

**Imaginative Travel: experiential aspects of
user interactions with destination
marketing websites**

Tim West-Newman

Abstract

In this thesis a discursive examination of backpacker attitudes towards and use of a New Zealand tourism website, based on their own accounts of their experiences of using the web for travel, offers a contribution to existing knowledge about human computer interaction. The study enhances current understandings of the processes through which backpackers interact with travel websites by including the social and personal context of their experience. Analysing interview data on user attitudes and behaviour, it argues the importance of taking into account the use-context of human computer interactions. Placing participants' interaction with the newzealand.com website within themes of imagination, emotional engagement, and authenticity in experience allows an exploration of such context. It demonstrates that backpackers' engagement with websites is shaped not only by their material circumstances but by their attitudes to travel in general, their assumptions and feelings about New Zealand as a place, and as a site for their own experiences.

The research applies usability techniques and methods to observe and inquire into tourists' experiential interaction with a destination website. The emotional, affective, reflective and behavioural aspects of tourists' decision making processes are studied in order to show how websites, as a medium of communication, evoke users' travel imaginings. In this way the study contributes to research into tourists' web-related motivation and behaviour. In addition, by applying discursive, performative, and experiential lenses drawn from travel research to human-computer interaction, it augments current research techniques for studying the social effects of virtual technology and web related human behaviour.

The thesis explores themes of representation of place and self in relation to backpacker experiences and frames them in terms of authenticity and trust. It argues that in navigating places, backpackers seek authentic experiences and that this notion of authenticity is mediated by their encounters with other travellers, locals, tourism providers, as well as books, television and the Internet. Websites as travel information sources shape how backpackers think about their tourist experiences; to do this effectively, what the site presents must resonate with the backpacker's views on how *they* think those experiences should be.

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Table of contents

Chapter One: I Introduction.....	1
1.1 Tourist experience and the world wide web	2
1.2 Who is a backpacker? Background statistics	4
1.3 Research Approach	5
1.4 Chapter outline	6
Chapter Two: Literature review.....	1
2.1 Usability, cognition and design.....	9
2.1.1 Human factors research.....	13
2.1.2 Human actors research	14
2.2 Context of the research: tourism as product.....	17
2.2.1 Information gathering and the tourist product	20
2.2.2 Tourism and the consumption of signs	21
2.3 New media	24
2.4 Destination image	27
2.5 Authenticity.....	29
2.6 Affect and emotion.....	31
2.6.1 The role of emotions	36
2.6.2 Emotional consumption: the pleasure of products	39
2.6.3 Emotions and place	42
2.6.4 Emotions, memory and self	44
Chapter Three: Research methodology and methods	51
3.1 Methodological positioning	52
3.1.1 Grounded theory	53
3.1.1.1 Treatment of literature and theory.....	56
3.1.1.2 Theory generation	57
3.2 Data collection: interview techniques	60
3.4 Usability testing	64
3.4.1 Thinking aloud	67
3.4.2 Morae data capture software	68
3.5 Methodological issues.....	73
3.5.1 Rigour and validity.....	73
3.5.2 Validity criteria for grounded theory studies	78
3.5.3 The role of the researcher.....	79
3.6 Research approach	81
3.6.1 Data collection and analysis.....	84
Chapter Four: Navigation	89
4.1 General backpacker behaviour.....	89
4.2 Planning	93
4.3 Time and travel	98
4.4 Experience and confidence	101
4.4 Price as a navigating factor	103
4.5 Work and travel.....	104
4.6 Information sources.....	106
4.6.1 Information centres	111
4.6.3 Guide books	112
4.6.4 Maps.....	116
4.6.5 Word of mouth	117
4.6.6 The Internet	122

4.6.6.1 Online booking.....	129
4.6.6.2 Networking using the Internet.....	131
4.6.6.3 Online opinion.....	131
Chapter Five: Tourist imagination and experience	137
5.1 Imagination and tourist experience	141
5.2 Roles and reframing experience.....	144
5.3 The role of the backpacker.....	146
5.4 Authenticity and travel experiences	149
5.5 General impressions of New Zealand	151
5.5.1 Authentic nature	151
5.5.2 Distance and the authentic other	155
5.5.3 Authenticity and the exotic	160
5.5.4 The authentic other: Friendly locals.....	162
5.6 Tourist Activities and Experiences	165
5.6.1 Hiking.....	167
5.6.2 Swimming with dolphins	168
5.6.3 Adventure activities	175
Chapter Six: Representation.....	183
6.1 Anticipation and the tourist gaze.....	186
6.2 New media	189
6.3 Analyzing new media.....	192
6.4 The computer as an object to think with	199
6.5 Imagery on newzealand.com website	205
6.6 Themes of imagery of New Zealand	214
6.7 Credibility and voice	222
6.8 Travel journals	224
6.9 Representations of backpackers	229
Chapter Seven: Conclusion	236
Bibliography	236

Tables and figures

Tables

Table 1: Participant Information	88
Table 2: Transport Types Used by Backpackers and Non-Backpackers.	90
Table 3: Activities Undertaken in New Zealand by Backpacker and Non-backpacker visitors to New Zealand	91

Figures

Figure 1: Philippe Stark “Juicy Salif” Citrus Squeezer	41
Figure 2: Morae Data Analysis Screenshot.....	71
Figure 3: Morae Data Analysis Screenshot.....	71
Figure 4: Kayaker, newzealand.com website.....	184
Figure 5: Home page, newzealand.com website	191
Figure 6: Travel index, newzealand.com website	194
Figure 7: Interactive Destination Map, newzealand.com website	200
Figure 8: Themed Highways, newzealand.com website	203
Figure 9: Interactive Map of New Zealand, newzealand.com website	204
Figure 10: Homepage newzealand.com website	206
Figure 11: Rippon Vineyard, newzealand.com website.....	208
Figure 12: Sights and Activities, newzealand.com website.....	209
Figure 13: ‘Other people’s beautiful New Zealand pictures’, Facebook website.....	210
Figure 14: Fjordland page, newzealand.com website	211
Figure 15: Flora page, newzealand.com website	213
Figure 16: Rangitoto Island, newzealand.com website.....	214
Figure 17: Streaming Video, newzealand.com website	220
Figure 18: Children, newzealand.com website	221
Figure 19: Salt Water Canoeing and Kayaking, newzealand.com website.....	223
Figure 20: Travel Journals, newzealand.com website	225
Figure 21: Travel Journals: Queen Charlotte Walkway, newzealand.com website.....	227
Figure 22: Backpacking New Zealand, newzealand.com website	230

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Chapter One: Introduction

The relationship between backpackers and tourism websites which is the subject of this research involves far more than a simple encounter between user and technology. The backpackers who were interviewed as they interacted with the official New Zealand tourism marketing website talked of their own experience and practices as backpackers and as website users. Their reflections on the way in which they positioned themselves in relation to other travellers and to the sights and activities encountered demonstrated the significance of context in understanding how travel websites are regarded and used.

The research required a combination of techniques and ideas from three areas of knowledge. Website use is normally studied as a technical exercise by usability experts within the field of human computer interaction. Increasingly, though, new media experts are adding a more sociological dimension in their broader engagement with this human-machine connection. General information about the context of backpacker behaviours and attitudes comes from the field of tourism which includes the work of sociologists, geographers, anthropologists, psychologists and marketers. In this thesis an empirical examination of backpacker attitudes to and use of a New Zealand tourism website offers a contribution to existing knowledge about human computer interaction. The study seeks to enhance current understandings of the processes through which users interact with travel websites by including the social and personal context of the users' experience.

Within the field of human computer interaction, usability research focuses on the ways in which people experience their use of information and communication technology. One of the cornerstones for examining the usability of a product is the observation of people as

they perform tasks using that product. Traditionally these situated examinations have focused on how efficiently tasks can be performed by users of software or physical products (Bannon 1991, Hughes 1993). While task efficiency is obviously important, particularly in areas such as data entry and rapid decision making, in many other areas of human computer interaction aesthetic, affective and emotional factors must also be considered (Norman 2004, Pan and Fesenmaier 2002, Vogt et al. 1993, Vogt and Fesenmaier 1998, Zhang and von Dran 2000).

1.1 Tourist experience and the world wide web

Tourism has particular qualities that make it especially interesting as a marketed product. These mostly relate to the fact that it is a commodity that includes experiences and expectations that are not actually purchased, but are nevertheless an essential part of the whole (Collier 2003), so that tourists are expecting to receive more than a collection of services. Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) point out that symbolic, hedonic, innovatory, and aesthetic information is combined by travellers to create images of what they will experience. In this study the effects of these intangible elements are examined through users' interactions with Tourism New Zealand's destination marketing website, www.newzealand.com.

Recognizing that tourist industry development depends on an effective transfer of information, Tourism New Zealand has placed particular emphasis on attracting 'interactive' travellers who use the Web to plan their journeys (Kotler and Gertner 2004). Increasing demand for individually planned travel packages organized on the Internet, and the long term growth in demand for more customised, experience-based products has resulted in growing markets for holidays that offer multiple experiences. These include

adventure tourism activities involving a measure of ‘controlled’ risk as well as creative and sports tourism (Larnaka Conference 2004). This is a world-wide trend in the tourist industry, with increasing numbers of tourism operators using the Internet as a marketing and distribution channel (Proll and Retschitzegger 2000).

MacCannell (1994), examining the tourist experience, has linked destination image, consumers, and the medium of presentation using the framework of a cultural production. By extension, this framework can be applied to the web medium to facilitate an holistic view of the creation of destination images. It has been noted that past examinations of the design of destination marketing websites have often focused on purely functional information such as room size and trip pricing (Manovich 2001, Gretzel and Fesenmaier 2003). Zhang and Von Dran (2000) also point out that checklists, the tool most often used to evaluate websites, do not take into account the affective and motivational aspects of web users’ experiences. Similarly, models of consumer behaviour that rely purely on cognitive theory and the notion of the ‘rational information seeking tourist’ do not consider the hedonic and aesthetic aspects of tourists’ decision making processes (Pan and Fesenmaier 1998).

In response, some researchers have proposed the creation of an extended model that takes sensory experiences and emotions into account (Gretzel and Fesenmaier 2003, Malter and Rosa 2001, Biocca 1997). Research into the components of compelling online interactions establishes that they need to be treated as situated experiences (Kutti and Bannon 1993, Lindgaard 1999). It has been argued that qualitative methods of inquiry such as participant observation, interviews, and co-operative inquiry, are effective in facilitating such an holistic approach. Such methods, based on the examination and interpretation of users’

subjective experiences with the product being tested, have been seen to have several advantages. They are thought to include the production of contextually rich data, good insights into human behaviour, and the creation of effective space for participants' own knowledge in the generation of data (Guba and Lincoln 1994, Schwandt 1994). These insights have informed the focus and methods adopted in this research, directing attention to backpackers' accounts of their travel experiences and the meanings they bring to these as they travel and interact with the world wide web.

1.2 Who is a backpacker? Background statistics

The Ministry of tourism defines backpackers as travellers who spend 'at least 30 percent of their visit to New Zealand staying in backpacker/hostel type accommodation' (Ministry of Tourism Backpacker Summary Report 2005:1). A significant proportion of international visitors to New Zealand are backpackers. For example 232,000 backpackers came to New Zealand in 2005, making up over 10% of total international visitors to New Zealand and their numbers have steadily increased since 1998. Backpackers tend to be young, with 40% listed in the 2005 international visitor survey as aged 15-24, and a further 37% who were between 25 and 34. Ministry of Tourism figures for the same year show that backpacker travellers to New Zealand come mainly from the United Kingdom (23.8%), Australia (18.8%), United States of America (9.1%), Germany (7.3%) and Japan (4.8%).

Backpacker expenditure has increased yearly from 1997 (\$266 million) to 2005 (\$642 million) and accounts for roughly 10% of total international visitor expenditure in New Zealand. It is interesting to note that while the average overall expenditure of backpackers and non-backers is similar (\$2,766 and \$2,993 respectively in 2005) the daily spends are rather different (\$91 for backpackers compared to \$155 for non-backpackers). This means

that backpackers stayed considerably longer in New Zealand to spend roughly the same amount (30.5 days compared to 19.5 days for non-backpackers).

In this thesis the term backpacker is not defined by choice of accommodation (although participants frequently did stay in hostels for at least part of their time in New Zealand). Instead the term is self-defined by the participants interviewed in this research as people who 'travel light' and are 'adventurous and price-conscious' (Allon 2004: 1). Backpackers, in their understanding, embrace a particular attitude to travel that favours lengthy stays, flexible itineraries, and 'meaningful' interactions with places and their inhabitants (Allon 2004, Obenour 2004, Shaffer 2004).

1.3 Research Approach

A grounded theory approach, where theory and data are interwoven (Charmaz 2006, Glaser 1978), was used to obtain a rich information source for data analysis, and to generate theory. A wide range of literature from many different fields was studied to help make sense of the information collected. This included human-computer interaction and usability research as well as selected cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, geography and tourism writing. These ideas are used in this thesis to explore how backpackers constructed images of place and where tourism websites fit in this process.

The importance of participants' general travel information-seeking and behaviour was apparent by the end of the first few interviews in this study. A grounded theory principle was applied and participants were asked open ended questions about their general impressions of New Zealand as well as their trip planning and travel behaviour. Backpackers were invited to take a tour of the newzealand.com website and

questioned/prompted for responses to what they saw, how they experienced the site, and how they evaluated the quality of the information in relation to their own experiences. The shape of responses showed a number of ways in which perceptions of their identity as backpackers, distinguished from tourists, shaped expectations of themselves, the landscape, adventure activities, cultural experiences and events, and relevance of information and knowledge about what would interest them.

The participants who were interviewed tended to be young (20-34), computer literate, and accustomed to using websites as tools for both general and travel-related research. In many respects they are Feifer's (1985) and Urry's (1995: 167) post-tourists who are open and curious about the world and the other cultures contained within it. They are also willing to take risks and have the 'semiotic skills' to explore the world while delighting in the 'contrasts between societies rather than longing for uniformity or superiority'.

These interview sessions were mediated, intersubjective events involving the participant, technology, and the researcher. The information gained revealed themes of interest to the subjects and pertinent to gaining a better understanding of how people relate to the web medium and what influences it has on their impressions of New Zealand. Central concepts were identified from the extended interview data to serve as organizing categories for the analysis and discussion of participants' travel experiences and inter-relationships with the web site. These themes include authenticity and trust, scripting, navigation and representation, and are outlined in the chapters of this thesis. Findings are divided into three substantive chapters which are described in the following chapter plan.

1.4 Chapter outline

The current chapter presents a description and explanation of the research and gives contextual information about tourism and backpacker behaviour in New Zealand.

Chapter two contains a review of the literature that includes the human-computer interaction material and usability field ideas that are the context of this research. Selected cultural studies, sociology, geography and tourism writings are also presented as they relate to new media, tourist attitudes and consumption.

Chapter three on methodology describes the grounded theory approach taken to the research, where theory and data are interwoven, and the tools and techniques used to gain a data rich information source for data analysis and to generate theory.

Chapter four, on navigation, examines the world wide web as a planning tool and compares it with other information sources to see how people navigate around New Zealand and orientate themselves within the country. It also provides context by describing participant's travel behaviour.

Chapter five, on imagination and experience, examines the relationship between experience and representation and looks at how they influence each other. It argues that as backpackers continue to gather information while they travel, experience and representation/information are interwoven.

Chapter six examines representation, looking at how images and representations of New Zealand help to create and reinforce individuals' schemas of themselves as backpackers and their image of New Zealand as a destination.

Chapter seven draws together the themes discussed in the previous chapters together with commentary on the central findings of this thesis.

Chapter Two: Literature review

Given the multidisciplinary nature of the area of study, this thesis draws on several bodies of literature, including tourism consumer behaviour, usability, sociology and information technology, and qualitative research methodology. The chapter therefore first reviews usability research relevant to the project, then examines relevant material on tourist behaviour before moving to consider the nature of the web medium and its connection with destination marketing. This literature review concludes with a consideration of the place of qualitative usability techniques in research on this topic.

2.1 Usability, cognition and design

The presentation of a website involves the integration of an aesthetic arrangement of images and audio and visual texts with a system of navigation. These elements serve as the visual cues or markers that guide the viewer through both the page and the site (Nielsen 2000, Pauwels 2005). The manner in which these markers are presented privileges some elements of the web site over others, creating a ‘hierarchy of information’ (Papson, Goldman and Kersey 2004). Hypertext (hypermedia) is primarily a visual form that ‘embodies information and communications, artistic and affective constructs, and conceptual abstractions alike into symbolic structures made visible on a computer-controlled display’ (Joyce 1995: 19).

The world conveyed by the interactive computer is often described as ‘virtual’ since its location or features cannot be pinpointed in the tangible world. This construction is the product of both user and computer; of human imagination with sound and images provided by the computer so that ‘...we can move through a constructed universe of our own

making, on virtual paths invisible even as we tread upon them.’ (Rothenberg 1993: 14). In this case the computer is more than just a tool: ‘A human user connects with the system, and the computer becomes interactive. Tools, by contrast, establish no such connection’ (Heim 1993: 77).

Examining the nature of users’ experiences with a product involves understanding many levels of interaction, including the aesthetics of the product, the emotional relationship with it, expectations and past experiences, and the context of its use (Greenbaum 1991, Jääskö and Mattelmäki 2003, Norman 2004). Kankainen (2002), using activity theory, defines two distinct levels of user need that operate at the levels of motivation and action. This means, say Jääskö and Mattelmäki (2003) that you have to first be able to recognize the issues that are relevant to the intended user. Then it is possible to go deeper into the interaction and functionality of the system. Jääskö and Mattelmäki (2003:126) recognize the value of narrative in gaining a more complete picture of the user experience and suggest that, in conjunction with storytelling and visual communication tools such as collages, ‘usability forms one solid and useful framework when trying to understand the whole nature of user experience’.

Usability testing is one of the primary tools used to examine user experience of the web. This practice typically involves observing users as they try out certain aspects of a product or process such as attempting to make an online booking on a travel website. Usability techniques are often used because practitioners are aware that designers cannot know exactly how users will respond to their interfaces and content and that users are not necessarily able to recognize or articulate fully their experiences with software. Usability testers try to gather insightful feedback and present it to the original designers in order to

help them make their software more usable (Hughes 1993, Nelson 1994). Usability testing has been frequently employed from a software engineering perspective to: diagnose problems to find out what is working well about a site and what is not working well; compare alternatives (for example between clients' and competitors' sites, between two interface prototypes); and verify that various usability goals have been met (such as reducing the time and effort needed to make an online booking) (Constantine and Lockwood 1999).

Although the research emphasis of this thesis extends beyond these goals to a more experiential and contextual examination of website usage, the situated nature of usability testing, where research is undertaken while users interact with a piece of software, makes it a helpful tool for examining the relationship between humans and computers in a tourism context. A wide variety of types of data can be collected during usability tests, ranging from detailed descriptions of what the user said and did during the test to counts of various aspects of users' behaviour, such as time to complete a task, number of errors or problems in completing the task, the number of requests for assistance (Constantine and Lockwood 1999).

Usability testing nearly always involves both qualitative and quantitative elements. For example, it always includes some qualitative notes and also nearly always reports some numbers, such as the percentage of participants who had a particular problem or who took a particular path to completing a task. But it may or may not include the types of quantitative data that are traditional in psychology research, such as time and errors (Constantine and Lockwood 1999, Hughes 1993, Nielsen 1993, 1994). Whether the emphasis in usability testing is qualitative or quantitative depends on other factors such as the goals and

philosophy of the testing. For example when the goal is comparison or verification, testing is more likely to include some quantitative data. For diagnostic testing, quantitative data may be less important than a qualitatively generated list of problems.

An important factor in determining the manner in which usability testing should be conducted is the overall testing philosophy and treatment of users. In other words, whether testing is seen more as ‘research’ or as ‘partnering with users.’ (Bannon 1991, Battarbee 2003, Greenbaum and Kyng 1991). Usability testing draws people from many different backgrounds and many of its techniques stem from academic psychology experiments with a very quantitative, objective approach (Bannon 1991, Jääskö and Mattelmäki 2003).

Other approaches to the study of human-computer interaction are more grounded in anthropology, ethnography, sociology, and other disciplines and fields that stress naturalistic, qualitative observations, using techniques such as participant observation, interviews, and co-operative inquiry (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986, Holtzblatt and Jones 1993, Jensen and Sogaard 2004; for example see studies at IBM – Mack and Nielsen 1987; Nielsen et al 1986, at Nokia – Jung and Anttila 2007, and at MIT – Intille, Kukla, and Ma 2002). These methods, based on the examination and interpretation of the subjective experiences users have with the product being tested, have been argued to have the advantages of producing contextually rich data, including good insights into human behaviour, and effective space for participants’ knowledge in the generation of data (Guba and Lincoln 1994, Schwandt 1994, Holstein and Gubrium 1994, Glaser and Strauss 1967, Strauss and Corbin 1990). The variation in approach to usability testing can be broadly attributed to two main schools of thought in the field of human-computer interaction which Bannon has termed ‘human factors’ and ‘human actors’.

2.1.1 Human factors research

A human factors research approach treats the user as an operator with a set of ‘cognitive and sensory motor limitations’ (Jensen and Sogaard 2004: 185). Software design is a matter of working around these limitations to minimize their negative effects, employing the standard science paradigm’s ‘singular ontology’ approach and a ‘bottom-up’ design strategy starting from ‘hard, reductionist facts’ (Jensen and Sogaard 2004: 185). Winograd and Flores (1986: 15) summarize the characteristic practices of this rationalistic tradition which emphasizes a single problem/right solution approach:

1. characterize the situation in terms of identifiable objects with well defined properties
2. find general rules that apply to the situation in terms of those objects and properties
3. apply the rules logically to the situation or concern drawing conclusions about what should be done.

Greenbaum and Kyng (1991: 8), however, criticize this as a linear process that forces problem solving into narrow pathways that are ‘ill-suited to the dynamic and generally chaotic conditions of developing computer systems for the workplace.’ They also quote systems designer Russell Ackoff (writing in 1974) to describe just what is wrong with this way of thinking.

We fail more often because we solve the wrong problem than because we get the wrong solution to the right problem. ... The problems we select for solution and the way we formulate them depends more on our philosophy and world view than on our science and technology (Ackoff 1974: 8 cited in Greenbaum and Kyng 1991: 9).

The rationalistic tradition that underpins this Human Factors approach derives from Cartesian thought that divides mind from body, ‘emotional interior and the objective, thing-oriented environment’ (Greenbaum and Kyng 1991: 8). In support of this claim

Greenbaum quotes Pelle Ehn's (1989: 52) description of the consequences of this perspective for system development.

The prototypical Cartesian scientist or system designer is an observer. He does not participate in the world he is studying, but goes home to find the truth about it by deduction from the objective facts he has gathered.

Greenbaum and Kyng (1991: 8) use his analysis of systems literature to support this claim, citing the work of DeMarco (1978), Yourdon (1986), and Jackson (1983), as illustrative of 'the call to objectivity in problem isolation'.

2.1.2 Human actors research

Some researchers within the field of human-computer interaction recognize that people 'encounter and interact with computational technologies in many forms' and that '[d]esign practice involves practitioners in the application of the skills and the processes required to synthesize appropriate solutions, and design education' (Anderson 2002: 111). Scandinavian practitioners in human-computer interaction have a long tradition of expanding their examination of the interface to its working context (Grudin 1990, Greenbaum and Kyng 1991, Jensen and Sogaard 2004). They have sought to extend what they perceived as an inadequate theoretical framework derived from cognitive psychology and scientific method by turning to other theoretical approaches, such as ethnography and activity theory. Making quite different epistemological and ontological assumptions, they recognize that interaction is a complex phenomenon better understood through a different approach. Through the 1980s a group of researchers adopted a Wittgensteinian perspective on the situated nature of knowledge, discovering the significance of context in the construction of meaning. Reversing previous research wisdom they recognized that successful design process 'started from a cultural and sociological understanding and

proceeded “down” into a concrete interface design (“top-down” and the-thing-in-context)’ (Jensen and Sogaard 2004: 185).

In this contextual mode of thinking designers must first understand the situation in which their software will be used. The notion of identifying a ‘problem’ which has then to be solved is replaced by detailed attention to the actual context where software will be used (Greenbaum 1991). Central to this is the understanding that

the meaning construction taking place during interaction cannot be reduced to atomic, perceivable events. When ‘that thing’ is ever-changing, we need a way of understanding ‘that thing’ without relying on an understanding of it in terms of its properties. (Jensen and Sogaard 2004:186; see also Suchman et al 1984)

The other fundamental difference in this approach that it sees users as ‘competent practitioners’ with their own ‘skill, knowledge, problems and fears’ (Greenbaum 1991:15) which must be recognized and understood. Here users are seen as actors in situations who share practices and experience skills.

People are more than a sum of parts; be they information-processing sub-systems or physiological systems, they have a set of values, goals, and beliefs about life and work. ... By using the term human actors emphasis is placed on the person as an autonomous agent that has the capacity to regulate and co-ordinate his or her behavior, rather than being simply a passive element in a human-machine system (Bannon 1991: 28).

Contextual studies, however, shift attention away from what happened at the interface between user and software. Jensen and Sogaard (2004: 185) call these interaction phenomena ‘the generic meaning-construction process taking place during interaction at the interface-level in itself’. They advocate an approach that ‘maintains a contextual emphasis and at the same time allows for studying construction of meaning at the interface-level’ (2004: 187). This kind of approach returns the focus of HCI research to eliciting what users experience while they interact with software.

Recently, some forms of usability testing have placed emphasis on qualitative methods of inquiry. That is, one that examines the subjective experiences that users have with the product being tested, in order to address these problems. This is because qualitative methods have been argued to have the advantages of producing contextually rich data, including good insights into human behaviour, and effective space for insiders' knowledge in the generation of data (Guba and Lincoln 1994, Schwandt 1994, Holstein and Gubrium 1994, Glaser and Strauss 1967, Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Hoffman and Woods (2000), for example, suggest that when studying cognitive systems in the field of Human Computer Interaction that a combination of 'precise artificial laboratory method' and 'subjective anthropological historical method' should be used so that 'fieldwork becomes a naturally occurring laboratory'. They point out that studying cognitive systems in context is concerned with discovery rather than with simply compiling a long list of the tasks, data, knowledge or linkages involved in handling a specified situation. This process of discovery raises the key question: 'How do we prepare ourselves to be ready to see/notice/recognize something fresh, something we did not know to look for?' (Hoffman and Woods 2000).

Like researchers in the field of human computer interaction, tourism researchers have extensively studied the nature of peoples' experiences while interacting with different environments using a wide variety of disciplinary knowledge and approaches. An examination of this tourism research can provide insights into human experiences and processing of virtual as well as physical places.

2.2 Context of the research: tourism as product

Tourism provides an excellent case study for examining user experience on the web as an interactive and subjective personal experience. This is because ‘the tourism product involves experiences and expectations which are not directly purchased, but which nevertheless still form part of the tourism package’ (Collier 2003: 18). Tourists are purchasing an experience rather than a collection of services and the range of information that travellers seek when planning and making decisions is vast and varied. Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998: 555) draw on various models of consumer behaviour to identify four categories that describe the non-functional information needs people might have when making travel decisions: hedonic (relating to emotional, sensory, phenomenological and experiential aspects of travel), innovation (involving novelty, variety, and creativity of experience), sign (symbolic expression and social interaction), and aesthetic (fantasy and image). All of these elements are argued to work together to create a picture of what the traveller will experience (Vogt and Fesenmaier 1998, Vogt et al. 1993).

Both marketing researchers and economists have pointed out the experiential nature of goods and services (Holbrook 2000, Pine and Gilmore 1999). Given that the nature of tourism products and services is deeply experiential, research related to hedonic values and emotional responses to consumption situations is particularly relevant for marketing tourism. Consumption and decision making processes related to tourism are, arguably, driven mainly by hedonic and emotional aspects (Vogt and Fesenmaier 1998, Vogt et al. 1993) and memories of trips are a function of trip related experiences and the stories constructed from them (Fesenmaier and Gretzel 2002). This recognition of the experiential nature of tourism and of new consumer trends calls for marketing approaches that use innovative ways for communicating tourism experiences (Schmitt 1999).

Past examinations of the design of destination marketing websites suggest that they were focused on purely functional information such as room size and trip pricing (Manovich 2001, Gretzel and Fesenmaier 2003). In addition Zhang and Von Dran (2000) suggest that checklists, the tool most often used to evaluate websites, do not take into account the affective and motivational aspects of web users' experiences. Models of consumer behaviour that rely purely on cognitive theory and the notion of the 'rational information seeking tourist' do not consider the hedonic and aesthetic aspects of the tourists' decision making process. Some researchers, however, have proposed the creation of an extended model that takes sensory experiences and emotions into account (Gretzel and Fesenmaier 2003, Malter and Rosa 2001, Biocca 1997).

A great deal of research has been dedicated to describing and explaining the decision making behaviour of tourists. A common theme is to describe the motivating elements of the decision making process in terms of push factors that provide the desire to travel, and pull factors that affect the choice of destination. Dann (1977), for example, proposes seven categories of travel motivation, four of which can be effectively related to tourism (the others being more applicable to business or migrant travel). He depicts travel as a response to what is lacking yet desired; as destination *pull* in response to motivational *push*. Motivation may be seen as a fantasy, or as a classified purpose, such as visiting friends and relatives or study purposes.

Similarly Crompton (1979) describes a total of nine motives relating to travel and six 'push factors' that can relate to tourism, including: escape from perceived mundane environment; exploration and evaluation of self; prestige; regression; enhancement of kinship

relationships; and facilitation of social interaction. Two further factors, novelty and education, are described as cultural (pull) factors. Mannel and Iso-Ahola (1987) suggest that people are motivated to travel by a desire to leave behind the personal or interpersonal problems of their environment and to obtain compensating personal or interpersonal rewards. They define two main types of push and pull factors: personal and interpersonal. Personal factors are categorised as self determination, sense of competence, challenge, learning, exploration, relaxation. Interpersonal factors are seen to arise from social interaction. Synthesizing these perspectives Krippendorf (1987) suggests that the common thread running through these theories of motivation is that the incentive for travel is the notion of 'going away from' rather than 'going toward' something and that travellers' motives and behaviour are focused on themselves rather than on the external world.

Other researchers (Urry 1990a, 1990b, 2002, MacCannall 1999) also describe the importance of anticipating and experiencing the "intense pleasures" provided by tourist destination and promised by various media representations (Urry 1990: 4). Govers and Go (2003: 15) point out that because 'tourism products are experiential in nature' tourists participate actively in the experience to create meaning for the travel events. This also means that travellers play an active role in shaping tourism destination image, 'which by definition is a consumer-oriented concept' (Govers and Go 2003: 15).

In addressing the question: 'why do people travel?' Berger (2004: 36) offers several explanations centred on meaning creation. He suggests that travel today is fundamentally an updated form of what was historically known as the 'Grand Tour'. There the purpose was 'to broaden and educate young men and women by exposing them to other cultures'. Then, as now, such travellers explore the culture of new places through everyday life, new

kinds of foods, visiting museums and having adventures (Berger 2004: 36). In other words, travel is a rite of passage for young adults – part of growing up. Berger also identifies an additional present day advantage of travel in the acquisition of increased appreciation of the traveller's own culture. This reflexivity has also been described by Lash and Urry (1994) as part of the post-modern nature of contemporary tourism, and of present day life in general.

2.2.1 Information gathering and the tourist product

It is widely recognized that, particularly with regard to experiential products like travel and tourism, consumers are involved in an ongoing search for information (Leemans, 1994: 23). This process of information gathering can be undertaken for its own sake, evoking the pleasures of anticipation and imagination: 'they are always searching and not necessarily because they are planning to buy' (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998: 553). By collecting this array of information, the consumer creates an image of what the travel experience might be like (Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000). Because tourism services are intangible, these images may even become more important than any actual reality (Gallarza, Gil-Saura, and Garcia 2002: 57). Such destination images are generally thought to be based on attributes, functional consequences (or expected benefits), and the symbolic meanings or psychological characteristics that consumers associate with a specific destination (or service). In consequence, the image influences destination positioning and ultimately the tourist's buying behaviour (Govers 2003).

Because tourism is an intangible product, and since there normally is a time lag between the purchase of the product and its actual consumption, travellers develop a cognitive image of the product they bought (Pizzam and Mansfield 1999: 2).

The cognitive image of travel formed by tourists is made up of experiences that they perceive to be different from their everyday lives. Thus they seek from places with 'rich

and interesting cultures’ and ‘great natural beauty’ (Berger, 2004: 68). The experience sought may include all home comforts, so travelers are secure in a tourist ‘bubble’ from which to watch and take photographs. But it may also be an almost total immersion through interaction with natives and a quest for ‘authentic’ experiences, within the available time frame.

The rewards of travel come through the gratifications of the tourist product and can take a number of different forms. Berger (2004: 41-43) describes some of these: amusement and entertainment, experiencing the beautiful, fellowship with others, satisfying curiosity and learning about the world, participating in history through attachment with people and events of importance, guilt-free sexual gratification, and quite significantly, self-exploration. Urry (2002) frames experience of this nature as having the characteristics of a ‘performed art’ where anticipating and dreaming about travel, destination, and chance encounters (Adler 1989) effect a liminal space between departure and arrival.

2.2.2 Tourism and the consumption of signs

The sociological literature on consumption offers an effective context in which to comprehend tourist experience as a marketable and consumable commodity. Lash and Urry (1994) point out the significance of flows of signs and information in relation to modern consumption, which occurs in a global environment of highly mobile capital and labour. They point out that ubiquity of such flows in modern life has meant that forms of interpersonal trust characteristic of earlier societies ‘are dis-embedded and placed in abstract systems’ such as the media and other forms of social knowledge (1994: 38). They see such flows of information as ‘aesthetic “expert systems”, made up of representations in films, television, poetry, travel and paintings serving as ‘mediators in the reflexive

regulation of everyday life' (1994: 55). Experience of the reflexive self results in a more choice-driven, self-aware consumer who chooses products at least partly for their identity-enhancing qualities (Crouch 2005, Lash and Urry 1994, Morgan and Pritchard 2004, Urry 2002). Urry (2002: 272) describes such consumers of travel as 'post-tourists' – travellers who are reflexive, critical, and open to choice. The world of the post-tourist is characterised by a shift from earlier forms of travel experience as passive contemplation of scenery to forms of active consumption of visual signs.

Finance is exchanged for visual property, for being able to look at and record to memory landscapes and townscapes even though one does not actually own the property being looked at or even have temporary rights of possession (Urry 2002: 271).

A semiotic approach has been increasingly popular with writers who, like Urry, interpret tourists as semioticians, skilled in interpreting images and locating them in their social context, in a reflexive understanding of a 'semiotic society' where they are constantly bombarded with images (Berger 2004, Urry 1990b, 2005). A number of explanations have been offered for the evident significance of visual stimulus to tourists. Although all senses are heightened by the experience of unfamiliar and different places, it is the visual dimension that 'gives shape and meaning to the anticipation, experience and memories of travelling' (Crawshaw and Urry 1997:179). The consumption of signs therefore is central to this way of conceptualizing tourism where 'tourism becomes, ultimately, a succession of photo opportunities' (Berger 2004: 33). The reciprocal relationship between sign in media and in the imagination is described by Crouch (2005) as one in which a media promoted emotional disposition combines with imagination and cognition to shape tourists' thinking about travel.

Indeed the activity of tourism itself makes sense only as an imaginative process which involves a certain comprehension of the world and enthuses a distinctive emotional engagement with it. This is true even if the experience

of tourism is only confined to a cycle of anticipation, activity and retrospection (Crouch et al 2005: 1).

The importance of signs in tourists' interpretation of their experiences is emphasized by MacCannell (1999) who argues that tourists construct images of the 'whole' through an accumulation of sights signified to be particularly representative of a place. His analytical framework, in effect, proposes an explanatory equation where the scene that a tourist consumes is privileged by marker information about that scene (provided by visual cues and / or a tour guide for example) to form an attraction:

[tourist/sight/*marker*]

Attraction

He then elaborates several stages of sight 'sacralisation' where various ways of marking the sight including: framing, naming, mechanical reproduction and social reproduction. At the latter, reproductive, stages of this marking process sights become symbolic of a region's identity or character.

Tourist attractions are not merely a collection of random material representations. When they appear in itineraries, they have a moral claim on the tourist, at the same time, they tend toward universality, incorporating natural, social, historical and cultural domains in a representation made possible by the tour (MacCannell 1999: 45).

MacCannell further relates sign and experience with production and consumption within the notion of a cultural experience. A cultural experience has two basic parts, a model and an influence. The model is a representation of an aspect of life and is an embodied ideal. The influence is the changed, created, intensified belief or feeling that is based on the model. So, for example, a pristine sandy beach surrounded by blue sky and inviting water populated with attractive people is the model. The associations of relaxation, fun and romance with this situation denote the influence. The model and its influence are connected by a medium. For example the social situation of face-to-face interaction, a gathering, is a

medium, and so are radio, television and film. A cultural model, its influence(s), the medium that links them, the audiences that form around them, and the producers, directors, actors, agents, technicians and distributors that stand behind them, together form a production (Pine and Gilmore 1999, MacCannell 1999).

2.3 New media

Since the 1990s the Internet has played an increasingly important role as a medium for presenting tourism experiences (Proll and Retschitzegger 2000, Hudson and Lang 2002). Its interactive nature adds new dimensions to ideas about marketing destination image (Gretzel and Fesenmaier 2003, Gallarza, Gil-Saura and Garcia 2002). In order to examine cultural production using the Internet as a medium, the nature of the web medium and its interpretation by consumers must be examined.

The high bandwidth, rich media nature of modern hypermedia means that high quality images and sound are widely integrated into today's websites (Gretzel and Fesenmaier 2003, Everett 2003, Pine and Gilmore 2007). Nevertheless, in the tourism industry, destination marketing websites remain largely driven by database structures (Manovich, 2001), focused on presenting functional attributes such as price, distances, and room availability. Their design is based on a model of a rational and information-seeking consumer which often results in simple activity based descriptions that reflect the supply side (reflected by computer programmers and/or marketing managers) rather than an actual consumer's perception of tourism experiences.

Gretzel and Fesenmaier (2003) argue that the lack of an experiential mindset within the tourism industry is due largely to a lack of understanding of the nature of tourism

experiences. Purely cognitive models of consumers can provide only limited explanations for what are actually holistic and often largely hedonic consumption experiences. What is needed, then, is an extended model that takes sensory experiences and emotions into account, such as a model of ‘embodied cognition’ (Malter and Rosa 2001) which assumes that consumers construct experiences largely from patterns of sensory input (Biocca 1997).

Other researchers have analysed these digital flows of information to take into account the manner in which technology and consumer are interwoven. Sassen (2002: 365) points out that technology is currently seen by some as ‘the impetus for the most fundamental social trends and transformations’, arguing that it is important to develop ‘analytic categories that allow us to capture the complex imbrications of technology in society’ she identifies ‘three properties of digital networks – decentralized access, simultaneity and interconnectivity ...’ (Sassen 2002: 366). From a sociological perspective the Internet constitutes a digital space that is shaped by technology and ‘embedded in the larger societal, cultural, subjective, economic, imaginary structurations of lived experience and the systems within which we exist and operate’ (Sassen 2002: 368). Urry (2002: 268) describes a version of these imaginary structurations of lived experience called cyberplaces where ‘it is possible to sense the other, almost dwell with the other, without physically moving oneself or without moving physical objects’. Digital networks allow a person to be ‘distributed’ online in sense that they can simultaneously project an aspect of themselves to others online, interacting with other such avatars in ‘diverse modes of co-presence’ (Urry 2002: 268). Sassen (2002: 370) points out that like any interaction in the lived world the use of such digital spaces is ‘constructed or constituted in terms of specific cultures and practices through and within which users articulate the experience/utility of electronic space.’

Everett (2003) has devised the 'heuristic trope' *dixitextuality* to describe how the construction of meaning in this medium is an extension and combination of the sign conveying mechanisms of 'old' media – from film, television and text for example. This term denotes a combination of the opportunities for convergence of information provided by digital technology and the semiotic notions of 'transposition of several sign systems into another' borrowed from Kristeva's (1974) notion of intertextuality. Drawing on Kristeva's suggestion that a novel as a 'sign system' borrows from and melds elements of other cultural sign systems such as 'poetry', 'carnival', and 'scholarly discourse', Everett argues that this same process occurs in the convergence of digital media and more traditional media significations found in film, television, and magazines. The nature of the digital medium where 'different signifying systems and materials ... are transformed into zeros and ones' means that these re-combinations can now be, in effect, infinite (Everett 2003: 7). Similarly Bolter and Grusin (1999: 43) point out that the 'world wide web is an exercise in replacement'. Clicking on a link on a webpage can causes information on the screen to be 'redrawn' and text and images are either presented in a new window on the screen, or overwrite an existing window. In this process '[t]he new page wins our attention through the erasure (interpretation), tiling (juxtaposition), or overlapping (multiplication) of the previous page' (Bolter and Grusin 1999: 43).

Humans' ability to understand and interpret this information is based on our ability to process other, more familiar, media.

We comprehend the information-richness and graphic density of websites and other Internet data because we are habituated to the dense image, text, and graphic design schemes previously developed by newspapers and magazines during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similarly we can recognize digital media's increasing sophistication in flash animation and streaming media technologies as a field of transpositions because their sources of sound and animation are recordings or rearticulations of cinema, television and radio's unique signifying systems (Everett 2003: 6).

This use of knowledge of how to work with, or interpret, one kind of object or situation in order to understand how another works has been described in detail by psychologist and product designer Donald Norman in his 1988 book *The Psychology of Everyday Things*. He points out that the average person would have to know how to operate approximately 30,000 objects including cars, doors, lights, phones, computers and software. It would be impractical, indeed impossible to memorize how to operate every single object. Instead existing ‘knowledge of the world’, previous knowledge and experience in interacting with other products, is applied to any new object encountered – with varying degrees of success. This premise has formed the foundation of the extensive use of the metaphor in software design (Turkle 1997, Julier 2000, Bolter and Grusin 1999, Norman 1988)

The success of the metaphor is dependent on its resonance with existing knowledge systems – that is its mapping to the user’s internal schema. As Everett (2003: 7) puts it:

Nonetheless, our abilities to understand the new modes and codes of digital media texts today are still often predicated upon successfully decoding their semiotic densities and “semiotic polyvalence” in terms of earlier media structures, what Kristeva calls “an adherence to different sign-systems”

The interactivity and multimedia provided by the digital medium are key factors in creating virtual environments and providing virtual experiences which enable the tourist to form a more vivid and clear destination image.

2.4 Destination image

In a cultural production the model and influence work together to create and reinforce a destination image (MacCannell 1999). Before the marketing effectiveness of such virtual tours can be evaluated, the image that the destination marketing organisation would like to portray must be decided (Govers 2003). Echtner and Ritchie (1993) describe destination image as having two primary sets of components: one attribute based the other holistic. Each of these components contains functional (tangible) and psychological (abstract)

characteristics. Images of destinations can also range from those based on “common” functional and psychological traits to those based on more distinctive or even unique features, events, feelings or auras (Govers 2003). Destination, or country image, has been described as

[t]he sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places. Images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected within a place. They are a product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data about a place (Kotler et al 1993 in Kotler and Gertner 2004: 42).

According to Kotler and Gertner (2004: 42) a country’s image is the sum product of its ‘geography, history, proclamations, art and music, famous citizens and other features’. A positive image can influence people to visit and revisit a place (Coshall, 2000; Tapachi and Waryszak, 2000). These country images act as knowledge structures or schemas related to place and are commonly used as shortcuts for information processing and consumer decision heuristics.

