
Tourism is intimidating/uncomfortable for those who don't like dealing with people	<i>I would prefer a backroom job where I don't have to deal with people</i>

A photograph of four people in a cave. Three women are standing on the right, looking towards the left where a man is gesturing while speaking. The cave walls are made of large, textured rock formations. The lighting is warm and focused on the people.

“I actually think there’s so many cool things to do in tourism, so many opportunities, but my school and society in general think it’s a bum subject. I don’t think it should be treated like that at all. The way it’s treated, people are definitely put off”.

Tourism as a secondary school subject

The ‘tourism’ subject is generally offered at secondary schools at years 12 and 13 (NCEA level 2 and 3), although some schools do offer the subject earlier. The subject is referred to differently from school to school – with ‘tourism’, ‘travel & tourism’ and ‘tourism and hospitality’ given as examples by research participants. This, in itself, may contribute to the uncertainty that surrounds careers in the tourism industry.

A common top-of-mind perception for young people when discussing tourism as a subject is that it’s a “*bum subject*”. It’s perceived as a subject for ‘non-academic’ students - those who are unlikely to meet the requirements for university – and not as a choice for students with a genuine interest in the subject. It’s also not a ‘traditional’ school subject so knowledge is limited and many simply don’t know what the subject really entails.

“At my old school travel and tourism was known as a drop out subject. My friends and I took it for the teacher...”

“I remember back in school that if you didn’t get into the math or science classes you’d just go do tourism and hospitality. It’s like the second choice so that’s probably why lots of people had a negative view of it”

There are students who take tourism out of interest or because they view tourism as a potential career option, but other factors appear to be more prominent. Tourism (along with other ‘non-academic’ subjects) occupies space as a “*filler*” subject: a subject that a student will take because they have a gap in their timetable, haven’t met requirements to enter other subjects, or are looking for “*easy credits*”. Furthermore, it’s not a university-approved subject so any credits gained from the tourism subject don’t contribute to gaining university entrance. This effectively eliminates the subject as a viable option for those looking to go to university or looking to gain achievement endorsements at school (NCEA merit and excellence endorsements).

“I applied for the tourism class and the person running careers advised me to go into science because she said I’d be wasting my talent, wasting my potential”

“A lot of people don’t take unit standard subjects to try get endorsements”

Tourism as a secondary school subject (*continued*)

The manner in which tourism is taught in schools was also questioned by young people who described it as “*where you fill out a booklet in class*”. Beyond teachers simply handing out booklets for completion, there doesn’t appear to be much more to the subject in the eyes of students who have taken the class or who have heard about it through friends. One positive endorsement of the tourism subject was simply because “*the teacher was so nice, she didn’t really care what you did*”.