Most country images are stereotypes, extreme simplifications of the reality that are not necessarily accurate. They might be dated, based on exceptions rather than patterns, on impressions rather than facts, but nonetheless pervasive (Kotler and Gertner 2004: 43).

Marketers, acting as producers use these destination images, playing on schemas and reinforcing certain aspects to create particular influences. This modified composite image or scheme created by the combination of model and influence is a brand image which has certain characteristics and associations promoted by the brand creator. Morgan and Pritchard (2004: 61) summarize brand literature to outline four different ways of conceptualizing brand image as communication devices (citing de Chernatony and Riley (1998) as an example), as perceptual entities (citing Louro and Cunha 2001), as value enhancers (citing Wood 2000) and as relationships (citing De Chernatony and Segal-Horn 2001). They define a brand as a ‘unique combination of product characteristics and added values, both functional and non-functional, which have taken on a relevant meaning that is

inextricably linked to that brand, awareness of which may be conscious or intuitive.’ Products are differentiated by claims of attributes matched to target markets creating product images that are congruent with consumer self images (Morgan and Pritchard 2004, Shiffman and Kanuk 2000); for example, ‘off the beaten track’ for backpackers.

According to Morgan and Pritchard (2004: 69) a key element in the creation of a destination brand is the identification and communication of the core values of the destination and its brand. These core values have to be durable, relevant, communicable and hold saliency for potential tourists and should ‘underpin and imbue every component of the brand identity, from photography, colour, typography and tone of voice, to the brand marque, so that the brand values are cohesively communicated.’ They identify destination ‘brand winners’, countries whose images ‘are rich in emotional meaning, have great conversation value and hold high anticipation for potential tourists’ (Morgan and Pritchard 2004: 68). These studies show the potential that positive imagery and mood have in creating and reinforcing a positive country brand or image foremost in travellers’ minds. Therefore imagery promoting place should reinforce both branding and positive stereotypes by fitting with consumers’ internal knowledge of New Zealand and their personal identity as a traveller/consumer.

2.5 Authenticity

Pine and Gilmore (2007: 5) argue that authenticity of experience has become the key factor in modern marketing, overtaking traditional purchasing criteria such as availability, cost, and quality.

No longer content with available, affordable, and excellent offerings, both consumers and business-to-business customers now purchase offerings based on how well those purchases conform to their own self-image. What they buy must reflect who they are and who they aspire to be in relation to

how they perceive the world—with lightning quick judgements of “real” or “fake” hanging in the balance.

Examinations of the nature of authenticity in travel research have been extensive, and the search for authenticity has been frequently argued by researchers such as Cohen (1979, 1988, 1989, 1992, 1995), MacCannell (1976, 1994, 2000, 2001), Selwyn (1996) and Urry (1990a, 1990b, 1994, 2002, 2005) to be the primary motivation for leisure travel.

Maccannell (1999) proposes a kind of authenticity that is sought through a premodern ‘Other’ that is supposed to exist in societies considered to be ‘less developed’ where connections between people and between people and places are thought to be much stronger through the ‘purer’ and ‘simpler’ lifestyles they enjoy. Cohen (1988) similarly compares tourism to a pilgrimage to escape the feelings of alienation that accompany modern life. Authenticity can also refer to the ‘quality of knowledge associated with the tourist experience’ (Selwyn 1996: 7). Websites, brochures, and tour guides can all attempt to frame an experience by presenting the highlands of Thailand as being ‘primitive and remote’ or New Zealand as ‘pure and unspoilt’ in descriptions of place. MacCannell (1999) suggests that the authenticity of places is often based on the staged performances of locals and tour guides. Although these performances may be initially successful in catering to those seeking authentic experiences of place, once their constructed nature becomes apparent the tourist becomes dissatisfied and seeks to move on to somewhere less artificial.

Brown (1996: 37) sums up this situation saying:

It is the search for such authenticity that drives the tourist on to new and previously ‘unspoilt’ places and peoples. To present them as such, however, the places and people are soon transformed into ‘sites’ and ‘attractions’. The tourist first colludes in this staging because it helps him comprehend them. After a while the staging becomes too obvious, however, revealing the attraction to be too inauthentic. Once again, the tourist has to look further afield for authenticity, and so on, into the ever-receding horizon.

Berger (2004), Crang (1997), Cohen (1988), Ryan (2000), Shaffer (2004), and Urry (1990a, 2002) have all used assumptions about a post-modern world to suggest that the contemporary tourist is reflexively aware of the constructed nature of their experience and quite 'playful' when seeking authenticity. Urry (1990a: 100) argues that the tourist 'knows that tourism is a game, or rather a whole series of games with multiple texts and no single authentic tourist experience.' Rather than being passively consumed, authenticity is a joint and negotiated construction between producer and consumer. Regina Bendix (1997: 17), in her book *In Search of Authenticity*, suggests authenticity does not result from 'the bounded classification of an Other' but instead is the product of the process of 'the probing comparison between self and other'.

Travel can be framed in this sense as a performed experience (Cloke and Perkins 1998, Jones et al 2003, Ryan 2000, Shaffer 2004) where people explore their sense of self by taking on different roles such as the role of an 'adventurer'. Cloke and Perkins (1998: 201) in their interpretation of adventure tourism in New Zealand pointed out the strong associations of 'paradisaal nature' with 'adventurous activity' that encouraged tourists to 'both gaze at spectacular scenery and grapple with the challenge of nature'. They argued that using a *performance* metaphor captured the essence of an adventure tourism experience because it can describe 'both a sense of seeing and an association with the active body, heightened sensory experience, risk, vulnerability, passion, pleasure, mastery and or failure' (Cloke and Perkins 1998: 214).

2.6 Affect and emotion

There is a plethora of psychological research into the ways in which humans process information which demonstrates that the brain effectively integrates cognitive and

emotional functions in processes of decision making. The establishment of this knowledge and the ways in which such processes work are particularly relevant for the subject of this thesis.

Raymond et al (2003: 537) suggest that human selection behaviour consists of two different but related processes. One they describe as ‘a strategic, object-oriented perceptual process [citing Duncan 1984] that determines what and where objects are and involves the brain’s selective attention system, which facilitates processing of specific task-relevant stimuli and suppresses processing of distracting stimuli [citing Kastner and Underleider 2000]’ . Citing the research of Ortony, Clore, and Collins (1998), they describe the other as ‘an emotion process that evaluates object representations in terms of current and future goals’ (537). The authors also quote evidence from other studies to suggest that human behaviour should reflect reciprocal interactions of these two major brain systems.

Studies have shown that emotional stimuli can produce specific effects; for example angry and sad faces attract and hold attention more effectively than emotionally neutral expressions (Eastwood, Smilek, and Merikle, 2001, Vuilleumier and Schwartz 2001, Fox, Russo, Bowles and Dutton 2001). It has also been found that aversive (emotionally loaded) words attract more attention than emotionally neutral words when processing tasks (Anderson and Phelps, 2001; Raymond, Shapiro and Arnell, 1992) cited in Raymond et al 2003: 537). Studies by Raymond et al. (2003: 541) studies confirmed that emotional processes influence attention and that a reciprocal relationship exists between attention and emotion. They also found that, ‘somewhat surprisingly, it is selective ignoring, rather than attending that appears to exert influence on emotional evaluation.’ Their findings were that ‘attention and emotion may work together to prioritize processing’ (Raymond et al: 541).

Gasper (2004), summarizes research on the role of affect in visual information processing to show that when individuals are feeling happy they tend to evaluate objects, persons, and events more positively than when they are sad. More specifically she finds (2004: 405-406) that mood influences the kinds of information that takes an individual's attention; happy people notice the positive aspects of the information presented; negative aspects will be most salient to a person in a negative mood. Judgments on ambiguous information (which require more substantive thought) are more affected by mood than judgments on unambiguous information.

Mood states affect not only judgment but also information processing. Use of heuristics, attribution error, peripheral cues, scripts, following schemas, and reliance on stereotype are all more commonly associated with happy states of mind. Several psychologists propose that the extent to which a person relies on internal knowledge to structure information is shaped by their mood at the time of processing (Gasper 2004: 406, Bless et al. 1996; Bless 2000, Bless 2001, Clore and Gasper 2001, Clore, Gasper and Garven, 2001a; Fiedler 2001, Gasper and Clore 2002). Drawing on this information Gasper (2004: 406) suggests that

[i]ndividuals in happy moods may structure information in a relatively top-down manner, in which internal knowledge (e.g. stereotypes, scripts and schemas) is used as a basis for understanding. In contrast, individuals in sad moods may structure information in a bottom-up manner, in which external knowledge [e.g. details of the information at hand] is used as a basis for understanding.

One proposed explanation for this is that in sad moods the situation may be perceived as problematic and needing careful information processing. In this case attention focuses on external environment, assumptions are avoided and processing is of a bottom-up nature. Whereas happy moods signal that the situation is benign and that individuals can rely on

strategies they usually find effective. ‘They pay attention to internal knowledge, follow their assumptions, and engage in top-down processing’ (Gasper 2004: 407).

Norman, (2004: 21) suggests that three levels of cognition are involved when people process experiences: visceral, behavioural, and reflective. The visceral level of processing evolved to aid in decision making for survival. At this level, rapid judgements are made on what is good or bad, safe or dangerous, and appropriate signals are sent to the motor system, such as tensing the muscles to get ready for fight or flight. This is the start of affective processing where the general ‘state’ of brain activity is set. Anxiety or negative affect results in focus ‘tunnel vision’, relaxation (positive affect) allows creativity and lateral thinking. The behavioural level of processing is where the use or manipulation of objects takes place (driving a car, typing on a keyboard), and does not have to be conscious. Thus it is possible to perform tasks while thinking of something else on the reflective level. actions taking place on the behavioural level can be ‘enhanced or inhibited’ by the reflective layer and, in turn, it can ‘enhance or inhibit’ the visceral layer. The highest level of processing is that of reflective thought. This level does not have direct access to input from the senses or direct control over behaviour. Instead it ‘watches over’, ‘reflects upon’, and ‘tries to influence’ the behavioural level. At the reflective level, the human brain can think about its own operations. ‘New concepts can be learned and generalizations about the world can be developed’ (Norman 2004: 23).

Activities can be initiated from both the visceral and reflective levels. ‘Bottom up’ activities are initiated by the former and are driven by perception; ‘top down’ activities are initiated from the reflective level and are driven by thought. Although survival based, visceral processing is thought to be fairly universal in terms of reaction to stimuli.

Behavioural and reflective levels of processing are very sensitive to experiences, training and education. Culturally informed views also have a huge impact on what is appealing to a person. Thus while most people would experience anxiety when exposed to high places or wild animals, reactions to art literature and design can vary greatly from person to person. These levels interact with each other and have an impact on design (Norman 2004).

An examination of the nature of the object of interaction involves the appearance of the object or software at the visceral level, the pleasure and effectiveness of use of the product at the behavioural level, and issues of self image, personal satisfaction, and memories arising from the use of the product at the reflective level (Norman 2004: 39). In this framework affect, emotion and cognition interact with and complement each other. Cognition interprets the world, and leads to increased understanding and knowledge. Affect and emotion provide a system for value judgement: what's good or bad, safe or dangerous (Norman 2004: 20).

The complex and multilayered nature of people's experiences in interacting with products is evident in the works of researchers in user-centred design (Jääskö and Mattelmäki 2003, Forlizzi and Ford 2003). They point out that 'the moment when experience takes place is always woven into past memories, but also tightly coupled to the dreams of our imagination.' (Jääskö and Mattelmäki 2003:126). And that 'in their stories people reveal many overlapping, life situation related and emotional meanings in their relationships with products... Experience is dynamic, it develops depending on time and context.' (Jääskö and Mattelmäki 2003:126).

2.6.1 The role of emotions

Clearly emotions play a very important part in the interaction process. There are a variety of approaches to thinking about emotions, created within a number of different disciplines. This is because ‘emotions have many facets’ (Orotny et al 1988: 1) including ‘feeling and experience’, ‘physiology and behaviour’, and ‘cognitions and conceptualisations’. Turner (2007) links the biological/psychological factors involved with the broader context and history in which interactions occur. Human emotional experience is generally agreed to be complex to the extent that definitions, when they are offered, are slippery and imprecise (Lupton 1998, Orotny et al. 1988, Turner 2007). Turner (2007:1) describes them as ‘elusive’ and points out that

[t]erms such as affect, sentiment, feeling, mood, expressiveness, and emotion are sometimes used interchangeably and at other times, to denote a specific affective state (2007: 1).

This thesis uses emotion as a generic term for the core concept while other terms ‘denote varying aspects of emotions’ (see 2007: 1). Many disciplines within the humanities, sciences, and social sciences work with the concept of emotion and offer conceptual framings and theoretical accounts of its origins and effects (see for example Barbalet 1998, Harré 1986, Kemper 1991, Lupton 1998, Orotny et al. 1988, Solomon 2003). Theories fall into two broad categories: those which emphasize the biological/physiological aspects and those that focus principally on the social and cultural dimensions. Or, in other words, emotions as inherent and emotions as learned. Although some scholars adopt extreme disciplinary positions at either end of the scale from evolutionary biologists to extreme social constructionists (e.g. Harré 1986) most locate themselves at some point on the continuum between. Thus Jonathan Turner (2007: 2), whose theory of emotions is adopted for this thesis, argues that emotions are biological – involving changes in body systems,

cognitive – ‘conscious feelings about self and objects in the environment’, and socially/culturally learned ‘words and labels that humans give to particularly physiological states of arousal’.

Turner’s (2007: 13) theory is constructed to persuade social scientists (and sociologists in particular) who generally neglect the biological aspects of emotions that human evolution included ‘selection pressures that led to the rewiring of the primate brain to make humans [strongly] emotional’. Emotions, physiologically, ‘involve changes in body systems – autonomic nervous system (ANS), musculoskeletal systems, endocrine system, and neurotransmitter and neuroactive peptide systems – that mobilize and dispose an organism to behave in particular ways’ (2007: 2). Turner, drawing on the work of more than twenty researchers, makes a division between ‘primary’ emotions which are ‘those states of affective arousal that are presumed to be hard wired in human neuroanatomy’ (2007: 23) and various kinds of elaborations of primary emotions. Like many, but not all, of these researchers he believes that anger, fear, sadness, and happiness are the hardwired base emotions and these can exist in varying levels of intensity.

Humans have the capacity to arouse primary emotions at varying levels of intensity and Turner supposes that this developed as ‘[n]atural selection probably worked on the neuroanatomy of hominids and humans to increase the range of expression of these primary emotions. Within this wider range, it becomes possible to expand further the subtlety and complexity of emotional feelings and expressions which, in turn, increase the attunement of individuals to each other’ (2007:3). The concept of elaborated primary emotions draws on the work of Plutchik (1962, 1980) who developed the idea of new emotions being created through a process of blending and mixing, rather as primary colours are blended and mixed

to produce new variations. Turner describes this as a process of elaborations which neurologically ‘probably involves the simultaneous activation of primary emotion centers in the subcortical parts of the brain in ways that produce new kinds of more complex emotions’ (2007: 5).

Emotions framed in this way are complex reactions to various situations which involve affective and cognitive processing. Orotny et al (1988: 4) state that emotions issue from ‘interpretations imposed on external reality rather than directly from reality itself’ that must involve some cognitive processing of the experience. They also note that simpler emotional reactions such as fear involve much less cognitive processing than higher order elaborations such as shame, or resentment.

Turner’s theory is relevant for this study in that its account of how emotional processes affect interactions between people provides some interesting ideas for considering the nature of peoples’ emotional relationships with products. Turner explains that human interaction is shaped by certain universal ‘need-states’ which generate expectations and emotions. The strongest of these is for ‘verification of self’ and this is followed in order of diminishing importance by ‘profits in exchanges of resources’, group inclusion, trust, and facticity (a verifiable sense of shared reality (2007: 85). If these need-states are fulfilled then individuals feel positive emotions, but when they are disappointed then various elaborations of negative feelings will follow. Emotionally satisfying products must also fulfill particular needs to do with ‘verification of self’ as outlined below.

2.6.2 Emotional consumption: the pleasure of products

Many authors (for example Jordan 2000, Norman 2004, Pine and Gilmore 2007, Peterson 2005) have commented on the importance of providing meaningful, emotionally satisfying experiences with products. As Norman (2004: 103) explains:

Beauty, fun, and pleasure all work together to produce enjoyment, a state of positive affect....Positive emotions *broaden* people's thought-action repertoires, encouraging them to discover novel lines of thought or action. Joy, for instance, creates the urge to play, interest creates the urge to explore, and so on. Play, for instance, builds physical, socioemotional, and intellectual skills, and fuels brain development. Similarly, exploration increases knowledge and psychological complexity.

Tiger's (1992) study of the pursuit of pleasure developed a framework outlining four types of pleasure: physical, social, psychological and ideological. Jordan (2000) and Norman (2004) have described how these pleasure-types might be expressed in the consumption of products. Physio-pleasure is a sensual experience arising from physical interaction with a product. Touch, sight, smell, and hearing can all be included in a process that involves Norman's visceral and behavioural levels.

Socio-pleasure comes from interaction with others. Examples include interactions through mediums such as email or telephone, or physical spaces that provide opportunities for people to gather, for example an office water cooler or coffee machine. On another level socio-pleasures are connected with status and image, as recognised by others, who might admire one's taste in buying a piece of jewellery or choice of holiday destination. Bourdieu's (1984) notions of cultural capital and the aesthetic disposition are apparent here, as status is earned in the eyes of others through demonstration of habitus shaped taste in product choice. These aspects mean that socio-pleasure involves behavioural and reflective aspects of product interaction (Norman 2004).

Psycho-pleasure is derived from the cognitive and emotional reactions that people have when interacting with a product. Psycho-pleasure maps closely to Norman's behavioural level of processing and is present when product use is engaging and pleasurable. Pleasure at this level closely resembles Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow experiences where a person is completely involved in a task that they find satisfying.

Ideo-pleasure comes from an enjoyment of 'the aesthetics, or the quality, or perhaps the extent to which a product enhances life and respects the environment' (Norman 2004: 105). Pleasure is also derived from the statement made by the public display of such a product. This aspect seems to share qualities with socio-pleasure, but a distinction can be drawn. While socio-pleasure is derived from the comments of others on a display of taste, ideopleasure comes purely from the act of display. Pleasure of this nature would occur at the reflective level using Norman's (2004) model.

Several theorists (Bourdieu 1984, Dittmar 1992, Featherstone 1991, Lupton 1998) have pointed out that a key aspect of consumption is to construct and reinforce particular images of self and identity. Rose (1990: 227) states that

[e]very aspect of life, like every commodity, is imbued with a self-referential meaning; every choice we make is an emblem of our identity, a mark of our individuality, each is a message to ourselves and others as to the sort of person we are, each casts a glow back, illuminating the self of he or she who consumes.

Jordan (2000) notes that Tiger's framework of pleasure types was originally intended to describe various aspects of pleasure, but not to describe its causes. Others, such as Norman (2004) and Khaslavsky and Shedroff (1999) point out that these kinds of pleasure can be achieved by a process of seduction that involves enticement, relationship and fulfilment. Norman's (2004: 112) idea that successful products must 'make an emotional promise,

continually fill the promise, and end the experience in a memorable way’ is illustrated by Khavslavsky and Shedroff’s discussion of owners’ relationships with the iconic Philippe Stark “Juicy Salif” citrus squeezer (described in Norman: 113-114.)



Figure 1: Philippe Stark “Juicy Salif” Citrus Squeezer

Reproduced from FormandDesign online
catalogue(<http://www.formanddesign.com.au/site/product.php?recordID=44>)

This novel and distinctive object ‘entices by diverting attention’. The sharp edges of its design, that do not make its intended use obvious, can evoke confusion, surprise or even fear and transform the everyday act of making juice into a special and meaningful ‘play’ experience. The possession of such an object makes several statements. It promises to show how even the ordinary can become exciting, it provides opportunity for the owner and others who see the object to engage with something that is novel, and it tells those who view the object that the person who purchased it has an aesthetic appreciation of its ‘originality, elegance, and sophistication’ as well as its playfulness. Norman (2004: 114) points out that the Juicy Salif provides the ‘reflective joy of explanation’ to others, suggesting that Philippe Starck is rumoured to have said ‘My juicer is not meant to squeeze lemons; it is meant to start conversations’. The outcomes of these strategies of desire is well described by Gabriel and Lang (1995: 113) who say

As we stare at the clothes in a shop window, at the compact disks in a record store, at the motorboats in our leisure magazine, at the mouth-watering dishes pictured in our Sunday newspapers or at our neighbour’s smart new car, we experience a feeling which can only be described as desire, a desire which is at once sweet and frustrating, as desire capable at times of convulsing our physical being as though it were purely sexual. Such objects seduce us, as though they were sexual objects, sparking off strings of

fantasies, which continue to prosper the longer the object remains inaccessible.

2.6.3 Emotions and place

Scholars from many disciplines have examined how people connect passionately with places but it is geographers who have most effectively drawn together the links between human experience of spaces, landscapes, feelings, and memory. Taking Bachelard's phenomenological exploration of human relations with the domesticated space of houses as homes as his starting point, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1974: 92) described the various landscapes and places that arouse 'the human love of place' which he called topophilia. He claimed that people form affective ties of varying strengths and subtleties which may be variously expressed.

The response to the environment may be primarily aesthetic: it may then vary from the fleeting pleasure one gets from a view to the equally fleeting but far more intense sense of beauty that is suddenly revealed. The response may be tactile, a delight in the feel of air, water, earth (1974: 93).

One strand of thought has focused on relationships with the familiar, accustomed connection with home environments (see, for example, Seamon 1984). Others have looked at the ways in which tourists experience places encountered on their travels. In both cases, notions of memory are an integral part of the analysis. In a paper about children's memories and dreams of place Chris Philo goes beyond Bachelard's well known *Poetics of Space* to his 'last major work', *The Poetics of Reverie*, to probe the 'remarkable psychic productivity of the imagination' (quoted in Philo 2003: 11). Childhood memories are understood as a kind of daydreaming (reverie) that is concerned not with factual accuracy but with 'the psychological memory-imagination mixture' (Philo 2003: 12). The significance of these ideas for this thesis lies not in the childhood aspect but in the vision of memory and imagination working together in adult perceptions of place.

We are standing before a great lake whose name is familiar to geographers [i.e. a real location], high in the mountains, and suddenly we are returning to a distant past. We dream while remembering. We remember while dreaming (in Philo at 13).

Imagination, allowed to roam freely, recalls memories of places and feelings. The notion of body memory, widely used in feminist and sociological writing about embodiment, also stresses the significance of involuntary remembering in our relationships with our environments.

Owain Jones (2005:210) argues that ‘memory must play a key, formative role in the construction of our ongoing emotional and imaginative geographies’, quoting Warnock’s suggestion that ‘we could say that in recalling something, we are employing imagination and that in imagining something, exploring it imaginatively, we use memory. There can be no sharp distinction’ (in Jones at 110). He suggests that since memories combine ‘image and feeling ... we have the possibility of remembering reflexively, the narrative of an event, or somehow remembering in different ways, and perhaps remembering emotionally when re-feeling past feelings’ (Jones 112).

Haynes (1980) notes that no person will perceive a place in exactly the same way as another. This is because their mental image is a product of the stimulus of the place combined with and related to a person’s existing knowledge, attitude, and values (Page 1995). The processes of perception and cognition are ‘mediated by experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, and personality’ so that ‘humans only see what they want to see’ (Walmesly and Lewis 1993: 96 quoted in Page 2005: 125).

2.6.4 Emotions, memory and self

Researchers have argued that the key to the complex relationships between self and other, emotion and cognition, lie in memory. Memory is the working space of the imagination where constructions of self and place occur. Memory is much more than a simple repository of information, '[t]he self – the – identity is always in flux, the present altering the past even as the past informs the present' (McConkey, 1996:315). Its workings occur at a level which makes conscious reflection on the process impossible (Damassio 1994). As Jones (2005: 228) points out, '[w]e are not aware of, or in control of, how experiences are mapped into us at the moment of their living out, or of how they are retained and retrieved (or not) through differing forms of memory.' Although we are not reflexively aware of the workings of memory, memory plays an important part in the reflexive awareness of self. Schutz (1971: 172-3) says that reflexivity cannot occur without memory; one must step outside of their experience to recall and reflect upon it.

We cannot approach the realm of the Self without an act of reflective turning. But what we grasp by the *reflective* act is never the present of our stream of thought... it is always its past ... The whole present , therefore, and also the vivid presentation of our Self, is inaccessible for the reflective attitude. We can only turn to the stream of our thoughts as if it had stopped with the last grasped experience. In other words, self consciousness can only be experienced *modo preterito*, in the past tense.

Ryan (1999: 199) draws on Schutz's notions of the reflexive self to suggest that holiday-makers create 'a self from a selective awareness of the holiday experience' that creates 'expectations of the future based on constructs of the past'.

Memories, therefore are the combination of image and feeling arising from an event (Hampl 1995), and can involve reflexive examinations of self and place, the construction of narratives, and 're-feeling past feelings' (Jones 2005: 212). Orotny et al (1988) suggest that emotions act as an indexing aid for memory. Powerful emotional reactions to a given

situation provide a trigger to the brain that the nature of the situation, and the outcomes of the person's actions to the stimuli within the situation, should be recorded so that they can learn the 'maximally appropriate' response. This process involves a combination of affect and cognition, where cognitive machinery is used to work out what is happening in the situation to evoke this emotional response and to work out the appropriate action to take in this case. For example people may feel anxiety when working to a deadline or being stalked by a bear, but the required responses to the given situation will probably be rather different.

Emotions also play a role in recalling more complex memories, both consciously and unconsciously, and can be used as 'research tools' (Jones 2005: 212). Hampl (1995:206), for example, says she does not want to remember through 'the grating wheels and chugging engine of logic' but instead through the heart – 'the guardian of intuition with its secret, often fearful intentions [whose] commands are what the writer obeys'. Here memory also plays a very important part in making sense of the world and sense of self, Norman points out that explanations and interpretations of events are fundamental to humans understanding the world through learning and remembering. Mental models play a major role here by enabling the behaviour required to solve a problem or interact in a given situation to be derived from previous knowledge. This process involves memory through meaningful relationships and memory through explanation. Although the mental models created in memory tend to be imprecise, Norman (1988:55) argues that 'precise behaviour can emerge from imprecise knowledge' for several reasons.

One reason is that much of the information necessary to perform a particular task is present in the world. Objects and social settings provide *affordances* – various cues on how they should be used, or how one should behave in a situation. A given course of action is

determined by a combination of knowledge in the head (memory) and knowledge in the world. In addition precise and detailed knowledge on how to interact is not required because various physical, logical, semantic, and cultural constraints are present, limiting the range of options when solving a problem. Some of these constraints, such as cultural conventions, must be learned, but once learned can apply many different circumstances. Using Shank and Abelson's (1977) theories on goals and scripting and Goffman's (1974) work on performance, social structure and conventions as examples, Norman (1988: 86) suggests that guidelines for cultural behaviour are represented in the mind by means of scripts and schemas, 'knowledge structures that contain the general rules and information necessary for interpreting situations and for guiding behaviour'.

These knowledge structures have long been explored by a diverse range of theorists using a phenomenological approach in relation to everyday life (Schutz 1967, Berger and Luckman 1967), travel (Berger 1983, Ryan 2000), emotions, memory and place (Bachelard 1971) and computing (Turtle 1997). Phenomenological ideas form the basis of all methods concerned with the 'qualitative study of reality-constituting practices' (Holdstein and Gubrium 2001: 263). Their subjectivist assumptions about the nature of lived experience originate in Husserl's (Bullock and Trombley 1999) philosophical phenomenology in which he argued that knowledge rests on experience and that humans actively constitute the objects of experience rather than passively receiving them as outside stimulus. However Husserl's theory reached the extreme position of claiming that intersubjective knowledge was impossible because no individual could ever know what any other person experienced, so it is Schutz's adaptation of Husserl that underpins the research in this thesis. In this theoretical work Schutz adapted Husserl's theories to form a social phenomenology that described how 'ordinary members of society constitute and reconstitute the world of

everyday life' (Bullok and Trombley 1999: 263). His purpose in developing this theory was different from mine because his concern was to understand the nature of social life, but many of his ideas are directly relevant to thinking about any examination of human experience – including human-computer interaction.

Every individual has a stock of knowledge which is made up of the constructs and categories they have acquired while interacting in the "life world". These stocks of knowledge, which include 'images, theories, ideas, values and attitudes' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994: 263) make up the individual's world of things that seem familiar to them and are the resources they apply to interpret experience. Throughout life individuals, as a result of interacting with their environment, continually add to and modify their stocks of knowledge. Each person approaches a computer system with their own stock of knowledge, which they use to make sense of their perceptions of that system. Computer users need to recognize a button, icon or menu system and know what they mean within the context of that use. For example, an individual will see a picture of a printer on an icon and know that clicking on it will print the document.

These are the (assumed to be) shared categories, based in an individual's stock of common knowledge, which people use to sort and organize what they know. Typifications provide guidelines for recognizing experiences as belonging to particular areas, or realms. Because stocks of knowledge are always open-ended and never complete they are can always be adapted and modified. People ascribe meaning by interpretively applying categories to 'the concrete particulars of a situation' (Holstein and Gubrium 1994, 263). Typifications are closely linked to stocks of knowledge, in the sense that they govern how humans organize stocks of knowledge. They form the basis for communicating concepts by applying the

categories assumed to be common or shared. When we tell someone what we are doing, we put it in terms we think that they will understand.

The idea of intersubjectivity relates to the notion that people assume that they interact with each other in a world which we all experience in basically the same way. ‘We take our subjectivity for granted, overlooking its constitutive character, presuming that we intersubjectively share the same reality’ (Holstein and Gubrium, 1994:263). Schutz (1967) introduces the idea that intersubjectivity is an ‘ongoing accomplishment’, a set of understandings that must be continually created and sustained by the individual efforts of participants. This interpretive positioning is particularly appropriate for an inquiry into the experience of traveler attitudes towards the Internet and its role in shaping their perceptions of New Zealand as a travel destination. This is because:

- People use their stocks of knowledge to interpret (make sense of) their experience, for example, their experience while using a computer.
- People use typifications to put what they experience into terms that they think other people will understand (use common stocks of knowledge).
- The process of intersubjectivity consists of an interplay between different, subjective experiences, each made sense of through their own separate stocks of knowledge.

Therefore achieving validity in the form of gaining an accurate depiction, understanding, and interpretation of the user experience depends upon achieving successful intersubjective experience of the user’s reality (Hughes 1993).

This thesis develops a human computer interaction perspective on tourist computer use that is informed by tourism scholarship and theory. It is positioned within a human actors approach that addresses the complex task of analyzing participant’s attitudes to both

technology and travel. Norman's framework for conceptualizing human experience provides a guiding reference for considering multiple levels of processing, where visceral and behavioural levels account for the emotional, affective and embodied aspects of experience and the reflective level provides more cultural and contextual cues. Both human computer interaction and tourism theorists draw on the behavioural cognitive and social sciences and similarities emerge in analysis of their work where comparison of the application of their theories can provide insights into the conjunction of tourist and computer experiences. In his earlier work Norman (1988) draws on the work of Goffman (1959, 1967) and Schutz (1967) to explain the importance of cultural constraints in the processing of situations as well as his juxtaposition of knowledge in the world and in the head. Turner (2007) shows how biological and behavioral psychology can be combined to theorise about the relationship between human emotions and the importance of roles and decision making. At the core of much of this work, in both human computer interaction and tourism, are the phenomenological notions of stocks of knowledge and intersubjectivity (Schutz 1967) that underpin the idea knowledge in the world and in the head. These also inform MacCannell's (1999) concepts of tourist experience and Urry's (1994) depiction of tourists as semioticians.

Common elements here include the way in which people under investigation are viewed, and the overall positioning of the researcher that guides that emphasis and stance used in the treatment of participants in this research. Crouch describes tourists as 'lay geographers' (Crouch 2000) and emphasizes the significance of 'a strong interest in the *subject* [emphasis in original], what people themselves make of their lives (63). Proponents of the human actors approach (for example Greenbaum and Kyng 1991) in human computer interaction analysis make similar positional statements. Turkle (1997) and Bolter and

Grusin (1999) similarly describe encounters with computers as series of encounters where different notions of the self the world can be compared and explore. Cohen (1979) suggests multiple modes of experience, each describing a state where a person's attentions are diverted from the cares of everyday life and new perspectives gained on self and the world. The core themes emergent from the data: authenticity, navigation, scripting and representation are therefore explored using the work of these theorists as comparative data to clarify the nature and interrelationship of these categories.

Chapter Three: Research methodology and methods

Located in the field of human computer interaction research, this thesis is concerned with the ways in which backpackers connect with travel websites. Using the Morae data capture system (described in page 68), thirty backpackers were interviewed in engagement with a key New Zealand tourist website (www.newzealand.com). The purpose was to explore participants' prior use of and responses to this site in the context of their own travel experiences and plans, and their use of the Internet while moving through the country. Understanding these relationships between traveller and website requires knowledge of the emotional, affective, reflective and behavioural aspects of their decision making behaviours. The research was undertaken to capture how the website, as a medium of communication, evokes user responses by examining how personal destination images are created, developed, and changed as a potential tourist moves through a decision-making stage and on into traveller mode.

This research adopts a phenomenological/interpretive theoretical positioning that emphasizes the importance of context in understanding perceptions of websites. Ryan (2000) points out that such an approach tries to understand human behaviour within the actor's personal frame of reference. This exploration of the role played by the Internet in traveller experiences therefore pays close attention to the contextual details of identity, attitude, planning, and image in travellers' attributions of meaning to the phenomena they experience online. Ryan (2000:122) also explains that 'qualitative research does not exist separate from empiricism, but extends empiricism towards individuality'. The point is reinforced by a quotation from Schutz's explication of the life-world (1964: 8):

The safeguarding of the subjective point of view is the only but sufficient guarantee that the world of social reality will not be replaced by a fictional non-existing world constructed by the scientific observer.

3.1 Methodological positioning

In research, three essential elements constitute ‘the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator ... in choices of method [and] in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:105). Paradigms in research therefore act as frameworks to define what can be discovered and count as legitimate knowledge, and how such knowledge might be gathered. Thus the choice of ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions made here determine the nature of this research.

The basic beliefs defined by a paradigm are encapsulated in answers to three questions (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:108). The ontological question asks about the nature of reality and what we can know about it; the epistemological question asks about the ways of knowing – the relationship between the knower and what it is possible to know. The methodological question is: how can the researcher find out what he or she wants to know? Any answers given to these questions are always ‘human constructions’ and, as such, cannot be ‘incontrovertibly right’ (Guba and Lincoln 1994:108). Instead they are chosen for their usefulness in guiding the choice of methodology, method, epistemology and ontological assumptions. The method and nature of knowledge production is dependent on the choice of paradigm. The criteria for judging the quality of the knowledge generated by the research process is also dependent on the choice of paradigm. Lincoln and Guba, in their description of the constructivist paradigm, provide a set of answers to these questions that seem particularly helpful for guiding the kind of research based on subjective human experience that are the present concern.

This research adopts the ontological position that there are ‘multiple, apprehendable, and sometimes conflicting ... realities’ (Guba and Lincoln 1994: 111). Because they are produced by human intellects these realities are fluid and can change as those who construct the reality change and adapt in response to experience (Schutz 1967, Schutz and Luckmann 1973). In this thesis knowledge about the user experience has been acquired in a way that the ‘investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the ‘findings’ are literally created as the investigation proceeds’ (Guba and Lincoln 1994: 111). The positioning of this approach tends to dissolve the normal distinctions made between ontology and epistemology (Charmaz 2005) because ‘what can be known is inextricably intertwined with the interaction between a particular investigator and a particular object or group’ (Guba and Lincoln 1994, 111). Because these constructions are produced by individuals, they can only be brought out and examined through an exploration of shared meanings between researcher and respondents (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Schwandt 1994). So the method of research must take the form of interaction between participants and the researcher.

3.1.1 Grounded theory

Within this framework a grounded theory approach was used to generate substantive theory relevant to this research topic. The intent of a grounded theory study is to generate or discover a theory which relates to and is grounded in the data gathered about a particular situation. This situation is one in which individuals interact, take actions, or engage in a process in response to a phenomenon (Cresswell 1998: 55). To study how people act and react to this phenomenon, primary data is collected in the form of interviews and observations over multiple iterations. This data is used to develop categories of information

that can be related to form theoretical propositions or hypotheses describing the phenomenon. A grounded theory approach to research can use a variety of different theoretical positions from positivist to interpretive (Charmaz 2006). Here this more open approach to grounded theory as described by both Glaser's (1978) earlier works and Charmaz' (constructivist approach) later work has been used.

The basis of grounded theory research is the development or generation of a theory closely related to the context of the phenomenon being studied. Strauss and Corbin (1994), for example, note that a theory is a plausible relationship among concepts and sets of concepts. The theory generated is substantive in the sense that it describes the nature of particular phenomena in a particular set of circumstances. Examples of substantive studies include impression management in chat rooms (Becker and Stamp 2005) or trust in virtual teamwork (Sainsbury and Baskerville 2006).

Several tools are used by the researcher in the process of generating theory. An open coding approach is used to identify cases and instances that may help to explain the phenomena being investigated and to define the qualities of these various cases and instances. At this point large numbers of codes are generated to be used as analytical signposts or indicators (Glaser 1978, Charmaz 2006). The researcher then groups these cases and instances together into various categories and the relationships between these categories is defined in a process known as theoretical coding. These indicators may be found through movement from specific to more general phenomena or the researcher can have 'a larger problem in mind' and look for more specific indicators to address it (Becker 1970: 198). Having said this, an open approach to inquiry with no preconceptions may be more productive:

The best evidence may be that gathered in the most unthinking fashion, when the observer has simply recorded the item as though it has no place in the system of concepts and hypotheses he is working with at the time, for there might be less bias produced by the wish to substantiate or repudiate a particular idea (Becker 1970: 198).

On the basis of a single event the observer may then choose specific items that can be used as indicators of things that are harder to observe, and this can in turn lead to finding shortcuts allowing the research to examine particular areas of interest in the participant's experience. In this kind of research it is important to develop appropriate sensitizing concepts. The following strategies, adapted from Becker (1970:191), are useful in thinking about what this process should entail.

- Identifying 'problems and concepts that give promise of yielding the greatest understanding' of the phenomena being investigated.
- Placing these observations in the context of theory in order to select concepts and define problems for further investigation.
- Creating theoretical models to account for an observed case, with the intention of refining it 'in the light of subsequent findings'.

Sensitising concepts are used to alert the researcher to central issues (Charmaz 2000, 2006, Glaser 1978) and are the product of a combination of the researcher's experience and disciplinary knowledge and an examination of the data. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the disciplinary and/or professional knowledge, as well as both research and personal experience that the researcher brings to their inquiry (Charmaz 2006, Glaser 1978, Strauss and Corbin 1994). This is very different from coding or analysing to make events fit into boxes; rather it is an awareness, or sensitivity of how elements in the data may fit with theory being generated.

Such sensitivity, when present, allows for a smoother flow in the analysis of data while observing experience by reducing the amount of analysis needed to describe or label phenomena within the experience of the user. This allows both user and co-researchers to remain more completely in the participant state or reality while retrieving the information that is required for the research goals. The process begins with a ‘sensitizing image of the interaction process’ (Denzin 1971: 168) built around such concepts as self, language, and joint act. The inquirer then moves from sensitizing concepts to the immediate world of experience and permits that world to shape and modify their conceptual framework. In this way, the inquirer moves continually between the realms of the more general theory and the worlds of user experience.

3.1.1.1 Treatment of literature and theory

In grounded theory, literature is treated as another source of data for the development of theory and analysis. The content of others’ accounts of research, concepts and theories are all compared with the emerging categories from the primary research in order to help develop the emergent theory. In this way literature is used not as a framework for theory development but rather, elements relevant to the research provide another source of coding and memoing in the theory generation process. Glaser (1992) identifies three types of literature that contribute to the process of theory building – descriptive, conceptual, and unrelated conceptual sources. Each has its own mode of contributing to theoretical development. Descriptive literature provides accounts of other cases, or comparisons with the phenomena under examination. In this thesis these were literature on other researchers’ findings on human computer interaction, emotions, and backpacker travel and perceptions. Participants’ quotes from other researchers’ studies can be used for comparative purposes.

Conceptual literature provides ideas that help to refine and extend the emerging themes of the research. Generally this literature cannot be read ahead of time and forms part of the data collection process as various theoretical categories become apparent and are explored. In this research, as trust, self, and authenticity emerged as strong themes, more literature on these topics from a variety of disciplines was consulted. Finally, in a grounded theory methodology contingent but not necessarily related conceptual literature is also consulted to aid the researcher in the process of coding and categorizing by extending their theoretical sensitivity to explanatory possibilities. In this case literature on cognitive and sociological theories on emotions, semiotics, and marketing became relevant.

Glaser (1978) makes an important point that in grounded theory literature is data in the sense of a resource, an explanatory tool that can be analysed, compared and contrasted but it is also primary data that legitimates the theory. This grounded theory approach to literature meant that theories from other authors are introduced as they become relevant to understanding concepts and categories emergent in the research. As Glaser (1978: 8) puts it:

Grounded theory does not confront or synthesise other theories, instead other theories become part of the data and memos to be further compared to the emerging theory to generate an even more dense, integrated theory of greater scope....The analyst must remember that it is the idea he is using, not the person it was borrowed from.

3.1.1.2 Theory generation

Following Glaser's model, substantive and theoretical codes were used. The former were used to delineate the nature of the phenomena observed; the latter served to establish relationships between elements described by the substantive codes (Glaser 1978: 55). The major goal of coding is to use a method that facilitates high sortability and flexibility (Glaser 1978: 71). Glaser (1978) suggests coding in the margin next to the indicator, and

the cutting up various sections of carbon copies of the notes so that codes can be assembled and compared in various ways. In this thesis did coding and categorizing was done electronically using Morae computer software and Microsoft Word documents.

Glaser (1978) suggests coding families to help see how themes emerging from the information might fit together. He lists eighteen coding families with comments on their use, but states that these families are flexible, overlap considerably and often frame the same construction in slightly different ways. He notes that the researcher:

... will think of other words for each family as well as discover new families. But in the final effort, they make the analyst very sensitive to what to write at which point, when in fact, he must take a stand and try to theoretically render an empirical pattern (Glaser 1978: 73-74)

The primary “bread and butter” coding family is the Six C’s: Causes, Contexts, Contingencies, Consequences, Covariances, and Conditions. But like the others, this is merely a tool to help the researcher think about how the data might relate together. Whether the use of this coding family is appropriate in a given situation is dependent on the nature of the themes from within the data emerge in a particular inquiry.

As the researcher creates relationships between observations and thus generates theory they must ensure that the emergent theory has ‘fit and relevance’ and that it works (Glaser 1978: 4). By fit he means that categories of the theory must fit the data which ‘should not be forced or selected to fit pre-conceived or pre-existent categories.’ For a theory to work in Glaser’s terms it must ‘explain what happened, predict what will happen and interpret what is happening in an area of substantive or formal inquiry’. A key part of the nature of grounded theory is that the emergent theory is constantly being modified as new data appears, for example as new explanatory conditions become apparent to the researcher.

Charmaz (2006: 181) describes the imbrication of theory and data in the grounded theory process as

taking comparisons from data and reaching up to construct abstractions and simultaneously reaching down to tie these abstractions to data. It means learning about the specific and the general-and seeing what is new in them-then exploring their links to larger issues or creating larger unrecognized issues in entirety...Grounded theory methods can provide a route to see beyond the obvious and a path to reach imaginative interpretations.

Through the process of comparing participants' accounts in this research several categories became particularly prominent in this research. The common themes identified were: performance, roles, scripting, authenticity, and narrative. Analysis of interviews revealed that the most useful framing of authenticity was one of a mediated form that involved a comparison of self and 'other'. This conclusion was arrived at by defining several aspects of authenticity. These were: authenticity as a reflexive exploration of self and experience online and in travel; as a traveller-identified benchmark for valid or worthwhile travel experience.

These aspects of authenticity tied into the category of roles through the performance metaphor where activities, and representations of activities were parsed by participants to see if they were appropriate for backpackers. A common theme identified in tourism literature is that of travellers seeking authenticity. Authenticity is treated in several different ways by tourism theorists but most if not all appear to agree that travelers are seeking authentic experiences – it is the framing of authenticity that is different – whether it is relative, or absolute, whether the emphasis is on the tourist producer or the consumer. The analysis used in this thesis found that emphasis on the consumer who in fact produced their own tourist experiences was most resonant.

Travellers could therefore be understood as ‘lay geographers’ (Crouch 2000) and as semioticians (Urry 1990a) who used their own schema to make sense of their travels. These schema were the products of intersubjective experiences with their lived world that included exchanges with other travelers, visits to websites, and reading guidebooks. The grounded theory principle using theory for comparison for its explanatory power (Glaser 1978) meant that theories relating to this stance were not applied per se. Instead aspects of Norman’s descriptions on how humans process experience, Turner’s (2007) integration of psychology and sociology roles and emotions were used as example frameworks to relate the primary categories of performance, roles, scripting, authenticity and narrative. Authenticity emerged as being a mediated, negotiable concept closely related to the concepts tourists as performers and the media scripting.

3.2 Data collection: interview techniques

This thesis takes the position that in order to examine people’s perceptions of a website in the interpretive/phenomenological tradition it is also necessary to look at the context of their travel experiences and attitudes towards New Zealand. As a result the role of the Internet in traveller experiences is explored through research into:

- The presentation of image of New Zealand as a destination through the newzealand.com website and other sources such as other traveller’s stories, television documentaries, books and movies, and the feelings and anticipations evoked in participants by this image.
- The perceived authenticity of information presented to the traveller.
- The effect Internet sources have on participants’ travel and decision making behaviour and planning.

- Where the use of the Internet fits with other key information sources used by participants to plan their travel, for example word of mouth and guide books.

Within the grounded theory methodology a phenomenographic approach was used to gather contextual information about participants' travel planning and experiences.

Phenomenography has been defined as:

... a research method adapted for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand the various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them (Marton, 1988: 144)

Ryan (2000: 123) notes that while phenomenology and phenomenography are both concerned with the structures of conceptualising a phenomenon, they differ in the focus of their approach. The primary concern of phenomenology is '*what* people perceive in the world' whereas phenomenography is interested in the '*way*' in which they perceive the world. It moves on from a description of what they perceive to an examination of how they make sense of their lived experiences. This is done by categorizing peoples' descriptions of various aspects of the world to see how they make sense of what they are processing (Marton 1981, 1988, Svensson 1997). The clear fit of a phenomenographic approach with the emergent, data driven nature of grounded theory is illustrated by Ryan's (2000: 123) quoting of Francis (1993: 73) who says:

Phenomenographic studies aim specifically to discover categories from the data, not to analyse in terms of predetermined classifications.

In the tourism field a phenomenographic approach has been used to examine a range of tourist experiences in travel to Majorca (Ryan 1995a) and the nature of saltwater crocodiles as tourist attractions (Ryan1998). Similar studies based on travellers' own narratives of their travel experiences through interviews have been undertaken with budget travellers (Obenour 2004) and coach tour parties (Tucker 2005).

Interviews using a phenomenographic approach are open ended. Ryan (2000: 125) notes that since the focus of the interview is on the interviewee's experience the researcher may have as few as four or five questions, beginning with one as simple as 'tell me what you did on your last holiday?' In this process the interviewer works with participants to clarify their thinking. Ryan (2000: 125) notices that transcripts of phenomenographic interviews commonly contain 'Can you give me an example?', 'What do you mean by that?', 'Could you explain that a little more?' and 'the 'mm!' accompanied by the encouraging nod of the head.' Interviewing using this approach fits well with a grounded theory methodology since the interviewer does not 'pose a series of questions derived from a pre-concieved model of structured relationships between variables [but] rather it is an exploration of respondents' processes of clarification of their concepts' (Ryan 2000: 125). As Marton (1994 cited in Ryan 2000: 125) notes:

As phenomenographic research is empirical research, the researcher (interviewer) is not studying his or her own awareness and reflection, but that of their subjects. The interview has to be carried out as a dialogue, it should facilitate the thematization of aspects of the subjects experience not previously thematized... These experiences, understandings, are neither there prior to the interview, ready to be 'read off', nor are they only situational social constructions. They are aspects of the subject's awareness that change from being unreflected to being reflected.

A phenomenographic approach therefore attempts to 'describe the world as it appears to the individual' through 'descriptions that are relational, experiential, content-oriented, and qualitative' (Marton 1988: 146).

3.3 Visual methods in the examination of destination image

Fairweather and Swaffield (2002: 385) point out that the majority of examinations of tourist attitudes and perceptions of New Zealand have been based upon questionnaire surveys with little if any use of photographs. However they also note a more extensive international

literature based on studies of general landscape perception based on the presentation of images as stimuli (Shuttleworth 1980, Uzzell 1991) which provide a ‘fruitful and valid way to investigate perception and experience’ (Fairweather and Swaffield 2002: 385, Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). Many studies have confirmed the usefulness of pictorial stimuli in investigating perceptions of place (Jenkins 1999, Stamps 1990, Meitner 2003 Shafer and Brush 1977, Shuttleworth 1980, Zube and Pitt 1981)

Other researchers, when surveying the body of destination image research (Jenkins, 1999, Fairweather and Swaffield 2002), have commented on the way in which investigations into people’s perceptions of place often rely on word-based scales and privilege words over visual techniques. Pearce and Black (1996: 419) suggest that ‘familiarity with texts and words’ leads researchers to prefer these forms of presentation of tourist experience. This practice, they think, ‘may well be out of step with the experiences of an increasing number of visitors whose world is increasingly dominated by visual images’. The visual nature of tourist experience has been explored in depth by Urry (for example 1990a, 1990b, 1992, 1994, 2002) and a series of co-authors (Lash and Urry 1994; Rojek and Urry 1993). Picture theorist W.J.T Mitchell (1994: 11) says that ‘[l]inguistics, semiotics, rhetoric and various models of “textuality” have become the lingua franca for critical reflections on the arts, the media, and cultural forms.’

Picture examinations have often tended to use preset scales and categories in the process of investigating respondents’ impressions (Jenkins 1999). One method of at least partially ‘freeing’ an analysis of verbal constraints is to allow research participants to freely describe their impressions arising from a particular image rather than forcing them to fit their responses to a set of pre-selected categories (Collier 1967, Harper 1994). Respondents then

describe target stimulus in terms that are salient to them (Jenkins 1999, Reilly1990). In this technique, even absence of description can be indicative, showing that the visual stimulus does not resonate with the viewer. Photographs, especially, have been used in a number of overseas studies relying on picture based research to elicit tourist attitudes and perceptions (Fairweather and Swaffield, 2002). Surveys of landscape preference, which include tourist attitudes, have been conducted by Nasar (1987), Daniel et al (1989) and Young and Brown (1992) and tourists have been the focus of work by several researchers (Eleftheriadis et al., 1990; Philipp, 1993; Chadee and Mattsson 1996; Mackay and Fesenmaier, 1997). Fairweather and Swaffield have conducted studies on visitors' and locals' experiences of Kaikoura (2001) and Rotorua (2002) in New Zealand

The images presented to participants in this study are presented through the website. The technique used is to get participants to 'think aloud' and describe their thoughts and feelings as they view images of New Zealand while interacting with the newzealand.com website. This technique is one of the core practices of the usability testing approach commonly used in examinations of human computer interaction (Nielson 2000, Rubin 1994). Thus, in this research, the artefact of the computer was added to the participants' experience. Through the computer images, text, video, and sound could be presented to the research participants as they spoke of their experiences. In the context of these stimuli participants told stories about themselves, about their travels and about the pictures they were seeing. These accounts could then be categorised to see what qualitative similarities emerged in the construction of destination image.

3.4 Usability testing

The contextual approach taken in this thesis is based on an established form of usability testing which is itself one of the primary tools used in the field of human – computer

research to examine user experience on the web (Constantine and Lockwood 1999, Nielson 2000, Rubin 1994). This practice typically involves observing users as they try out certain aspects of a product or process such as attempting to make an online booking on a travel website. Usability techniques are needed because designers cannot know exactly how users will respond to their interfaces and content and users are not necessarily able to recognise or articulate fully their experiences with software (Nielson 2000, 2002, Waes 2000). The purpose of such tests is to gather insightful feedback for software designers to help them make their applications easier to use (Hughes 1993, Nelson 1994).

Usability testing is commonly employed to diagnose software problems by finding out what is working well about a site and what is not. Usability testing techniques are also used to compare alternatives (for example between clients' and competitors' sites, between two interface prototypes) and to verify that various usability goals have been met (such as reducing the time and effort needed to make an online booking) (Constantine and Lockwood 1999). Although the emphasis of this thesis extends beyond these goals to a more experiential and contextual examination of website usage, the situated nature of usability testing, where research is undertaken while users interact with a piece of software, makes it a helpful tool for examining the relationship between humans and computers.

A wide variety of data can be collected during usability tests, ranging from detailed descriptions of what the user said and did during the test, to counts of various aspects of users' behaviour, such as: time to complete a task; number of errors or problems in completing the task; and the number of requests for assistance (Constantine and Lockwood 1999). Usability testing nearly always includes both qualitative and quantitative elements. It always includes some qualitative notes and often includes reporting some numbers, such

as percentage of participants who had a particular problem or who took a particular path to completing a task. But it may or may not include the types of quantitative data that are traditional in psychology research, such as time and errors (Hughes 1993). Whether the emphasis in usability testing is qualitative or quantitative depends on other factors such as the goals and philosophy of the testing. When the goal is comparison or verification, testing is more likely to include some quantitative data. For information on subjective human experiences with software a more qualitative approach, based on participants' accounts while using it, is more appropriate (Nielsen et al 2002). The approach to usability testing used in this thesis research was very exploratory as the investigation focuses on the overall nature of participant's experience while interacting with the website rather than simply examining the functionality of the website in terms of participants performing a particular task.

An important factor in determining the manner in which usability testing should be conducted is the overall testing philosophy and treatment of users. In other words, whether testing is seen more as 'research' or as 'partnering with users.' (usability.gov). Inquiries into user interaction experiences employ people from many different backgrounds. Many usability techniques stem from academic psychology experiments with a very quantitative, objective approach (Constantine and Lockwood 1999). Other approaches are more grounded in anthropology, ethnography, sociology, and other disciplines and fields that stress naturalistic, qualitative observations, using techniques such as participant observation, interviews, and co-operative inquiry (Hughes 1993). These methods, based on the examination and interpretation of the subjective experiences users have with the product being tested, have been argued to have the advantages of producing contextually rich data, including good insights into human behaviour, and effective space for participant's

knowledge in the generation of data (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994; Holstein and Gubrium, 1994; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

3.4.1 Thinking aloud

A key technique used to elicit information from participants in the context of their experience is the ‘think aloud’ protocol. This method has its roots in the field of cognitive psychology, and is based on the technique of introspection, in which interview subjects recollect the mental processes they go through when they perform a particular task. The accuracy of such descriptions has been in questioned (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977) by those who posit that people are generally unaware of the processes influencing their behaviour and tend to generate causal theories about the effects of various types of stimulus on them rather than expressing their own processes. In order for the introspection method to be useful or valid Ericsson and Simon (1980,1984, 1993) suggested that participants should be asked to describe what they are attempting to do or thinking about while in the process of performing the task rather than provide an interpretation of the situation or their thought processes after the event. This process referred to as “think aloud’ or protocol analysis and is well established in the field of human computer interaction (Nielson et al 2002), particularly in the areas of knowledge elicitation (Hoffman et al 1995) and usability (Waes 2000).

Using a think-aloud protocol, where users say what they are feeling or thinking as they use the product, grounds the data as directly as possible in user perceptions and experience (Nielson et al. 2002). The use of direct, real-time observations of the user, rather than self-reports such as surveys, keep the evaluators’ conclusion grounded in directly observable data. Studies show that cognition and experience is situated (Brown, Collins, and Duguid

1989), so that what is described in a delayed review or post-testing feedback may be different from what is experienced at the time.

The research and analysis takes place in the context of shared experience. Both researcher and participant are able to see the software displayed on screen during the usability testing session. The researcher, as observer, can then attempt to step into the user's world as they interact with the software being tested, in a similar manner that the inquirer actively enter the worlds of people being studied in order to 'see the situation as it is seen by the actor, observing what the actor takes into account, observing how he interprets what is taken into account' (Blumer 1969:56).

Reflection and communication are important for both the participant and researcher in order to ensure that the latter is getting an accurate representation of the user experience. Techniques such as member checking, where interpretations about the data are tested with the users themselves, can increase credibility (Hughes 1993). In this manner triangulation occurs by comparing the impressions of the user and the facilitator while they are interacting with the website. Here triangulation is 'a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation' while recognising that 'no observations or interpretations are perfectly repeatable'. Therefore 'triangulation serves also to clarify meaning by identifying different ways a phenomenon is being seen' (Stake 1994:241).

3.4.2 Morae data capture software

Morae software by Techsmith was used for both data capture and analysis. The software allows the researcher to capture a video and audio record of each research participant while

they interact with a computer system. This software simultaneously records the state of the computer screen throughout the session. This provides a rich picture of what the user is experiencing and their reactions to that experience. The video provides information on facial expressions and body language to supplement the inflections in voice and the oral information given by participants in the context of what they are seeing on the computer screen.

This software has data analysis functionality which allows the researcher to add timestamped notes and markers while reviewing this rich data. This aids in the grounded theory coding process by enabling the researcher to quickly revisit the primary data for further analyse and recoding as conceptual areas are being developed. This computer-aided form of analysis addresses one of the practical research problems of the analysis of ‘voluminous’ data (Ryan 2000). Ryan (2000: 125) observed that peoples’ descriptions of their own experiences of a phenomenon had a particular, disjointed, quality.

...the conversation of the phenomenographic researcher is not free flowing
...[it] is often marked by pauses and moments of silence. This is because the respondent will cease speaking – the act of cessation may be an invitation for not simply comment on the part of the researcher but for theme development.

These conversations are essentially a stream of consciousness generated by the participant and facilitated by the researcher.

Ryan (2000) also noted that the nonlinear description of themes by participants in this style of research requires ‘keener listening skills’ than the more directed conversation that takes place with a structured interview. The Morae data analysis software allowed an abstract level of interpretation (through coding) to be attached directly to the rich data, allowing the researcher to ‘jump’ round the rich data captured in the recorded interviews and follow participant’s thoughts as they threaded through the conversations. This process of coding

while being remaining immersed in the data is crucial to knowledge generation using grounded theory. As Glaser (1978: 55) puts it:

Coding gets the analysis off the empirical level by fracturing the data, then conceptually grouping it into codes that then explains what is happening in the data....it allows the researcher to transcend the empirical nature of the data – which is so easy to get lost in – while at the same time conceptually accounting the processes within the data in a theoretically sensitive way.

Coding in grounded theory is a form of bricolage where themes arise through tinkering with the data in a ‘bottom-up’ manner. This is analogous to Turkle’s (1997: 51) description of problem solving by bricolage, where theory is generated ‘by arranging and rearranging’ aspects of the problem; by trying something, stepping back, reconsidering, and trying another. This is a ‘flexible, non-hierarchical style’ that ‘allows for a close connecting with one’s objects of study’. Turkle (1997) notes that one of the modern computer’s great strengths and impacts on contemporary thinking is its role as an ‘object-to-think-with’ where representations and simulations of the ‘real world’ can be easily modified and compared. The representations of participant’s experience enabled by the computer allows for flexible coding tied directly to the rich data captured by the video recording and screen capture. Instead of being abstracted by text in transcription, non-verbal information conveyed through facial expressions, body language and tone of voice (Turner 2007) are readily available to be coded and recoded in order to tease out common themes and generate theory from description.

In this research codes and notes were recorded both in the software, and in Microsoft Word documents. For analytical purposes the codes recorded in the Morae data analysis suite were more open and descriptive. The codes and memos recorded in Word documents were more in depth, and tended to describe the nature and relationships between various observations. Markers indicating events of interest in the testing session were frequently

revisited and re-coded in the light of trends arising from further observations and emerging theoretical categories.

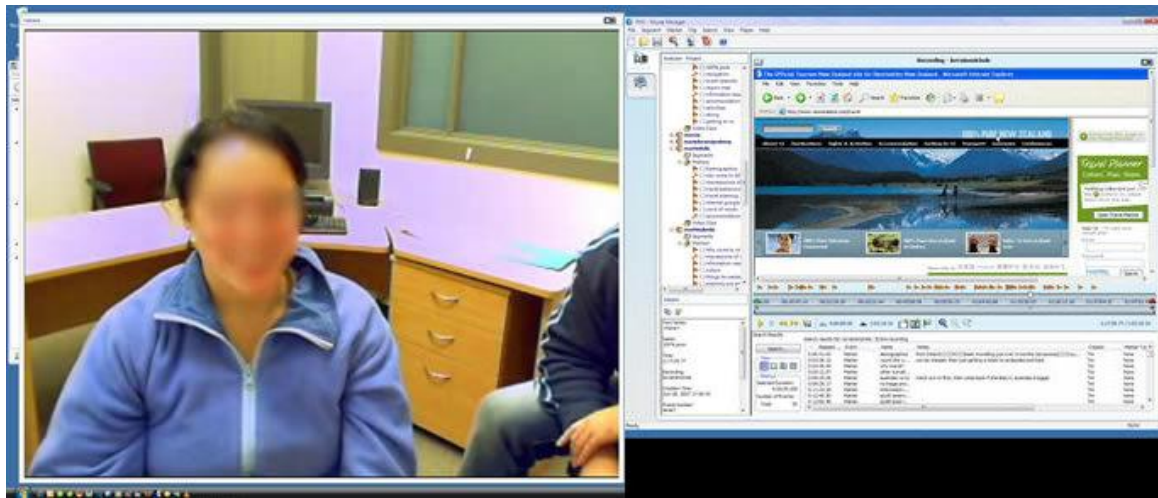


Figure 2: Morae Data Analysis Screenshot

Sometimes the focus of the participant was on the computer screen (figure 2) and sometimes it was on the interviewer when they were discussing their experiences (figure 3).



Figure 3: Morae Data Analysis Screenshot

Contextual questions about travel planning and behaviour were also asked while the participant was at the computer, and recorded by the software. Participants also sometimes showed the researcher other websites that they used and talked about them. This provided

some illustration of the aspects of a website that were appealing to the participant and some comparative data between the website being demonstrated and the newzealand.com site.

The power of video data is that the researcher can revisit and examine emotional responses when the user is interacting with the system. Turner argues that in effect human emotions can be understood as ‘a primal language system in which emotional phonemes are strung together into sequences by implicit rules of syntax that communicate affect’ (2007: 83). This is evidenced by the clarity with which we understand from watching a soap opera without soundtrack what is happening. Ekman’s widely cited research which demonstrates the universality of primary emotions across cultures and was performed with still photographs (Ekman, 1973a, b, 1982, 1984; Ekman and Friesen, 1971; Ekman et al., 1972). Turner argues that with the capture and expression of movement in video non verbal communication is made even clearer than in still photographs, and establishes that rather than body language being an adjunct to spoken language, it is a more primal form of communication within the evolutionary sequence and that humans are consequently especially skilled at reading such communications. He claims that in the way that evolutionary sequences frequently repeat as developmental stages in organisms babies are highly receptive to adult interaction that imprints with ‘smiles, acts of touching, verbal cooing to convey positive affect’ (2007: 83). This has implications for researchers, who, when observing users interacting with the system, are reading the emotional language as well as their spoken word.

Use of the Morae software helped codify what the researcher was seeing to the higher abstractions and synthesis in memos and writing chapters. In fact, the computer formed an integral part of the process of theory generation in this thesis. Experiences in undertaking

this research bore a striking resemblance to Sherry Turkle's (1997: 30) relationship with her personal computer:

Why is it so hard for me to turn away from the screen? The windows on my computer desktop offer me layers of material to which I have simultaneous access: field notes; previous drafts of this book; a list of ideas not yet elaborated but which I want to include; transcripts of interviews with computer user; and verbatim logs of sessions on computer networks, on bulletin boards, and in virtual communities. When I write at the computer, all these are present in my thinking space seems somehow enlarged. The dynamic, layered display gives me the comforting sense that I write in conversation with my computer. After years of such encounters, a blank piece of paper makes me feel strangely alone.

3.5 Methodological issues

In any inquiry the researcher has to consider what constitutes valid data and also what reliable conclusions can be drawn from those data. Traditionally many practitioners in usability testing believed that user experience must be quantified for analysis in order to support objective decisions (Hughes 1993). However the quantifiable findings that result often do not produce the useful data that shape product changes (Carroll, 1990; Draper, 1996). Furthermore, when they are used, they are often insufficiently analysed, or they are reported in ways that lead to unreliable conclusions by the tester or by the client (Patton, 1987).

3.5.1 Rigour and validity

The kind of quantitative analysis typically employed in usability testing is based on observations of subjects' behaviour such as measures of speed and accuracy of performance of a task (Card et al 2001). However these methods do not provide any understanding of the 'moment by moment cognition between clicks' (Card et al 2001: 498). Such methods do not reveal how people's goals evolve as they interact with a piece of software or system,

their perception and processing of information provided by the system, and how and why they decide to go to a particular part or section in the system.

From a methodological point of view, Guba and Lincoln (1994) identify two sets of critiques of the traditional positivist paradigm as it is applied to research into human behaviour. One is internal to the paradigm, working within the set of positivist assumptions (intraparadigm critiques). The other set consists of objections to the positivist paradigm stemming from proponents of other paradigms/systems of inquiry (interparadigm critiques). Internal critiques identify problems with precise quantitative approaches because they inevitably strip away much of the contextual information. This is because in order to be manageable, quantitative methods must focus on narrowly selected subsets of variables for analysis. This kind of focus necessarily reduces the relevance of any finding since they can only be rigorously applied to similarly stripped contexts. A strictly quantitative approach also produces the risk of eliminating an important explanatory factor during experimental design and data analysis. Other associated problems involve the elimination of the meanings and purposes that activities have for the humans who perform them and the problems of relevance of theories generated from an outsider's view of what is being studied to those who are the objects of the study. In addition, quantitative methods frequently produce data leading to statistically meaningful generalizations that may not actually apply to any particular case. Finally, the formal process of quantitatively verifying a tightly framed a priori hypothesis tends to neglect/elide the discovery process that preceded it.

Some forms of usability testing have placed an emphasis on qualitative methods of inquiry. That is, one that examines the subjective experiences users have with the product being

tested, in order to address these problems. This is because, in strong contrast, qualitative methods have been argued to have the advantages of producing contextually rich data, including good insights into human behaviour, and effective space for insiders' knowledge in the generation of data (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994; Holstein and Gubrium, 1994; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Hoffman and Woods (1998: 18), for example, suggest that when studying cognitive systems in the field of human computer interaction, a combination of 'precise artificial laboratory method' and 'subjective anthropological historical method' should be used so that "fieldwork becomes a naturally occurring laboratory'. They point out that studying cognitive systems in context is concerned with discovery rather than simply compiling a long list of tasks, data, knowledge or linkages involved in handling a specified situation. This process of discovery raises the key question 'How do we prepare ourselves to be ready to see/notice/recognize something fresh, something we did not know to look for?' (Hoffman and Woods 1998).

An interpretive approach to usability testing produces its own particular problems. Schwant (1994:130) raises the issue of credibility in such inquiries and notes that the most important aspect is probably that of criteria: 'What is an adequate warrant of a subjectively mediated account of intersubjective meaning?'. Without adequate criteria for evaluating or interpreting accounts of human experience, they may be seen as solipsist (they are only my accounts) or relativist (i.e. all accounts are equally good or bad, worthy or unworthy, true or false, etc). If, as in this case, the paradigm chosen denies the possibility of purely objective knowledge, then some other criteria must be found. One solution is to rely upon procedural criteria as grounds for judging the quality of interpretations (Becker 1970, Hughes 1993).

The validity of any interpretation is then tied with the methodology used to provide it. Another solution is to judge interpretive accounts on the pragmatic grounds of whether they are useful, fitting, and generative of further inquiry.

Goodman (1988:163) argues that in order to judge the validity of claims and interpretations a pragmatic notion of rightness can be used instead of notions of 'truth' or 'certainty'. In this way cognition

is reconceptualised as the advancement of understanding wherein we begin from what happens to be currently adopted and proceed to integrate and organize, weed out and supplement, not in order to arrive at truth about something already made but in order to make something right – to construct something that works cognitively, that fits together and handles new cases, that may implement further inquiry and invention.

Similarly Madison (1988) states that when we make an interpretation we do not follow rules or procedures but rather exercise judgment which cannot be verified or tested. It can only be evaluated by considering its thoroughness, comprehensiveness and coherence and deciding whether its adoption would be useful.

Merriam (1998: 198) states this common concern, 'All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner' She again reinforces the similar goals of the two techniques, 'Assessing the validity and reliability of a qualitative study involves examining its component parts, as you might in other types of research' (199). Grounded theorists Corbin and Strauss (1990: 4) believe that many readers of qualitative research tend to read it with a quantitative interpretation: 'Qualitative studies (and research proposals) are often judged by quantitatively oriented readers; by many, though not all, the judgment is made in terms of quantitative canons'. Becker (1970:199) states the problem clearly saying:

After completing the analysis, the observer faces the knotty problem of how to present his conclusions and the evidence for them. Readers of qualitative research reports commonly and justifiably complain that they are told little or nothing about the evidence for conclusions or the operations by which the evidence has been assessed.

He suggests that better presentation of the researchers' inferences, the way the research was conducted, and the resulting data would go a considerable distance toward resolving this problem. The problem of presentation is also more difficult in that while statistical findings can be given in tables, qualitative data is difficult to represent in concise and easily accessible form. This is because qualitative accounts 'frequently consist of many kinds of observations which cannot be simply categorized and counted without losing some of their value as evidence' (Becker 1970:199).

A fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is that it seeks to bring to life, to illustrate, to involve its audience. Unlike quantitative research, where the burden is on the researcher to determine the applicability of the data through statistical analysis (Hughes 1993), 'Qualitative research passes the responsibility for application from the researcher to the reader' (Firestone 1993, 22). Or as Hendrick points out, '[qualitative] research illustrates (vivifies) rather than provides a truth test' (1983: 506).

Lincoln and Guba (1994: 108), in a discussion of various inquiry paradigms, make the central point here that answers given to any question are 'fundamentally human constructions; they are inventions of the human mind and subject to human error' and they go on to note that '[n]o construction is or can be incontrovertibly right; advocates of any particular construction of any particular construction must rely on persuasiveness and utility rather than proof in arguing their position.'

3.5.2 Validity criteria for grounded theory studies

Charmaz (2006:182) combines the interpretive approaches to questions of rigour with a grounded theory methodology to propose four key criteria for evaluating whether rigour has been achieved in a particular research project. They are: credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. Credibility questions include:

- Has your research achieved intimate familiarity with the setting or topic?
- Are the data sufficient to merit your claims? Consider the range, number, and depth of observations contained in the data.
- Have you made systematic comparisons between observations and between categories?
- Do the categories cover a wide range of empirical observations?
- Are there strong logical links between the gathered data and your argument and analysis?
- Has your research provided enough evidence for your claims to allow the reader to form an independent assessment- and agree with your claims?

Originality asks:

- Are your categories fresh? Do they offer new insights?
- Does your analysis provide a new conceptual rendering of the data?
- What is the social and theoretical significance of this work?
- How does your grounded theory challenge, extend, or refine current ideas, concepts and practices?

Resonance includes:

- Do the categories portray the fullness of the studied experience?
- Have you revealed both liminal and unstable taken-for-granted meanings?

- Have you drawn links between larger collectivities or institutions and individual lives, when the data so indicate?
- Does your grounded theory make sense to your participants or people who share your circumstances? Does your analysis offer them deeper insights about their lives and worlds.

Usefulness criteria ask:

- Does your analysis offer interpretations that people can use in their everyday worlds?
- Do your analytic categories suggest any generic processes?
- If so, have you examined these generic processes for tacit implications?
- Can the analysis spark further research in other substantive areas?
- How does your work contribute to knowledge? How does it contribute to making a better world

3.5.3 The role of the researcher

This research took a co-operative approach to inquiry that placed value on active user participation. The interviewer takes the role of a facilitator to help participants describe both their immediate experiences while interacting with a computer, and their previous travel and planning experiences. The use of facilitation techniques in the research process raises methodological questions of distortion and influence in the collection of data and therefore requires some discussion and explanation.

Facilitation is about process – how you do something – rather than the content – what you do. A facilitator is a process guide; someone who makes a process easier or more convenient. Facilitation is about movement – moving something from A to B (Hunter et al 2007: 19).

Facilitation within this co-operative environment involves entering into a user's world in a way that assists them to be clear about their own function. Active techniques are used such as *situated interviewing*, where the user is encouraged to speak about their experience while it is occurring. This approach is based on the idea that users can best inform others about the usability of a system while they are using it. When using this approach the facilitator is central to the process of guiding the user through the warm-up, testing and 'cool down' post-testing. The need to establish a trust-based relationship with the user in a short period of time means that the researcher must be transparent, genuine and open.

It is important that a facilitator's approach to the user is open and honest. The manner in which the entire test process is conducted and the way in which the facilitator responds to the user's experience, comments and behaviour must demonstrate a genuine approach – 'your manner, body language, and voice modulation during difficulties all communicate much more than words' (Rubin, 1994). In the interpretive approach adopted by this research, a more co-operative method of inquiry was employed with facilitator and subject sitting together. The effect of positioning the facilitator in the same room and beside the user has been explored by several researchers (Constantine, 1999; Nielsen; Rubin, 1994). Previous experience in usability testing (Sellar 2001) suggested that participants were most comfortable having the facilitator seated directly beside, and in fact preferred to have them within line of sight. When the facilitator could be seen, users mentioned that were more at ease because they were aware the facilitator's attention was on the screen and not on them. This researcher's experiences of facilitating in previous usability studies showed that very little, if any disruption to the user's flow experience is caused by interviewing and questioning from a position directly alongside them. Users commented that this position did not distract or interrupt their experience of the website in any way and tended to reinforce perceptions of the facilitator as either *companion*, or *observer* (Sellar 2001).

Users are treated less like subjects and more like partners in the process. The ability to share the user's experience is fundamental as this informs the type of active facilitation techniques and manner of interaction used. It enables a deeper understanding of the user's world and therefore richer information on their experience. This kind of approach can be seen in terms of *doubling* as used in psychodrama. *Doubling* occurs when the facilitator comes alongside the user and tries as much as possible to take on the identity of the user

through taking on their body position and feeling affect (Blatner, 1998). The facilitator brings their experience, intuition, skills, and abilities into their relationship with the user and these are likely to influence the user in some way. During testing, the facilitator should acknowledge and be aware of preconceptions, such as a dislike of certain aspects of the website, and assumptions, such as assuming users will be interested in a particular section. The facilitator can then be awake to non-verbal responses or comments that may influence the user by ‘leading rather than enabling’ (Rubin 1994: 71).

The use of naïve inquiries can help with setting bias aside and enhancing observer objectivity. Getting alongside the user and approaching each page with a fresh perspective assists the facilitator to become more closely involved in the user’s experience, which then stimulates a natural flow of inquiry. This involves a process of bracketing off the researcher’s prior knowledge and assumptions to avoid biasing the shape of the user’s response. This technique of bracketing is used in phenomenological methods of inquiry where ‘All assumptions about causes, consequences and the wider significance of the mental process under inspection are eliminated’ (Bullock, A. and Trombley 1999: 645).

3.6 Research approach

In this research, data from a total of 30 interviews was collected to saturate the categories. A category represents a unit of information composed of events, happenings, and instances (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and is considered saturated when the addition of further information yields no further explanation to this category or greatly diminished returns (Glaser 1978). Data collection and analysis feed each other in a reciprocal process as information is gathered, then data is analyzed. More information is then gathered to further develop emerging theory, and so on until theoretical saturation is reached in each category. The participants interviewed were chosen using a theoretical sampling approach to best form the theory. The decision on the number of interviews was based on the extent to which the categories of information emerging from the data became saturated and whether

the theory was elaborated in all of its complexity. This process of taking information from data collection and comparing it to emerging categories is called the constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser 1978, Cresswell 1998). It is a process of comparing incident to incident, then incident to concept, then concept to concept.

Interviews were free flowing and open ended, with questions within the interviews generated by both what participants had said in their interview and categories that had arisen in analysis of data from previous interviews. Through a series of open ended interviews the following questions were addressed.

Contextual questions:

- Why did they come to New Zealand?
- What impression of New Zealand did they have before coming?
- What sources of information did they use to find out about New Zealand?
- What sources of information did they use to plan their trip to (within) New Zealand (for example website, guidebook, advice from locals and other travellers, visitor information centres)?
- How did they use and rate these sources?
- What were the key attractions (activities/places) before/during/in hindsight their trip to New Zealand?

Website questions:

- What attracts/interests them on the website?
- What impressions of NZ did the images give them?
- What did they like about the website?
- What did they dislike about the website?
- How did they use it to plan their trip?

- If they had not used the newzealand.com web site yet, how did they think they would use it to plan their trip?

The New Zealand.com website was the primary website that participants were asked to examine. This website is created for Tourism New Zealand website for the purpose of marketing New Zealand as a travel destination. When examining participants interactions with this website the following questions were considered.

- How does newzealand.com represent New Zealand to the participants interviewed?
- What role *does* this web site currently plays in participant's travel planning and experience?
- What role *could* this website site play in their travel planning and experience of New Zealand?

Throughout this process of gathering data video footage was reviewed, and re-reviewed and more notes and comparisons were made with existing data. Ideas that appeared to relate to the emerging codes were examined from a wide range of literature as data, from psychology, tourism, sociological and computing literature.

Before engaging in the usability testing process users were made aware of their role as active participant in the research. During a warm up session participants may be made aware of particular issues that the researchers are interested in, such as usability, navigation, and engagement (Blatner 1998). The testing process was explained to participants and they were encouraged to express themselves as they interacted with the system. This process also acts to help create a testing context that is closer to a real world

environment by helping users to move from a clinical laboratory atmosphere to a more familiar home, office or school environment for example.

During the warm-up process users were introduced to the concepts that guide the research so that they would be sensitised to phenomena of interest to the thesis throughout their experience. These concepts are important as they help the researcher to gather from the user experience information about particular themes and categories. For example user engagement or how well people's attention is drawn to and captured by the site. In this case the participants were asked to point out the elements of the site that act to create and maintain this feeling of engagement in the target user group.

3.6.1 Data collection and analysis

The sample for this research was drawn from the pool of adult travellers to New Zealand who travel primarily by backpacking. With one exception, a New Zealander who had lived in Australia for over ten years, all participants had a country of birth other than New Zealand. Backpackers were invited to participate in usability testing through written notices on Auckland Youth Hostel Association (YHA) hostel notice boards. They were made aware of an incentive to participate of a voucher for two nights accommodation at a YHA hostel. The Youth Hostel association supported this research by allowing me to recruit participants from their two city premises and donating the vouchers used as incentives to participate.

The summary of participants interviewed listed in table 3 shows that a total of 30 travellers, all but one aged from 20 to 34, were interviewed over a period from May 2006 to November 2006. Participants came from Australia (1), Canada (2), Estonia (1) France (2)

Ireland (3) Argentina (1), Italy (1), United States (6), Scotland (1), England (1), Brazil (2), Holland (4), Germany (4) and Spain (1) and planned to spend anywhere from two weeks to a year in New Zealand. The duration of time already spent travelling around New Zealand at the time of interview varied from two days to ten months, with the majority of participants having already spent several months in New Zealand. A theoretical sampling approach was used, in which participants selected were representative of the phenomena under examination in accordance with the principles of grounded theory. The theory generated from this sample is substantive (descriptive) rather than deductive.

Interviews were free flowing and open ended, with questions generated by both what participants had provided and categories derived from analysis of data from previous interviews. The interviews were in depth and took anywhere from 45 minutes to 2.5 hours to complete. The majority of interviews lasted approximately 1.5 hours. Within this environment, an active form of knowledge elicitation called situated interviewing was undertaken. Interviewing in this context is not a set series of questions, but rather shares similarities with unstructured interviewing in qualitative methodology. The nature of the interactions between participant, researcher and computer and the direction that the interview takes are thus driven by the situation 'being in part a product of the activity, context and culture in which it is developed and used' (Brown et al, 1989) rather than pre-defined in advance. Situated interviewing encompasses a core set of action-based techniques used by the interviewer as facilitator. In previous usability tests undertaken by this researcher, various techniques were experimented with, including:

- Active listening,
- Naïve inquiries,
- Interviewing the user and using probing questions during the test,

- Making a statement for the user to reflect on,
- Clarifying the user's experience with them while they are having the experience, and pausing the test altogether to enable a point or idea to be clarified.

This use of techniques is responsive to the user and their experience rather than being planned in advance, which interferes with the spontaneity of interaction. The facilitator is therefore undertaking a cycle of analysis and reflection 'in the moment' the user experience occurs, which then informs the type and use of techniques employed.

The newzealand.com website is the primary website for this investigation. It serves two main functions:

1. a billboard to advertise the country (in the same kind of way as television or print media advertising). This does not involve interaction to make arrangements, bookings, or payments.
2. a planning tool for individual use

Backpackers were invited to take a tour of the site and questioned/prompted for responses to what they saw, how they experienced the site, how they evaluated the quality of the information in relation to their own experiences. The shape of responses showed a number of ways in which perceptions of their identity as backpackers, distinguished from tourists, shaped expectations of themselves, the landscape, adventure activities, cultural experiences and events, and relevance of information and knowledge about what would interest them.

Central concepts were identified from the extended interview data to serve as organizing categories for the analysis and discussion of participants' travel experiences and inter-

relationships with the web site. These themes, which include authenticity and trust, scripting, navigation and representation, are discussed in the following chapters.

Participant Information	Age	Gender	Country of origin	Length of stay in New Zealand	Time spent in New Zealand at time of interview	Estimated computer Usage (when at home)	Part of a larger trip	Previously seen newzealand.com
1	29	F	Scotland	2 weeks	2 weeks	10 hours / week	Yes ¹	No
2	22	M	USA	6.5 months	2 days	20 hours/ week	No	No
3	27	M	USA	One year	2 weeks	15 hours/week	Yes ²	No
4	21	M	USA	6.5 months	2 days	20 hours/week	No	Yes
5	20	F	Canada	9 months	9 months	5-10 hours/week	No	Yes
6	27	F	France	One year	1 week	5-10 hours/week	No	No
7	24	F	Germany	One year	1 month	5-10 hours/week	Yes ³	Yes
8	27	F	USA	One year	3 months	5-10 hours/week	No	Yes
9	22	F	Germany	One year	3 months	5-10 hours/week	No	No
10	34	M	USA	6 weeks	3 days	10-15 hours/week	No	Yes
11	28	F	Holland	5 months	3 months	10-15 hours/week	No	Yes
12	24	M	Brazil	4 months	5 days	10 hours / week	No	Yes
13	25	F	Holland	One year	5 months	10 hours / week	No	Yes
14	23	M	Germany	One year	5 months	20+ hours/week	No	No
15	24	M	Argentina	11 months	10 months	10 hours / week	No	No
16	22	M	Canada	9 months	9 months	5 hours/week	No	No
17	27	F	Germany	1 year	9 months	5-10 hours/week	No	No
18	33	F	Spain	5 months	6 weeks	10-15 hours/week	No	No
19	28	M	Ireland	10 weeks	2 weeks	10-15 hours/week	Yes ⁴	Yes
20	20	F	USA	One year	11 months	10 hours / week	No	No
21	32	M	Italy	One year	3 months	10 hours / week	No	No
22	20	F	Brazil	3 months	2 weeks	5 hours / week	No	No
23	22	F	Holland	1 year	8 months	10 hours / week	No	No
24	28	M	Holland	10 months	6 months	10-15 hours/week	No	Yes
25	26	F	Estonia	10 months	6 months	10 hours / week	No	No
26	55	M	Australia	2 weeks	3 days	None	No	No
27	24	F	Ireland	1 month	1 week	10 hours / week	Yes ⁵	No
28	22	F	Ireland	2 months	1 week	10 hours / week	Yes ⁶	Yes
29	28	M	France	1 year	2 months	10 hours / week	No	No
30	34	F	England	1 year	6 months	10 hours / week	Yes ⁷	Yes

¹ India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand

² Australia

³ Australia

⁴ Asia, Australia, India, Fiji

⁵ Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Australia

⁶ Australia, Thailand, Cambodia

⁷ Asia

Chapter Four: Navigation

This chapter introduces the backpackers interviewed for the research. It recounts in detail the nature of their travel behaviour and attitudes, often in their own words. In doing so it describes how participants in the research travelled around New Zealand and what information sources they used. This material forms the contextual basis for the subsequent examination of their relationships with and use of computers. Navigation is a fundamental part of independent travel. Backpackers draw on a range of information sources to explore the countries they visit. Travellers navigate both physically through the landscape and virtually within information sources. Jansson (2007:12) describes the importance of navigation in the following way:

A significant aspect of the tourist experience is the need to appropriate space in a cartographic manner – either to find one's way to new sites and sights (getting on the right bus), or to establish routinized patterns of mobility (getting from the hotel, to the beach, on to the bar). These mobilities evolve through the interplay between the sensory appropriation of the surroundings, and the visual imagery (both cognitive and and phantasmagorical) of spatial representations such as guidebooks and maps.

An examination of informants' travel strategies helps locate the position of travel websites in backpacker travel experiences and behaviour. It also provides insight into how these websites can influence decision making in the context of all information sources used.

4.1 backpacker travel statistics

Some statistical data on backpacker travel behaviour in New Zealand provides background information. Tourism New Zealand's 2005 visitor information survey shows that the most commonly visited destinations for backpackers are Auckland (76.8%), and Canterbury (68%) both of which have international airports, and are thus the country's major departure and arrival points. Other popular regional destinations are Queenstown (61.2%), Rotorua

(55.9%), the West Coast (54.7%), Wellington (53.8%), Taupo (46.8%), Nelson (43.6%) and Fiordland (41.1 %). Statistics from Tourism New Zealand also indicate that backpackers are more likely than other visitors to visit a greater number of these destinations, possibly because they tend on average to spend longer in New Zealand.

Backpackers tend to use a number of different transport options while travelling around New Zealand. The table below shows that coach and ferry travel are popular options as is rental transport. Backpackers use air travel less often than other travellers and more than fifth of them traveled around the country in private cars or vans. Tourism New Zealand suggests that this is because backpackers' tendency to stay longer and travel to more destinations makes longer duration, more cost effective transport options available to them.

Transport Types Used by Backpackers	%	Transport Types Used Any by Non-backpackers	%
Scheduled Coach Service	43%	Private Car/Van	32%
Interisland Ferry	43%	Airline	30%
Rental Car/Van	38%	Rental Car/Van	27%
Airline	29%	Coach Tour/Tour Coach	20%
Private Car/Van	22%	Interisland Ferry	12%
Shuttle Bus	21%	Taxi/Limousine/Car Tour	11%
Coach Tour/Tour Coach	20%	Shuttle Bus	8%
Backpacker Bus	18%	Other Commercial Ferry/Boat	8%

Table 2: Transport Types Used by Backpackers and Non-Backpackers.