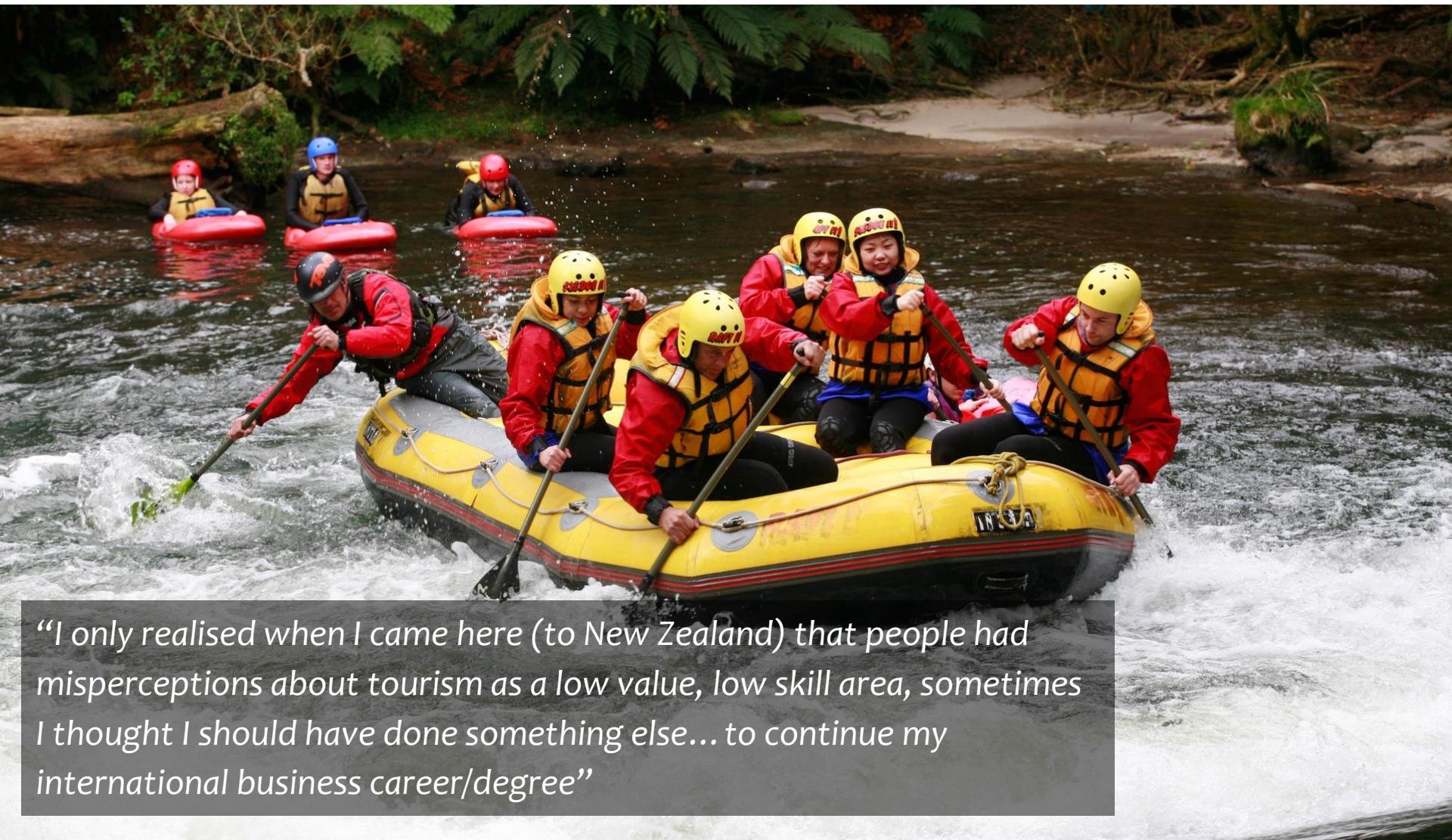
The passion that teachers may or may not have for their subjects/classes is noted as a key factor in how students perceive the subject. Simply, teachers teaching the ‘tourism’ subject who do not have a knowledge or background in the industry (e.g. having taught geography prior to taking a tourism class) are less likely to deliver the subject with ‘passion’ and to encourage students to pursue a career in tourism.

“*The current (tourism) teacher was teaching Samoan, it was decided because that teacher had a gap in their timetable... you can sense that I have a problem with that, because I think if someone’s teaching something they need to have passion about it... if I was teaching something I wasn’t passionate about I’ll just sit there and give them the work books... It’s a different experience*” **Careers Advisor in Wellington**

The view of tourism as a “*bum subject*” at school contributes to the negative perceptions of careers in the tourism and, to many, this is a deterrent to consideration of tourism as a career option.

“*Schools don’t approve, parents don’t approve and your peers don’t approve*”.

“*I actually think there’s so many cool things to do in tourism, so many opportunities, but my school and society in general think it’s a bum subject. I don’t think it should be treated like that at all. The way it’s treated, people are definitely put off*”.