Reproduced from 'The International Backpacker Market' (2005) Tourism New Zealand report
(<http://www.tourismresearch.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/163EDAFE-A40F-4463-A36D-63D692AC0DB8/21268/BackpackerReport2005.pdf>)

Solo travel is a popular and increasing trend; in 2005 54.6% of backpackers travelled around New Zealand on their own, significantly more than the 44.0% who did so in 1998. Those who were accompanied tended to travel with one (33.2% of total backpackers) or, to a much lesser degree, two others (4.3%). Travel companions were most often friends (21.4%) or partners/spouses (16.4%).

The figures below from the 2005 study show that nature and sightseeing activities were the most popular and that significantly more backpackers than other travelers undertook them. Engagement in adventure activities such as kayaking, skydiving, and bungee jumping were much more prevalent among backpackers than non-backpackers.

	Backpacker (%)	Non-backpacker (%)
Walking And Trekking	89%	66%
Sightseeing (Land)	84%	65%
Museums And Galleries	57%	30%
Volcanic/Geothermal	56%	34%
Entertainment	50%	21%
Boating	46%	32%
Canoeing, Kayaking, Rafting	35%	6%
Cultural Attractions	30%	19%
Sky Diving/Parachuting	24%	2%
Bungee Jumping	17%	4%
Dolphin Watching	16%	4%
Whale Watching	14%	4%

Table 3: Activities Undertaken in New Zealand by Backpacker and Non-backpacker visitors to New Zealand

Reproduced from 'The International Backpacker Market' (2005) Tourism New Zealand report
(<http://www.tourismresearch.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/163EDAFE-A40F-4463-A36D-63D692AC0DB8/21268/BackpackerReport2005.pdf>)

Their longer average stay in New Zealand allows backpackers to undertake a wider variety of activities in different parts of the country. This may also be why they also saw themselves as more active travellers who valued interaction with other cultures and viewed participation in activities as an important part of their visitor experience.

Some further (and slightly more up to date) contextual information on this market can be gathered from the Youth Hostel Association New Zealand Guest Survey 2007 conducted by New Zealand Tourism Research Institute which analysed 1447 completed surveys collected from 46 hostels. Guests' country of origin were similar to 2005 official visitor survey figures, with 24% of respondents coming from England, 10% from Germany and

7% from the U.S. These backpackers were also fairly young with 39% of respondents aged 18-25 and a further 31% aged 26-35.

Length of stay figures also showed similarities with official visitor survey data. A large proportion of respondents (39%) indicated that they would holiday in New Zealand for a period of two, three, or four weeks. Another 16% planned to stay considerably longer, over six months. Over half of the guests surveyed (54%) were travelling on a visitor's visa and a further 17% of guests had working holiday visas and 9% were on a student visa. Survey figures indicate that the planning period leading up to travel to New Zealand was often fairly long. Around a quarter of respondents surveyed had decided to travel to New Zealand 6 to 12 months prior to departure and a further 18% made travel decisions more than 12 months in advance. At the other end of the spectrum, 23% made their travel decision less than 2 months before leaving home.

Both public and private transport options were popular with backpackers. Bus services provided by Intercity/Newmans Coach Lines accounted for 15% of respondents, with a further 19% split between the different backpacker bus companies such as Kiwi Experience, Stray, and Magic Bus. Rental cars were also a popular option at 30%. Other backpacker transport options included vehicle purchase (23%) and using a friend's car. The 2007 YHA NZTRI report indicated that travellers frequently waited until they were in New Zealand to make their travel and accommodation arrangements. Over half of respondents (55%) did not pre-purchase any transport within New Zealand before they left home. Of those who did, the majority booked domestic flights (42%), followed by rental cars (39%), bus passes (34%) and the Interislander Ferry (27%). Similarly, more than half of respondents (55%) did not prepay for their accommodation prior to departure. Those who

did pre-purchase accommodation most commonly booked through the Internet (39%), and via travel agents (22%).

The majority of respondents (60%) did not pre-book any accommodation, transportation or activities before arriving in New Zealand. Of those respondents, who did book, the majority (76%) booked accommodation; 58% of respondents booked transportation while only 23% booked activities. Forty percent of respondents used direct Internet booking, 21% booked through a travel agent, and 19% booked over the phone. These travelers planned and organized their trip around New Zealand using travel guides (65%), especially the Lonely Planet, as well as the Internet (56%) and word of mouth (53%).

The figures suggest some trends about backpacker behaviour. The large variety of places visited and activities undertaken, combined with a length of stay that is generally longer than that of other visitors, indicate that backpackers are particularly committed to getting an in depth sense of the country. Aspects of these behaviours and attitudes were often evident in interviews with the participants in this thesis. A discursive analysis of their travel and information seeking behaviour forms the rest of this chapter.

4.2 Planning

A common theme among research participants is the limited use of pre-arrival planning for visits to New Zealand. Most left detailed planning on routes and time to be spent in each destination until they arrived and tended to be fairly ad-hoc in their arrangements even then.

‘...hostels seem to be the cheapest places to stay and they seem to be spread out so that seems pretty convenient. Especially given [the] memberships

which are a good deal. The membership ends up paying off after you stay a bit longer.'

Those who were traveling in New Zealand for over three months thought that if their visit had been shorter then they might have spent more time on advance planning and would possibly have used package tours.

'I know that I've got the time and don't need to rush so I just take it as it comes.'

'I didn't really do any planning. I have heard of Paihia and Coromandel from people in backpackers but I have not done any research, I'm not wanting to rush.'

However even those who were staying for two to six weeks in New Zealand actually adopted similar planning strategies, avoiding package tours and arranging travel details after arrival.

'...really on the fly, not a lot of planning. Basically I called around, looked at a few different websites.... Two days before I came here I booked my hostel for my first two nights. And that's it, that's all the planning I've done.'

Lack of advance planning also seemed to add to participants' sense of anticipation and excitement in the unknown.

'I'm glad I came here ignorant because it made it all the more exciting.'

'I don't want to plan too much ahead because... you might meet people on the road you want to hang out with more, or you might find a spot you really like or some spot you don't really like so you move on. I like the flexibility.'

There are also practical considerations for avoiding detailed advance planning. Brown (2007), in his ethnographic study of travellers' navigation behaviour, noticed that decision making was often easier when in a particular place and that vagueness in travel strategies can be intentional with plans '...deliberately designed to be only as specific as necessary'. Using Simon's (1955) notion of 'satisficing' he describes a process where:

plans are “good enough” rather than detailed programs of activity. Indeed, the plans are often deliberately ambiguous so that they can take into account future contingencies. As Suchman (1987) argues, plans do not determine behaviour but rather are used flexibly in deciding what to do (Brown 2007: 376)

Although details had not been planned, participants often had lists of things they definitely wanted to do in New Zealand, and knew about other activities that they would decide on after arrival. Every participant mentioned that they had to experience one or more of the following activities: swimming with dolphins, sky diving, bungee jumping and tramping (hiking) in New Zealand. In comparison diving, snorkelling, and snowboarding were seen as things that might be done here, but might be dropped from their itinerary if necessary, because they were available elsewhere.

Backpackers in New Zealand tend to plan in a fairly ad-hoc way. They often went to a place without gathering much advance knowledge about it and then sought information about activities, work and accommodation on arrival. It was almost a point of pride not to make intensive travel plans.

‘SWAP had already booked us two nights accommodation after that you just winged it. We were pretty much like chickens with their heads cut off for the first 2 months. We went to Auckland and were told to get out of Auckland because out of all the places in NZ it’s just like any other city. We were told that Wellington was great, so we went down there. Looked for jobs and apartments for two weeks then decided to leave and left two weeks later. Then went WWOOFing (willing workers on organic farms) for a week to get our heads screwed back on. Then we decided as summer was coming should get jobs in more touristy places like Taupo and Rotorua.’

Interviews indicated that more experienced travellers feel less desire to plan and to try to fit as many activities as possible into a given space of time.

‘Now that I’ve done lots of travelling I don’t have that feeling any more that I need to go to places in the sense that I need to do it now and I need to do everything’

'Oh yeah, for me it's not a big deal to travel, I just pack and go. I don't think about it so much because my credit card works here so ... what can happen, even in the furthest point in the world what can really happen?'

Previous travel leads to a relaxed attitude based on an understanding that there would always be more things to do and places to see.

Maintaining a sense of independence was an important theme in choosing style of travel. All the participants avoided package tours, and either used inter-city bus services, bought cars or hired camper vans so that they could go where they wanted when they wanted and stay for as long as they liked. 'Back packer buses' such as those run by Kiwi Experience, Stray, Magic Bus and any of the other 'hop on hop off' buses were viewed with disdain by all participants who mentioned them. These backpackers all disliked the idea of waiting round for other travellers and objected to having guides on a bus dictating where they went or how long they stopped off at a certain place.

'[we went on] a tour bus they say it's hop on hop off but while you're going there it's kinda like you're in school. 'Ok we're going to be here for such and such a time, meet back in half an hour'... no I want to do it in my own time, if I don't like a place I don't want to have to wait for a whole bunch of people'

'I tended to travel on my own. I don't know why I didn't care for package [travel]... it just feels trapping.'

Participants who had included New Zealand in larger trips around the world reported more extensive planning in earlier legs of their travel and less as the trip progressed.

'I planned months in advance for India at the start of my trip, ages reading notes before I got there. I always thought in the country I was in I would research the country I was going to, but in reality that didn't really happen so most of the place after that were fairly ad hoc'.

Often this was because, having assumed that they would plan the next part of their trip while in their current destination, they ran out of time.

'Not so much what I did with other places but because it was towards the end of the trip it just became less and less organised because you are always just about to arrive somewhere and [I] wouldn't have time to research in the place you have been before.'

New Zealand was universally seen as a 'safe place', unthreatening and familiar enough for participants to feel confident in simply playing things by ear. A major reason for lack of planning was the trust all participants expressed in New Zealand's tourist infrastructure and information services.

'The tourist information here I think is really, really, helpful. The places that you get over in the cities and things ... tend to be really easy to find and incredibly helpful. So you're never really stuck for information.'

'They were really great about giving me really basic things about... buses to get somewhere, how much something costs or booking something for you ... so you're kind of able to be quite lazy really....Somehow they never seem to be far away either.'

'It's a lot easier here than in other places say for example we arrived in Italy a couple years ago and we couldn't find the hostel... we booked the hostel and everything we couldn't find exactly where it was because...the maps that they had given us were incorrect. So that's why I'm saying here it's a lot more organised. It seems like there's someone babysitting you all the time, it's great.'

This meant that participants felt they could simply turn up at a place and then decide where they were going to stay and what activities they would do there. That, in turn, would dictate how long they remained in a particular place. In contrast they thought countries in the developing world were places where travel was much more difficult and demanded extensive planning.

'[I was] more nervous in Asia because there are potentially more things that could go wrong in those kinds of countries, the language for a start. For example Laos has very few facilities – there's just stuff that could happen that you wouldn't necessarily worry about here [like] drinking water. There are more risks but on the other hand it's more adventurous and more interesting.'

4.3 Time and travel

Travel and tourism are often examined through the concept of ‘time out’ (Urry 1994, 2002). Such travelling ‘is found when we focus on travel as a withdrawal from clock-time and from routines of everyday life’ in a liminal state (Elsrud 1998: 311). The quality of ‘time out’ may vary according to nature of the experience, for example a bungee jump compared with breakfast in a Wellington café.

Time is part of the value of travel – the ‘time out’ of vacation intensifies and extends subjective temporality in a way that is often then projected onto the holiday locale, as a place where time is condensed and diffused. Or, travel functions to delay or interrupt the otherwise irrevocable passage of time (Curtis and Pajaczkowska 1994: 201 quoted in Elsrud 1998: 311).

Here ‘time out’ is a period away from responsibilities to others in both personal and work life, from the demands of and obligations to workmates, employers, partners and children.

The individual backpacker, travelling alone and having taken ‘time out’ from her home structure – work, friends and family ties, and to some extent even norms and values – is to a greater extent than elsewhere left in solitude to structure both her time and her action (Elsrud 1998: 315).

Elsrud, interviewing female long-term budget travellers, noted that ‘time out’ for women while travelling meant time away from caring for others and that in many cases they travelled alone because they perceived that these responsibilities to care for others would otherwise continue. This time out had an anticipatory aspect in that many women she interviewed stated that they were travelling and taking time out before settling down with a partner and having children.

Similar views were expressed by many of those interviewed in this study. Participants included only one couple travelling together; the rest were either on their own or with

friends. Many women were aware of being at a particular 'life stage' where they were free to travel before setting down and having children. Such awareness can lead to a decision to fit as many activities as possible into this visit because there may not be future opportunities.

'I'd rather do it now rather than regret not doing it later... A year from now I could be knocked up with a baby ... and saying 'why didn't you go sky diving' and not having that chance for another ten years.'

This awareness of liminality, of being at a particular 'life stage', can lead to a desire to experience as much as possible while in New Zealand, to 'fit as much in'. Many participants were in a second 'gap' phase of their life between completing tertiary study and starting work. Others were between jobs or taking accrued leave from their work. In most cases their trip to New Zealand was seen as a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity.

'I wanted to go see somewhere else in the world before I get stuck in a job 9-5 for the next 40 years of my life.'

'I've always wanted to travel to Australia and New Zealand, since I was 16....So I always said when I go there I don't want to go for two weeks.'

'I always had in the back of my head that I was going to go away. This could be me only chance to see this side of the world.'

New Zealand's perceived distance made visiting a significant investment in time and money, so travellers wanted either to stay for an extended length of time or to come as part of a much longer trip that included other nearby countries. There are opposing tensions in attitudes to time here; the desire to 'escape' the time related pressures of everyday modern life balanced against a need to take account of time in order to 'maximise' experience by fitting as much as possible into the journey.

The problem, for researchers, with viewing travel as purely 'time out' is, as Elsrud (1998:31) puts it, 'one risks being blinded by its connotations of timelessness and lack of

structure and therefore ends up turning a blind eye on the journey's constitutive qualities.' Instead she suggests that travel be seen as a rhythm of 'time frames' where attention is paid to time in order to plan and participate in activities, and 'time outs' where temporal pressures and awareness fade. Some aspects of the travel experience require attention to time – for example fitting a number of activities into a day trip. Other pastimes, such as relaxing on a beach or in a resort swimming pool are 'time out' activities where part of the pleasure of the experience is the freedom from awareness of the 'clock ticking.' The following comments typify participant's attitudes toward fitting as much as possible into a particular day, or in a particular place.

'It's going to be tough to find to find out where we really feel comfortable, where we'll enjoy it the most. It's basically going to be, do as much as we can in as little time as possible.'

'On the first day we arrived we did tons of stuff, the day seemed like it did not end. But it's got to be making the best of the time.'

'We kept looking after already decided to come to New Zealand to allocate the time range of where we are going how much time we really had to say this is a definite, must do on our list. And say we have to go here and start making the trail. To make a path and say hey this is something good and we can catch this on the way.'

Conversely, some of those interviewed showed an attitude typical of experienced travellers who structure travel in their 'own time'. They still enjoyed travelling but had a different perception of time pressure, feeling able to take as long as they wished in a place and move on only when the mood struck them (Elsrud 1998, Urry 1994, 2002). One, for example, saw no need to 'rush to Paihia when the sun is shining'.

Perceptions of available time act as a constraint in participants' attitudes to planning. Not surprisingly, those who had more time to spend in New Zealand also tended to be more open about how long they spent in a particular place.

'We are trying to keep it flexible some people don't have that flexibility ...so that's just something we are going to have to keep in mind. If we do find a place we really like we are going to have to spend more time there and then keep on moving once we feel satisfied I guess.'

A relaxed approach to planning shows a desire to avoid structure, to enjoy 'time out' and not having to 'clock-watch'. This could also explain why people tended to not travel together. Most were open to the possibility of travelling with other backpackers they came across, or with whose advertisements they spotted in notice boards located in backpacker hostels providing it did not inconvenience them. However they were generally unwilling to change their plans to fit with another traveller.

'if it was at the right time, if it just happened to be that our complex plans matched, then I would, but I wouldn't go out of my way to search [the boards] I might just look over them if I had 10 minutes waiting, because it just seems so difficult to find someone who would have the same plans as you.'

Other travellers at the end of a long world trip seemed jaded.

'if you hook up with someone for a journey you're probably going to have this big long conversation and at the end of the journey you're probably going to go completely the opposite way and it feels like a waste of energy... possibly because I've been away for so long. .. I mean maybe at the start I would have made more of an effort.'

Jansson (2007) and Brown (2006) have pointed out that considerable time and effort can be devoted to organizing meeting times and common travel plans. By travelling alone participants avoided responsibility to others, and the necessary temporal aspects of meeting up and travelling together.

4.4 Experience and confidence

Although New Zealand was not seen by any of the participants as a destination that required extensive advance planning, experience still played a role in determining the amount of planning they did. The more experience they had, the less likely they were to

plan in detail. Many had previously travelled around Europe and Asia, and some had already visited Australia and/or New Zealand.

'Coming back now it's different because that time I was two years younger and your perception is a lot different. The motivation when I first came Auckland was a stop over on the way to Australia so just came because it was on the way. When I first came it was my first long trip away from home, everything was new and exciting and you meet a lot of people but only backpackers that time, didn't meet any locals stayed at the YHA. So it was basically like being a tourist the first time.'

'I had a very good impression [of New Zealand] but it had more to do with the many different places and the beaches and the rain forests.'

'If you're a backpacker and you haven't been backpacking before you get kind of overwhelmed by all the people and the staying in hostels and all this information.'

New Zealand was seen as a safe destination, particularly in comparison to Asia and South America. This affected the level of confidence in travel and expectations.

'[I was] more nervous in Asia because there is potentially more things that could go wrong in those kinds of countries, the language for a start. For example Laos has very few facilities – there's just stuff that could happen that you wouldn't necessarily worry about here [like] drinking water. There are more risks but on the other hand it's more adventurous and more interesting.'

One had previously travelled to twenty countries; she had *'travelled a lot to see a lot'*.

Many others had similar levels of travel experience and felt that this experience gave them confidence in approaching travel with little planning.

'Oh yeah, for me it's not a big deal to travel, I just pack and go. I don't think about it so much because my credit card works here so ... what can happen, even in the furthest point in the world what can really happen?'

This extensive travel experience can shape travellers' anticipations of a destination.

'I was really calm, it doesn't excite me any more, you just do it, it's kind of sad.'

it was of course a nice experience but I don't think about it [beforehand] ...it's kind of a thing you learn when you get disappointed.'

'If I go on a ski holiday I don't dream about a nice sunny day and snow because it might be when you're there it will be... bad snow and raining...so you don't think about it.'

This experience can also affect how participants choose their activities:

'It's kind of difficult because there are two different organisations doing the same thing and you first look at the organisations and the things they're doing. Then you look at the prices and they're different so you think more expensive more experience. And then we went for the cheap one, and I believe it was the same experience...You don't know anymore, it's in the end it's all the same.'

This attitude was present in other cases where participants, particularly experienced travellers, thought the experiences provided by tourist operators were the same and tended to limit their options to avoid spending time and money repeating activities.

'I had so many activities I wanted to do and [the list] got shorter and shorter. At the end you only do one. I wanted to see the volcanic landscape and there was also the geyser. '

'We went to one and it seems like the same, so you only do one natural resource. You're not going to see all the Maori villages, just one. It's all approximately the same.'

4.4 Price as a navigating factor

The participants in this study were all very price conscious. Price was considered very carefully in choice of activity and operator and costs on accommodation and food were cut wherever possible.

'Money is definitely a limited resource right now until I get a job. Right now I'm using my ATM card from home they have barely any fees for using international ATMs so I have to keep in mind about the exchange rates and how much money I have in my bank account. A \$500 car is roughly \$350 US and if I have \$5000 USD I can afford that. We can spend \$30 a day from here on out without getting a job. I have been recording expenses on a spreadsheet on MS Excel. Unfortunately money doesn't grow on trees so

...[you] have to prioritise and look out for good deals, discounts, people selling their equipment really cheap.'

'In the back of our mind if somebody is going to be going somewhere see if we can get a ride there – share resources.'

'...when we were in the south island we put all the things we wanted to do in a big list. It was all about have we done it before? Can we do it back home? [we] didn't go skiing here [we] can do it in Canada. We didn't go kayaking in Abel Tasman because we didn't have money for it and also had already been kayaking before, we went tramping instead.'

Nevertheless, participants were willing to spend money in particular places or for special occasions. For example, one traveller planned to save money for a few weeks and then spend it going out for her birthday in Auckland.

'In saying that in a few weeks time we are going to go and treat ourselves and go somewhere that's reasonably expensive and have our hair done, and go to "it's all about me" and enjoy ... Ponsonby life a little bit.'

4.5 Work and travel

Those backpackers who were travelling for more than three months tended to integrate work into their travels. Workmates were seen as a source of local travel advice, and many travellers would also go to cafes and bars with them to experience local culture. Many took jobs on farms or orchards because this kind of work allowed them to experience rural life and be flexible in the travel; it also provided money to fund their travel experience.

'Money isn't infinite and if we could delay getting a job we would...If we need to get a job we have the visas for a reason.'

In a sense, they could experience the authentic 'Other' of earlier times through temporary participation in agricultural life.

'I think I would like to try everything. I don't really have a lot of farming experience but would be good to do because I'll probably be working in an office at home. Just want to get a flavour for what else is out there while on the trip. '

'Since we are doing a lot of farm stays I think it would be good to meet authentic experience the culture meet the people and see what they really do on a day to day basis, stuff that you would not necessarily see from going on tours. You only see other tourists on buses.'

Travellers used a combination of strategies to mix place-experience with work. Often they would go to a particular location at a certain time because they knew that seasonal work, such as fruit picking, would be available. While participants had savings, they would tend to choose a place they would like to visit and find work while they were there. Backpackers were very aware of the need for work because savings might run out if they were planning to spend a long period of time in New Zealand.

'You don't even think about leaving until you got the job [in the next place] You get the job and see how much you're going to make. And then you get a place to like and see how long you can make so much money. Also go with the weather – so in Taupo, when is summer going to be over? For example in February we had another nice month of weather there and we had enough money so we left and were going to spend all that money for the time we had nice weather, and then we were going to go down to Christchurch and get another job. We didn't want to be trapped in one town for the entire summer.'

Travel and work tended to follow a cycle of working and saving to travel combined with local trips at weekends. Ideally work would be seasonal, allowing them to work in winter, and travel in summer. They most often took retail, hospitality, and temping jobs; sometimes they obtained higher paying skilled employment such as accounting, and stayed longer in one place to keep that job. Others avoided their usual profession and worked instead in hospitality so they could meet people. Many adopted a flexible approach where they took jobs such as fruit picking or labouring for a few days or weeks to allow for variation in their travel plans. Work was sought from various sources – job websites, seasonal work websites, word of mouth, text, backpacker community websites, door knocking, and local papers. Some participants who expressed difficulties in getting jobs thought that this was because employers perceived them to be transitory and were reluctant to hire them.

'We are pretty much are you playing it by ear... trying to plan ahead as much as we can. But those hosts (work hosts from the help exchange website) can't promise stuff 3 months in advance. They say when the time is closer let us know what is going on. So far it's been really working out conveniently we have had 5 or 6 responses of places that we can stay on the road so that helps out a lot with expenses.'

Because work and time need to be balanced, long term travellers may in fact necessarily be constrained by the 'clock time' they set out to escape through travel. In any case the need to fit information, content, experiences, events 'in time' within their time schemes requires some structuring. However that structuring is established by the person doing the travelling rather than by external forces such as partner's needs and employment conditions. This desire for 'freedom' and lack of structure means that planning is looser and more flexible, and more on the spur of the moment. Decisions are made while on the move and are subject to change; nothing is fixed, as such information is not all sought at once at the beginning of the trip, but throughout the journey as required.

Elsrud (1998: 314) writes that 'regarding a journey as a 'time frame' involves 'a hunt for content' that moves beyond issues of 'clock-time structuring' to 'the complexities of other time dimensions and experiences'. In effect, travellers 'express a freedom to create their own actions and structure their own movements'. Perhaps part of this structuring is to avoid too much planning, to leave freedom for 'moments in time', to increase anticipation of surprising new experiences. There are also practical considerations in terms of limited pre-arrival knowledge about a place. Information is not sufficient to completely plan every detail, so plans must be left general and open to change due to circumstances that arise on the way.

4.6 Information sources

Moving from place to place involves the solution of several common navigation problems. Choices of activity must balance the attraction of different sites against the time and effort needed to travel to each. Such planning often involves the clustering of activities in order to minimize the time spent travelling between attractions. Functional factors such as opening times, public transport schedules and sometimes advance bookings must all be considered on unfamiliar road systems. In addition such decisions must be made without direct personal knowledge of, for example, accommodation and surrounding area (Brown 2007:376).

Participants in this study did not make exclusive use of any particular medium of information to solve their travel problems, but used a combination of sources. Guide books and word of mouth were the most commonly used resources; all had a guide book and used it to form a general idea of location, available activities, and accommodation. A commonly employed strategy was to simply arrive in a place and rely on local information centres and hostel staff to discover what they could do in that region. Each type of information source was perceived to have its particular strengths and weaknesses. Participants considered the Internet to be an effective resource for both broad overviews and precise searches, but they also noted that its use depended on access to a computer and a sufficiently fast and reliable Internet connection. In contrast, guide books are portable, self contained and have large amounts of information that interests travellers, but may be out of date in terms of available accommodation, activities and pricing.

To see how websites, and the newzealand.com website in particular fit within this network of information, it is necessary to examine both the qualities of each type of information source, and how they interacted together to inform and affect participants' mental images of

places and decision making about them. In this study travellers are framed as researchers who piece together their journeys through various nodes or information sources, assembling their pathway from various accounts of experience and visual data from word of mouth, in books, websites.

A core factor is the perceived reliability or ‘trustworthiness’ these sources of information. Norman (2004) states that the level of trust that a person has in a piece of information and/or technology that they interact with is based on both implicit and explicit promises and on past experience. Within this thesis issues of trust and expectation arise through Internet-use, guide books, interacting with other travellers and tourism operators, engaging in tourist activities, and visiting places. These various types of experiences are all interrelated and create various expectations. Placed within the framework of Norman’s processing theory:

Reflection is at the heart of cognitive basis of emotions, you build up expectations of behaviour based on prior experience, and if the items with which you interact fail to live up to expectations, that is a violation of trust, for which you assign blame, which can soon lead to anger. Establishing trust is complex, but it involves, among other things, implicit and explicit promises, then clear attempts to deliver, and moreover evidence. (Norman 2003: 141).

Expectations are built from multiple sources, including advertisements and recommendations, previous experiences and the user’s understanding of what a product is and how it works. Norman (2004) states that this conceptual model may be the most important factor in establishing and maintaining trust. Possessing an accurate conceptual model and being able to see the current state of the object or item under use acts to create a strong sense of trust and reliability. This knowledge of conceptual model and system state as trust generators can be applied to multiple situations. For example whether an online

booking application is processing your request or has ‘hung’, or if the tour bus you are waiting for is running late due to traffic or has broken down on the side of the road.

In the context of travel and the Internet these ideas connect well with Zhang and Von Dran’s (2000) adaptation of the Hertzberg’s hygiene factors and motivators to the analysis of websites. Hygiene factors (dissatisfiers) are functional, only noticed when disappointment occurs, when implicit expectations are not met. In this sense the speed and reliability of the Internet connection is also a hygiene factor – when it is working well it is not noticed but when its performance is unsatisfactory it suddenly becomes apparent and has a negative effect on the pleasure of browsing.

In this case, for example, the person experiencing the slow loading time could attribute their frustration to either the website or the connection. This is where trust and blame come to play: if the person viewing the website has seen that same website at home and the experience was smoother, or if accessing any website (or websites they commonly use such as email clients) from the Internet connection while away seems slower, then blame is likely to be attributed to the connection rather than the website.

Access to the Internet allows people from far away countries to book and compare prices for flights to New Zealand and accommodation. The establishment of forums and interactive technologies provides people with the ability to engage in dialogues with other travellers enabling them to gather information and opinions from others who may be half way across the world. The existence of other mediators acting as motivators became apparent in the context of this research when they changed a participant (actor)’s outlook or behaviour. For example when one participant saw pictures of a recommended accommodation on a website she thought it was very shabby. However the person who

recommended the accommodation told her that they had worked in for that hotel, and that it was in fact very nice. She then decided to book a room in this place on the basis of this recommendation. Positive experience such as the one just described, as well as beautiful images on a website, and special deals shown on a flyer or heard about through other travelers, can all be motivators.

Within this framework, hygiene factors and motivators define the type of mediated affect – positive or negative. In the context of travel, hygiene factors may literally be the cleanliness of accommodation, the comfort of a bus ride, the coldness of inviting looking water when swimming with dolphins, or the weather. Motivators direct the participant's attention to a scene or place in the way MacCannell's (2001) markers create an attraction by privileging a scene. Hygiene factors are functional, only noticed when disappointment occurs, when expectations are not met. Information sources identified by participants have been grouped as three forms of mediator: guide book, word of mouth, and the Internet. The following section examines how these were perceived and used by participants.

4.6.1 Information centres

The tourist information infrastructure in New Zealand was perceived to be very good. Participants stated that they could find 'iSite' visitor information centres anywhere they went and that the quality of information provided was comprehensive and very useful. Interestingly, nearly every traveller thought New Zealand's tourism infrastructure was much better than that of their own country. For example, one participant commented that her hometown of Edinburgh must be a nightmare for visitors to navigate because it's 'just not geared to tourism in the way that somewhere like here is.' However this perception may simply be because, as locals, participants had never sought out visitor information in their home town and were not actually aware of the resources available. For many participants, visitor information centres were often their first stop on arrival in a region.

'They are really good here in New Zealand, they are quite a bit better than a lot of other places. We just went over to Rotorua and Tauranga and basically went into the information site and got all the information, went to see a Maori hangi and dance thing and also booked our hostel, set up our rafting and got tickets to spa. [You] talk to a person behind a computer and they set it all up. They give you maps it's really good.'

4.6.2 Brochures

A massive amount of printed material is available to travellers, particularly when they arrive in New Zealand. In hostels and information centres like i-Site, travellers are confronted with 'literally 4 walls covered in information.'

'...it's so much information and you don't know what to go with so you kind of just take a dart and throw it at a board and say that's fine, I'll take that one'

'You end up not touching anything because it's just too much... I don't want to spend hours... reading and comparing [brochures] ... The longer I travelled the less attracting it was, the less it caught my eye, it's something you get used to.'

Brochures were used to get specific information on time, pricing, location. The sheer quantity meant, however, that recommendations were solicited through other information sources first

'Say, skydiving, you check brochures to get a price range [and] keep asking people "what do I get for my money".'

Participants saw brochures as necessary because they contained pricing information that tended to be absent from website information (although the text and imagery were often identical to the print version) and more up to date than the pricing listed in guide books. What is also interesting here is that, when faced with such a barrage of 'pretty pictures' and enticing text, backpackers apparently filter out these aspects and go straight to pricing.

4.6.3 Guide books

The guide book was ubiquitous with travellers, every participant had at least one, and in most cases it was a Lonely Planet. Brown (2007:372) points out that 'guidebooks come in many different forms, from free handouts to Michelin and Baedeker'. Tourists like them because their information comes in 'a structured and relatively standardized form' that includes accommodation, attractions, recommended bars and restaurants together with phone numbers and opening times. Such standardization effectively reduces uncertainty and lends an aura of safety to otherwise strange places. Nevertheless, he points out, 'guidebooks need to be put in their place'. They are 'collaborative artifacts' which must be combined with other information sources like maps and local advice 'to be converted from general prose to activity'.

The following participant comments encapsulate the relationship of many travellers to this information source:

'The guidebooks are brilliant! All the information is probably on the Internet, but in the guide book it's all together...so I know people use the Internet a lot but I use it when I have to but even at the moment I have the New Zealand Lonely Planet in my bag and it's great because you just take it out whenever you want... and it's not just Lonely Planet, there's Footprints, there's Rough guide, a few of them out but the all offer pretty much the same kinds of information.'

'And that's what you need, you need a bible...so that you can follow it. And that's what I used for South America but for coming here I suppose I was a little more comfortable. First of all because everyone spoke English, and second of all because my mates had been here just before me, so they were telling me do this, do that. And as you're coming down through Chile you meet people who have just left New Zealand who tell you what to expect so to speak.'

Some people rated guide books as their primary information resource for travelling.

'The guidebook is definitely first ...I have other guidebooks too but the lonely planet is really good. I think it's a really good source for young people because it's kind of made for that kind of travelling.'

'The book would be more interesting because it has more information on one place. The book has more detail, where you can sleep, what you can do, how it's going to cost. What you expect from each place.'

Participants often used the information found in guide books in conjunction with the Internet and word of mouth information.

'Websites are very helpful for finding out specific information or finding out the options of more specific things. – transportation or specific information on major tourist attractions. Like the trails for the great walks that we want to see. Also good for general information but not as good for getting a huge overview as a book that you can browse through easily.'

More general guidebooks like the Lonely Planet were combined with more specialised books, often walking guides like the *Lonely Planet Tramping Guide* or *Let's Go New Zealand*.

'I'm going to do a lot of hiking so ended up getting the trekking New Zealand guide from Lonely Planet as well so I have the generic one as well as the trekking one. It has information on how to get from place to place, what to expect on the trail, days, stopping points where huts are. It's pretty good, but it's pretty much trekking only so it won't have restaurants, where to stay, that kind of deal.'

'The generic book is good just to get an idea of what the editors thought, what they liked when they went to a certain place and you get to hear point of view and their reasons why they enjoyed a specific attraction. Their point of view is pretty good...It has a lot of information about tons of different places so you can pick and choose. It also has photos on it so you can say 'lets go to the kauri forests' pretty much anywhere. So that's where I can see Bay of Islands and say that looks cool and then I can go to my trekking book and see if there are any trails to do there so I kinda use them together.'

In this sense information in books also acted as a marker leading people to decide where to travel.

'I heard about the Tongariro crossing from people a lot...it seems to be the walk of choice so I looked it up the other day in the book and saw that there was quite a few walks that they recommend. The book was 'Let's go New Zealand.'

Guidebooks were seen as 'reliable technology' in this context, because they are not dependent on the infrastructure required for a laptop and an Internet connection. This applied particularly in the case of tramping guides designed for use in the bush.

'I can't get an Internet connection this has all the trails and their information if we are going to be in the wilderness.'

Another factor relating to the reliability of guide books is the quality of information provided. Although some participants who were not native English language speakers had their own language guide books, they preferred English language versions because the information in them was perceived to be more accurate and reliable. An Argentinean traveller noted:

'...English would not be a problem for books or for the website I'm quite used browsing through English websites; I even prefer it because the translations are very poor. I'd rather go through the original. It was the same with books in English they may be more expensive but the language was much better.'

Another participant said that the only time she uses her German book to find places to visit is so she can tell her parents, who have the same book. The perceived quality of the New Zealand Lonely Planet was often made by comparison with previous experiences in using

other guide books from the series, such as the Australian and European versions. The quality of information in some of the other versions of the Lonely Planet, for countries such as India and South America, was seen as much lower. Some had been to accommodation and attractions listed to the guide only to find that certain recommended places no longer existed.

'I'd say Lonely Planet is probably great for down here but they weren't very good for South America, was out of date. It depends where people have been travelling before, what guide book they're gonna use.'

I'd used Lonely Planet in Europe before, that's why I thought they were good. That's why I was quite surprised when I got to South America and used it and things were closed when I got there ...but I know that people are using it in New Zealand and Australia and they found it very good. And they have a new edition out with Australia and New Zealand together. It's very hard not to [see New Zealand and Australia together when the books provide all the information together.]'

The main problem with information in the New Zealand version was thought to be the lack of up to date pricing. Because its content is static, the printed medium is inherently vulnerable to the problem of outdated information. One solution here is to regularly release updated versions of the publication, but this approach is costly for both producer and consumer. Guide books may have to be reprinted with minimal but important pricing changes and travelers obliged to purchase the new version for access to up to date price information.

'You've got the lonely planet there [it's] very informative. They try to keep it up to date but even if it was published as recently as the previous year the prices turn out to have changed... I used the one for Australia and it was really helpful to get basic information about accommodation stuff and for the maps so you can see where places are. They also give hints on activities.'

Sometimes, as in the case of the traveller quoted below, there was outright suspicion of the author's knowledge.

'When you read a guidebook sometimes it seems like the people who wrote the guidebook haven't been there, they just picked information up from... I dunno... other guidebooks or local travel agents or something.'

The first time they realized this was when using the Lonely Planet tramping guide book to navigate Cape Reinga at the top of the North Island of New Zealand.

'We went to the walkway by Cape Reinga because the guidebook told you which way to go and was really detailed so we thought people must have been there but it led us to completely the wrong direction.'

They also found that the map in the book was similarly incorrect. Despite this, when asked if this experience made them less likely to rely on the guidebook, they said they would continue to use it but also check the quality of its information with other sources.

'Actually no it's still good... I guess I'm going to be more careful with descriptions in the guidebook from now on and try to double check everything.'

4.6.4 Maps

Maps, both separately and within guide books, were also found to be particularly helpful for forming a general plan of action when travelling. Tourists use maps, Brown (2006: 375) says, for orientation and to find approximately the right direction, not always knowing where they are or even where they are heading. Because map reading can be done on the move as a constant updating of spatial information, maps in the hand are ideally suited to this kind of behaviour. They are often used in conjunction with guidebooks for information about place and location; the 'what and where' of sightseeing.

Information from maps and guide books can also be combined to cluster sights and activities. Rather than heading to a place that contained only one desirable activity, travellers can work out where they can go to experience a variety of different things, and

make choices between them, for example in deciding to visit a restaurant or a bar strip. Maps, themselves, have an educational function too; one aims to learn enough, become sufficiently oriented to then be able to do without them (Brown 2006).

4.6.5 Word of mouth

Talking is a central part of traveller's information sourcing. Word of mouth is natural and needs no infrastructure or technology although it can, of course, be transmitted by them. All participants talked to people about their trip both they came to New Zealand and continued to do so after they arrived. A wide range of people were asked; often, it seemed, anybody who was nearby. Conversations with others also provided a 'feel' for a place and helped travellers to make judgments about value for money. Some were quite indiscriminate in their choice of sources.

'We asked everyone. We just keep asking people. Everyone seems very helpful.'

'I talked to at least 10 different people who had some experience with New Zealand from professors to friends to sending a couple of random emails to people who were over in New Zealand. Sometimes those people actually gave me email addresses of others ... so I ended up emailing people I had never met.'

'I talked to everybody... people in hostels, people on buses, friends, colleagues.'

'I talked to everybody, people in the street. I went over to the Aotea centre south pacific display just chatted to people, people in bars, on the bus...'

Others were more selective:

'I did a lot of talking to people, my brother and his colleagues were really good sources....And a lot of it is just a feel for something, it's not tangible.'

'I didn't specifically seek out people to ask advice... but I might happen to ask somebody if they recommended anything if they had done a specific activity that they though was worth doing but [it was] kind of casual.'

Talking to people is convenient – they are already there in proximity to the traveller – and this may also provide a chance for a solitary traveller to interact both with other travellers and with locals. Similarly, participants thought meeting and interacting with other people was important part of the travel experience. They hoped to meet a lot of people, both travellers and locals: ‘this is an opportunity... on many different levels’.

‘I keep asking all the locals ‘where would you go hang out? Where would you go listen to music? What would you do in the weekend?’

Although such questions can be used to gather or exchange information, they are also a ‘ticket to talk’ (Sacks 1995), a chance to interact with and engage in conversation with others while travelling (Brown 2007). This particular behaviour is seen both by researchers and backpackers themselves as one of the defining characteristics of backpacker practice; that is, engaging in active interaction rather than passive consumption of experience (Allon 2002, Shaffer 2004, Elsrud 1998, for example). As Brown (2007: 372) says:

The social contact that these conversations initiate may be of more value than the mere exchange of information –they are as much platforms for establishing other (possibly temporary) social bonds, as enjoying the company of other people.

Participants were aware that the quality of such information might vary and they would have to filter it with their own travel experience, so in this sense they acted like critical researchers. The quality of information in brochures, guidebooks and websites was also tested by word of mouth advice which they used in a form of informal triangulation.

‘I don’t know if all travellers do that, some of them might just worship what the Internet says or whatever but you have to be wise about it. When you’ve been travelling for a while you work out what may work what might not, what you like what you might not. Sometimes you might make wrong decisions but you just take the good with the bad. Sometimes we would end up booking buses [in South America] and they would just be awful but you accepted it and knew for next time.’

Word of mouth, then, is not entirely trusted but can work in conjunction with other information sources and the participant's own experiences and their 'gut feel' for a place. This is exemplified in comments on choice of hostel association, where participants although they used the Internet for pricing and membership information, often did not decide on a particular one until they actually got to New Zealand and actually saw the accommodation.

'One of my friends ... came out here last winter and she said go to ACB it was great we had so much fun, had a good time at night, they always had something planned. So when we got here the bus from the airport dropped us off and we looked it and we were like this place looks kinda shady... the place didn't really look that comfy and we just didn't really like the atmosphere that much So we walked round all day with our packs on our backs. YHA also had membership available with discounts at tons of places. It seemed a lot more homey, people were pretty friendly there to. So once you get to the front desk and say hello and asks some questions you can tell if they are pretty friendly, if they are really helpful. I mean everybody really friendly helpful, really friendly as it is but this place really made us fell like we were at home.'

Participants frequently gathered stories from others who had been to New Zealand and these often caused them to modify their plans. In several cases this led to a change in focus from Australia to New Zealand.

'I've always wanted to travel to Australia, since I was sixteen. ...So I always said when I go there I don't want to go for two weeks. I started looking more into New Zealand after I spoke to people who had been there and they said "spend all your time in New Zealand it's gorgeous, you won't want to go to Australia." ...and some of them were extensive travellers. '

Personal accounts can positively influence people's actions, making them add or remove destinations from their itinerary.

'Normally the guide book will tell you but I'd ask around the hostel, other travellers...word of mouth's great. As long as the operators keep their customers satisfied they'll have cheap advertising there. You'd be surprised how many tours we went with just by word of mouth. We might have made up or minds by looking at the guide book or something else but once you'd heard someone else talking about some spectacular tour you wouldn't mind

changing it. You'd ask them why it worked for them sometimes people like different things, if you liked what they were saying then sure why not'.

'I think a lot of it will be what we feel comfortable with and what opportunities that we find So far I found that asking people where is the best place to see something? What is the easiest way to get around? from travellers who are coming back to Auckland because they are ending their trip. So asking "hey what did you think about this city and what were your favourite places/ places you didn't like?" [It's] giving us really good information.'

Such information may draw people to a place, acting as a marker privileging one site over another so that they modify their travel plans. Here the opinion of another traveller acts as a mediator because it is a motivating factor that alters travel plans.

'I'm feeling pressured to get down to the South Island, everybody keeps telling me get down to the South Island as quickly as possible, that's where everything is. .. six weeks is a long time, but I keep feeling I need to get down there as soon as possible. So last night I scoped out how I could get down there a little more quickly.'

Information can also make people aware of 'hygiene factors' (limiting conditions) that lead them to modify their behaviour to avoid a perceived risk. For example learning from other travellers that bad weather in the South Island might cause road closures, leading to missed flights.

'I think I'm put off a lot of stuff purely by the weather... "a lot of people said they got stuck in various places and I just didn't want to get stuck anywhere because I'm on quite a short time scheme.'

Participants thought that the travel advice obtained from people had 'generally been good'. Travellers asked a wide variety of people for advice, including locals that they encountered, hostel and information centre staff. Information from other travelers was seen as the most trustworthy because they were thought least likely to have ulterior motives for recommending a place.