“I only realised when I came here (to New Zealand) that people had misperceptions about tourism as a low value, low skill area, sometimes I thought I should have done something else... to continue my international business career/degree”

Key influences/influencers on career decision-making

Parents are key influencers, through their own choices of work/career or through what they value (whether from a career perspective or more broadly). Parents themselves vary greatly in their approach – from no involvement, to unquestioning support for their children’s choice, to gentle guidance, direction or outright insistence. At the extreme are instances of parents directing their children to pursue careers they themselves wanted but were unable to pursue.

“My main thing would be it’s really up to them on what pathway they choose” Parent in Auckland

“I would say study something that when you finish you have a specific role and a job description... We always talk about this dream, this passion and encouraging them to follow their passion but sometimes passion is there but you get so disappointed when you can’t get a job” Parent in Auckland

“My mum’s a lawyer and I don’t really understand why my parents want me to be a doctor. I think it was because mum wanted to be a doctor first, she wants her kids to do what she couldn’t do”

“My dad owns a business so business has always been familiar to me”

When it comes to tourism, many young people believe that their parents have very limited knowledge of tourism careers, which results in negative views.

“Our parents just want us to do the best, have the best opportunities, and this (tourism) wasn’t really a subject when they went to school. They see university as the peak and tourism isn’t a traditional subject”

“I don’t think my parents would understand what tourism was all about. They’d just think about travel guides and air hostesses, that’s about it”

Parents’ Perceptions of...

Careers in Tourism

- *Growing industry with many job opportunities*
- *Many low-pay service roles*
- *Many un/low-skilled roles*
- *Questionable long-term viability working in tourism*
- *Constant travel to go where the demand for workers is*
- *Outdoorsy roles, a ‘doing’ job*
- *High staff turnover, lacks job security*
- *Struggle to see a ‘career’ or career path in tourism*

Tourism as a Subject

- *Non-academic subject*
- *Prefer kids to go to university - the “traditional route”*
- *Easy subject, their children can do better*

Key influences/influencers on career decision-making (*continued*)

Siblings, other family members and close family friends (especially older siblings/family members) also influence choices, through their own choices of study/career. This influence becomes even more pronounced if parents, siblings and/or other family members have followed similar study/career paths.

“My parents and family, we have a long history of people serving in the military, I want to be the one who makes the family proud...”

“My uncle has been in the police force... told me to go gain experience first, he’s probably the reason why I want to be a police officer”

The tacit support/disapproval siblings and other family members show for a young person's emerging study or career preferences also has an impact.

“My kids have older cousins who have been through university, so they ask them what do you reckon about this and that” Parent in Auckland

Peers, again through their choices of study/career and their support for/disapproval of a young person's emerging study or career preferences, are a key influence on young peoples' study and career choices.

“Also my friends during high school (were an influence), always veer towards what your friends are doing, what they’re into, 60-70% of my friends did commerce (so I did)”

“I thought all my friends are going to uni so I should do”

Key influences/influencers on career decision-making (*continued*)

Beyond a young person's immediate network of family and friends, **careers advisors** influence decision-making through the options they choose to present to young people and through their encouragement/discouragement of emerging study and career preferences.

"I applied for the tourism class and the person running careers advised me to go into science because she said I'd be wasting my talent, wasting my potential"

"She was great, she's always booked out, people always say she's really great, she's a drama teacher and she's creative, she brings up courses and ideas that you wouldn't have thought of. She doesn't look at your marks but you as a person and your strengths and weaknesses, who you are as a person"

In the eyes of careers advisors, their role is primarily to guide students on their career path, taking into consideration what their skills and interests are. This approach can be seen as 'uninspiring' by some students and helpful by others.

*"I would never tell a student what to do or how to do it, it's always student driven so I'm just there guiding them, helping and supporting..." **Careers Advisor in Wellington***

*"I used to ask what they want to do and put that aside and ask what else they think they want to do but this often confused students, so we've just found it's better to work with what they're presenting. I was trying to get them to think outside the square but it didn't work" **Careers Advisor in Auckland***

"They suggest something that is achievable for you and not setting you up to fail"

"Our careers advisor was good at providing information but she wasn't very good with advice if I said I wanted to talk through ideas. I was looking for information on what I should do, not where I should go. I would have liked to be given options, 'you could also do this'".