'Tips from other travellers that people aren't necessarily going to talk about when they are trying to sell something Tips that you would want to know.'

'...we did but most of the people we talked to were backpackers themselves and at the time that we came, everybody was in the same situation that we were in. They didn't know where to begin either and were looking for jobs.'

Advice from this source was also valued above local advice because participants thought they probably shared a similar perspective and were less likely to be jaded by or unaware of various tourist attractions.

'Quite a lot of the kiwis have not done a lot of the things. [get advice of travellers rather than locals] ... a different mentality ... if you come here you want to do stuff, so I tend to talk to travellers because they have tried these things.'

'But you don't hear a lot of ... specific answers... there's no distinct specific "we all go"...or... " this is a really popular spot"'

Nevertheless participants were also aware that advice from other travellers was subjective and therefore they tended to filter it, taking more notice of positive accounts of an experience than negative ones:

'Within backpackers it's the ones that are telling the positive things, because you don't know if the people who had negative experiences just had a bad day or something.'

'I'm careful because... you've got to experience yourself and make your own decision...If they don't like the event or activity, or the weather at the time, or are in a bad mood...they are not going to appreciate things it's better to get a general idea [from their description] and do it yourself.'

'Backpackers love to pass on their knowledge. When I do it though I try not to influence them, you want them to make up their own minds. I ask a lot of questions... I don't judge the place based exactly on what they say but I take it into account.... I got told by a friend don't hike the glacier, do the heli hike, but then I had to take into account she's not a hiker. I would love the hike because I love hiking.'

Hostel staff were often consulted, and were seen as a good source of planning advice, though some participants were aware of possible commercial interest on the part of accommodation providers. For example when one participant queried hostel staff about activities in the surrounding regions to he asked them to 'be honest'.

‘Don’t just give me the company line, tell me if you actually have been to that place, do you like it? Is that your personal opinion? Because I’ve got a few different takes [on a place]. Last night a backpacker said that Picton had a really nice hiking route if I can’t make it to Abel Tasman might be able to do that. The woman at the YHA desk said “skip Picton, nobody stays there.” Then I asked her about the hiking route there and she said that “yeah, that walk might be good. If I listened just to the desk staff I would have bypassed it entirely. ‘

Because of this he would prioritise backpackers’ opinions/information over YHA staff members ‘because it’s new to them and they are experiencing it for the first time too, generally’. Although he thought that desk staff were very helpful and friendly he was not sure if ‘maybe they have done it so many times they are a bit jaded.’ This also shows an active triangulation of various word of mouth sources.

4.6.6 The Internet

Participants often saw websites as a primary tool for finding travel information. One of the strengths of the Internet is that it is available to travellers while in their home country. In fact home connections were generally seen to be faster and more convenient than those available to them in New Zealand. The former were consequently used more frequently and for longer periods of time. Some, who were enthusiastic Internet users, estimated the average length of their sessions from home to be about one to one and a half hours. They were online most days: ‘I thought it was a fun activity to do; to say check it out I’m going here.’ This behaviour tended to change once they were accessing the Internet within New Zealand. Because participants perceived local access to be slower and more expensive than their home connections, they tended to ration their use, prioritising email for travel arrangements, contact with friends and family at home, and some online booking for flights and bus rides.

'One concern is if I'm in an Internet café with an older slower Internet connection the more graphic intensive it gets, it can be a pain. and I have experienced that in New Zealand, slower Internet.'

'I have used the YHA Internet cafes and the ones on Queen Street. Being slower definitely decreases the desire to spend a lot of time looking for detailed information about a place.'

'I tend to use the Internet café near the flat I'm in rather than the flat's dialup connection because it would be too slow.'

'I would certainly be less inclined to go on the Internet here in New Zealand than at home because I have a much faster connection [at home]'

The nature of available connections was a clear hygiene factor. Participants' expectations of performance were built from their online experiences at home. When they found that the connection in New Zealand was slower, and more expensive because they were conscious of paying for time while browsing, they limited their time online and prioritised organizational tasks and communication with home.

'You can easily spend an hour on the Internet and not feel like doing anything. Also the connection might be slow or the computer might crash in an Internet café and I would feel like [I'm] wasting money.'

Participants took a more leisurely attitude to gathering information online while in their home country and were more likely to browse for information about their destination country out of curiosity or for pleasure. Perceived issues of access and convenience also led participants to use alternative sources of information.

'A lot of the time with backpackers and the Internet you don't have it readily available. So normally you go to an I-site and look at pamphlets or ask. Or you look for backpackers when you get there and ask.'

Access to the Internet in New Zealand's main centres was seen to be commonly available, its use there mostly limited by perceived quality and expense of connection.

'[Access is] pretty good, it feels expensive to me but ...purely because I have come from Asian countries but in reality I think it's pretty cheap, I think it's cheaper here than in the UK. It's usually pretty fast and you

usually find it fairly easily wherever you go. I've never found that I've had to search particularly for an Internet café if you just kind of go out of your hostel and walk you normally find one just down the street or your hostel might have one.'

Having to pay for Internet access also contributed to their use of alternative information sources such as guide books.

'I wouldn't jump on the Internet because it costs money and I figure the books [pretty] accurate. Maybe slightly out of date, but [I'm] not using the Internet much for planning activities.'

Travellers' opinions of the Internet in comparison to guide books varied. One frequently adopted approach was to use websites mainly for more specific information.

'Websites are very helpful for finding out specific information or finding out the options of more specific things – transportation or specific information on major tourist attractions. Like the trails for the great walks that we want to see. Also good for general information but not as good for getting a huge overview as a book that you can browse through easily.'

One type of traveller who used this approach is typified by the backpacker who 'usually doesn't just sit there and look at random things', but uses the Internet to research specific topics.

'I use it for travelling when I know the place, and know what I want and I want to find a place to stay or book a tour, only if I really know what I want to do. I usually don't just look around, maybe I should do that more often...I think you could find quite a lot of interesting things if you did look around.'

Word of mouth was often a stronger initial factor in decisions to come to New Zealand and Internet-use was then seen as complementary, reinforcing anticipation and helping to plan specific travel details.

'I pretty much already knew where I wanted to go before I started looking at stuff so the Internet didn't change my idea of where I wanted to go because I knew that already I was just looking up places that I had in mind.'

Others took the opposite approach, using websites simply for getting a 'first glance' at a place and books for more detailed information.

'[The] book would be more interesting because it has more information on one place. The book has more detail, where you can sleep, what you can do, how it's going to cost. What you expect from each place.'

Participants were aware of the varying quality of travel websites: 'Some are good, some are bad'. Even those who considered themselves experienced Internet users found many difficult to use because of inconsistent features within and between sites. However people were often willing to persevere when they were searching for the best price for transport, activities, or accommodation.

'I think that a lot of people, myself included, probably put up with a lot because they are looking for price more than anything. But if I'm not looking for price...I'll just go with the site that I like best.'

Participants who stayed in YHA hostels said that they preferred to use Internet cafes because these were much cheaper. However they were pleased that access was available in hostels 'just in case' they wanted to use it. For other backpackers, the price and speed of Internet services were not significant because they preferred guide books which they found more convenient.

'It's not too expensive; I could use it all the time if I wanted to. It's just the books with me I can just grab it and ... read it. Whereas you have to go to an online café or something [in order to use the Internet]'

Others were enthusiastic about using the Internet while travelling: several had brought their laptops, hoping to use them for precisely that reason.

'Most of these help exchange hosts will have email although it's probably not good to assume that they have Internet there, maybe they check their email at work – but we are figuring that they probably wouldn't mind if we just plugged in and went online to check out what's going on with other people.'

In these cases guide books were seen as a back-up:

'Sometimes you're not sure where technology is going to be or not going to be and that is where the Lonely Planet guide is going to come in handy – to say we can stay here. It has a list of hostels in the book, where to eat, where

to get pretty much anything and how to get there....So if we have the technology we will probably use the technology otherwise we have the book for backup.'

Many participants used the Internet extensively before their journey to get general impressions of places, spending many hours a week looking at foreign countries. That time included searching Google images and visiting travel forums to read traveller's experiences.

Especially with places like India, Pakistan finding out about the culture and about things that you should or shouldn't do, things you might need to take, how you should dress, costs of things ... planning, particularly, just getting a general idea of the country.'

When in New Zealand participants also looked up specific locations that they planned to visit so they could get a general idea of that place.

'I think it gives you a general idea of what it's going to be like with the photographs and comments that people make. It gives you a sense of a place before you get there, I think, a little bit. Like we did that for the Coromandel and there were pictures of what you'd see and do.'

Many participants used the Google images Internet application to search for images of New Zealand.

'I would have a broad spectrum of New Zealand and nice views of the country.'

'You just start searching everywhere and... then you get to an image that just says "wow."'

'We kept looking after already decided to come to New Zealand to allocate the time range of where we are going how much time we really had to say this is a definite, must do on our list. And say we have to go here and start making the trail. To make a path and say hey this is something good and we can catch this on the way.'

Such information was also used to allocate time and find 'definite – must see places'.

Some participants said that they looked at images because they saw themselves as visual people for whom images were 'another way of getting information besides just words'

Anticipation is important here, as many participants said these images were a factor in their decision to come to New Zealand. ‘Some very attractive pictures of relaxing [and] nature’ create positive affect and associations and can act as a marker drawing travellers emotionally towards a place.

‘The view, I mean shoot, even just a small picture of Doubtful Sound makes me want to go there.’

Similarly, online video libraries like Youtube and Google video were used to gain impressions of what experiences in New Zealand might be like.

‘Google video actually has a lot of videos about things like zorbing – I had no idea what that was – I just type in zorbing to Google video or New Zealand to the Google video search, image search, regular search. Did a lot of exploring websites and getting an idea of what I was getting into.’

Interactive mapping tools like Google earth were used for navigation and to get further impressions of particular places.

‘I’ve been looking at that as well seeing where the airport is and to see the terrain from a bird’s eye view to see how close things really are. Sometimes a map can be pretty deceiving although Google maps can also be pretty deceiving – we looked at the airport on Google maps while on the plane and thought we could just hike our way into Auckland city and people on the plane basically talked us out of it and on the bus ride there we realise we would have been screwed [if we tried to hike there] this is a highway walk - you don’t know what’s a highway, what’s walkable, where there is going to be a fence to block our way.’

Participants who used these applications said that they did so for enjoyment and anticipation rather than for navigation and planning.

‘Google earth was more of a fun factor it wasn’t really a research tool more just out of curiosity to get a feeling for it. It’s fun you can say my house is here I’m going to be going all the way here.’

However a few completely avoided looking at images prior to their trip because they did not want to form prior impressions of New Zealand. Too much information would spoil ‘the surprise’ of their New Zealand experience.

'Looking on the Internet you see it, but it's not the same as seeing it in New Zealand, experiencing it. You don't really get it until you're here.'

'I looked at the newzealand.com website before I came but I was so overwhelmed with it that I didn't know what to look up. Because there were so many natural wonders and I guess that I thought that ...[I'm] a backpacker and I'm only there for 9 months. I don't need to research all the things that I can do there... I can plan my trip when I get there. All I need is the basics.'

The Internet was also used for specific information, for example, the website for Intercity Coachlines was frequently accessed for planning and timetabling. Participants saw this company's service as the most flexible, allowing them greater independence in travel. By contrast, 'backpacker bus' companies such as Magic Bus and Kiwi Experience were negatively viewed as 'touristic' package oriented 'party' buses.

Sometimes the specifics of a particular piece of information were very important. This was evident in the case of the participant who only had two weeks to spend in New Zealand in the middle of winter who really wanted to find out if any roads would be closed due to bad weather. She had heard from other travellers to New Zealand that this was a frequent occurrence but could not find up to date information.

'I guess as a local here you know where to look for it but as a tourist I didn't know where to look for local news. I search Google for things like "news New Zealand" hoping it would come up with a local newspaper that would have a link to weather. ...But it usually just came up with rubbish so I never really came up with a decent link to up to date information... It's easy enough to find weather and temperature information but not which road will be shut.'

People typically used the Google or Yahoo search engines for searching for specific information.

'Now that we are in the country and have an idea of where we want to go to generally it's going to be for making more specific arrangements. Finding

out very detailed information about exactly which bus are we taking, what time, when [are] the best exchange rates.'

'Also the DOC website looking at the exact reservations that we need. [We] Need to make bookings there for Milford sound, Able Tasman ... so more for making things happen now - taking action as opposed to gathering ideas about what we want to do.'

In these cases, Internet information has a more functional role as a resource providing detailed information on specifics of a place such as price, location, and available facilities. For example the Department of Conservation website provides 'hands on maps, trails of readily available information so you can search really specifically on where you want to go.'

4.6.6.1 Online booking

Participants often did not use online booking and simply found accommodation after they had arrived in a region.

'I sorted it out when I got there, even in India...I never quite knew where I was going to be or when, or how long I was going to be in any one place until I got there....had a big idea in my head before I went of the kind of cities or the kind of places that I wanted to go to but I didn't really know how long or where I would stay in advance.'

Instead, the Internet was frequently for finding particular details about accommodation, rather than as a starting point.

'I mainly relied on the Lonely Planet or sometimes other travellers. if they had any recommendations. ... I would usually go to the Internet to look at something from the guidebook rather than look for something on the Internet to begin with.'

When deciding amongst hostel associations, backpackers identified 'YHA', 'BBH' and 'ACB' as their main options and then used the Internet to answer their queries on cost and membership conditions. Websites were also used for pricing, booking and timetabling

information and to avoid making paid phone calls in a foreign country. Backpackers' phone access is often limited to cell and pay phones so they must pay for the time spent making enquiries.

However, because of trust issues, online booking was not used for 'smaller places' where participants were not confident that they would receive timely information about the state of their booking request. They also doubted whether the business operator would get and process their booking quickly enough.

'Smaller backpacker places and B and Bs don't have real time booking. It's a matter of them emailing you back which if you're booking the day before is not much use. I Came in winter [it] didn't seem to be that busy so just turned up seemed be ok...[there] seemed to be enough backpackers so not a problem.'

Those who were travelling during the perceived off peak winter season saw no need to book online for transportation or accommodation, believing that the availability of these resources exceeded demand at that time of year. This was in direct contrast to their behaviour during high season in other countries.

'[It] depends, when I started off [travelling] I did because I was arriving in Rio de Janeiro and it was the peak time of the year.'

Many participants used the Intercity Flexi-Pass, a service provided by the Intercity Coachlines company that allowed them to make travel bookings and 'get on and off' as they pleased. They tended to go online for this to book the next leg of the trip at short notice, often the night before departure. Reservations for domestic flights were similarly made at short notice.

'One of the flights I literally booked the day I was going to go because. I was going to get a bus but just couldn't face the long journey so I went to an Internet café and found there was a flight that afternoon and booked it then and there. I suspect in summer it would not be the case (booking on the day) but in winter it was fine.'

Commonly used websites for bookings and travel arrangements included Qantas, Air New Zealand, Origin Pacific, TranzAlpine Train, and the Inter Islander ferry.

4.6.6.2 Networking using the Internet

Websites were often used to organise work and farmstays. The approach taken by two backpackers from the United States typified this strategy.

'In May we found a help exchange website (helpexchange.net) which is a website that has hosts and helpers. Hosts advertise a place to stay and food in exchange for working for them...we thought that would help a lot in cutting our expenses down so that we could have a lot more fun doing other things and see their part of the country at the same time. A lot of them have been really helpful...picking us up from whatever places we are at.'

'The website has the country broken up into regions. We found a few places that we liked like to go to in one region so [we] emailed three people in that region in case some of them were booked out.'

'We would say go to a farmstay for four days, then travel a ton, another for three days and do some hiking in Lake Taupo for example, then another farmstay for four days.'

In this way work and travel were combined using the Internet to find hosts in desirable locations. The common practice was to choose the place to visit and then to look for work within that region.

'[we would] Look at the attractions of the area then say oh wow this person lives within 15min of what we want to see so maybe they can give us a ride. Also it's kinda like eBay. – you can leave feedback, what they were like. Hosts might have up to 15 responses on the family they [traveller] stayed with and what they did. So you can see if somebody had a great time, if they treated them well.'

4.6.6.3 Online opinion

Participants liked sites with ratings for accommodation and attractions.

'Normally if I'm coming to a big city I'll go to the Internet and check out Hostelworld.com. ... Basically you can go in there and check what other travellers think of the hostel and they give it a rating so you know yourself'

what it should be like. And you have a few pictures and things. That's actually a good system; I think a lot of people are using that.

Online message boards are mediators in the sense that they allow the kind of opinion that is frequently expressed through word of mouth to appear with questions and replies, even though participants in the 'conversation' are not actually within speaking distance (or even in the same country). A major distinction between the Internet and guide books is the availability of tone or opinion. While guide books tend to provide only one author's opinion or perspective on a place, the interactive possibilities of the Internet facilitate the expression of many different opinions and perspectives on a place, including those of travellers themselves.

Analysis of such dialogues can on a behavioural level show how the Internet mediates the sharing of opinion that characterises face to face communication. Online dialogue is different from face to face conversation because it is both asynchronous and distanced (Mitra and Watts 2002, Pauwels 2005). If a traveller wants the provider of an online opinion to clarify any aspect of what they have said, this may not happen. That is because the informant may not even know that a query has been posted regarding their opinion, or may not have access to reply to the query, or simply may have "moved on" mentally and not care about answering a question. Other travellers on the board may step in and answer the query, giving their opinions or attempting to interpret the original poster's views.

It is the nature of online dialogue that communication is more distanced, and more dispersed in the presentation of opinions than a traditional dialogue. A face to face conversation is immediate and between the same people, without others who may be halfway around the world chiming in. Online conversation could be compared to being in a

room and asking a question by writing it on a blackboard. People might come in and see the question and write a response to it, or they might not. The person asking the question might stay in the room to see if anybody comes in, or they might leave and come back later to see if anyone has responded. Or they might even leave and never bother coming back to see if anybody has written an opinion.

Yet another dimension is added in by the fact that by searching online, one can actually find all people's previous questions about a topic, in a sense recovering conversations from the past. So online opinion is convenient in terms of distance, and of volume in some cases (for example, there may be many posts of a particular topic, like the best bus company to use while travelling round New Zealand). But it is not convenient in the sense that one needs access to the Internet and is more reliant on trust to gain a dialogue because 'you don't know if someone on the other end is going to be around to answer your query'. Because participants are not receiving the immediate feedback of face to face dialogue, their willingness to pose a question depends on their confidence that they will receive a timely and helpful response.

On a reflective level, people are critical thinkers; they filter the information they read on a website and assess it according to their own situation.

'There was one review on the website that said the place was kinda cold ... and the place needed renovation and there was no insulation so they got cold and got sick but we thought that would not be a problem because we have a lot of equipment.'

As in the case of word of mouth, travellers often gave more attention to positive than to negative commentary.

'[We read] really good things like the host took them around the mountains, horseback riding, to the beach and showed them a lot of sites ... I'd be like hey that guy is willing so that would be good.'

'We weighed it pretty heavily before our making our decision but dictated choice of hosts within a region, not choice of region.'

Many participants used notice boards like the Thorn Tree section of the Lonely Planet website. They thought that the quality of information on these message boards varied and expected to filter through the information on a website and evaluate its content.

'Some days it's great; some days it's rubbish; that's why I find guide books a lot better.'

'I find the Lonely Planet noticeboard very good; there are other ones but on that one if you have a query someone will be able to answer it.'

Other notice boards were designed for travellers from a particular country by people from that country who have travelled to New Zealand and Australia, for example, www.frogsinnz.fr for French people, and www.reisebine.de for Germans.

'It's run by lady who has been to Australia about 13 times and is a really good website most German people know about it and it has loads and loads of useful information. You can find out about visa and tax information, advertise mobile phones...'

These findings suggest that travellers are researchers who triangulate information (Brown 2007). They use various types of complementary information sources for opinion on places, to find things to see and do, and obtain work. Information sources are also used to find practical information on visas, transportation and accommodation. Applying Norman's (2004) framework of levels of processing to these information sources: imagery can provide affective and emotive information on the visceral level. Pricing and location information is provided on the reflective level. The manner in which information is searched for is the domain of the behavioural level; this is where factors such as convenience of access, searching, and navigation come into play. Comparisons can be

made between the behavioural aspects of different types of information resource and can help to indicate how and why participants used them. Guide books are small, portable, reliable technology. This means that they can be accessed at any time, in a car, while walking on a trail or resting in a tent or cabin. They are easy to use and scan – you just have to flip a page – and are indexed and grouped by place to make searching convenient. They can provide both a broad overview of a place, and specific information on accommodation and activities within a region.

The Internet has a huge breadth and depth of information. Various websites offer maps, videos, and images through search engines with powerful and flexible searching strategies (Bolter and Grusin 1999, Norman 2004). Blogs, online travel journals, and message boards all allow participants to search for other travellers' opinions online. While the nature of this information is very similar to that provided by word of mouth, the Internet enables this information to be transmitted and aggregated, circulating opinions from many, many people who may be very physically distant from the enquiring traveler (Bolter and Grusin 1999, Everett 2003, Mitra and Watts 2005).

But the Internet is also reliant on infrastructure (Sassen 2002), on computers, power to run them and Internet connections to send and receive data. Most of this will cost the participant money, usually by the minute or ten minute block. These are all behavioural, functional considerations that can affect choice of information source. In particular, the importance of response time on the Internet has been widely recognised by usability experts who have found that the time to load a page is the single largest factor in users abandoning a website (Nielsen 2000).

This study indicates that participants tend to give more weight to positive than negative opinion. They showed reflective awareness that negative opinions might be biased by particular nature tastes, personality, and individual experience on the day. Positive information, then, can be understood as a motivator but negatives do not deter. However hygiene factors (that only become apparent when people are dissatisfied) were clearly visible when connections were thought to be slower and more expensive than those normally used. Although these factors manifest themselves on the behavioural level, anticipation of such difficulties occurs as a trust issue on the level of reflection. Once participants found that the Internet connection they used was slow enough to annoy them, they tended to limit or modify their Internet use and turn to other information sources. The reasons for these attitudes are further explored in the following chapters.

Chapter Five: Tourist imagination and experience

When a traveller interacts with a website they combine their personal experiences with the images they see (Crouch et al 2005, Urry 2002). This connection between travel experience and representation is central to the relationships between travellers and the websites they use and to the research conducted with the participants. This chapter therefore focuses on how people process their travel experiences.

In this thesis the phrase imagination and experience is specific to an information seeking perspective. Here, a human computer interaction framework based on Norman's identified levels of information processing forms the conceptual basis for comparison of the elements that make up participants' travel imaginings and experiences. A broad range of tourism literature and theory is used to define aspects of the respondents' descriptions of their experience; positioning is thus from a human computer interaction perspective rather than from one that is based purely in tourism theory. As Turkle (1997) has identified, imagination is always actively present in the processes of users' engagement with computers as objects to think with. Tourism theory describes how people imagine places in schema generated through personal experiences, received information (online and through other sources) and individual notions of self. The complex imaginative experiences that people have of places are captured, for example in Crouch's description of leisure/tourism as

encounters in different ways: with other people, with material space, with one's imagination, ideas, metaphors of place, of leisure and tourism, of nature and of the city. These encounters may be with memory and people and places in other parts of one's life. (Crouch 2000: 3)

In the field of design, Norman (1988, 2005) writes of processing and memory, and notes that the memory borne of knowledge of relationships as a schema containing emotions is the strongest (most persistent and influential) kind. In this chapter the quotations from participant accounts and the theoretical material is intended to prompt an empathetically imaginative reader response.

The use of the terms imagination and experience (Crouch 2005) encapsulate the complex relationships between perception, cognition, emotion, affect, memory and anticipation (Crouch 2005, Jones 2005, Powell 1978). Before they arrived in New Zealand, the individuals in this study had formed an image of New Zealand based on accounts of other people's experiences. These accounts came by word of mouth, the Internet, and other media including books, television and film and the resulting image is a composite of the impressions formed by these sources. As participants travelled through New Zealand that image was mediated by their interactions with others, especially local residents, travel providers and other travellers, as well as information from websites, guide books, and their own experiences. This research then, needs to examine how image is created, developed, and changed as the potential tourist moves from a deciding on a destination to being an active traveller.

To do this it is necessary first to return to Norman's affective/cognitive theory of experience as described earlier in this thesis. In the construction of his affective/cognitive theory of experience, Norman (2004: 21) posits three levels of cognition that are involved when humans process experiences: these operate at the levels of visceral, behavioural, and reflective experience. The visceral level of processing is the oldest and deepest, used for decision making for survival. At this level, rapid judgements are made on what is good or

bad, safe or dangerous, and appropriate signals are sent to the motor system, such as tensing the muscles to get ready for fight or flight. This is the start of affective processing where the general 'state' of brain activity is set. Anxiety or negative affect results in focus 'tunnel vision', relaxation (positive affect) allows creativity and lateral thinking.

At the behavioural level of processing, use or manipulation of objects, which does not have to be conscious, takes place. Thus it is possible to perform tasks like typing or driving a car while thinking of something else on the reflective level. At this level actions can be enhanced or inhibited by a still higher, reflective level of processing and, in turn, can enhance or inhibit the visceral layer. The highest level of processing is that of reflective thought. This level does not have direct access to input from the senses or direct control over behaviour. Instead it watches over, reflects upon, and tries to influence the behavioural level. At the reflective level, the human brain can think about its own operations. New concepts can be learned and generalizations about the world developed (Norman 2004: 23).

Activities can be initiated at both the visceral and reflective levels. 'Bottom up' activities are initiated by the former and are driven by perception; 'top down' activities are initiated from the reflective level and are driven by thought. Visceral processing is thought to have developed as a decision making mechanism for survival response to stimuli (Ratner 2000, LeDoux 2007). Behavioural and reflective levels of processing are very sensitive to experiences, training and education. Culturally informed views also have a huge impact on what is appealing to a person. Thus while most people would experience anxiety when exposed to extreme heights or wild animals, reactions to art, literature and design can vary greatly from person to person. These levels interact with each other and have an impact on design (Norman 2004).

Researchers in psychology and neurophysiology have shown that affect, emotion and cognition interact and complement each other (Norman 2004, LeDoux 2007, and see Raymonde et al 2003). Cognition interprets the world, and leads to increased understanding and knowledge. Affect and emotion provide a system for value judgement: what's good or bad, safe or dangerous (Norman 2004, 20). Norman's model provides a mechanism for seeing how the mediation in tourist experience, described earlier, actually takes place. This scheme can be used to examine the thought processes involved in both the 'embodied' experience of travel (Crouch et al 2005) and the 'gazed' (Urry 2004) experience of interacting with various information sources. Norman's model can be applied to explore mechanisms for expectation, experience, and memory and also applications for representing these phenomena in terms of various tourist 'products' as they are experienced both vicariously and in actuality. Experience has been described as

...the sensation of change.....an experience is any process we're conscious of and involved in as it happens. To experience something requires that we recognize an alteration to our environment, our bodies, our minds, our spirits, or any other aspect of ourselves that can sense change (Diller et al 2006: 18).

Experience can take a number of different forms, from logical reactions to emotional or visceral sensations. Diller's (2006) examples capture the nature of these particularly well. Watching a convincingly argued documentary may causes us to make an enlightened change of personal viewpoint. Movies may lift the mood or produce visceral states of physical aversion (see Norman 2004, Boorstin 1990, and Bolter and Grusin 1999).

Some experiences are deliberately created for others, 'manufactured for a mass market and delivered through designed artefacts' (Diller et al 2006: 19). These are delivered through place, for example Disneyland (see Julier 2000; Eco 1986; Ritzer and Liska 1997) objects

like Philippe Starck's lemon squeezers (Norman 2004), and laptop computers (Turkle 2007). Others are simpler and more ubiquitous – 'hanging out' with friends or the sensation of sun on your face (Crouch 2005).

Powell's (1978: 17-18) list of ten key features constituting personal images of place illustrates how complex and nuanced they can be:

- a) A spatial component accounting for an individual's location in the world;
- b) A personal component relating the individual to other people and organisations;
- c) A temporal component concerned with the flow of time;
- d) A relational component concerned with the individual's picture of the universe as a system of regularities;
- e) Conscious, subconscious and unconscious elements;
- f) A blend of certainty and uncertainty;
- g) A mixture of reality and unreality;
- h) A public and private component expressing the degree to which an image is shared;
- i) A value component that orders parts of the image according to whether they are good or bad;
- j) An affectional component whereby the image is imbued with feeling

These factors illustrate the complexity of processing that is inherent in human interaction with place and show why being in a different place can change how people experience everyday activities.

5.1 Imagination and tourist experience

When the role of the tourist imagination in the media is compared with that of tourist activity itself, it is clear that the roles are not the same. Gaze and sound may be reproduced but movement, smell, and touch can not. Nor can the range and repertoire of active tourism roles be engaged within the constraints of media interaction. (Crouch et al 2005). This interaction with information is ‘gazed’ because the information provided is passed through the filter of the provider. It is then further filtered through the receiving participant’s own knowledge and schema. Rojek and Urry (1997: 9) ask how we sense what other places are like? Their answer involves observation of visual data, moving ‘forwards and backwards between diverse texts, film, photographs, landscape, townscape and models so as to “decode” information’.

The tourist experience itself is embodied because it involves actual physical interaction with the environment, with the location and people where the participant is travelling (Shaffer 2004, Crouch 2005, Cartier 2005). Norman’s model is able to take into account this form of embodied effect in the visceral and behavioural levels of processing. Heights, heat, cold, touch, smell as well as sights can impact on the visceral level of experience, which is immediate and in the moment. Similarly movement, play, the feel of walking up a slope, or engaging in other tasks such as snowboarding or kayaking or hiking involve the behavioural aspects of processing where both play and poetry of motion have been linked to the seductive nature of people’s encounters with place.

In moving around, in watching, the body is expressive. ... The ‘fun’ of tourism may be a means of being in the world, of reaching and engaging the world, a medium through which it is enjoyed, and the subject declares herself within that world (Crouch 2005:28).

Only the reflective level extends over time (Norman 2004). Here both memory and anticipation come to play. The reflective is where images of self and place are mediated and

re-mediated. Here imagery can influence how something will be experienced. On the other hand the experiences on the visceral and behavioural levels can help shape these memories, and in this way feed into further expectations themselves. The interplay of levels is where the reflective levels of anticipation and memories of previous can influence the current experience.

The shape of anticipation can be influenced by previous travel experiences (Dann 1996: 69). One participant had previously travelled in more than a dozen countries and had and believed that she had ‘travelled a lot to see a lot’. Many others had similar travel experience. They felt that this experience gave them confidence in approaching travel with little planning (as mentioned in chapter 4). This extensive travel experience can also affect a traveller’s anticipation when travelling to a destination.

‘I was really calm, it doesn’t excite me anymore, you just do it, it’s kind of sad.’

‘it was, of course, a nice experience but I don’t think about it [beforehand]...it’s kind of a thing you learn when you get disappointed.’

‘If I go on a ski holiday I don’t dream about a nice sunny day and snow because it might be when you’re there it will be... bad snow and raining...so you don’t think about it’

In examinations of actual tourist experience, Perkins and Thorns (2001) argue that the metaphorical basis of the tourist gaze seems to lie in the experience of tourism in Europe among particular classes of tourists. In that situation, tourists spend a considerable amount of time looking at historical landscapes and related interpretive sites/sights, often in an attempt to experience a simpler ‘other’ located in a previous time when daily life was less complicated and disjointed (MacCannell 1999). By contrast, both international and domestic tourists in countries more recently settled by Europeans, such as New Zealand, participate in active forms of tourist recreation, such as hiking, caving, bungee jumping and

jet boating, where gazing is only one component of the tourist experience. In these circumstances more passive activities such as viewing Maori cultural performances which involve simply the gaze can be perceived as disappointing.

'I'm not a big fan to be fair, I think it's a nice way to come into the country and quite sweet and touristy ... I can't say wow!...that was Maori culture at its best. [but] it was all quite fun and they did it well.

I don't know how it could be done differently because we're not in an age where you could go into some kind of old style Maori village because people don't live like that any more. So they are kind of recreating something so I guess it's always going to be a bit trite in sense.'

That is why Perkins and Thorns suggest that a better metaphorical approach to tourism is to talk about the tourist performance, which incorporates ideas of active bodily involvement, physical activity and gazing (Perkins and Thorns 2001: 186).

5.2 Roles and reframing experience

Ryan (1995, 2000) noticed that for travellers to Majorca buying a newspaper 'was a different activity'. He suggested that this was because the manner in which they framed the transaction was changed by being in another place. Many writers have pointed out the ways in which tourism is a departure from everyday experience (see Urry 1990, 2001, MacCannell 1999, 2001, Ryan 1997, 2000, Lengkeek 2001). This movement from the everyday lived-world to the world of the traveller removes certain tensions and can make other aspects of everyday experience more apparent (Schutz 1990, Lengkeek 1996, 2001). Like Norman's high affect, which focuses concentration and stifles creative and lateral thinking, Lengkeek (2002: 177) suggests that the high stress of daily life and the 'acceleration of processes of exchange made possible through media of communication' means that we 'bracket' or filter out much of what we are experiencing. The free time and

escape from the stresses of everyday life afforded by leisure travel allows us to become far more aware of what we are immediately experiencing. As Lenkgeek (2001: 177) puts it:

The normal bracketing itself is placed in parentheses. Some aspects are pushed into the foreground, some into the background....Whether the tension of consciousness is directed to one activity, for instance stamp collecting, mountain climbing, or breaking a time limit, being away lessens the substance of the reality of the everyday world that we have left behind. On the beach and in the sun we experience our bodies, pampered by suntan lotion, through filing our nails or by simply relaxing, we are just like animals that lie in the sun and groom their fur.

The freedom and creativity afforded by leisure time encourages play and means that the imagination is given more reign to create 'new synthesis between the self and the environment'. Kjolsrod (2003: 159) points out that this is an adventurous experience where the 'challenging demands of collecting objects, backpacks or mountaineering, guide actors to turn their adventures into personal frames, or protoboundaries through which ideas of self involve.' When travelling, narratives of self are explored as individuals take the role of the traveller. Wagoner and Kadianaki (2007: 490-1) point out that the framework that tourists use to make sense of their travel experiences is based on the 'social representations and symbolic resources' of their home community, including guidebooks, film, magazines and documentaries.

5.3 The role of the backpacker

A strongly reoccurring theme among participants was the identification of self as traveller rather than tourist. Tourists were seen in an almost derogatory sense, as shallow consumers of manufactured tourist experiences. This is not new, MacCannell (1994: 94) observed that 'the term "tourist" is increasingly used as a derisive label for someone who seems content with his obviously inauthentic experiences'. Tony Wheeler, founder of Lonely Planet publications stated in the 80s:

If I had to define my belief in travel it's that if you've been some place and stayed in the local Hilton you've not been there (sorry Conrad). Tourists stay in Hiltons, travellers don't. The traveller wants to see the country at ground level, to breathe it, experience it - live it. (Tony wheeler, founder of Lonely Planet publications 1982: 22 in Allon 2004:1)

In her own examination of backpackers travelling round Australia, Allon (2004:1) described the 'typical backpacker' as being

young (18-35 years), educated, adventurous and price-conscious. Their travelling style is characterised by their preferences for budget accommodation, a flexible itinerary and extended stay.

They are also described as "active adventure seekers", seeking out activities that are authentically Australian, and removed from the mainstream tourist experiences'.

Tourism New Zealand identifies the prime targets of the New Zealand brand as 'interactive travellers', people young in body or heart who love travel, seek new experiences and enjoy the challenge of new destinations. These definitions have clear similarities, with the backpacker fitting as a longer term, more price conscious subset of the interactive traveller (Morgan and Pritchard 2004).

Allon's (2004:51) interviews with Australian backpackers describe a particular set of claims about what makes a backpacker rather than a tourist. 'Backpackers "don't go to tourist sites" they 'get with people', 'set up shop', and 'meet locals and other backpackers.'

Many backpackers in Allon's study also distinguished themselves from tourists by a particular claim on their authenticity of experience. As one said, 'Travellers and backpackers have a "different way of viewing things." They "sink into the surroundings" and "take things in." They "go to see other cultures" and also "want to know more about local communities."' (Allon 2004: 51). Allon found that many backpackers also cited the ability to live and work in a place for a long period of time as a way of becoming immersed in the local culture and therefore of being able to have a more authentic travel experience. Some of the travelers she interviewed felt that living and working in a country for an extended period of time was also a factor that distinguished them from short-stay tourists who simply restricted themselves to the established sites and activities. In the words of the participants she interviewed: 'don't just visit' but they 'live there'. 'A tourist is on a pretty tight schedule. They get off the bus, take a picture, get back on the bus. Backpackers are on their own time, their own schedule, not someone else's' (Allon 2004:51).

This thesis found very similar themes in backpackers' own perceptions of what makes up a tourist rather than a backpacker:

'There's tourists and there's backpackers. Tourists are the people with a lot of money, the people who will cram onto a huge boat just to swim with dolphins with a 100 other people.'

'When we went swimming with dolphins we could have gone on a huge boat full of people but we wanted a catamaran with 10 people and it was way more sociable and personal, and we got more time to do it....The more people the worse it is because nobody is interacting.'

'I think a lot of backpackers interact more and the rich tourists don't. They are all about themselves.'

These quotes also show a common theme of interaction as being a core part of the kind of traveller that the participants thought themselves to be:

'you want to hear peoples' stories, you want to meet people when you are a backpacker, tourists don't really want to. They are on a vacation they don't want to have to socialize.'

'you want to experience, not just do things.'

Experiencing local culture as a traveller rather than a tourist featured prominently in participants' descriptions of how they chose to travel. Like the travellers that have featured in other studies (for example Allon 2002, Obenour 2004) one of their travel goals was to achieve a deep and immersive experience of a place by spending time there and interacting with locals.

'if you come here only as a tourist for just a couple of weeks [what] you see is superficial you go to places take pictures but you hardly get in contact with the locals. If you go for months, a long time, you watch TV and listen to the radio you get a very good impression of the culture and how things are working here. How people make their living that sort of stuff.'

'It's not only about just getting to places and just taking pictures ...I'd rather have ...contact with the people and.. see how they think.'

This attitude can present itself in terms of a rejection of package tourism and place that were seen as too 'touristic':

I don't necessarily like all of the huge tourism where you're dropped off on a bus and you just kind of look at the stuff for two seconds. I like how we're backpacking...earning what we're doing. Even when we walked to One Tree Hill from our hostel everybody said that's ridiculous take a bus. But when we got there we thought wow we walked all this way and look how beautiful the view is. As opposed to tour buses that turn up there for four seconds, took pictures and ran away. Kinda like herding sheep and cattle.

[we]- went to pahia and thought there were way too many people there and left. Rotovegas was the same we were only going to spend two days there because there was so much to do and so many people.

Some participants had similar feelings, but were also aware of their own status or role as tourist and did not want to be ‘hypocritical’.

It's all right if other people are there, I'm a tourist as well I can't be a hypocrite about it

Shaffer (2004: 154) created a ‘model’ backpacker from her travel journal, when she travelled around Europe as a backpacker doing ethnographic research.

The ideal backpacker travels solo but always meets interesting people. She finds ways to communicate with the locals; she either speaks the language or tries to speak the language. The ideal backpacker both visits iconic sites and travels off the beaten path. She makes new discoveries, eats native food, and sleeps in either hostels or local bed and breakfasts.

This prototype was a composite of what she, backpackers she encountered, and the experiences of travel framed by the guidebook that she chose as her travel guide understood to be the ideal backpacker. Shaffer noted that paradoxically, this particular framing experience in order to be an ‘authentic backpacker’ actually worked to deny her an authentic sense of self and the places she visited.

5.4 Authenticity and travel experiences

Notions of authenticity have always played a central role in studies of tourist experiences. Many theorists have proposed that travellers search for authenticity for self and in ‘others’, the latter often described as the Authentic Other (MacCannell 1976, Selwyn 1996, Urry 1990, Cohen 1988). Their search for ways to understand this phenomenon have revolved around the experience of encounters, values, and images that manifest the elusive qualities of ‘spontaneity’, ‘genuineness’ and ‘worth’ (Pearce and Moscardo, 1986). These are frequently framed in terms of connection to a simpler, pre-modern past where ‘the genuine’ is linked with ‘traditional’ life, unsullied by the modern world (Cohen 1988, Hughes 1995)

and social relationships retain their intimacy. Interestingly many participants interviewed here expressed impressions of New Zealand as being from an earlier ‘better’ time.

‘I talked to people who had been here 10 years ago and they said it was very laid back because the population is not so big. You still get a bit like how it was in the 70s in Europe, laid back and a bit more relaxed....I just wanted to go somewhere where I could experience the more slow rhythm of life basically... more relaxed lifestyle.’

‘My parents came here in 2001 and loved it, they said it was like America was 30 years ago.’

Other versions of authenticity have significant resonances with the backpacker desire to ‘really experience’ a country by interacting with locals. Cohen (1988) identified a variant on tradition, a traveller-created version that coincides with their own social norms and behaviour and thereby ‘experientially validates’ them (Obenour 2004: 3). In this case, he argues, authenticity is less about reconnecting with values from an earlier time and more about successfully interacting and adapting with the host culture (Redfoot 1984, Smith 1989). This interaction with another culture would also lead to insights about oneself and one’s own culture (Berger 2004, Adler 1989a,b). As Obenour (2004:3) puts it:

Authentic tourist experiences yield... an enhanced understanding of oneself. The experience was authentic when the tourist says it was whether or not it matched a social representation of authenticity.

Urry (1990) uses notions of a post-modern reflexive awareness of self and environment to describe a post-tourist, a tourist that is aware of their part in constructing an authentic experience and who views this involvement as one of the enjoyable aspects of travel.

5.5 General impressions of New Zealand

Travellers consulted several common information sources before they arrived in the country. These were books and guide books such as the Lonely Planet, television, advertisements and documentaries, word of mouth from friends, relatives and other travellers, and the Internet, through image searches and websites. From these sources they gained impressions that followed a number of common themes characterising New Zealand. These involved perceptions that the country:

- Has attractive scenery
- Is ‘clean and green’
- Has diverse scenery – mountains, lakes, beaches, glaciers, forests and green fields – within a comparatively small area.
- Allows travellers to see the whole country without travelling huge distances and investing a lot of time.
- Has a relaxing, slow paced life style that allows people to get away from the ‘rat race’
- Is so distant from their home country, for many at the opposite end of the world, that it is the furthest place they could go.

These observations have been synthesised into several themes for the purposes of this thesis: *authentic nature*, the *authentic other*, and the *authentic local*,

5.5.1 Authentic nature

One of the common themes in the presentation of New Zealand is of a place for ‘reconnection’, with nature, with oneself, and with family (Morgan and Pritchard 2002). Many theorists have commented that we now live in a postmodern world (for example the

various works of Gergen, Lyotard, Turkle and Urry) full of ‘meaning, messages, and multiple selves’ (Bulbeck 1999: 407). Gergen (1991) argues that in such a world, where notions of self are fluidly constructed and reconstructed through the consumption of signs, people may have little sense of an integrated and singular identity.

The pressures and stresses of daily life attenuate experience and limit the ability to reflexively explore oneself (Bulbeck 1999, Cohen 1992). To escape these pressures one must move ‘outside’ everyday life (Cohen and Taylor 1992) to ‘hideaways of experience’ where the self can ‘sustain a sense of being who and what it is’ (Gubrium and Holdstein 2000: 97). Bulbeck (1999:407) posits that ‘one escape route to a “genuine sense of being”’ is though travel, particularly travel to wilderness destinations. Neumann (1992: 186) describes this idea well in his study of travellers to the Grand Canyon.

People take the world of travel and nature to flee the routines of work, home, and family and seek out ways of living that involve them in situations where they find they can be closer to some primary and basic mode of life. The river, the trail, and the road are places where the alienating rhythms, routines, and boredom of modern life seem imposing. They are places where people may find individuality, excitement, flexibility, and freedom.

Wilderness has always been seen as a place ‘out-there’ away from civilization, but whereas once this notion made the prospect of being in such places frightening (Cronon 1996, Urry 2005), it is now inviting, providing a ‘lense for experiencing reality’ (fine 1992: 157). Cronon (1996: 80) describes how wilderness is now seen as an inherently authentic place that allows the freedom for people to ‘be themselves’.

Wilderness is the natural, unfallen antithesis of natural civilization that has lost its soul. It is a place of freedom which in which we can recover the true selves we have lost to the corrupting influence of our artificial lives. Most of all, it is the ultimate landscape of authenticity. Combining the sacred grandeur of the sublime with the primitive simplicity of the frontier, it is the place where we can see the world as it really is, and so know ourselves as we really are – or ought to be.

These themes appeared in the reflections of all the travellers interviewed for this study. For example:

'[I thought New Zealand was] a green country with lots of spectacular things to see and lots of things to do in without having to do lots of travelling to get to it.'

'I feel like the tourist attractions are hiking and outdoors and stuff, like action stuff whereas before I came I thought it was more like lying on a beach, or more like cities type thing so that's been a kind of interesting contrast to what I expected.'

[I] got that impression because it's an island, granted a very large island, and a lot of times island culture is like "let's go hang out at the beach, listen to music" so I very much anticipated beach culture.'

Comments like these are typical and were repeated, with varying degrees of elaboration and detail, by all participants. Most also said they came to New Zealand seeking 'adventure', to see 'a lot of the country'; 'a lot of diverse terrain'. Often there was evident excitement and anticipation as travellers described their expectations.

'Seeing beaches, glaciers, volcanoes, rain forest, huge open fields, lakes, huge fish... catching fish, walking a lot of the scenes from [The] Lord Of The Rings, and seeing huge, beautiful, unbelievable breathtaking sights from untouched nature. It will be awesome.'

'One of the things that appealed to me about New Zealand is that you can be in the mountains, and then not too far away is the beach that's just two things that go great in a landscape. A lot of it is the scenic view. See something that is breathtaking, that you don't usually see when you're not living on an island like this.'

'New Zealand seemed like it had a lot of natural things that I wanted to see and not just all cities. [It has] natural wonders. I'm from the east coast of Canada so there's not that much [natural features] as the west, the west has the good mountains like New Zealand. I like glaciers, geysers, tropical scenery, mountains, the Southern Alps, I find them interesting I went into biology, so I'm interested in animal life and all that kind of stuff.'

Often there was a strong consciousness of the singularity of what New Zealand could offer in experiences they simply would not have anywhere else.

'That's really unique when I see something that's unique, different from anything I've experience from the United States or Australia or anywhere else.'

The connotations associated with glaciers, a connection with nature in a past age, strongly appealed to some.

'I think just a giant...primordial...piece of the earth that we don't have really in America ... so I won't get to see that in my country.'

Travellers from the European and American continents were captivated by the idea of islands as a different kind of natural environment. The romance of islands has been depicted by human geographers (Tuan 1974) and Pacific scholars (Hau'ofa 1998) and is also a longstanding theme in the marketing of Pacific Island travel (Sua'ali'-Sauni 2000).

'I love islands, I think it's.. like an escape like .. the image of paradise. Being away from everything, away from a lot of the U.S. from bullcrap government and people being afraid of the wrong things. It seems like it's a lot less stressful out here. People are just enjoying what they have around them.'

'I love the ocean as well and I know that no point in the entire country is more than 70 miles away from the ocean so that was a big deal. As well as all the different land features the country has to offer.'

Those who value quality of life especially want to celebrate and enjoy a promised clean environment, a sense of uncrowded space and the consequent absence of the kinds of stress generated by life in more heavily populated countries.

'I think it's very beautiful, clean, a lot of landscape, 4 million people living in this big country....In the Netherlands it's like 60 million people living in a small, small country – so a lot of space [in New Zealand].

I heard that the days seem longer, because of the less stress.... It's very relaxed.'

5.5.2 Distance and the authentic other

The distance of New Zealand from Europe and North America provided positive connotations of entering a liminal space, far from mundane everyday life, for participants who were from those regions.

'It's the farthest point you could ever go, you could not travel further. Also because it's the furthest point so everyone kind of knows about it. Because it's far away it's kind of interesting. ... If you've been there, everywhere else is very near.'

'I just wanted to get away after my graduation. And New Zealand seemed like a very nice and friendly place. I also thought the scenery would be very beautiful. It's the furthest you can get from Europe basically; I just thought it would be nice.'

'It was just I didn't know about New Zealand at all and I it was because of that, it was far and I'd never really heard about it.'

Participants had gained these impressions from imagery seen through various media sources and from talking to other travellers who had previously visited New Zealand. Their informants, who were often considered to be 'extensive travellers', had told them it was the most beautiful place they had ever seen.

'I've always wanted to travel to New Zealand...because [New Zealand] is just a really beautiful country...[it] has lots of things other countries don't have ...you have the sea and the mountains are close by and all the plants that grow nowhere else.'

Hunt (1975) and Scott et al. (1978) have shown that travellers' impressions of a place are affected by the distance of the destination from their homes. They argue that the greater exposure to information about a place near to home through media and friends and relatives means that such images would be more realistic and finely differentiated. The corollary of this would mean that the imagination would have a greater part to play in the creation of participant's image of New Zealand. This distance amplifies the perceived difference from

everyday life and allows the traveller more freedom to explore roles or aspects self different from their everyday self. Cohen (1979) uses a phenomenological approach to outline various degrees to which tourists remove their focus from the everyday world and shift it to the Other. Five modes are described:

- 1 Recreational: moving away from the ordinary in search of entertainment.
- 2 Diversionary: escaping the stress of everyday life for a moment.
- 3 Experiential: seeking authentic experiences of nature and culture to compensate for a perceived lack of these things in the daily life-world.
- 4 Experimental: seeking to rediscover oneself in another, foreign, natural or context as a result of feeling 'lost' in everyday life.
- 5 Existential: feeling 'estranged' from ordinary life in their own place and culture and escaping to a 'better world' in another tourist location.

Lengkeek (2001: 175) points out that Cohen's modes are based on differences between Turner's (1973) 'centre', the casual orientation of the everyday world and the 'center-out-there' a position that steps outside daily lived experience. The combination of the strong nature theme and distance from their home country in participants' perceptions of New Zealand would make it an inviting place to enter these deeper modes of experiencing the other.

In explaining why they chose to come to New Zealand, travellers often made comparisons with both their home country and other travel destinations. Morgan and Pritchard (2004: 61) surmise that New Zealand's principal competitors are Australia (close proximity); Canada, South Africa and Ireland (because they have similar landscape and features); and Vietnam, Cuba and the South Pacific (as undiscovered 'new' destinations). Participants in

this study often conceptually linked Australia with New Zealand and made it their first choice destination. While Australia was perceived as more of a party destination it was also dauntingly large; New Zealand was thought to be a more manageable size for exploration.

'Australia seemed really huge to explore whereas New Zealand had beaches, mountains, pretty much everything we would want to see within six months.'

'I wasn't sure at all where I wanted to go, so I thought I'll see what New Zealand looks like first, and if I like it I'll come back, whereas Australia is bigger so you need more time to play around with.'

And many participants had received recommendations from travellers who had already been to New Zealand. For some, New Zealand had the advantage of novelty, being less frequently visited by other travellers from their own country.

'[I] didn't want to go to Australia because everybody from Canada goes to Australia.'

'My [friends] had taken a year off work but instead of going to Australia' which is what everybody in Ireland does, they came to New Zealand because one of the guys had relatives here.'

'I've always wanted to travel to Australia, since I was 16. ..So I always said when I go there I don't want to go for 2 weeks. I started looking more into New Zealand as I spoke to people who had been there and they said "spend all your time in New Zealand it's gorgeous, you won't want to go to Australia."... and some of them were extensive travelers.'

'Most Dutch young people go to Australia but I thought New Zealand would be nicer because I have this image of Australia being very barren, dry desert... I thought New Zealand would be more beautiful.'

In these cases participants were frequently more aware of Australia as a common travel destination, but wanted to go somewhere different from their peers. New Zealand was also seen as 'less threatening' by some travelers since it was perceived to be free of the potentially dangerous fauna in Australia.

'I wanted to visit Australia, I think I liked the Koala bear and the Kangaroos and wanted to check out Ayers rock and the Aborigines. After I found out that nine of the most toxic spiders, snakes, and everything lived in Australia I decided "nope I'm not going to visit Australia!"'

'Mainly that the kiwis are really really nice and easy going and laid back and that the travelling is very easy here...there were no threatening animals compared to Australia which made me feel a lot more comfortable coming here and travelling around and also the landscapes.'

Many participants, particularly travelers from the United States and Canada, chose New Zealand over Europe for its perceived novelty and natural features. Whereas Europe was urban and filled with history, New Zealand was seen as a natural, relaxed place to go with a warm climate.

'I wanted to go to an English speaking country, for improving my English, and since I've been to the States twice and the UK was quite close and very cold and I decided to go to New Zealand.'

[it] seemed like it had a lot of natural things that I wanted to see and not just all cities.

New Zealand was perceived as a more unusual travel destination that was less likely to have been visited by their peers. Interviews indicated that the experience of travelling may be seen as more unique to participants, and they are more likely to go somewhere that other travellers have not been. This gives a greater reflective pleasure of accomplishment, of achieving something others have not.

'A lot of people go to London, Europe it seems like a very standard thing. You say I'm going to London and they say that's cool I went there four years ago whereas if you tell them you're going to new Zealand it's very different from the typical that U.S. people do. I think it's a lot more pretty than if I were to go to Europe, not crowded with people and traffic.'

Young American travellers also saw New Zealand as less crowded and more naturally beautiful than Europe. They saw backpackers in New Zealand as more mature (in travelling

attitude perhaps) than friends who went to Europe to party in their ‘gap years’ between high school and university.

‘I think London, UK culture is very similar to US whereas New Zealand seems to have a lot more relaxed ways of doing things. A lot more nature, a more varied mix of travellers to the country too, from all over so you can meet a lot of the world in one place.’

In these cases Europe was seen as a less exotic, more easily accessible destination. A distinction was also drawn between New Zealand as a more interactive and adventurous place to travel and other places where history and culture were to be passively consumed.

‘Europe seems very standard, not a cool island filled with excitement and adventure, more ancient history. What already happened. People go to Europe to see what everyone else did, in New Zealand you create your own adventure. You can do whatever want, you can see about every land form you want to. You can craft it how you want to. Europe seems run of the mill. I’m sure there are plenty of beautiful things you can do there but this country seems more known for all the adventure sports, all of the cool natural beauty and its active, active participation. You’re not watching other people the whole time.’

‘New Zealand is still a very young country. And all the activities are very “to do” activities very different compared to Europe... attracts tourists in different ways, in doing things.’

North American participants, in particular, also saw New Zealand as a more friendly and exotic place than some of the common United States domestic holiday destinations.

‘When I travel, I don’t want it to be exactly like home, I want it to be different. Also I heard Kiwis are laid back, I wanted to see that, I wanted to be a part of the community.’

‘Sure California has the beaches and the mountains but I think another big factor is the people....We’ve always heard that New Zealanders are pretty friendly pretty helpful. Whereas in California – Californians aren’t necessarily that friendly, stuck up just arrogant about life in general – at least that’s my experience.’

‘People go to Hawaii but I think the land features here are way more extreme. I think New Zealand has a lot better variety of features. I don’t think Hawaii has hot springs for example. And they might have rainforest but it’s not right next to a glacier and [a] volcano. Hawaii seems like a

honeymoon spot. Also unique thing, people go to Hawaii, I don't think there are as many people going to have a great adventure in New Zealand.'

'Chicago does not really have land features apart from Lake Michigan, maybe a few pretty little places but nothing that's huge in scale, nothing geothermal.'

5.5.3 Authenticity and the exotic

The idea of the exotic encompasses a number of characteristics centring on the notion of 'strangeness' involving geographical and/or historical distance, and cultural differences of many kinds. Perceptions of exoticism may be triggered through cuisine, clothing styles, architecture, language, and customs. For Western travellers many places offer intriguing and various mixtures of the exotic and the ordinary. In this regard Berger cites Morocco as just such a combination where Casablanca is quite European but the souk in Fez is distinctly exotic (Berger 2003: 34). Although New Zealand's distance from many participants' home countries made it appear somewhat unusual to them, Asia and India were seen as far more challenging and exotic destinations. For one participant New Zealand was really tagged on as part of a round the world trip which was focused on Asia because it was the otherness of different cultures that appealed to her.

'I was initially travelling with my girlfriend for three months so we started off in the more difficult countries, India is a lot more difficult to travel in than New Zealand so that's why I started in India and around Asia, I just basically looked at the map and followed geographically where to go... I suppose it's just a kind of fascination with different types of human behaviour and different types of living as well. I mean I studied psychology so I have an interest in people I guess. And it's just seeing people who live in it what kind of an opposite way to the way that we do. And I like going to places that people don't necessarily visit much as a tourist or as a traveller.'

She was not so attracted by scenery, and far more interested in experiencing cultures that were different from her own, western culture.

'A lot of people had told me New Zealand's a bit like Scotland [and] in a way that's why I was not so excited about coming here because I tend to go to places that are a different culture.... I didn't like going anywhere that was western to begin with ...that was a bit off putting to me because I live in Scotland so I don't really see the point of going somewhere that's ... similar.'

Different kinds of places appeal to different kinds of travellers. New Zealand has little appeal for those who seek exotic experiences; they find that Asia offers strange and different cultures. But conversely, New Zealand can offer strikingly different and beautiful scenery in the context of safe and familiar 'western' culture and conveniently easy travel. In particular, the fact that New Zealand is an English speaking country generally adds to its appeal. This was true both for both native English speakers, and for non native speakers seeking to improve their English. Nevertheless, for native English speakers, differences in accent and colloquial language can add to a sense of the being away from home.

'It's great that English is still spoken so even though a lot of things may be different it's not too hard to adapt besides the accent. In general [the accent] is not too bad, the slang is more difficult to understand than the accent. Accent makes it feel more like you are in a different country makes it more interesting to hear people who sound a little different, who use different words makes for a richer experience.'

New Zealand is seen as a western culture, and its perceived similarities with other Western countries was often seen as a strength. For example Canadians knew that New Zealand is part of the Commonwealth and thought there would be similarities with Canada for that reason.

'I knew the government was the same, and the language was the same, and the culture was very similar like they celebrate a lot of the same holidays we did. It wasn't extreme culture change.'

The fact that English is the spoken language of New Zealand is seen as positive for both native English speakers, who thought it would make it easier for them to interact with

locals and plan their travels, and non-native speakers who saw travel to New Zealand and an opportunity to practice their English.

5.5.4 The authentic other: Friendly locals

Part of the importance of friendly locals to participants was the desire to interact with them in order to be a ‘true’ backpacker. A common theme was the friendliness of the locals and the general, laid back nature of New Zealand culture. These impressions came from word of mouth from other travellers, email correspondence with local tourist operators, and the initial experience of interacting with hostel operators.

‘My friend was here last winter she said that she would talk to anybody and everybody was very helpful. Everybody was nice, generous. Even my folks knew people that came out to NZ and for example who got caught in a rainstorm and took shelter in somebody’s barn. The people who owned the barn came in and invited them to stay the night inside the house and offered them tea...a very welcoming very heartwarming environment.’

This friendliness was seen as very genuine and part of the local psyche, rather than being contrived purely for the tourist service industry.

‘People are very friendly here. More than willing to help you and answer any question you have and direct you to a good source. People don’t seem like its skin off your back when you ask them for something. Whereas where I’m from if you stop someone on the street who looks like they might be going somewhere they might answer your question but they’re not genuinely interested in getting to know you at all or generally being friendly or nice. Here people say hello to you on the street, the greetings are a lot more friendly. Emails say “kind regards”, “best regards”, “cheers”, it seems more uplifting than that the salutations I’m used to. People actually acknowledge that other people are there. You don’t get that in Chicago ... a few random people might be still nice but [here] it seems to be general attitude than the exception to the rule.’

This attitude was reinforced by participants’ experiences when interacting with hostel staff.

'People at the hostel have been helpful, seemed genuinely interested given full directions. People at the hostel [where] we are paying \$15UUSD are all consistently nice. [so] it's not because you are paying more that they are giving you better service. [It] Seems like genuine concern rather than kissing ass to get a bigger tip. '

Dann (1996: 76) talks of this particular framing of locals being 'familiar'

Here the operator tries to persuade potential tourists that, although their holiday desire may be partially motivated by curiosity and a quest for the strange and exotic, reality will not be so strange that they will experience disorientation or anxiety. In fact, there will be many familiar sights to remind them of the place they left behind and their need for security. By extension, it is suggested that the warm feeling of being at home can be found among the welcoming inhabitants as well.

In his study of holidaymakers in Majorca, Ryan (1995a) asks, on the basis of conversations, whether the friendliness respondents reported finding was due to holidaymakers themselves being friendlier because they were able to relax. Additionally he queried whether the doing of different things was not, in reality, a change of activity compared with what they did at home (as apparently shopping for a newspaper was a 'different' activity) but a change in perceived quality of action and evaluation for that action as a different experience.

MacCannell (1999) argues that contemporary tourists habitually locate the 'Other' (frequently a pre-modern Other) encountered in the course of a holiday in a world which is in some way more whole, structured and authentic than the everyday world they inhabit cognitively for most of the year. One of the central elements of MacCannell's argument is that the tourist goes on holiday in order to cognitively create or recreate structures which modernity is felt to have demolished. The appeal of New Zealand can be seen in terms of 'getting away from it all', being a place to relax, to escape the pressures of modern life.

'[I'm] Looking to see places where there aren't tons of people, being away from pollution, being away from cell phones and power lines, looking for things that I'm not actually necessarily looking for. Being away from stress and busy life and people honking and swearing at each other.'

Participants often commented on the stressful and hectic nature of daily life in their own country and how the beach life and a slower lifestyle they associated with New Zealand made it very appealing as a travel destination.

An exploration of another culture also gave them a chance to reflect on aspects of their own country's culture. Travellers were often not particularly aware of the Pacific Island and Maori cultural influences in New Zealand, and this was something that stood out to them when they experienced local culture and gave prompted them to think about their own cultures.

'[Before I came here I] was thinking more of Californian culture rather than Pacific Island culture. I had no idea there were so many Maori people here and that there was such a strong Pacific culture ... so that was kinda cool. I thought it was going to be much more like California, I hadn't seen whale rider or anything.'

'The culture makes me realise how ignorant I am on my own [countries] native culture and how we just push that culture aside. And how it's integrated [in New Zealand] they still have the same problems as we do but I guess they're facing it better.'

In addressing the question: 'why do people travel?' Berger (2004) offers several explanations centred on meaning creation. He suggests that travel is fundamentally an updated form of what was historically known as the Grand Tour. There the purpose was 'to broaden and educate young men and women by exposing them to other cultures'. Then, as now, such travellers explore the culture of new places through everyday life, new kinds of foods, visiting museums and having adventures (Berger 2004: 36). In other words, travel is a rite of passage for young adults – part of growing up. Berger also identifies an additional

present day advantage of travel in the acquisition of increased appreciation of one's own culture. This reflexivity has also been described by Lash and Urry (1994) as part of the postmodern nature of contemporary tourism, and of present day life in general.

Berger claims that among middle-class students in America, going abroad has been normalized as part of the transition from youth to adulthood. There is status associated with travelling abroad and failure to travel is now '...seen as, somehow, deprived' (Berger 2004: 37). He argues that as part of transition from youth to adulthood this time of travel has a quality which he describes, drawing on Victor Turner's notion of a 'liminal' state as 'ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classifications'

5.6 Tourist Activities and Experiences

Much literature has commented on the nature of tourism as a product, and the commoditisation of experience (for example Cloke and Perkins 1998, 2001, Urry 1997, Cohen 1995). This thesis uses Norman's (2004) framework for processing experience as a general aid to think about how participants' viewed their travel and Internet experiences. Norman suggests that people interact with products on multiple levels. Consumption of a product at the visceral level is concerned with the sensuality and aesthetics of a product, how it looks and feels. The behavioural level relates the pleasure and effectiveness of use, and the reflective level is where issues of self image, personal satisfaction, and memories arising from the use of the product are considered (Norman 2004: 39). Each level of processing influences, and is influenced by, the other levels. The interplay between these visceral, behavioural and reflective levels of processing experience creates particular tensions which can often help to define the enjoyable nature of the product. The bungy jump is an example of a product that exploits the dynamic levels to create a particular

experience. It plays on visceral reactions to height and sudden change of direction combined with knowledge on the reflective level that this experience is being produced in a safe manner. If people felt that the ride was in fact unsafe they would be unlikely to take part.

Norman (2004) examined people's reactions to a roller coaster ride to explain why such anxiety inducing activities are popular. He suggests that some people seem to love fear itself: they enjoy the high arousal and increased 'adrenaline rush' that accompanies danger. He also identifies the feelings that follow the ride as motivating factors: the pride in conquering fear and of being able to brag about it to others. In both cases the visceral angst competes with the reflective pleasure - not always successfully, for many people refuse to go on those rides, or having done it once, refuse to do it again. But this adds to the pleasure of those who do go on the ride: their self image is enhanced because they have dared to do an action that others reject. The appeal is therefore related to the interplay between several levels of processing.

An examination of tourist experiences can be helpful for several reasons. Such an examination compares the presentation of an activity with its actuality as perceived by the participant. Accounts of others' travel experiences are a common source of information for travellers, and sharing these accounts, while at home and abroad, can be yet another source of pleasure in travel (Brown 2005). This provides opportunity to examine how Norman's three levels of processing can help to explain the interactions between imagination and experience in real world tourist activities. The most common activities undertaken by travellers were tramping/hiking, swimming with dolphins and skydiving

and/or bungy jumping. These three activities show various aspects of participants' desire to interact with nature and to have adventures in the wilderness.

5.6.1 Hiking

Hiking or tramping was an activity that every research participant undertook or planned to undertake, depending on when in their travel stage they were interviewed. New Zealand was seen as 'really good for tramping because you can do so many diverse things here'. Hiking was perceived as a way of relaxing and getting close to nature.

'I guess because I've lived in the city so long ... to get out into the green forest and stuff, I just like that.'

'[I] really liked the coastal walkway by cape Reinga where we started at Ninety Mile Beach and ended at Spirits Bay. And it was awesome, especially because there were no other people and the landscape changed so often sand to rushes to beach ...'

This interaction with the environment can appeal to travellers on both visceral and behavioural levels, by having the pleasure of physical activity, walking through a natural environment, while enjoying the experience of natural phenomena through their senses. Travellers were aware of an element of challenge. One participant would have liked to do the Tongariro crossing but crossed it off his list after hearing another person describing the track. because he felt that he was not fit enough to do it in winter.

'I think I would die...I can't imagine actually doing that this trip, maybe next trip when I'm in better shape but there's no reason to kill myself.'

This element of challenge can also provide a sense of accomplishment that actually gives pleasure on the reflective level (Norman 2003). One traveller frequently did not want to go tramping but the partner she travelled with did and convinced her to go with him. Having made the effort she was pleased with the experience

'But as soon as I went... once you get warmed up to that kind of thing ... it was always better than I expected.'

Participants preferred uncrowded places for hiking/tramping; 'I don't like people'. But many did not view this as a concern when deciding where to do their hiking 'because there are not too many places in New Zealand you can go to where there are lots of people.' Others who had gone tramping still enjoyed the challenge but were surprised by the number of other people taking part on the tramp. These experiences changed their image of New Zealand as being 'off the beaten track'.

'[When I went on] the Abel Tasman trail there was just so many people there, that you kind of felt like everyone's seen this, everyone's done this.'

it's somewhat off the beaten trail but ... not really. I mean Stray, one of the tour buses, they were saying 'further off the beaten track' and we all laugh about that really. No-one gets off the beaten trail anymore there's not a trail that's not beaten really. Except I saw a film guy who was walking in a place with no trails, I'd hire him in that because I'm not comfortable not knowing where I'm going.'

This can create a kind of tension in the processing of the travel experience, where the behavioural and visceral pleasures of interacting with the natural environment are played off against a diminished reflective sense of accomplishment by being aware that the surroundings have to be shared with other travellers and are not as 'wild' or 'off the beaten track' as anticipated.

5.6.2 Swimming with dolphins

Bulbeck (1999:135) draws upon a broad body of literature and her own research to define a set of 'nature dispositions'. As well as a utilitarian orientation which sees animals and places as sources of food, for example, she outlines three positive orientations towards nature. The first is a humanistic orientation based largely on the emotional appeal of

animals where they are treated as subjects for enjoyment and this attention is directed towards 'cute' animals domesticated as pets and in the wild, for example dolphins.

Much of the appeal of these animals is created by various social constructions, including the media who portray some types of animals as 'cute' (e.g. Flipper). (Bulbeck 1999, Trembley 2002). Animals that are morphologically similar and/or appear to behave or show emotions in a manner similar to humans have been shown to be appealing (Lorenz 1954, Bentrupperbaumer 2005). In addition some species can have more aesthetic appeal than others through their movement, appearance (including size shape and colour) and visibility (Tremblay 2002, Bentrupperbaumer 2005), for example, the ease with which larger animals can be viewed makes them more appealing to nature tourists (Hammitt and Cole 1998).

The second orientation described by Bulbeck is 'a moral response concerning the correct treatment of animals' (Bulbeck 1999: 136). Essentially all animals should have 'rights' regardless of how 'cute' they are. Her third conservationist orientation is 'a political and or ecological response which identifies animals within ecosystems' (Bulbeck 1999: 136). She outlines two variations of this position: A 'deep ecology' perspective that 'nature has rights independent of human needs' and is often associated with a desire to connect with nature, and a 'sustainable development' perspective that preserves wildlife through patronage thus taking a role of human dominance over nature with presumably altruistic intentions. Bulbeck found that most consumers of wildlife experiences had a humanistic orientation – they enjoyed cute animals but were happy to eat meat and did have not much desire to environmental actions themselves.

Participant's stories of interacting with dolphins suggest that the appeal of this experience was most closely related to the humanist orientation but that a conservationist orientation of the 'deep ecology' type was presented by tourism operators as a reason for not interacting with the whales or dolphins and a means of mitigating disappointment. Participants generally accepted this 'deep ecology' conservationist orientation and used it to frame their own experiences, for example when they were unable to swim with dolphins because they were pregnant.

This evidence of one orientation regulating another has been explained by some theorists who describe various 'positionings' of self (for example Callero 2004, Turner 2007). A person's self is treated a heterogeneous set of selves, which come into play in different situations (Wagoner and Kadianaki 2007: 489). Within these multiple roles superordinate positions come to regulate subordinate positions. Gillespie (2006) illustrates this by showing how the role of ME-as-tourist can regulate ME-as-buyer. Tourists must bargain with locals to show that they are savvy travellers not 'tourist dupes'. In the case of dolphin tours ME-as-conservationist can regulate ME-as-consumer. Although participants want to 'get the most' out of a given purchased tourist experience many reconcile this with a position that sees themselves as visitors or guests to the dolphins natural environment where they must respect the wildlife.

Interaction with animals in the wild was seen as another way of connecting with nature. Nearly all participants wanted to swim with dolphins. The perceived appeal was linked to a feeling of closeness to nature. It was seen as important to swim with them in their natural surroundings.

'I think everybody wants to swim with dolphins. But not [a] trained, living in a cage dolphin....They are very smart animals...fascinating. I just want to swim with them.'

Nollman (1987: 55) claims that 'more people love dolphins than just about any other wild animal'. Curtin and Wilkes (2007) suggest dolphins have an ubiquitous contemporary appeal founded on mythical beliefs and narratives of human-dolphin interaction which appear scattered throughout history. Modern, and post-modern, anthropomorphic social representations of dolphins as 'bearers of alternative values such as collectivity, compassion, friendliness, creativity, joyful sexuality, androgyny, spiritual wisdom and intuitive intelligence' (Bryld and Lykke 2000: 2) have fuelled a growing desire in tourist populations to seek interaction with them. The growing popularity of encountering dolphins over the past few decades has brought with it a surge of intensive, commercial commodification of dolphins internationally. When United Kingdom television viewers were asked to vote on the 50 things they thought people should do in their lifetime: swimming with dolphins ranked first (BBC 2003). Cloke and Perkins (2005: 910) argue that this arises because dolphins are the subject of a range of 'anticipatory knowledges and expectations' following exposure to powerful image constructions generated by popular media. Such images provide a means with which to grasp the world; allowing tourists to enter an imaginative world of place–experience and experience–performance (Crang 1997).

Dolphins are a 'spectacular and charismatic species' (Smith et al 2006: 116) that combine many attractive attributes. They are large enough to be easy to view, cute, playful, approachable and tend to relate to humans. In fact such is their appeal that simply being in the presence of such creatures may provide a satisfying experience (Bentrupperbaumer 2005). In most cases participants had already decided to swim with dolphins even before

they had arrived in New Zealand, their concerns were more with the price and the length of the tour and any added features such as the opportunity to go sea kayaking while out on a day trip.

'We didn't want to go in Paihia because it was too touristy... [We] did it in Tauranga because it was summer, beautiful weather and it was something we wanted to do in the North Island and we didn't really know about any other places in the North Island where they could do it. We narrowed it down to two options.. looked at how long each option was, cost, what you were going to do, and how many people would be on the trip. Isite said there was no difference but when we looked at them, one of them said it was a full day but was only really a ½ day (8-1) so went with the other one that was 10-4:30. and had kayaking and snorkelling equipment. So was by far the best option.'

Some participants who had purchased day trips to swim with dolphins, did not actually end up swimming with dolphins. Reactions to this were mixed.

Swimming was perceived as a natural activity where you came into the dolphin's environment. Some participant's understood that they might not be able to physically interact with the dolphins and accepted this even though they would have liked to do so.

'Experience was awesome, it was a beautiful day, we saw a lot, we didn't actually swim with dolphins because they [dolphins] weren't in the mood. It's their choice whether they want to swim with you or not. I understand that. I like nature. I mean I was kinda hoping I could touch one [but] as soon as I found out about the DOC regulations that they were wild thought that's probably not going to happen.'

One participant reported that her experience actually exceeded her expectations in the sense that the operators seemed to make considerable effort to find dolphins to swim with and included other activities such as snorkelling.

'They tried so hard to find them, they went over time because they were looking to get one last look at them. [We] also went snorkelling on that trip and totally exceeded expectations.'

Others were more sceptical about the behavior of operators, believing that they knew that their customers would be unable to swim with the dolphins due to the time of year, and simply did not tell them before chartering the trip.

'We went to bay of Islands and they said that we would be able to dive with the dolphins, then there was little baby dolphins so they wouldn't let us. But it seemed kind of deceptive I don't think they ever really planned...I think ...it seemed like they fully knew that we wouldn't be able to do it before they took us out.

[We] had heard that there were nice cruises in the bay so they went to the information centre] and I saw what was available and how much it cost. [There were] seven of us so we couldn't take first boat which was a sailboat with only two slots. We ended up doing a cruise boat which was bigger than we wanted and not a sail boat which is what we wanted. They had snorkelling but the snorkelling was really ridiculous because they wanted to save the wetsuits [because] they might scrape along the rocks or something and it was really cold so no-one really enjoyed it and the area wasn't very good. I didn't see anything it was pretty murky. .. so that was so-so, we did see heaps of dolphins but they didn't let us get in with the dolphins, because of the baby dolphins.

I'm slightly bitter about it [the experience] but overall it was really beautiful, I was really glad that we did it, but it would have been nice if they let us swim with the dolphins and wear the wetsuits because it was fairly cold and that seemed kind of sketchy having wetsuits right there in front of you but not able to use them.'

This impacted on their perceptions of operator information on swimming with the dolphins, making them more suspicious of the experience presented to them in advertising.

'see this says swim with the dolphins in warm clear subtropical waters, which I really wouldn't say that they're warm or clear particularly, although it was really beautiful...maybe in the summer it would be really warm and clear for some reason...they should probably gloss it over because it is tourism, they want you to do things.'

'That's kind of weird [description on website] because it doesn't really say what you get to do.'

'you can't snorkel next to whales can you?... I wouldn't think you could.'

'That's the only offer there for the Bay of Plenty, which is close, so after reading this I would go to my guidebook and check it out, see if there wasn't

something else offered because this doesn't fully offer all the details like... information [on what you do on the cruise] or how much it costs.'

Various levels of enjoyment are present in the experiences of interacting with dolphins. There is a visceral primitive appeal of water, being close to nature. This can be combined with behavioural aspects of movement and interaction in the water with the dolphins, and the functionality and the comfort of the equipment used for this purpose. Finally, tensions can operate at the reflective level where the pleasures of being close to nature can be ruined by seeing the experience as being 'staged', 'inauthentic', or too 'touristic'. These tensions can arise from the strong association between dolphins and nature. Other studies such as Curtin and Wilkes's (2007) study on people's experiences swimming with captive dolphins found that although they were impressed with 'the grace, size and power of dolphins', they also believed the experience was 'too staged, too short and too expensive'. She talks about a 'post-purchase dissonance' due to the unnatural surroundings, small enclosures and tricks performed by the dolphins resulting in 'unfulfilled expectations of a quality interaction'.

The differences between expectations and experience have been noted in Chon's often cited study (1992) which found that visitor's perceptions of place were most negative if experiences did not live up to their preconceived images and reactions were far more favourable if experiences exceeded expectations. However these disappointments can also be reframed to ones more 'appropriate' for a backpacker to experience by both the superordinary roles of self and the opinions of other tourists. Jonas et al (2003:424) argue that other travellers play a part in reinforcing particular framing of experiences. Using their research on river adventurers they posit that meaning is strongly attached to place and that being in wilderness surroundings allows 'the "true" self to emerge in the face of adventure'. If one of the members on a rafting party complains about the discomforts or inconvenience

of the trip others will attempt to redirect the interpretation into something more appropriate for an ‘adventurer’. One of the travellers they interviewed illustrates this point saying:

When we made it to the takeout at Clay Hills, the other group was already there, so we had to wait for them to finish de-rigging before we could start. So, to kill time, we went over and chatted with the other group, you know, to swap river stories and compare our trips. To our surprise their guide stated in disgust, “that was my first and last river trip!!” He then told us about their boat being stuck on rocks, crawling in knee-deep mud to reach camp, and having to row all day to make up time due to low water. Although we had similar experiences – we were on the same river during the same low water – we had a great trip. So we tried to convince their guide that all those struggles and hardships were all part of the experience, and, although he resisted in saying that he had any fun, he did finally agree, “Yeah it was kind of an adventure.”

5.6.3 Adventure activities

Adventure activities play a prominent role in the New Zealand tourist and traveller experience. Cloke and Perkins (1998, 2002) have noted that the New Zealand Tourism Board’s 100% Pure New Zealand branding strategy has presented New Zealand as a ‘thrilling and adventurous’ place (Cloke and Perkins 2002: 523). Images of a jet boat or the bungy jump are frequent icons in tourism media and, and adventure tourism attractions feature in tourist guides and other travel literature relating to New Zealand (Cloke and Perkins 1998, 2002).

The slogan ‘New Zealand is Adrenaline Country’ was heavily promoted and the text in a specific *Adventure* brochure released in the United Kingdom and elsewhere shows the attempt to appeal to a potential traveller’s sense of excitement and adventure while linking these activities to New Zealand :

Synonymous with adventure, action and adrenaline, New Zealand is where it all began. Experts on how to make the most of the great outdoors, New Zealanders are eager to share it with the rest of the world . . . New

Zealanders are justifiably proud of their reputation for inventing some of the most original and thrilling activities known to mankind. (NZTB 1998: 1)

Potential visitors to New Zealand are seduced with anticipatory images and ideas of an adventurous place Cloke and Perkins (1998, 2002). The slogan on the website of the widely recognised founder of bungy jumping, AJ Hackett, aptly illustrates this approach with the slogan 'Action is our culture'. The following statements by participants typified their attitude to the appeal of adventure tourism in New Zealand:

'Being out of my comfort zone. Freedom, adventure. Challenging my physical fitness., and my nerve.'

'The adventure of the whole thing, you know, travelling....A lot of things you don't do when you're in your usual routine.'

There is also a strong sense among participants that New Zealand is the place to do adventure tourism.

'it's very accessible here, I think we did skydiving, sand boarding and something else all in the one day.'

you're just doing stuff the whole time, it's great, really cool.

I guess [here], and the western world in general, a lot of the enjoyment is just hanging out in the next café or going to nice bars or .bungy jumping or sky diving all that kind of stuff that you can do here.'

'New Zealand is still a very young country. And all the activities are very 'to do' activities...very different compared to Europe... which has history and culture.'

'I heard it about friends who had been on their round the world trip that New Zealand is adventure capital of the world, bungy jumping and sky diving....it's a crazy persons paradise down there.'

'That's a great attraction too because people keep going "oh yeah there's the outdoor sports" ...I want to do the bungy jump....I just have to get the courage though.'

'You can go sailing here, you can go bungy jumping, you can do all that crazy stuff here, you can do that at home but it's not as popular as here, and it's a lot more expensive.'

'New Zealand is the land of extreme sports. I don't know much about it really besides geography like stuff and this extreme sports.'

Bungy jumping in particular was strongly associated with New Zealand. When asked why, participants could not explain the origins of this association for them, but it was just something 'they knew'.

'I always wanted to do bungy jumping and I thought it would be really great to do my first jump in New Zealand because it's famous for bungy jumping.'

'[We did] bungy jumping in Queenstown – it's the thing to do in Queenstown.'

'Well that's the one thing you always think of when you go to New Zealand. I think everybody in the world thinks of that. because you guys started it...it's just so scary.'

'... it's just part of pop culture at this point. Everybody just knows... New Zealand – bungy jumping...like kangaroos – Australia.'

The strong connection between bungy jumping and New Zealand was given by travellers as a reason to make their jump in New Zealand rather than elsewhere. It was seen as a challenge and accomplishment. People would undertake a bungy jump 'just to say you did it' or

'To face your [fears] ...I'm not a fan of heights.. I can't imagine there are that many people that love heights... It's just you and a big drop, that's why I imagine sky diving would be easier, somebody's attached to you...you kind of go down together.'

Sky diving was not seen as unique to New Zealand, but Taupo was perceived to be one of the cheapest places in the world to perform a tandem jump 'skydiving everybody said go to Taupo...cheapest in the world to go there.' Participant's attitude towards sky diving in terms of challenge and safety were similar to their attitude to bungy jumping

'I tried sky diving in the states and it was too cloudy so I didn't get to ...it's kind of like a spur of the moment thing and you lose your nerve if you don't do it right there and then.'

Price is a factor... and knowledge, I want to be attached to somebody who knows what they are doing...so I would pay a little more if the guides in Taupo weren't as good as somewhere else then I might go somewhere else.'

'[safety is] huge .. I want to come back in one piece.'

Many wanted to seize the opportunity to do these thrill seeking activities while they were away from home and travelling in New Zealand.

'A year from now I could be knocked up with a baby ... and saying why didn't you go sky diving not having that chance for another 10 years.'

'It is a chance, I'm not married, I saved up the money. You should travel far when you are young, because when you are old, disabled, it's going to be much more difficult.'

Adventure tourism in its various forms can appeal to travellers on many levels. At the visceral level it appeals to atavistic feelings of anxiety; discomfort brought about by sudden changes in direction or velocity, exposure to dark enclosed places. Overcoming the challenges posed by these fears, and an awareness of safety in reality at the reflective level can transform this discomfort into excitement and a sense of achievement. Cloke and Perkins (2002), commenting on a study of black water rafting in the Waitomo caves concluded that such activities are based on rich and complex person-environment transactions. Challenging situations such as jumping down an underground waterfall were found to create 'mildly unpleasant feelings of nervousness and apprehension that can also be exciting' (McIntyre and Roggenbuck 1998: 401). This study concluded that, like Norman's rollercoaster, the degree to which activities were seen as pleasant or unpleasant was strongly influenced by perceptions of risk. Passive contemplation combined with low level activity (floating through the cave in the dark) induced feelings of peace, calm and enjoyment when nature was viewed as benign and non-threatening. Each of these situations resulted in variation in the intensity of arousal and relaxation (McIntyre and Roggenbuck 1998: 419–20).

On the reflective level memory and sharing a sense of achievement play a strong part in the appeal of the adventure experience. Cloke and Perkins (2002) suggest that the immediate bodily gratification offered by adventurous experiences is complemented by the commoditized longer-term dimensions of the experience. Adventure tourism operators provide consumers with the 'opportunity to appropriate the place-experience' in video and photographic form as well as on t-shirts.

Adventurous tourists will now often accept the chance to purchase these photographic records of themselves as a kind of transferable story of how they thrillingly overcame nature in New Zealand's great outdoors. Operators will further pander to the commodification of memory by providing certificates to commemorate the successful completion of the activity. Adventure is about achieving something worthwhile; having something to take home with you that is worth (freeze) framing (Cloke and Perkins, 2002: 540).

It is characteristic of adventure activities that the experience is shared at the immediate time of the event and later in photographs and videos. Although participants frequently traveled alone, they strongly appreciated company in their adventure experiences.

'[It would] just be more fun... to have someone else here to share the buzz... to be scared or have a laugh together'

'It's not quite the same... to jump out of a plane on your own and...there's nobody to tell ...what you've done.'

This suggests that adventure is a shared experience. Pleasure at the reflective level can be derived from telling others of your experience and the behavioural level by having another body there when you do it. These perceptions extended to understandings of New Zealand as a place, strongly connected with adventure activities and ideal ways of experiencing them within the country

'I think because of the kind of place it is where you are involved in a lot [of] activities and stuff like that. It's just more fun [with] company. It's probably not as fun a place to travel on your own as some other places are.'

Groups of travellers saw themselves as having shared characteristics.

'We are quite an adventurous bunch; everyone is interested in doing that kind of stuff.'

'I think it's about the people I'm around too, who very much want to do it...like next weekend is an adventure weekend when we go and do something.'

Several themes are present in participants' descriptions of adventure experiences. One is the wilderness context of the adventure; another is the framing of the adventure experience and the role that must be played by the traveller as an 'adventurer' in this process. Finally the group performance aspects of these activities, where 'fellow adventurers' both provide an audience and a reinforcing influence for the performance of self-as-adventurer. Cloke and Perkins (1998, 2002) observe that most of the adventure activities available in New Zealand take place in natural surroundings. These natural surroundings provide a 'wilderness' setting where travellers can discover their 'true' or authentic self away from the distracting demands of everyday life. This self is explored through dealing with the challenges, including the exposure to potential danger or risk (Fine 1992a, 1992b, Jonas et al 2003).

Simmel (1965) posited that it is the act of abandoning the security of the mundane for new experiences filled with uncertainty that makes an adventurer. The 'adrenaline' inducing experiences of white water rafting, skydiving or bungee jumping in wilderness settings provides opportunity to voluntarily face challenges and fears that are not normally encountered in daily life, for example fear of heights or drowning, (Jonas et al 2003, Vester

1987) to develop ‘character’ (Goffman 1967) and achieve self-actualisation (Elias and Dunning 1986).