Careers Advisors' Perceptions of...

Careers in Tourism

- *Growing industry with many job opportunities*
- *For friendly, outgoing students, with an "x-factor" personality*
- *Service/customer-facing roles top of mind*
- *Admit limited knowledge in this space*

Tourism as a Subject

- *Not recommended to students capable of obtaining university entrance - non-academic subject*
- *Often place students into tourism if they have no other options*
- *Not taught the right way to represent tourism as a career choice*
- *Experience is more important than qualifications*
- *Better off studying other subjects even if interested in a tourism career – keep options open*

Key influences/influencers on career decision-making (*continued*)

Teachers are also role models, representative of the particular area in which they teach and through their encouragement/discouragement of study choices.

"(At primary school) The teacher influenced me by being happy and enthusiastic"

"Teachers said I was good at numbers, that encouraged me"

"Ended up choosing science because I liked it and because at school my science teachers were really cool and that influenced me"

"I think if you have a teacher you like, then you like the subject"

"It depends on who is teaching it, our students tend to pick subjects with teachers they enjoy going to, it's a real relationship type of school. In the past it's been booming with teachers and when they've changed, the rolls fall" – Careers Advisor Wellington

Teachers can be seen as the most well-placed to build influential relationships with students in the schooling system given that they are likely to have the most face time with students.

"Young mum's school a different environment, you got to know the teachers and them you, I felt like they actually cared for me and that's why I valued their opinions"

"Some teachers are more helpful than others, they understand us more, some have passion and they inspire us"

Key influences/influencers on career decision-making (*continued*)

At their best, **careers expos and career presentations** expose students to a wide range of opportunities and enable students to gain insightful knowledge about a specific area.

(Talking about careers expos) "That's what our schools are really good for"

"Careers expos are very helpful, you see things that you might not have thought of"

"Talking to current students about what they were doing, that was useful"

Specific career presentations were noted as particularly helpful as these go beyond simply distributing information to offering advice and insight into a pathway.

(Talking about industry career presentation) "They actually explain about what you want to do"

"Talking to universities gives you some insight into where certain degrees can leave you"

"At school we would have people come and talk to us, about uni and things, then had a girl come and talk to us and she told me about business, about what I could do, people with successful jobs"

The **general school environment** and the school's culture and traditions can also have a strong influence on how different subjects are seen. This can also affect whether subjects beyond the 'traditional' school subjects are even offered.

"I went to an all girls school, we were more encouraged to take math and science. We were invited to girls engineering days at Auckland Uni (to encourage girls into those subject areas)"

*"We unfortunately don't offer tourism as a subject, we used to but one of the head of departments didn't view it as an academic subject and canned it... We're a very traditional school, we have the very standard subjects..." **Careers Advisor in Christchurch***

Key influences/influencers on career decision-making (*continued*)

Socio-economic status plays a critical role in career and study choices. A family's current financial circumstances or the financial circumstances that existed during a young person's upbringing can make consideration of career options an unaffordable luxury: simply finding work is the priority, regardless of what that work is.

"I just want a stable career for our kids"

"I don't want to struggle"

Environmental factors, including social media, film, television, literature, and music, also impact decision-making through their influence on personal values and priorities, and through their direct or indirect portrayal of people in different careers.

"Social media exposes you to more unconventional career paths"

"I'm influenced by my culture and my people, you'll see violence daily... just seeing conflict everyday makes me want to make a change"

"I only realized when I came here (to New Zealand) that people had misperceptions about tourism as a low value, low skill area, sometimes I thought I should have done something to continue my international business career/degree"

Finally, the realities of the **work environment and relationships with work colleagues** play a role in how young people view career options and whether they choose to continue on a path or look elsewhere.