Jonas et al (2003: 409) point out that while the act of facing risk voluntarily makes one an adventurer, it is the performance of those acts in front of others ‘that truly confirms the adventurous self’. Fellow travellers ‘become a backdrop that reflects back the conditions of their own existence’ (Neumann 1999, 190). They provide a basis for shared interpretation of experience, judging other’s adventure performances, and imputing the adventurer identity onto the actor if it resonates with their own notions of adventurer behaviour. They can also ‘help’ others to reframe interpretations of adventure activities. For example travellers who express disappointment with the discomforts experienced during a rafting trip may be told that ‘it’s all part of the adventure’.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these themes. Representations and understandings of nature and adventure are created, anticipated, and remembered in the backpackers’ imaginations and realized through embodied achievements. People can experience travel on many levels. Interacting with places and other travellers involves physical and visual dimensions (Cloke and Perkins 1998, 2002, Crouch 2005). It also generates feelings of challenge and accomplishment (Norman 2004). People like to share their experiences with others both at the time and afterwards (Cloke and Perkins 1998, 2002). The sense of challenge and the satisfaction of accomplishment are both offered to and sought by travellers. Expectations are then created and mediated by others’ depictions of a tourism ‘product’ and the traveller’s own experience (Crouch 2005). Travellers create mental images of a place by combining their own experience with representations of that place by others. Norman’s (2004) model provides a way of seeing how these things might fit

together. Analysis at visceral and behaviour levels of processing accounts for the embodied experience of actual travel and analysis at the reflective level examines how image is created and how experience and image influence each other. The role that new media plays in the creation of travel imaginations is described in the following chapter on representation.

Chapter Six: Representation

Images and representations of New Zealand help to create and reinforce the way travellers see both themselves as backpackers and New Zealand as their destination. A useful concept for examining the construction of images of self and place (and self in place) is what Crouch et al (2005) call the tourist imagination. The term was coined to explore the interdependence between tourism and the media, using it to conceptually bridge the space between 'the shared vitality which lies as much in the sense of global mobility engendered by the media in our daily consumption of films, books, television, newspapers and photography as it does in the actual activities of travelling, enjoying, and exploring.' (Crouch et al. 2005: 1). This imagination therefore both influences, and is influenced, by tourists' experiences in travel and media representations of travel.

The imagination is taken from the everyday world into the tourist activity but equally may be brought back from the tourist world as an enhanced imaginative facility. It may be used to appropriate fictions in support of the physical mobility of travel, but equally, travel may be the inspiration of fictions (Crouch et al 2005:2-3).

Before they arrive in New Zealand, all participants' experiences of the country are necessarily vicarious. These create certain anticipations and expectations, for example adventure, and closeness to nature. After arrival those anticipations and expectations mix with their actual embodied experience. In both cases the metaphor of the gaze can be used to describe the process of creating constructs within the tourist imagination.



Figure 4: Kayaker, newzealand.com website

in Morae screenshot of www.newzealand.com adventure activities section (www.newzealand.com/travel/destinations/off-the-beaten-track/off-the-beaten-track_home.cfm, July 2006) The idea of vicarious experience combines the construction of a destination image with the placement of self within that destination. Participants' quotes illustrate how they place themselves within the place depicted by an image; for example the kayaking scene in figure 4, and the feelings associated with being in such a place.

'It's kind of [like] you can see that nature is bigger than you. This person is totally dwarfed by the rocks around them yet they're obviously able to navigate it. The falling water is very cool I don't think it's very typical of many places you find, it seems like it would be a great experience. There's a huge rock which is a way of conveying some danger, make it risky ..it's like you're really navigating something, really doing something. Not like a museum where you just go there and look at something.'

Anticipation is often thought to be a central theme in the attraction of the tourism product (Urry 2002, Selwyn 1996)

Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze (Urry 2002:3).

A sense of vicarious experience can be consciously created by tourism marketers in their representations of place. This has been discussed by a number of tourism theorists who point out that it is possible to evoke such anticipatory responses (Dann 1996, Crouch et Al

2005, Urry 2004, MacCannell 1999). ‘Viewers and readers are enabled to project themselves into new situations ... This is the world of unrealizable daydreams and fantasy’ (Berger 1983: 146), it is ‘the very fabric of tourism’ (Dann 1976: 69).

This construction of images can be seen in terms of a cultural experience (MacCannell 1999) which is made up of two basic parts, a model and an influence. The model is a representation of an aspect of life and is an embodied ideal. The influence is the changed, created, intensified belief or feeling that is based on the model. So, for example, a lone kayaker surrounded by imposing rocks and before a crystalline cascade of waterfall is the model. The associations of closeness to nature, solitude, adventure and self-reliance with this situation denote the influence. The presentation of these experiences mediates the traveller’s perceptions and expectations of their own travel experience. A mental image of the experience presented is created or modified by the presentation of the model, and the feelings encapsulated by the model’s related influence help shape how they will process the actual experience presented.

The model and its influence are connected by a medium which might be, for example the social situation of face-to-face interaction, a gathering, radio, television or film. A cultural model, its influence(s), the medium that links them, the audiences that form around them, and the producers, directors, actors, agents, technicians and distributors that stand behind them, together form a production (Pine and Gilmore 1999, MacCannell 1994, 1999). To this mix can be added hypermedia. Since the 1990s the Internet has played an increasingly important role as a medium for presenting tourism experiences (Proll and Retschitzegger 2000, Hudson and Lang 2002). Its interactive nature adds new dimensions to ideas about

marketing destination image (Gretzel and Fesenmaier 2003, Gallarza, Gil-Saura and Garcia 2002).

6.1 Anticipation and the tourist gaze

Urry (2002) uses the metaphor of the gaze to capture the fact that tourists pay much greater visual attention to elements of landscape or townscape that they find when travelling than they do when interacting with them normally in everyday life. In the 'gaze' people linger over such sights which are commonly visually objectified and captured through photographs, postcards, films, and other model representations. These representations in turn enable the gaze to be endlessly reproduced and recaptured. This gaze, according to Urry, is constructed through signs; the act of being a tourist involves the collection of such signs. A small village in England, under the gaze becomes the 'real olde England'. As Culler (1981:127) explains,

the tourist is interested in everything as a sign of itself... All over the world the unsung armies of semioticians, the tourists, are fanning out in search of the signs of Frenchness, typical Italian behaviour, exemplary Oriental scenes, typical American thruways, traditional English pubs.

The gaze is also involved in anticipation, a quality often thought to be central to the attraction of a tourism product (Urry 2002, Selwyn 1996).

Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze Urry (2002:3).

The creation of anticipation in media can involve various stratagems. For example, Dann's analysis (1996: 69) describes a process of five steps in which an idealised and sanitized version of 'nature' elides potentially uncomfortable realities, creates desire and 'talks of the

future with references to the past while ignoring the present. Potential travellers can thus 'project themselves into new situations which often permit the carrying of personality equipment and nostalgic rewarding experiences into the future'. The holiday experience represented in this fashion is a carefully designed product.

Norman (2004) provides some ideas on how products are designed to appeal on multiple levels of experience based on his proposed three levels of processing: visceral, behavioural, and reflective. At the visceral level the focus of design is on appearance and aesthetic appeal. At the behavioural level the pleasure and effectiveness of use while interacting with a product is important. Finally, on a reflective level, issues of self image, personal satisfaction, and the memories arising from engaging with the object for consumption must be considered. (Norman 2004: 39).

All three of Norman's (2004) levels of processing affect the choice of tourist product. The creation of an anticipatory image takes place on the reflective level, but is influenced by both behavioural and visceral levels. On a visceral level, Norman believes that attractiveness produces positive emotions, causing mental processes to be more creative, and more tolerant of minor difficulties (Norman 2003:60). At this level affect creates an anticipatory pleasure of enjoying, for example, warm sun and relaxing natural surroundings. Norman's (2003:83-84) own description of reflective design applies particularly well to travel consumption. It is

all about message, about culture, about the meaning of a product or its use. For one, it is about the meaning of things, the personal remembrances something evokes. For another, very different thing, it is about self-image and the message a product sends to others.

This is where the traveller decides to avoid the ‘touristic’ and choose a style of activity or travel that fits with their self image as traveller or backpacker. Norman’s understanding of the behavioural level can be applied in several ways. In a functional sense it can relate to the ease with which travel information and services are provided. In a more metaphorical sense Norman equates Boorstin’s (1990) three levels of processing movies (visceral, vicarious and voyeuristic) with his own three levels of processing, mapping visceral to visceral, vicarious to behavioural and voyeuristic to reflective (2003:123-127). In this analogy the voyeuristic level of processing is where the viewer identifies, and lives through, the characters presented in the film. Similarly this could be applied to the role that a traveller envisages themselves playing in the trip or activity they are contemplating.

The images that help to market a product are designed to create anticipation (Berger 2004, Dann 1996), which involves vicarious experience where one creates an creating an image of themselves in the place being portrayed. Being placed in the future, anticipation occurs at the reflective level of processing, but is affected by the visceral impact of imagery, and on the behavioural level by how easy it is to access and navigate the imagery presented. In another sense the behavioural level can also relate to placing oneself and one’s actions in a given imagined scenario. In this way representations provide a sense of the landscape that you hook the self into in, both in anticipation and while travelling. In this thesis

Representation and imagination can be encapsulated within the system of a cultural production, with its model, influence, the producer, and consumer. Of particular interest in this thesis is the mechanisms by which tourist imagery is presented in new media.

6.2 New media

The presentation of a website involves the integration of three elements: an aesthetic (involving the use of repetition, alignment, proximity and contrast), the use of images and audio and visual texts, and a system of navigation. These elements serve as the visual cues or markers that guide the viewer through both the page and the site. The manner in which these markers are presented privileges some elements of the Web site over others, creating a 'hierarchy of information' (Papson, Goldman and Kersey 2004). Hypertext (hypermedia) is primarily a visual form which 'embodies information and communications, artistic and affective constructs, and conceptual abstractions alike into symbolic structures made visible on a computer-controlled display' (Joyce 1995:19).

The world conveyed by the interactive computer is often described as 'virtual' since its location or features cannot be pinpointed in the tangible world. This construction is the product of both user and computer, of human imagination and sound and images provided by the compute so that users 'can move through a constructed universe of [their] own making, on virtual paths invisible even as [they] tread upon them' (Rothenberg 1993: 14). In this case the computer is more than just a tool: it is an agent that a person forms a working relationship with to explore various simulations of the world (Turkle 1997).

In this sense websites are 'gazed' upon rather than 'embodied' constructions. They provide vicarious experiences for the user of the website's consumption. These representations of the media and the vicarious experiences arising from them are fluid and can influence each other. Unlike like traditional media, the technology of logs, forum postings, travel journals, and location feedback for travel websites allow the tourism consumer to act as their own

producer. They are given a ‘voice’ (Mitra and Watts 2002) to express their experiences online. Bolter and Grusin (2000) noted that digital media lend themselves to remediation-appropriation, borrowing, offering comment, and reforming media. The components that make up the presentation are ‘borrowed’ from other media – films, television, photography, and print and different genres within media such as guide books, brochures, and documentaries.

The key difference between new and traditional media, whether it be print, film, or television, is the structure of the production and the way in which the narrative unfolds. In the case of interactive media the designer can provide cues about where they would like the consumer to go, but the narrative as a whole is constructed by the consumer as they choose to navigate through various links, moving from page to page of hypertext and opening new windows to view video clips and images (Manovich 1997, Julier 2000, Everett 2003). Turkle (1997) points out that the computers’ ability to create and display representations of the world allows people to explore the world through simulation, by following paths of their own creation.

interactivity allows narrative situations to be described in potentia and then set into motion – a process whereby model building supersedes storytelling, and the what-if engine replaces narrative sequence (Cameron 1998 quoted in Julier 2000: 179).

This style of presentation has distinct impacts on the particular website encounters and descriptions of experience in this research. Images in a website are not presented on their own for consumption. Instead, the newzealand.com website, like other websites is a busy combination of images and text (figure 5). In fact the website is always competing with other applications and stimulus on the computer. People might have email, social

networking sites such as Facebook, and instant messaging applications all open in other windows and competing for their attention.

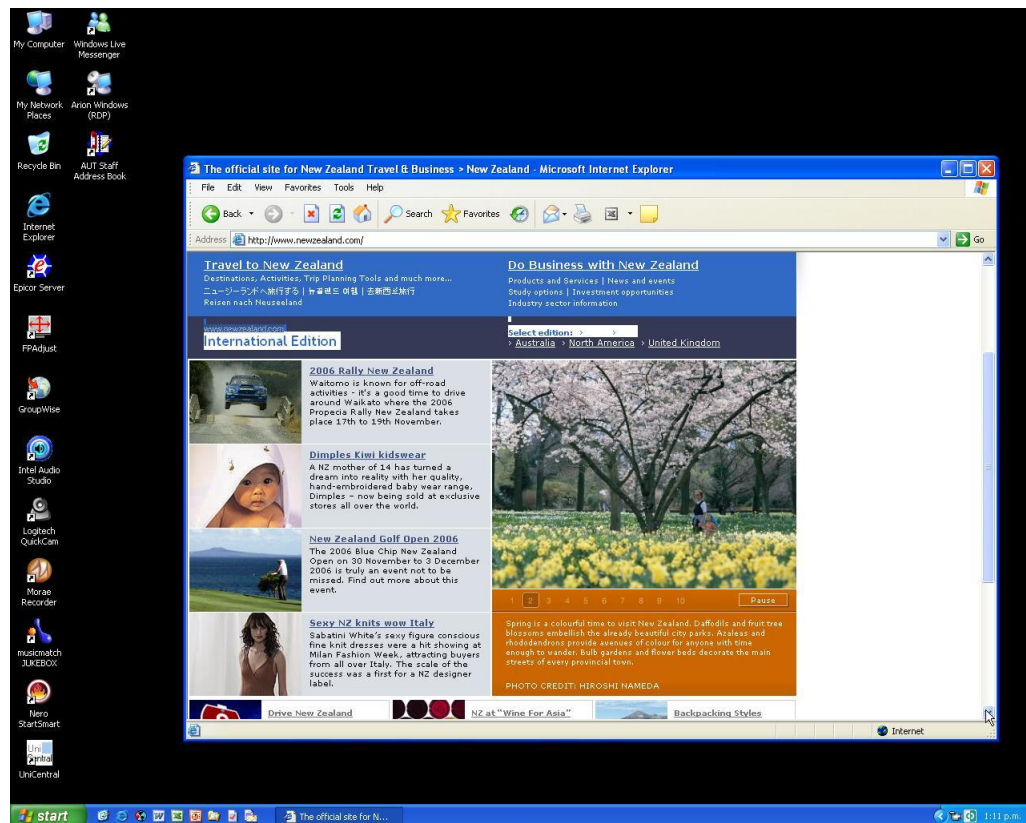


Figure 5: Home page, newzealand.com website
in Morae screenshot of www.newzealand.com home page section (www.newzealand.com, June 2006)

In writing this thesis an initial attempt was made to ‘tidy up’ the screenshots shown from this site to make text and images more visible and legible, but this misrepresented what participants experienced. In fact the backpackers interviewed here often complained that text and images were too small and said that they would like to see larger images. One of the defining characteristics of new media is the attempt to ‘saturate’ the senses with a combination of text and imagery (Bolter and Grusin 1999, Everett 2003). Bolter and Grusin (1999) point out the tensions present when attempts to transparently present an ‘immediate’ experience of a representation, for example place, are enacted through new (hyper)media techniques that inundate the user with various imagery borrowed or

remediated from other mediums in the form of images, text, video, sound. Phenomenologically speaking, if you are irritated by attempting to peer at the images and text presented the screenshots for this discussion, you are sharing some of the same experiences participants in this study had while interacting with the website (although these screenshots are reduced even more to fit on the page).

6.3 Analyzing new media

The analysis of new media often uses theory drawn from the analysis of other media, As Bolter and Grusin (1999: 16) put it:

Digital visual media can best be understood through the ways in which they honor, rival, and revise linear-perspective painting, photography, film, television, and print.

Berger (2004: 71) notes that those involved in creating advertising media ‘make various appeals to their readers and try to strike a responsive chord in them’. A commonly employed tactic is to use representations with associations that readers will find to be positive and attractive, and that can stand in for an entire range of concepts. For example the image of a palm tree can signify ‘tropics, sun and warm weather’. A logo such Rolls Royce’s can suggest quality and luxury. The use of the words ‘pure’ or ‘unspoilt’ can connote authentic connections with nature or people away from the stresses and pressures of everyday life. The success of these associations is dependent on how well the representations interact with a ‘person’s prior knowledge to make their points’ (Berger 2004: 71).

Still photographs have their own unique capacity to capture and convey images. This recognition has led commentators to offer various accounts of how they achieve their effects. Certainly photographs dislocate time and space, fixing a moment ‘in the flow of

life and experience and transpose[ing] it to other contexts' (Edwards 1996: 200). Through the technology of framing and recording an instant in time, some things may become newly visible to the observer, others are elided, and notions of simplicity and complexity rearranged (Sontag 1979, Edwards 1992: 6-8). In the vocabulary of photographic imagery, fragments express essence. They

become symbolic structures, reifying culturally formed images as observed realities, rendering them 'objects'. In this process the signifier and the signified collapse into one another, the physical subject itself becomes indivisible from its symbolic or metaphorical meaning, the symbol becomes reality (Edwards 1996: 200).

Yet however the physical subject is represented, the interpretation of the image is the domain of the viewer. The meaning of the image is 'free-floating' and subject to the observer's processing framework.

The photograph can act as an authenticating device. A product of the light reflected from a real-life object or scene it can be seen as a more authentic and accurate representation of a place than a verbal or textual description (Bolter and Grusin 1999, Edwards 1996). Such images of place provide authoritative statements about what can be consumed 'in terms of exotic and romantic notions of the other' (Edwards 1996:201)

Photographs also act to reframe the interpretation of a place. Urry (2005) contends that it was the arrival of the photographic technology that transformed people's dispositions towards natural environments from that of a frightening wilderness to a desirable landscape to be 'romantically gazed' upon. Wilderness became places where people could exercise their 'aesthetic dispositions' (Bourdieu 1984) admiring the composition of a view the same way they might admire the composition of a photograph or painting.

The manner in which photographs fragment space and time parallels the nature of the tourist experience where the parts of a place that the tourist interacts with are assembled into an overall impression of that place. Berger (2004) summarizes many tourism theorists (for example Urry 1990, MacCannell 1999, Selwyn 1996) position that tourist experience is essentially that of consuming signs in one form or another, whether they be beautiful vistas, locals in native garb, or ‘traditional’ cuisine. Tourism, in essence, becomes ‘a succession of photo opportunities’ (Berger 2004: 33).

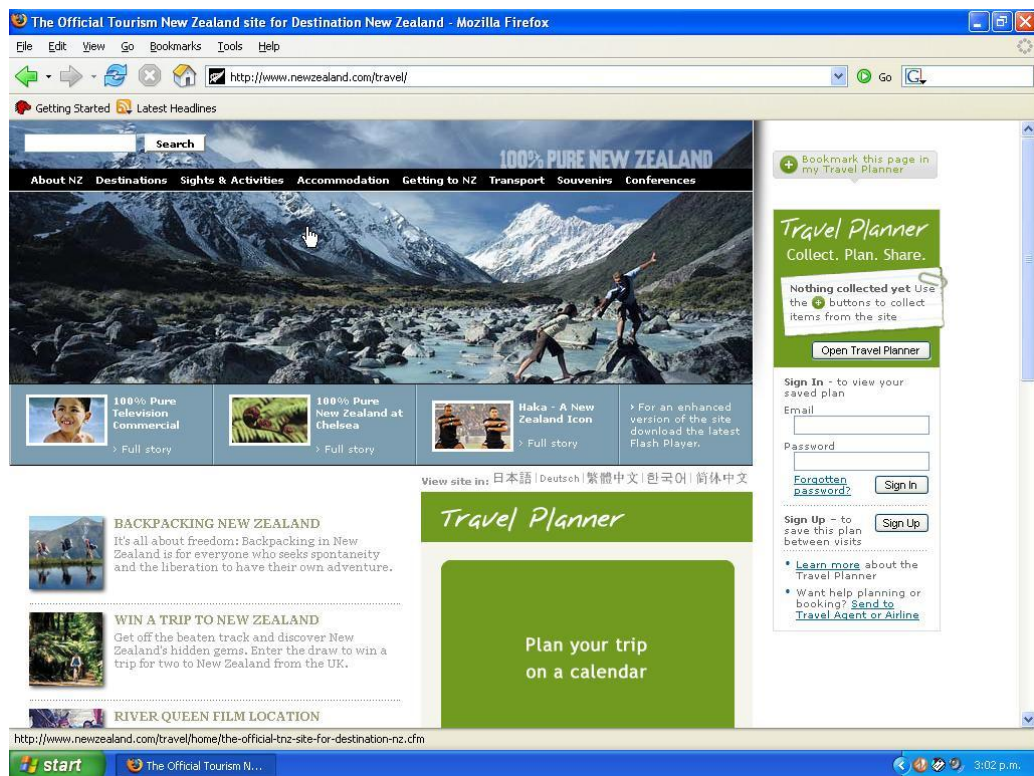


Figure 6: Travel index, newzealand.com website

in Morae screenshot of www.newzealand.com travel index section (www.newzealand.com/travel/, June 2006)

Photographs provide ‘markers of tourist desirability’ by showing the unspoilt nature and the differentness of a place (Cohen 1989, Edwards 1996). For example figure 6 above shows a ‘wild’ alpine scene completely devoid of signs of human development. Photographs are also a mechanism for providing evidence of the trip, and for others to

evaluate a traveller's ability to seek out an 'authentic' experience of a place. For example pictures taken by a traveller could show them interacting with 'touristic' attractions or they might represent travels 'off the beaten path' and interactions with 'real locals'. In this sense 'the act of photography or owning a photograph authenticates and represents the *experience* of the possessor' (Edwards 1996:200). As Norman (2004: 50) explains

Photographs, more than almost anything else, have a special emotional appeal: they are personal, they tell stories. The power of personal photography lies in its ability to transport the viewer back in time to some socially relevant event. Personal photographs are mementos, reminders, and social instruments, allowing memories to be shared across time and place and people.

Some researchers have suggested that Boorstin's analysis of film provides a helpful framework for examining engaging experiences in new media (Marsh 2003, Norman 2004). According to Boorstin (1990) film on the visceral level works on 'gut' reactions such as disgust, terror, and arousal by appealing to the 'lizard brain'. Film makers do this by providing scenes of violence, fast motion, passion which create sensations rather than emotions. Music, lighting, and camera angles are used very technically to evoke these reactions, but the viewer needs to be unaware of these techniques. Any reflective appreciation of the artistry involved will detach them from this experience (Norman 2004: 124).

At a vicarious level viewers are enjoying the activities portrayed in the film as if they were participating themselves. This is where one becomes involved in the storyline willingly suspending disbelief in order to enjoy the story as it develops and identifying with situations and characters (Boorstin 1991, Norman 2004). The voyeuristic level is one of reflection and observation, where the viewer engages their intellect to 'comment and think about an experience'. At this level

...the depth and complexity of characters, events, and the metaphors and analogies that a movie is meant to convey produce a deeper, richer, meaning than is visible on the surface with the characters and story (Norman 2004: 126).

The enjoyment of a film on a voyeuristic level is to do with realizing and admiring the meaning of references in a film (such as parodies of other films in popular culture), and the tension and suspense of a situation by linking it with other scenes (for example knowing that the hero is about to walk 'blissfully unaware' into a trap set by the villain of the film). Processing film on the voyeuristic level also has the potential to remove the viewer from enjoyable experience (Norman 2004). This is where perceived inconsistencies in storyline or the inaccuracies in depiction on film are recognized and criticized.

Norman (2004) points out that just as most experiences do not occur on a purely visceral, behavioural, or reflective level, but are rather a combination of these things, similarly:

[t]he best products and the best films neatly balance all three forms of emotional impact....with engaging visceral spectacles, an engrossing story for the vicarious, and enough depth and hidden metaphorical allusions to content the reflective voyeur....The craft of filmmaking encompasses a wide variety of domains. All elements of a film make a difference: story line, pace and tempo, music, framing of the shots, editing, camera position and movement. All come together to form a cohesive, complex experience (Norman 2004: 128).

A successful film or an engaging online experience will involve a state of 'flow'. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has defined flow as a particular state of consciousness where the participant is fully involved in their current activity and loses sense of time and distractions from the experience (Marsh 2003, Norman 2004). These states can occur in 'any kind of mind-absorbing work' (Norman 2004: 125) including, playing music, computer or board games, reading, or watching film. Harrison (2001) argues that tourists enter a flow state when they engage with new and different places in a both sensual and aesthetic ways.

Whether they are interacting with places or various forms of media the absorption in the experience ‘...disengage[s] people from the cares of life and transport them into some other world’ (Norman 2004: 125).

Part of the problem of representation is familiarity. Norman (2004) points out that if a person is shown the same stimulus, such as a spoken sentence or a picture, repeatedly their brain activity in response to this stimulus declines with each viewing. One strategy is to reduce the exposure to any particular item. The zen approach to views suggests that windows onto scenery should be in places of transition like hallways so that people only get glimpses of the view rather than gazing at it for long periods of time. However Norman rejects the suggestion that people become overly familiar with a real-life view. He says that the view from his home is dynamic, changing with the season and the time of day.

Unlike ‘real’ views, the pictures on a website are static, so the stimulus is always the same. One way to combat this is to make the picture so complex, like the surreal drawings of MC Escher, that the brain cannot process it all at once and something new can always be ‘seen’ or processed with every viewing. Another strategy, adopted by the newzealand.com site, and many other websites, is to make the picture move, to change and update the content, and to periodically update the look, navigation and interface of the site so that every time someone comes to the site there are new stimuli for them.

But there is a delicate balance here, between engaging and annoying stimuli - for example the flashing banners that attempt to gain a user’s attention. Psychologists have found that users have become very adept at tuning these out (see, for example Bywaters et al 2004, Gasper 2004, Raymond et al 2003). Graphics designed to be engaging might send a

message unintended by the designer, and put the user off the website entirely. Bolter and Grusin (1999: 3) talk about this balance when they describe tensions between immediacy and hypermediacy in attempts to achieve ‘the ultimate purpose of media...to transfer sense experiences from one person another’.

The logic of immediacy is the desire to create the most real and immediate experience of the thing being represented by making the medium transporting the representation seem to disappear. For example photographs should be as realistic and as distortion free as possible. The special effects in film should not be noticeably computer generated, instead they should be indistinguishable from live action shots. Strategies of hypermediacy seek to transfer sense experiences to the consumer through multiple ‘windows that open on to other representations or other media’ (Bolter and Grusin 1999: 35). Text, photographs, sound, and video are layered in digital media in order compensate for ‘cybernetic loss’ (Thackara 1988, Julier 2000: 182) of other ‘embodied’ senses such as, touch, smell, and scale in proportion to the viewer, in order to ‘reproduce the rich sensorium of human experience’ (Bolter and Grusin 1999: 35). In hypermediated productions the medium becomes a visible part of the process as resizable windows, linked text and images, and controls for audio and video become part of the experience.

Ideally the designer can create a flow or “presence” experience (Norman 2004), where the user loses sense of time, is internally motivated to explore the site. In the course of this research it appeared that participants entered into these flow experiences on occasion, being silent, engrossed, slow to answer or ignoring questions, and appearing to be annoyed at being interrupted when the question was repeated. Generally these interruptions were well received when they occurred during more ‘playful’ exploration of graphics and multimedia,

but were found to be more annoying when participants were actively searching for a piece of information. Here were long silences present as browsed a website and processed information. There was also a great deal of searching, as most took 10 minutes or more to find what they were looking for in terms of accommodation or activities and were engrossed in scanning for information.

6.4 The computer as an object to think with

Observations of participants interacting with the newzealand.com website indicated that they were very active. They moved the mouse around the page, highlighted text, and clicked on links in order to access maps, videos, calendars, and more images and text. The computer here is an ‘object-to-think-with’. Through the opacity of the inner workings of the computer afforded by graphical user interfaces and the desktop metaphor ‘we have learned to take things at interface value’ (Turkle 1997:23) and are accustomed to ‘substituting representations of reality for the real’. For example, a virtual desktop is seen as no less real than a physical one. Turkle argues that the ability to ‘play around’ with virtual objects using a computer has changed the way people solve problems:

The revaluation of bricolage in the culture of simulation includes a new emphasis on visualization and the development of intuition through the manipulation of virtual objects. Instead of having to follow a set of rules laid down in advance, computer users are encouraged to tinker in simulated microworlds. There, they learn about how things work by interacting with them. One can see evidence of this change in the way businesses do their financial planning, architects design buildings, and teenagers play with simulation games. (Turkle 1997: 52)

The computer is an ‘object-to-think-with’, a tool that provides opportunities for simulation; for bricolage, for exploring different routes through trial and error.

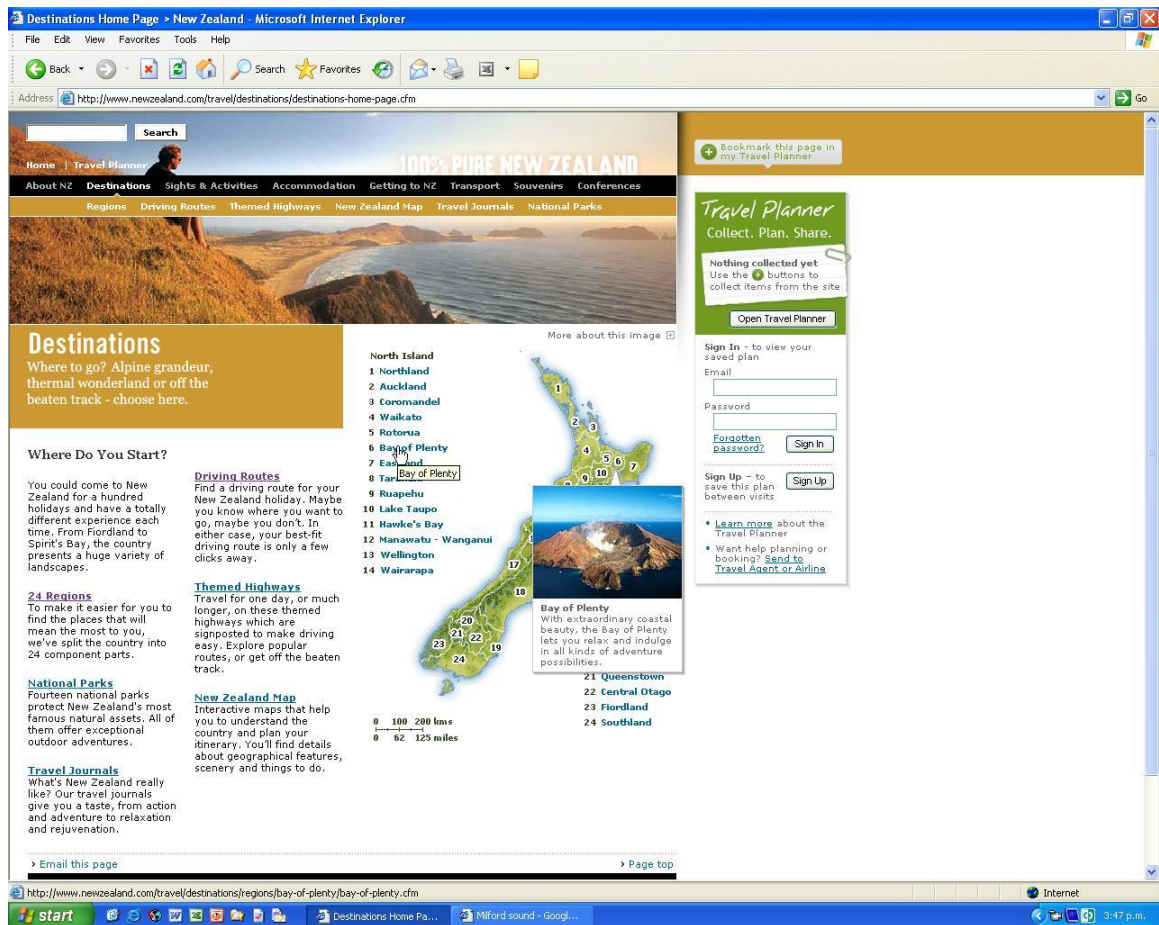


Figure 7: Interactive Destination Map, newzealand.com website
 in Morae screenshot of www.newzealand.com destinations section
 (www.newzealand.com/travel/destinations/destinations-home-page.cfm, July 2006)

Screens like the one depicted in figure 7 were very popular with participants. A small image of a destination and some accompanying text appeared over any of the numbered locations. Every participant found this map in their exploration of the newzealand.com website and paused on this page to interact with the application. They were universally pleased with the ability to gain a brief impression of a place, and to see where it was in relation to other places in New Zealand. They also expressed enjoyment in moving the mouse over each numbered location in order to find out what would be depicted.

This kind of interaction is a good example of bricolage, of playful exploration (Turtle 1997). This playfulness has been regarded as a key element in creating engaging 'flow'

experiences. Flow as play is an absorbing activity, with its own intrinsic rewards generated by the act and the achievement of self-generated goals in a manner that is neither too difficult nor too easy (Czikszentmihalyi 1990, Norman 2004). Often these goals are based on a process of discovery. Drawing on Simmel's (1971/1911) definitions of adventure as a departure from the predictability of everyday life to the unknown and unexpected Kjolsrod (2003) frames adventure as a specialized form of play that can take many forms, all of which can guide explorations of self:

The captivating yet challenging demands of, say, collecting objects, backpacking or mountaineering, guide actors to turn their adventures into personal frames or proto-boundaries through which ideas of self evolve. Of the many possible selves a person may relate to, only a few are actually enacted upon and even fewer are embraced. An identity moulded in play is distinctive in the sense that is also a chosen identity, easily incorporated into self-supporting narratives. (Kjolsrod 2003: 459)

These adventures can occur in either the physical world or the in virtual world enabled by the computer. In either case imagination plays an important role in framing the experience. Being engaged in computer simulations (no matter how simple) or in new and different physical surroundings provides opportunities for people to move away from their everyday experience, acting as a 'membrane against reality' and providing 'the fun and freedom to engage in extraordinary things' and explore the meanings associated with them (Kjolsrod 2003: 459).

Participants interacting with the newzealand.com website were engaging with and evaluating the metaphors presented by the site. They were consuming signs (Urry 1990) and using them to explore their own notions of what constituted a satisfying travel experience. They were also determining the appropriate depictions for a backpacker and whether the depictions of a backpacker on the site were 'real' or authentic (Schaffer 2004).

Turkle (1997: 236) notes that while there are differences in the nature of virtual (simulated) and physical experiences, they might be complementary:

Compare a rafting trip down the Colorado River to an adolescent girl using an interactive CD-ROM to explore the same territory. In the physical rafting trip, there is likely to be physical danger and with it, a sense of real consequences. One may need to strain one's resources to survive. There might be a rite of passage. What might await a girl who picks up an interactive CD-ROM called "Adventures on the Colorado?" A touch sensitive screen lets her explore the virtual Colorado and its shoreline. Clicking a mouse brings up pictures and descriptions of local flora and fauna. She can have all the maps and literary references she wants. All this might be fun, perhaps useful. But it is hard to imagine it marking a transition to adulthood. But why not have both – the virtual Colorado and the real one? Not every exploration need be a rite of passage. The virtual and real may provide different things. Why make them compete?

Computers enable play, and simulations of nature allow for experimentation, problem solving by trial and error, and navigation without a fixed plan. Computers require hands on use and an active imagination. Simulations were created by participants using the newzealand.com website using processes of scripting, storyboarding and mapping.

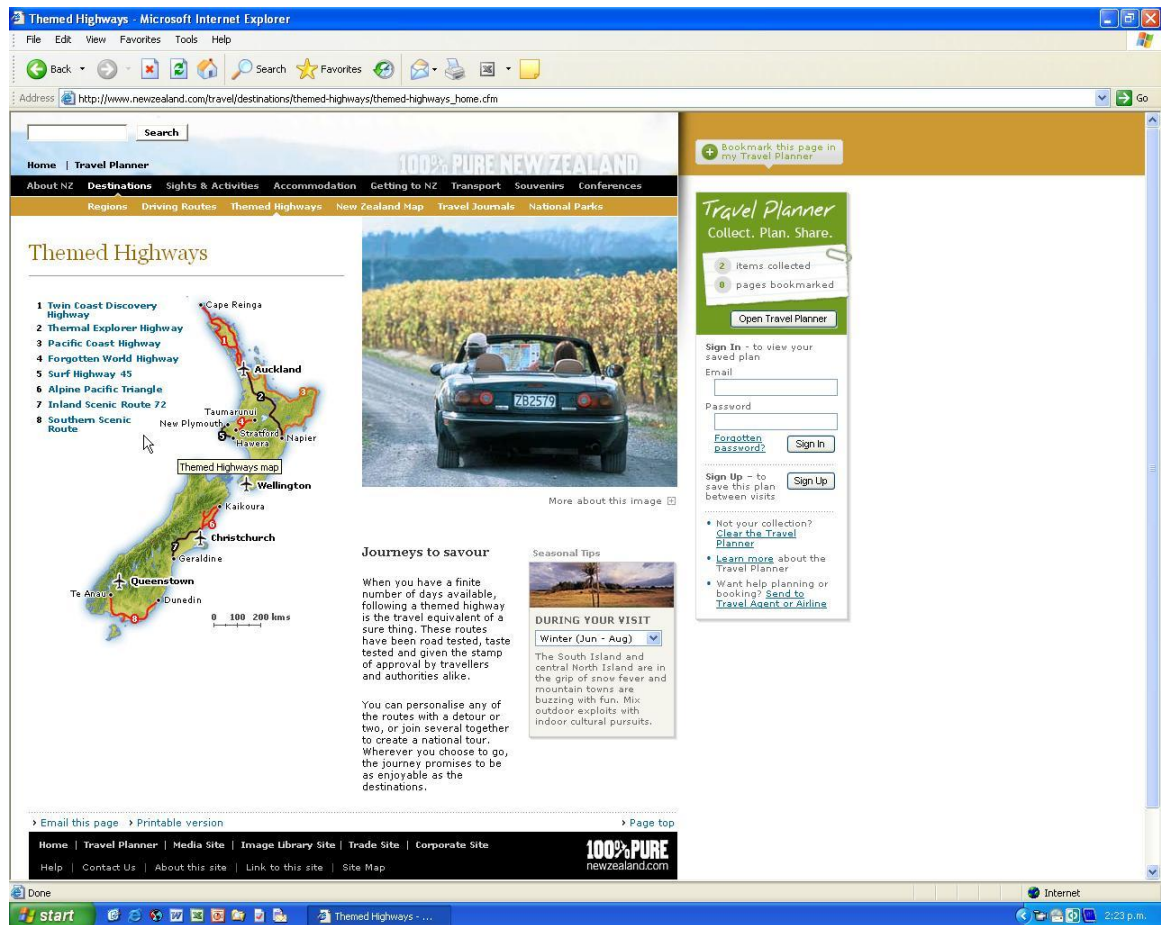


Figure 8: Themed Highways, newzealand.com website
 in Morae screenshot of www.newzealand.com destinations section
 (www.newzealand.com/travel/destinations/themed-highways/themed-highways_home.cfm, July 2006)

These maps (figures 8 and 9) provided opportunity for simulating their trips and helped them to build a mental ‘map’ of the country. This was important because it facilitated the construction of impressions of place and of how the different attractions represented on the website were geographically related.

‘My plans were mostly based on newzealand.com, routes, I printed out a lot of them to see what it would say about each town, each piece of road, then I would join pieces together one place one day, then road, and another place another day.’

‘When you look things up for traveling it’s always nice to have a map..get an idea of how far things are. For our south island trip we basically know the route we want to go... we have some places we want to visit but we might have some time in between and it’s easy to [use the map] to find what is in the region, what are some things to do.’

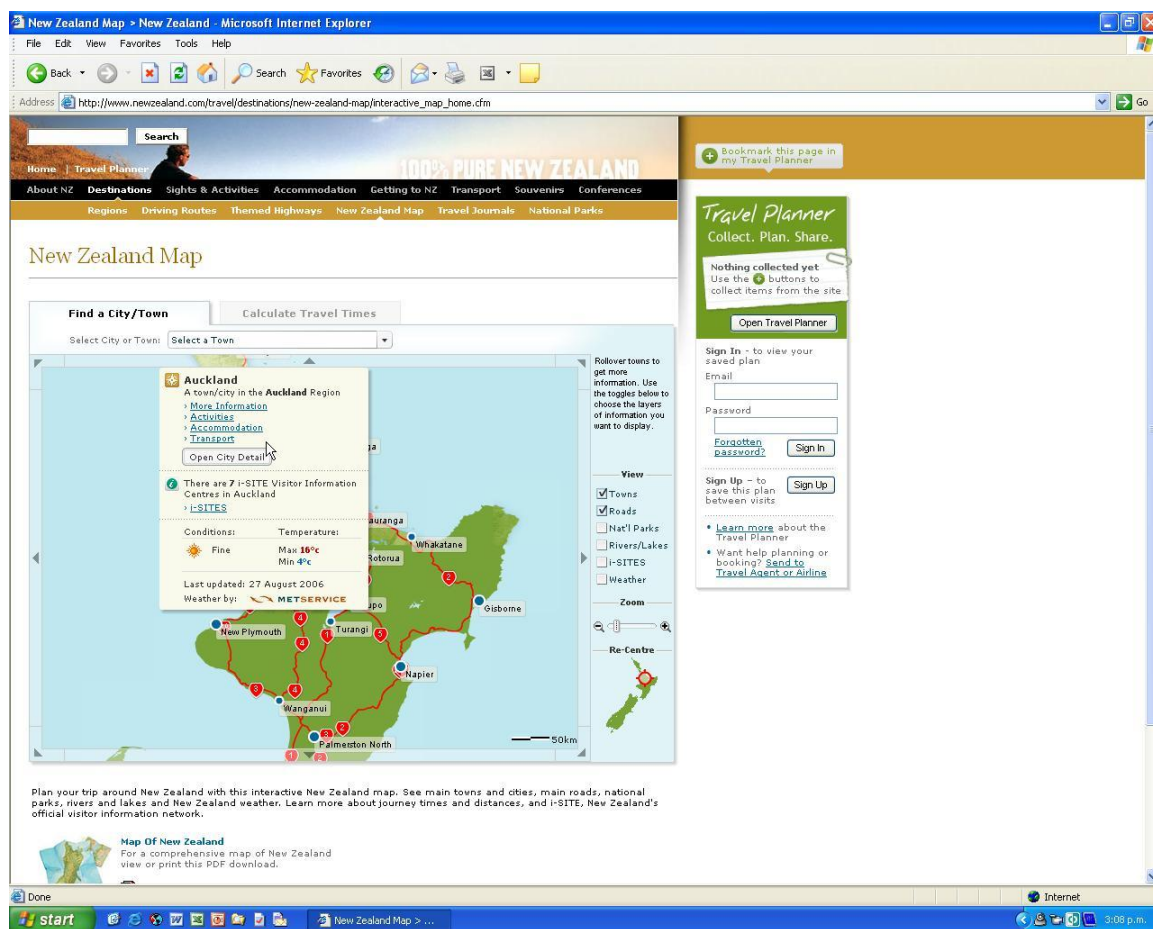


Figure 9: Interactive Map of New Zealand, newzealand.com website
in Morae screenshot of www.newzealand.com destinations section
(www.newzealand.com/travel/destinations/new-zealand-map/interactive_map_home.cfm, July 2006)

These maps were often used as problem solving tools in order to decide which attractions to visit in a given region.

‘One person who is travelling cannot see everything, but at least see the most interesting [bits] without spending too much money.’

Printing of relevant information for later use was a popular practice. For example hard copies of driving routes allowed users to access the information while in their car, and to append the information with their own written notes.

‘I used this section, driving routes, to plan. I printed out the biggest routes because they covered most of the country and then got maps from a govt website and printed out, printed out three copies and sketch routes out...I would like to have the most information I could to choose my route.’

'I think what I would do at this point is print out the contact page and the about page and then have a look at the other operator. And just sit back and look at them for a hour and see which I think has the best deal.'

Like any source on the Internet the website was most frequently used in conjunction with other online resources. Often the information provided would create interest in an attraction or region and the participant would search for more material.