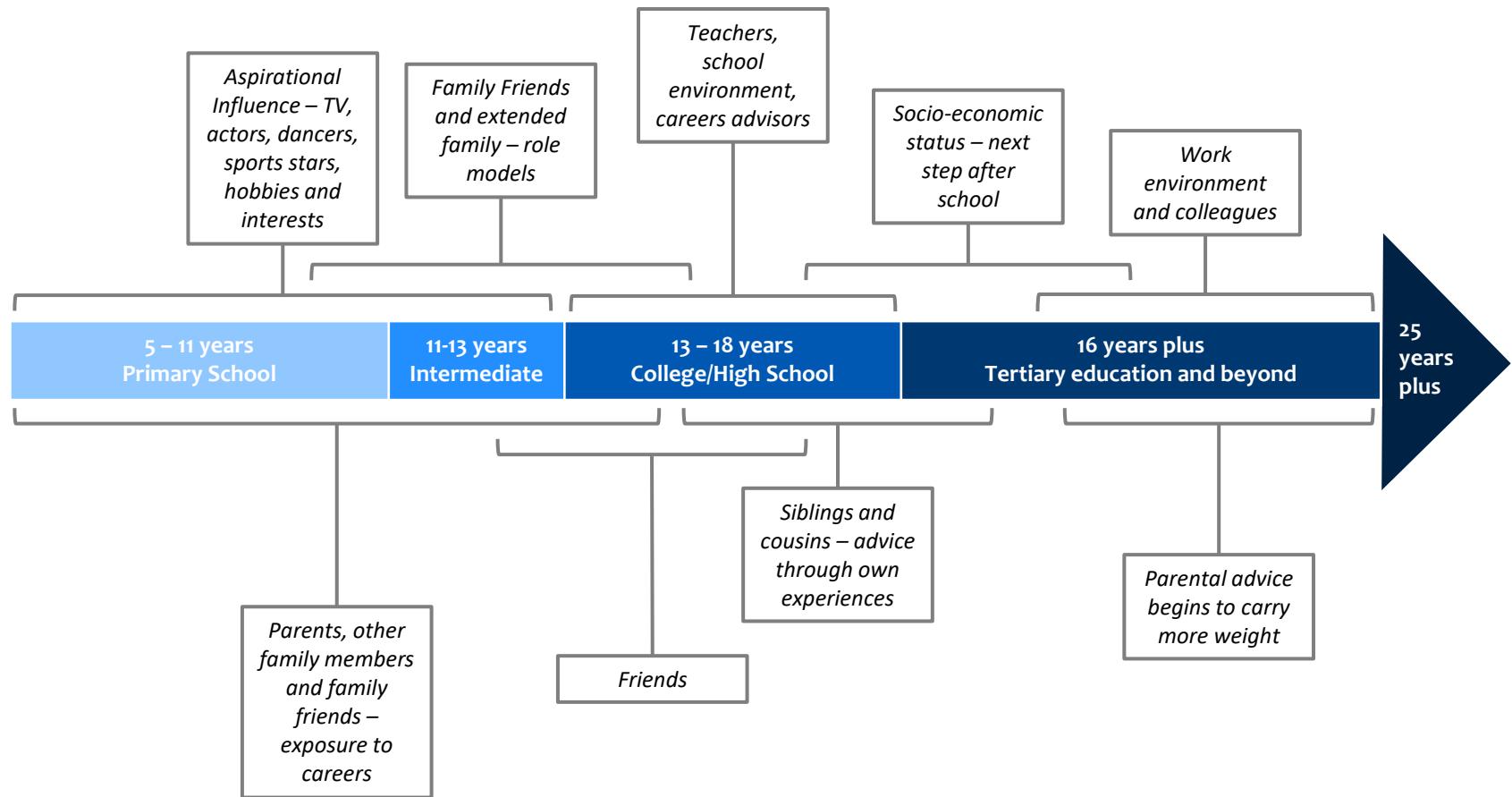
"I always had it in my mind that it was an easy degree, the papers were always easy at uni and you could put your own spin on it but I've learned through my work that it's nothing like that"

"Since landing my job, it's kind of changed what I want to do... I guess once you get a taste of it your perceptions kind of like... change"

"I currently work in the health sector and that's really broadened my perspective of the whole industry"

Timeline of Influences

Many of the influences discussed are a 'constant' (e.g. the influence of parents as they "keep tabs on" their children from birth to adulthood). However, from the discussions with young people, it is apparent that the weight and timing of other influences varies, each becoming more or less prominent at different stages of their lives.

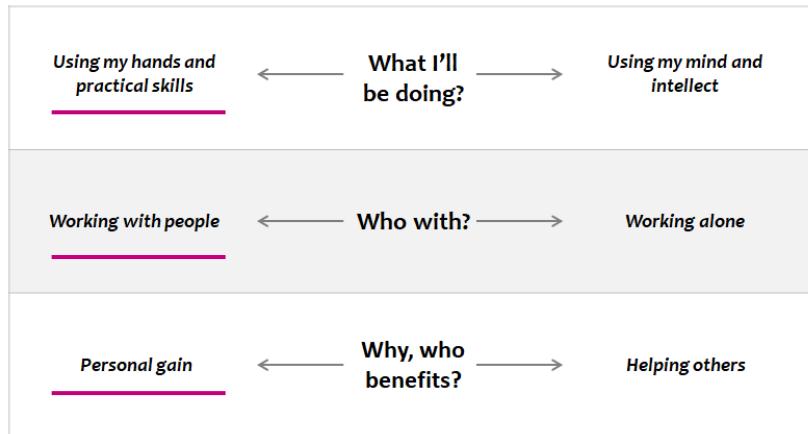




“The industry’s changing, it’s our biggest industry and it’s so much more accessible now, so there are more people coming across and it’s growing. The perception is changing, as our generation grows up it will change even more”

How is tourism positioned currently?

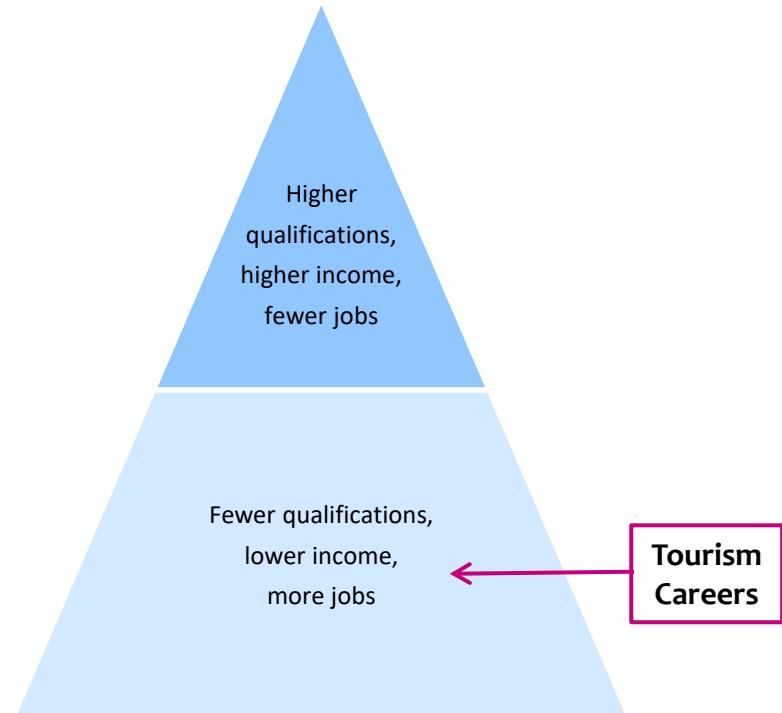
Linking back to the models discussed on pages 7 and 9, the following illustrate how tourism careers are currently positioned n the minds of young people:



What I'll be doing? – **Using my hands and practical skills**, strongly associated with the outdoors, doers, not thinkers

Who with? – **Working with people**, servicing other people, working in teams

Why, who benefits? – **Personal gain** (not financial), self enjoyment, travelling and living in the moment



Recommendations

Promoting the tourism industry: The current research findings suggest that a wider strategy is required to change perceptions of the tourism industry. This will provide important context for the promotion of tourism careers, but will also support the industry's efforts to attract investment, build social license and achieve other objectives.

Reframe the discussion: As far as tourism careers are concerned, there is a need to directly address current misperceptions. Far from being all about part-time/casual hospitality work, the sector offers an exciting and diverse range of career options for people of all types (including those with big aspirations!). However, young people – and their parents - struggle to define what these career options are. Speaking of 'careers in tourism' is too vague and currently suggests only a limited range of (mostly low-paying) jobs. To correct misperceptions and to broaden New Zealanders' understanding of 'tourism' and 'tourism careers', it is important to promote a range of specific careers and career pathways within the tourism industry, including both high priority sectors from a labour and skills shortage point of view and those that showcase less well-understood opportunities.

As examples, consider customer-facing and backroom careers; entry-level to senior management roles; employment/self-employment; operational/strategic/technical careers' roles in pretty much every discipline you can think of – IT, education, management, sales and marketing, finance, science, customer experience, product/service design and innovation, social media, AI etc.

Highlight competitive advantages: A global industry offering global opportunities, people-centred, fun, flexible, dynamic and personally rewarding (dealing with people from around the globe and all walks of life, delivering life-changing experiences, working with a product of which New Zealanders are immensely proud and much of the world envious).

Address perceived disadvantages: Embark on myth-busting – using real life examples of people working across the tourism industry to counter perceptions that all jobs are low-status, poorly paid, 'easy' (i.e. not challenging, 'for those who can't do better'), isolating and antisocial, uncertain/unreliable, limiting in nature.

Educate the influencers: Notably parents, teachers and careers advisors – people can't advise on what they're unsure of themselves.

Recommendations (*continued*)

Address structural barriers: Notably the status of tourism and hospitality as a subject at secondary school. Quite simply, tourism as a secondary school subject is the first ‘formal’ introduction to ‘tourism’ for many young people and its current status and the approach to teaching appears to leave a lasting negative impression. How tourism is currently being represented in many schools is a disservice to the industry and appears to be helping engrain many negative perceptions of tourism as a career option.

It should therefore be a priority to realign subject content/positioning with the reality of career opportunities available in the vibrant and economically significant tourism sector. At the same time, it may be useful to look at how tourism can be better integrated into other subjects such as social studies, geography, etc.

It's not all about a ‘career’: While the focus of this research was ‘careers’ in tourism, the reality is that the industry will need large numbers of people who may not choose tourism as their career (e.g. a part-time job while studying). While promoting career options, the many roles available still need to be positioned as viable and appealing shorter term jobs. It is essential not to overlook the promotion of jobs that will be filled by people not seeking a ‘career’ in tourism.

Let experience speak for itself: Just as important as attracting a skilled and competent workforce is retaining the current skilled and competent workforce. The industry needs to ensure that all young people have a good experience working in the tourism industry (and not let negative perceptions of tourism become reality). As part of this is ensuring that the current workforce is aware of the opportunities to progress within the industry and supported to do so. This will also ensure positive word of mouth supports efforts to build positive perceptions of careers in the tourism industry.

Think long-term: It will take a long-term strategy to change existing negative perceptions of career opportunities in tourism. Even amongst the youngest group of people interviewed for this research (13 – 15 year olds), many negative perceptions of tourism careers already appeared well-engrained although, on a positive note, there are signs that attitudes may be changing as the industry grows in significance.