If something would attract my attention, I would go for some more research. Like clicking here [highlights place link] or going to Google with the name to find out more information.

6.5 Imagery on newzealand.com website

The images on this site can be examined in terms of the model they represent, and the influences identified by participants as they view the image. Participants were asked to talk about the impressions that the images depicted in the newzealand.com website gave them. The pictures were generally considered to be attractive to participants who described them as 'very beautiful' and 'very rich' (for example figure 10) though there were also criticisms of the aesthetics or 'feel' of a particular image.



Figure 10: Homepage newzealand.com website
in Morae screenshot of www.newzealand.com homepage section (www.newzealand.com, June 2006)

This valley river bed surrounded by mountains shown in figure 10 was commonly thought to exemplify the diversity of scenery that travellers expected to see in New Zealand.

‘That picture is great. It’s just really cool with the valley here and the mountains at the side and the people...you want to be the people there. You want to see it yourself.’

This response also shows how people locate themselves within the place depicted by the image. This is the tourist imagination at work, creating a vicarious experience at a behavioural level of processing, after which judgments are made about the desirability of being in such a place. In this case, many wanted to experience the diversity of being somewhere that where summer and winter can come together.

'I like seeing the juxtaposition of people in shorts and short sleeves and snow on the mountains in the background. So it's got to be great weather at lower elevation.'

However some participants saw the banner image in figure 10, with its grey and white mountains and pale blue sky, as a little cold and bleak. This judgment was at least partly based on an aesthetic level and related to the composition of the picture and the colours that dominated it.

'I like that there is a lot of variety on the overall page. I think its good [the images] are very diverse. I think the [banner image] is cool but I have a preference for brighter colours. I think this looks cool as a Lord of The Rings type picture but I would prefer [to see] a Milford Sound type picture with the green of the forest and the water and the mountains. A more diverse, generally brighter, picture. [with] more green, more blue would be more appealing.'

On a more vicarious level, the place portrayed was seen as uninviting, harsh, and difficult to traverse.

'I think a lot of people would find this a hard place to explore.... I don't know if I could go tramping for 12 hours a day through rocks.'

The isolation conveyed by the image and the promise of an opportunity to escape from day to day life was seen as a positive.

'What I like about it is that it's isolated and that you can get away from stuff, different from a beach shot. But I would prefer more of a summer looking picture with mountains in the back.'

This shows how processing on visceral, behavioural and reflective levels all affect the overall impression of an image. On a visceral level the image in figure 10 appears somewhat cold and dull whereas warmer and brighter colours are generally associated with positive affect (Norman 2004). The nature of the scene also causes participants to ask themselves on a reflective level whether they would really like to place themselves in a scene that looks so difficult to navigate. The autumn scene below the banner picture, with the yellow and brown leaves and the blue water, was seen as warmer and more inviting.

The image of a lakeside winery (figure 11) also shows the diversity of scenery within a small area that was seen as a positive aspect of New Zealand. Participants liked the contrast of the wine country with lakes and mountains and compared it to their own country.

'I was born in California and spent time on the family vineyard – there on the plains you don't see anything but farmland for miles and miles whereas here you have the vineyards and this huge body of water and the mountains as well.'



Figure 11: Rippon Vineyard, newzealand.com website
 popup window in Morae screenshot of www.newzealand.com destinations section
 (www.newzealand.com/travel/destinations/off-the-beaten-track/off-the-beaten-track_home.cfm)

This image of a lone Kayaker sandwiched between massive rocks (figure 12) is the primary focus of the 'sights and activities' index in the newzealand.com website. It conveyed to participants an impression of powerful natural forces.

'[There are] cool looking, enclosed, waterfalls all over the place, basically kayaking is fun anyway. The appeal is sometimes it's just good to be away from people, to be around nature, natural environments.'

'This looks great ..it's just so New Zealand... like it's kind of lonely and the light is really nice and the water is so blue, looks like lots of fun.'

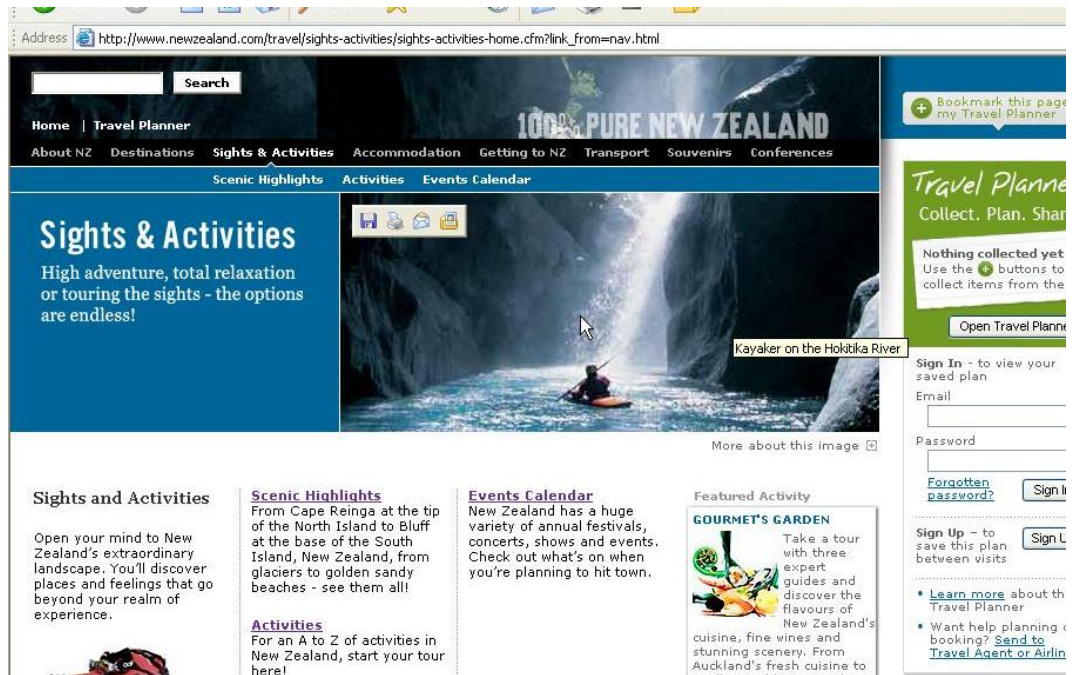


Figure 12: Sights and Activities, newzealand.com website
 in Morae screenshot of www.newzealand.com in travel section
 (www.newzealand.com/travel/destinations/off-the-beaten-track/off-the-beaten-track_home.cfm, June 2006)

Participants associated feelings of adventure, fun, risk, and connection with nature with this image. They recognized the promise an interactive experience, of active participation in an outdoor adventure rather than passively ‘gazing’ at a landscape or museum.

*‘It’s kind of [like] you can see that nature is bigger than you. This person is totally dwarfed by the rocks around them yet they’re obviously able to navigate it. The falling water is very cool I don’t think it’s very typical of many places you find, it seems like it would be a great experience. There’s a huge rock which is a way of conveying some danger, make it risky. **It’s like you’re really navigating something, really doing something. Not like a museum where you just go there and look at something.**’*

This image encapsulates the kind of experience of ‘otherness’ that travellers believe to be characteristic of New Zealand and expect to find for themselves. It is an otherness associated with nature rather than exotic other cultures (as for example in Asia) and

represents a simplification of life where people immerse themselves in nature. Nature here is believed to offer both challenge and tranquility.

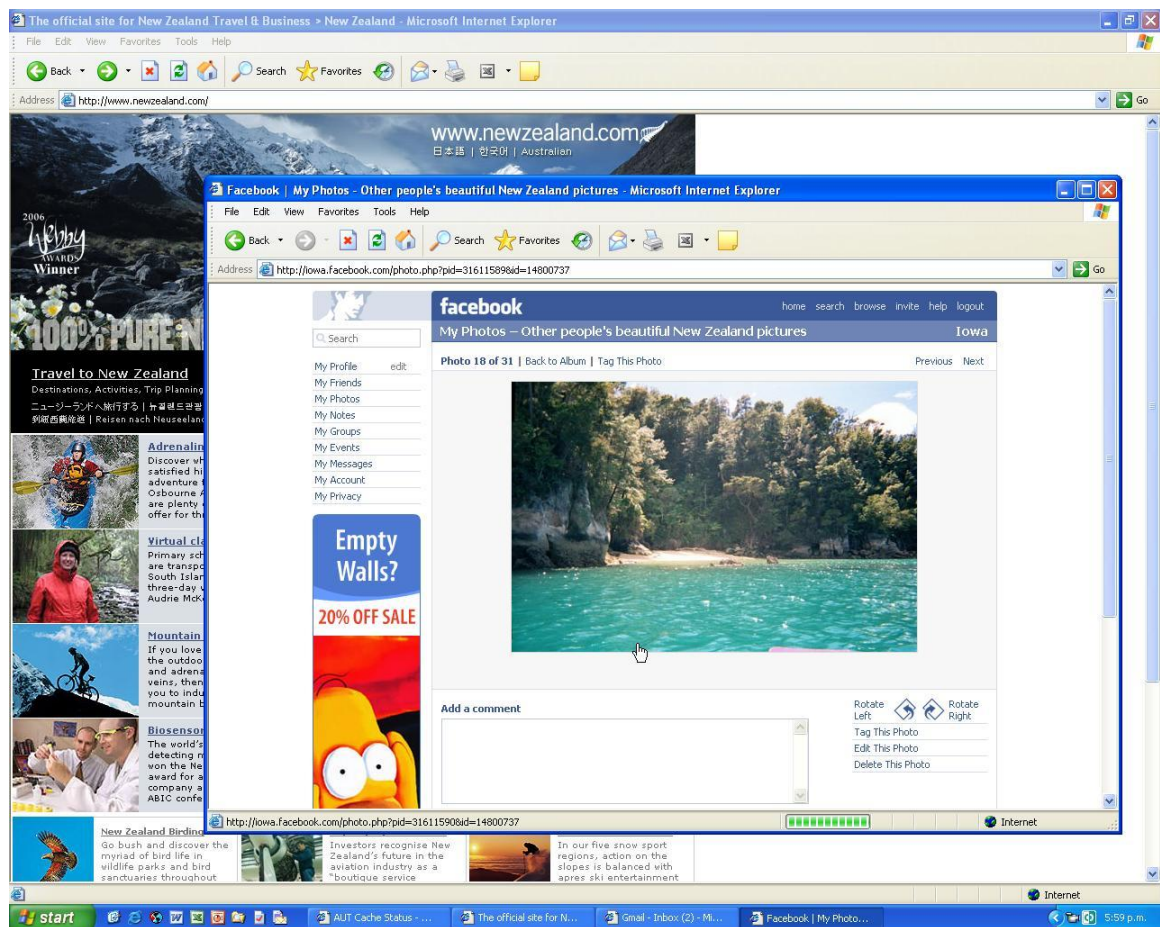


Figure 13: ‘Other people’s beautiful New Zealand pictures’, Facebook website
in Morae screenshot of participant’s facebook gallery (home.facebook.com/photo.php?, July 2006)

Reaction to the image in figure 12 shows the appeal of the ‘other’ in terms of escape from modern life. One of the particular pleasures of travel in less populated places is that opportunity to believe in the uniqueness of their interaction with place. Privacy, ownership, and privilege are promised by this picture, the sort of exclusive experience that has been the bread and butter of tourist promotional imagery, in books, brochures (Dann 1996) and now on the Internet as well.

I told my friends if I find this, I’m never coming home. If I figure out where this spot is I’m just going to stay in this little cove. The colour of the water

is absolutely beautiful – it seems like a really rich vibrant colour. There's just a little spot of sand, so it's not like a huge beach, say on Lake Michigan [which would be] an endless beach with 50 million people sitting on it. [This beach] is small and very private. If you found it you're the only person there. It's your beach for that time, almost.

Travellers in this study mentioned Fiordland and searched for the term on the newzealand.com website more often than any other place. They thought it seemed both unique and relaxing.

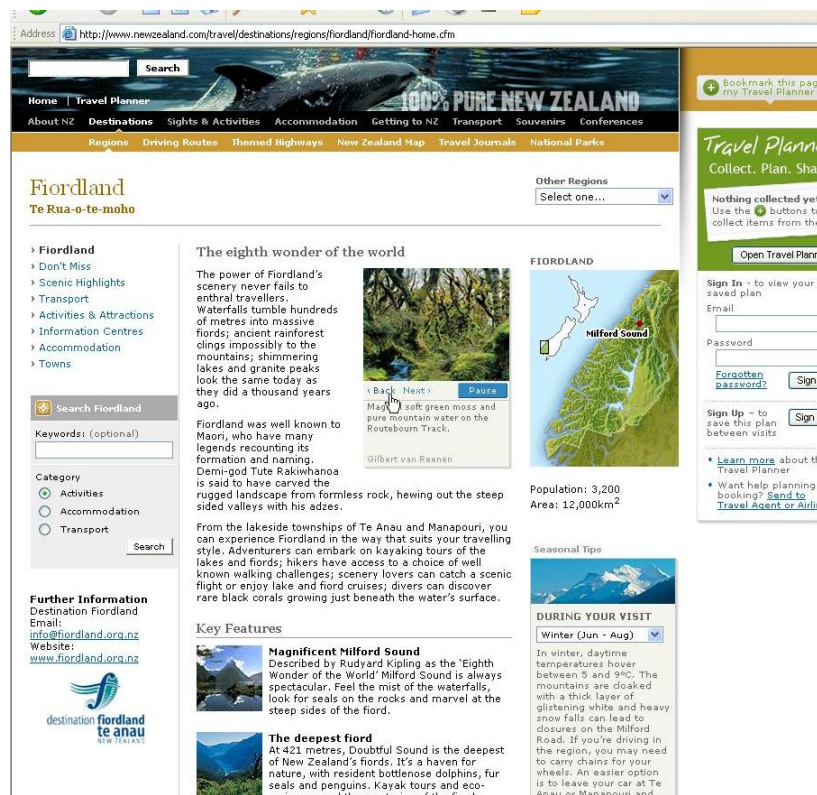


Figure 14: Fjordland page, newzealand.com website
 in Morae screenshot Fjordland page, destinations section newzealand.com website
 (www.newzealand.com/travel/destinations/regions/fjordland/fjordland-home.cfm, June 2006)

When asked why they searched for Fiordland the most common answer was that other travellers recommended visiting this region. Participants stated that the stories told by other travellers were very positive, and their comments on the depicted images maintained this positive attitude.

'Fiordland looks like a relaxing natural area which resonates with what I have heard about Fiordland. Like a warm feeling, "that's nice."'

'That's really unique. When I see something that's unique, different from anything I've experienced from the United States or Australia or anywhere else...'

'That's nice, just walking through there. Any of the scenery, it's incredible.'

'The view I mean shoot, even just small picture of Doubtful Sound makes me want to go there. '

Participants also liked the convergence of signs and information (figure 14). The combination of pictures, descriptive text, maps, and links to further information allowed them to assemble a more complete picture of the nature of a place, and how it connected geographically to other places.

'That's nice, being able to have a map like that and statistics like this [the population and square area information located underneath the map] are good for me.'

'[it's] great that you can search within Fiordland for more information.'

'These maps are really good, normally when you come to a new country you have no idea where a place is in relation to everywhere else...now you can work out if you want to make say another 30 min trip to check out something else nearby.'

Sometimes participants who had already visited certain places thought the images were inadequate to capture the immensity of the actual experience. For example a picture of the kauri forest (figure 15) provoked a German traveller to comment on this difficulty.

'it's exactly what I experienced in taking pictures of these trees, it's impossible to get a good picture of these trees. .. They are so much more impressive when you actually stand in front of them.'

When she was physically present in the Kauri forest and saw the tree she realized that the experience 'didn't remind [her] of the picture at all.'

'When I think about it when I saw it I didn't think 'oh yeah that's the one I saw in the picture' but I think that's just the general problem with these trees. I don't think you have that when you go to other places.'

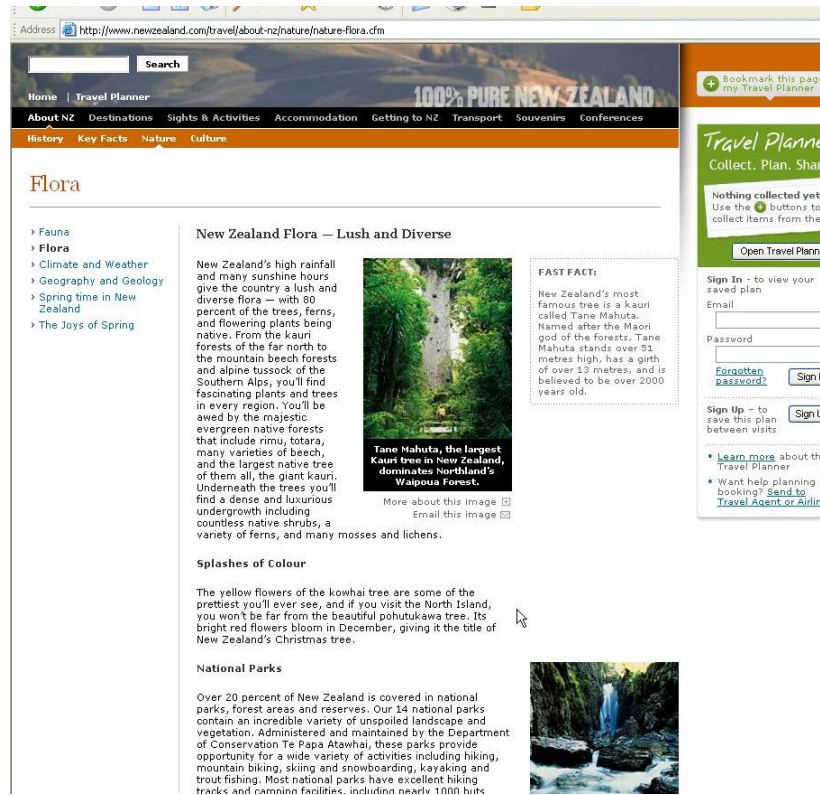


Figure 15: Flora page, newzealand.com website
in Morae screenshot Flora page, about-nz section newzealand.com website
(www.newzealand.com/travel/about-nz/nature/nature-flora.cfm, June 2006)

Some places were so much better in reality.

'I've seen so many postcards of Cathedral Cove and that was also much better when you went there...the colours were better, which is actually quite weird because usually they do the postcard so the place looks even better, but... they couldn't do that with that place. We were there on a really nice day so maybe that helped. ... I think I would always expect the place to be even better now.'

The texture of urban experience was not essential to travellers' conceptualizations of New Zealand and they responded more critically to website representations of Auckland (figure 16) than to images of nature and scenery.

'I think this is not the impression I have of Auckland. I know that's Rangitoto there, but those houses look almost Mediterranean ... but I can see why they put that picture there, it's a very nice picture... with the late afternoon sun, and it looks like a very quiet spot, you can relax there.'

In this case the participant recognized this picture as being a ‘model’ and idealized representation rather than an accurate image of what they would actually experience.

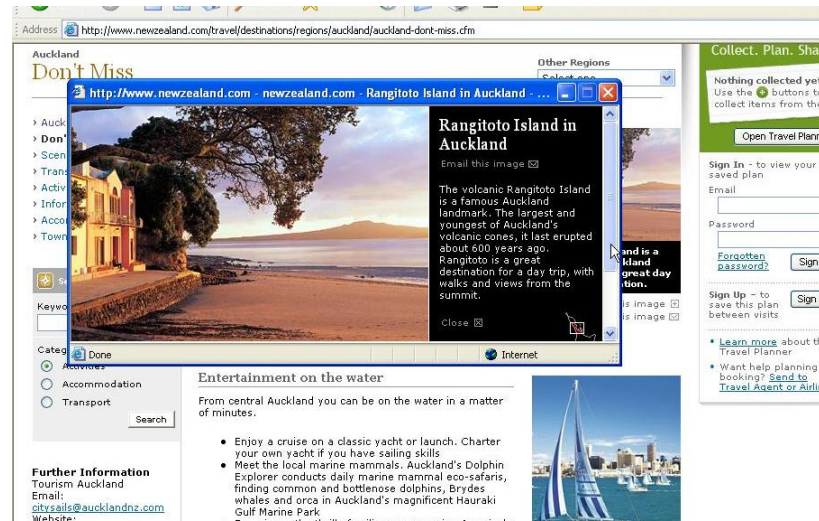


Figure 16: Rangitoto Island, newzealand.com website
 Popup window in Morae screenshot Auckland page in destinations section newzealand.com website (www.newzealand.com/travel/destinations/regions/auckland/auckland-dont-miss.cfm, August 2006)

This level of critique seems to be associated with a strong awareness that such pictures are created for marketing purposes. The widespread level of visual literacy among travellers means they recognize photo montages and don't accord cityscapes the same tolerance they give to scenery assemblages, which are actually quite appreciated. This is probably because natural scenery montages fit with both preconceptions and actual experiences of New Zealand as a nature site (and sight) and as such have a ready made acceptance. Imagery from the website both reinforces and is reinforced by existing destination images of New Zealand.

6.6 Themes of imagery of New Zealand

The particular themes of emotional responses to depictions of nature, reactions to 'iconic' images representative of New Zealand, and aesthetic appreciation of the diversity of elements in landscape have been noticed by other researchers. Fairweather and Swaffield

(2002), who used photographs to analyze visitors' and locals' experiences of Rotorua, New Zealand. Four particular themes emerged from their research that also resonate with the findings of this thesis.

The first theme is one of 'sublime nature' that encapsulates 'positive feelings of peace and quietness' as well as 'awe and power' arising from viewing pictures of natural features including bush, streams, large trees and thermal activity. Fairweather and Swaffield (2002: 291) use the term sublime to show that nature is being framed as 'grand, noble or awe inspiring'. They point out that this perspective was first associated with tourism in the 'touring cultures' (Urry 2005) of the nineteenth century appreciations of landscape and that this kind of experience is still 'potent and relevant' to visitors today. Images that depicted 'commerce, work and the trappings of the city' were disliked as they represented the antithesis of sublime nature. The kind of 'sublime' feelings reported to be associated with these images show the visceral impact they can have on a traveller.

'Iconic tourist' (Fairweather and Swaffield 2002: 291) experiences represent the fulfillment of the promises of adventure, through novel exploration as promoted in tourist advertising. Images eliciting these responses are of marketed tourist attractions such as Maori cultural performances and geothermal sites. Fairweather and Swaffield observed that the comments of participants in their study indicated that they wanted to experience new and interesting things such as Maori culture and geothermal attractions and not did want mundane experiences that reminded them of everyday life 'at home'. This represents the experiences of adventure and the other that have been promised in advertising and have been commented on by MacCannell (1999), Urry (1990) and many others in the construction of tourist attractions.

‘New Zealand family’ experiences involve interaction with the landscape through particular activities. In this case the setting is important for both practical and aesthetic considerations. Places should be convenient to visit and safe for children to play in but they should also differ from the ‘familiar suburban and backyard scenes’ that ‘they are escaping from’ (Fairweather and Swaffield 2002: 292). Family play can therefore occur in natural surroundings or other areas that offer a new and different experience such as a museum. This kind of interaction-based anticipation of experience acts on mainly behavioural, or vicarious levels of processing.

‘Picturesque Landscape’ is related to the aesthetic appreciation of a place. Rather than reacting on an emotive level where nature is seen as peaceful or powerful and ‘awe inspiring’ the composition of a scene is consciously admired. This could be take the form of combinations of elements such as sky, trees, and water or the integration of a house into landscape or the architecture of a particular building. Picturesque landscapes have an ‘aesthetic quality located between the sublime (awe inspiring) and the beautiful (the serene) (Fairweather and Swaffield 2002: 292). This is a more aesthetic, reflective appreciation of particular sights (or sites) and a consumption of place based more on ‘gazing’.

Representations are the building blocks from which individuals form their mental constructions of place. The construction process involves the making of multiple comparisons – with other places and images, and in relation to identity and image of self. This idealised representation that Goffman (1974: 41) and later MacCannell (1999) call a ‘model for not a model of’ is presented as a marketing tool, and is used to help create and perpetuate a branded destination image or stereotype with particular associated traits and

feelings (the 'influence'). The process of integrating the image presented with the consumer's own mental image of place can be explored using Norman's processing model. In this context the aesthetics and beauty of the presented image influence the consumer on an affective level, and the associations of self image and vicarious experience are constructed and modified in the reflective level of processing.

The image of New Zealand is constructed by representations in variety of sources, websites, guide books, books, and travellers' stories. The country is perceived to be both similar to and very different from most participants' home countries. It is far away, a simpler place; physically exotic but culturally familiar for western tourists like the ones interviewed. Excitement is provided through adventure activities and nature, not through contact with exotic local peoples. Experiencing the 'Other' - reconnection with a simpler - time is through the timelessness of nature and the more relaxed pace of life, not through living 'participant-observer' style with native hill tribes in Thailand for example.

Participant's impressions of this country are in line with its established marketing image, of a place of adventure, of being close to nature (Morgan and Pritchard 2004). On a visceral level imagery is appealing, creates a positive affective state towards the country and reinforces positive stereotypes consistent with the brand image Tourism New Zealand desires to convey. On a reflective and behavioural level New Zealand is perceived as a place where one can get close to nature, off the beaten track, 'reconnect', simplify one's life, perhaps even rediscover oneself.

This kind of consumption of sign involves both gazing and performance. In concluding their research on visitor perceptions of travel experiences to Rotorua. Fairweather and

Swaffield (2002: 294) note the importance of both performing and gazing in New Zealand experiences. They suggest that the 'graded experience of the Elizabethan theatre' as a useful metaphor for explanation where 'some of the audience become active participants, some choose to remain detached spectators, and others move between the two.' In addition they point out that watching others members of the audience perform forms part of the overall experience.

Munt (1994), using the example of brochures produced by Kestours for the Caribbean, notes that advertising for 'authentic' tourist experiences can take a minimalist 'truthful' approach. Printed on what appears to be recycled manilla paper and using only line drawings and a pair of small black and white photos the text of the brochure states:

The Caribbean is a tropical destination....Ants, mosquitoes and cockroaches thrive in hot climates and whilst usually harmless are sometimes a nuisance. In the long hours of sunshine, lack of rain can mean erratic water and electricity supplies – really hot water is rare. The Caribbean is a long way away. Your flight takes at least 8 hours and even in modern wide-bodied jets, it can be tedious as can protracted entry formalities when you arrive....The Caribbean is very different to Britain. To enjoy our holiday to the full, you must accept its shortcomings as a challenge and as an enriching experience rather than a reason for complaint. (Kestours, The Caribbean Holiday Guide, 1991/92: 1 reproduced in Munt 1994:103)

This is a quite obvious appeal to consumers' adventurous spirit.

In *Tourist Agency*, Maccannell (2001) comments that guidebooks frequently point out shortcomings in describing places such as historic shrines or natural attractions like mountains or lakes in terms of not quite reaching tourist expectations – as not quite suitably framed for Urry's 'tourist gaze'. Shaffer (2004) noted that her Steves, her guidebook of choice when touring Europe, took this approach in certain passages.

With the exception of a few splurges, rooms downtown feel like Lisbon does downtown: tired and well worn. To sleep in a well-located place with local character, you'll be climbing dark stairways into a world of cracked plaster, taped handwritten signs, dingy carpets, cramped and confusing floor plans, and ramshackle plumbing. ... While old Lisbon seems a little sleazy at night, with normal discretion my listings are safe. (Steves 595 in Shaffer 2004: 153)

Shaffer (2004: 153) points out that such of descriptions help to build Steves' 'career and credibility as someone a traveller can trust' who offers a kind of 'back door' to Europe. However these criticisms frame the travel experience in a particular way. Although Shaffer found that her own backpacking experiences of Europe were often well reflected by the descriptions found in Steves' guidebook, occasionally she noticed disparities, for example she did not find Lisbon to be 'sleazy' and this made her question how her perceptions of place might actually be restricted by these representations.

The participants in this research often responded negatively to depictions on the newzealand.com website that they saw as catering to tourists rather than 'adventurous' travellers. A good example of this phenomenon is participant reactions to a short video on the website (figure 17) depicting a middle aged wealthy couple engaging in various activities, such as sailing, horse riding on the beach, fishing and golfing. Viewers thought this catered to tourist interests but not to travellers like themselves.

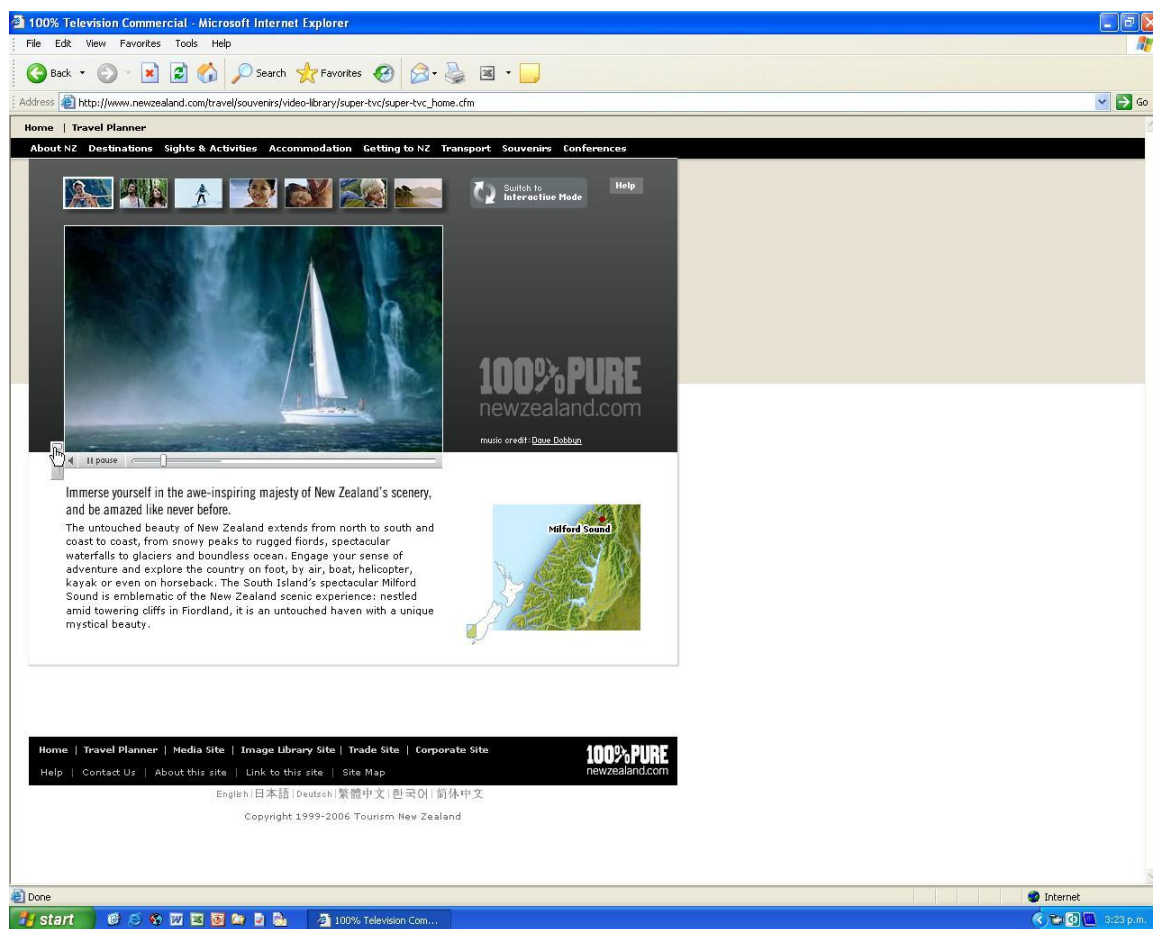


Figure 17: Streaming Video, newzealand.com website
 Morae screenshot, video section, newzealand.com website
 (www.newzealand.com/travel/souvenirs/video-library/super-tvc/super-tvc_home.cfm, June 2006)

Reaction to an attractive couple who appear to be in their forties sailing a large yacht:

'See this is what a tourist needs... oh yeah we're loaded we can go rent a yacht.'

When the same couple is seen in a Kauri forest, standing very close to a large Kauri tree:

'They can't stand that close to a Kauri tree, because of the delicate roots.'

Commenting on a scene where a helicopter takes skiers along a scenic mountain route and lands so they can ski on the mountain.

'Again heliskiing \$700...that's very expensive, very touristy.'

Horse riding on the beach:

'I wouldn't want to go ride horses on the beach because I could do that back home.'

In reaction to a lone fisherman on a river:

'Fishing does not interest me it interests old men that have a lot of money.'

The people and the activities depicted in the video clip clearly did not fit with backpacker images of how they would like to experience New Zealand.

'This is more geared towards tourists - In all that video it gives me the impression that you need a lot of money ... not to go to new Zealand. But to do all that stuff.'

This was not the only image that did not resonate with backpackers. One did not like the image with the children depicted below (figure 18) because she could not identify with the children in this scene.

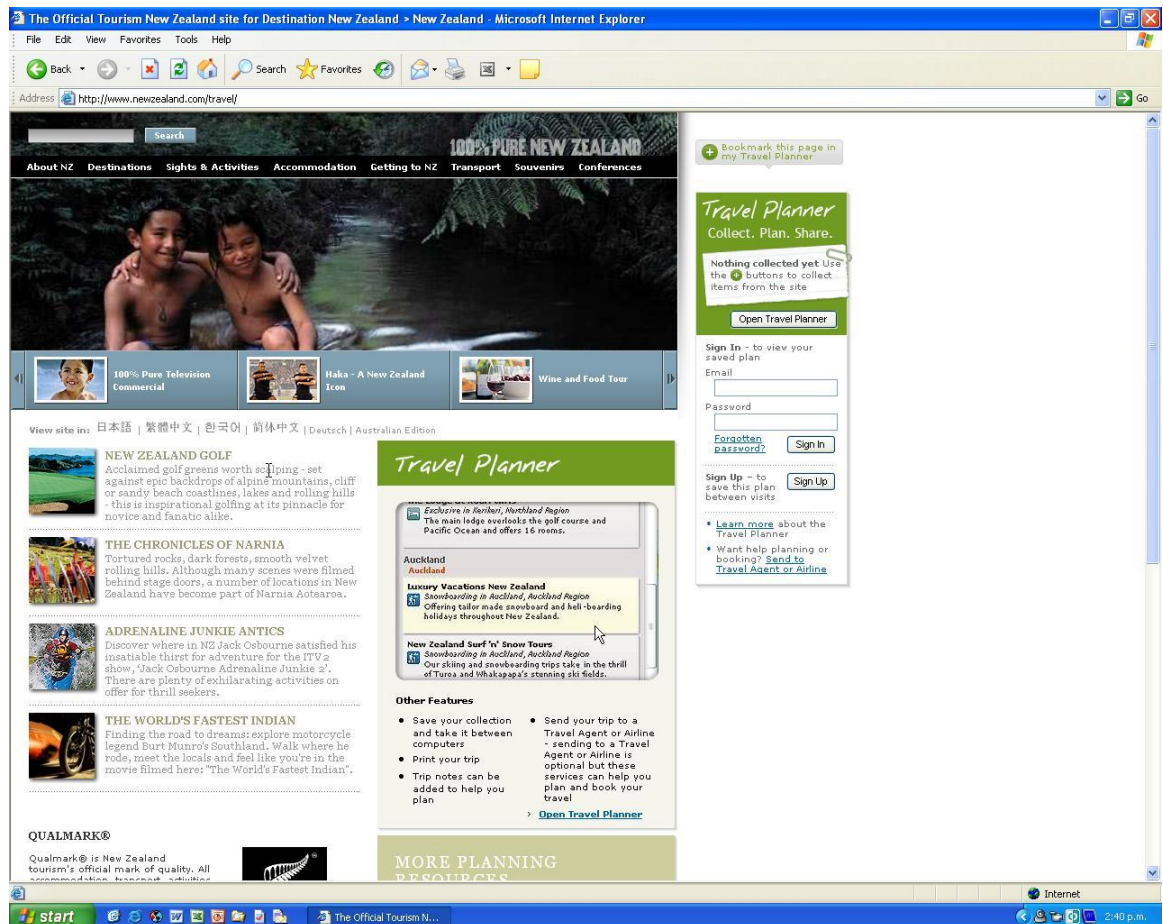


Figure 18: Children, newzealand.com website
Morae screenshot, travel section, newzealand.com website
(www.newzealand.com/travel/, June 2006)

'I like having people in pictures where I can imagine myself doing that. Maybe I just can't imagine myself being a child somewhere. When I go there I want to see people... I don't to see some children sitting on a river.'

These examples show the importance of depictions that resonate with the backpacker view of self. De Chernatony (1993: 178) suggests a useful metaphor here in terms of a 'brand wardrobe' where selections are made according to their ability to help express particular 'emotions, personalities, and roles'. If the representations of the website are framed from a marketing perspective as a series of 'touch points' (Diller et al. 2006: 19), designed to convey a particular 'brand' essence such as authentic nature and adventure in the case of New Zealand, then clearly those 'touch points' have failed in this case.

6.7 Credibility and voice

Research has shown that users' evaluation of the credibility of websites does not generally involve a methodical examination of the site author and credentials (Burbules 2001, Mitra and Watts 2002, Warnick 2004). Instead, factors such as the perceived relevance and usefulness of the site content, usability, and 'professionalism' serve as 'signs of trustworthiness and expertise' (Warnick 2004: 262). Participants liked the general layout and presentation of the newzealand.com website (figure 19) and often commented that it looked very 'professional'.

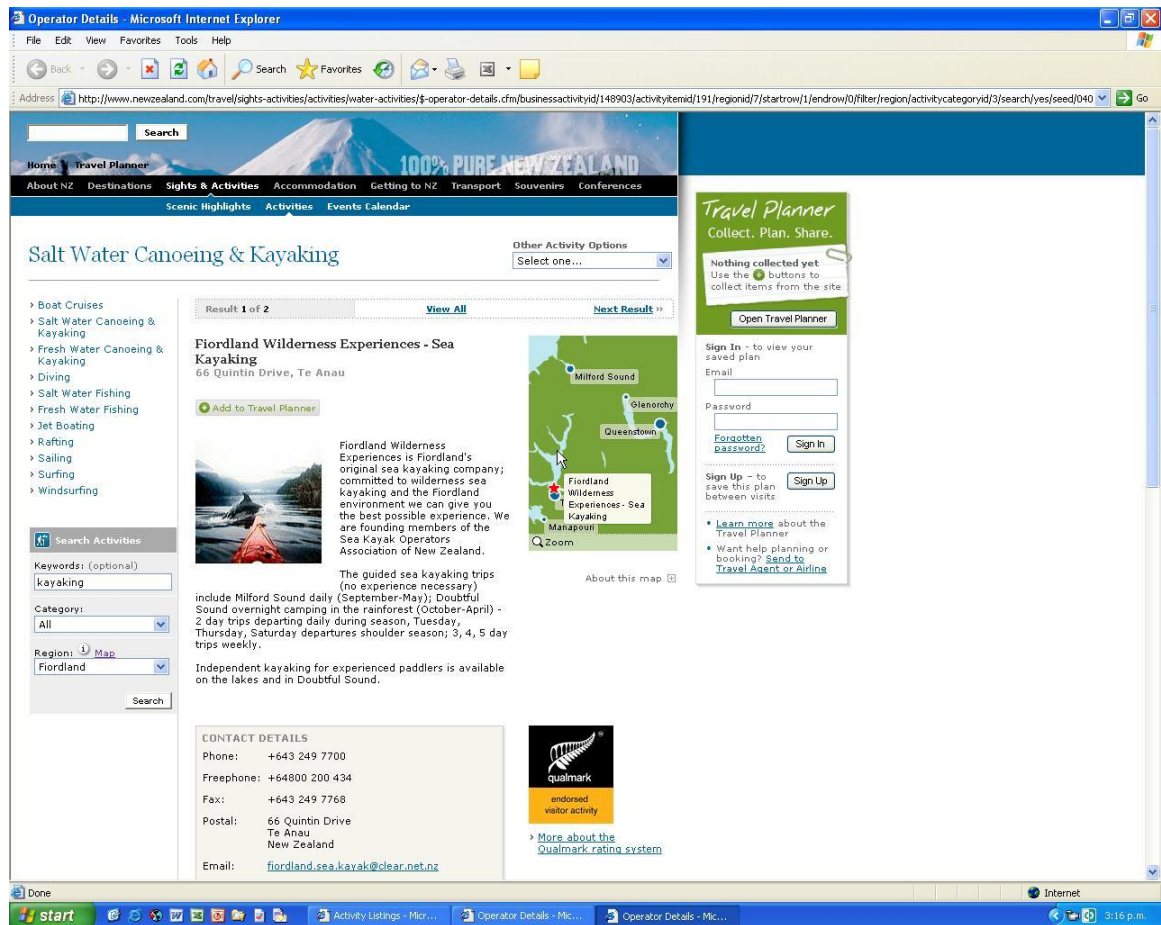


Figure 19: Salt Water Canoeing and Kayaking, newzealand.com website

Morae screenshot, activities section, newzealand.com website

([www.newzealand.com/travel/sights-activities/activities/water-activities/\\$-operator-details.cfm/](http://www.newzealand.com/travel/sights-activities/activities/water-activities/$-operator-details.cfm/), June 2006)

'This page gives a positive impression of the activity. The picture has an impact, it's really appealing, very high quality.'

The style and tone of content also plays an important part in the perceived credibility of a website. Using the metaphor of the voice to analyze Internet discourses, Mitra and Watts (2002: 490) argue that authenticity is the key to 'legitimizing a voice' over the Internet. Authenticity here is a 'multi-dimensional construct that includes notions of truth, accuracy, eloquence, and an ontic connection with lived experience', in other words '[a]n authentic voice speaks of a lived experience in an ethical and accurate genuine way'.

Arguments must be presented eloquently, and the reader must be able to ‘evaluate the rhetorical strategies of the speaker’ (Mitra and Watts 2002: 491). Meaning is the product of negotiations between speaker and reader where neither has any inherent authority to legitimize the source. Hence authenticity is not considered to be inherent in the source, it must be earned in the consciousness of the viewer. Mitra and Watts point out that in order to make competent judgments about the authenticity of a representation, the reader has to consider the history and conditions of its production, and the techniques used to present its argument. However many researchers have argued that frequently contextual conditions are ignored in the analysis of an online sources and assessments of their accuracy or trustworthiness are based purely on the perceived eloquence of the source (Burbules, 2001, Mitra and Watts 2002, Warnick 2004).

6.8 Travel journals

The role of narrative is important in interacting with websites and making evaluations of the message that they provide (Burbules, 2001, Mitra and Watts 2002). The act of viewing these representations online often prompted participants to recount their experiences in the ways described in the two previous chapters in this thesis. This illustrates how computers may act as artifacts for memory props for storytelling (Turkle 1997) where travel experiences depicted on the world wide web can be compared with personal constructions.

In addition participants were particularly interested in other travellers’ stories that were presented in the ‘Travel Journals’ (figure 19) section of the newzealand.com website. Many marketers now argue that authenticity has overtaken other considerations as the primary differentiating factor in consumers’ minds, such as quality, price and availability - though

these factors are still important (Pine and Gilmore 2007). Authenticity occurs when the experience presented by the marketer resonates successfully with the consumer (Peterson 2005). Because such representations must fit with consumers' self image, expectations and values, one particularly effective way to communicate these experiences is through the opinions and accounts of other travellers online in weblogs and forum postings. This user generated content can be perceived by consumers to be more genuine and assumed to be free from any marketing bias or other vested interests.

'I think tourism websites in general are trying to sell the country to you. Obviously they are not going to say don't go to that place because it's not that exciting... So you are not necessarily getting a true sense of the destination.'

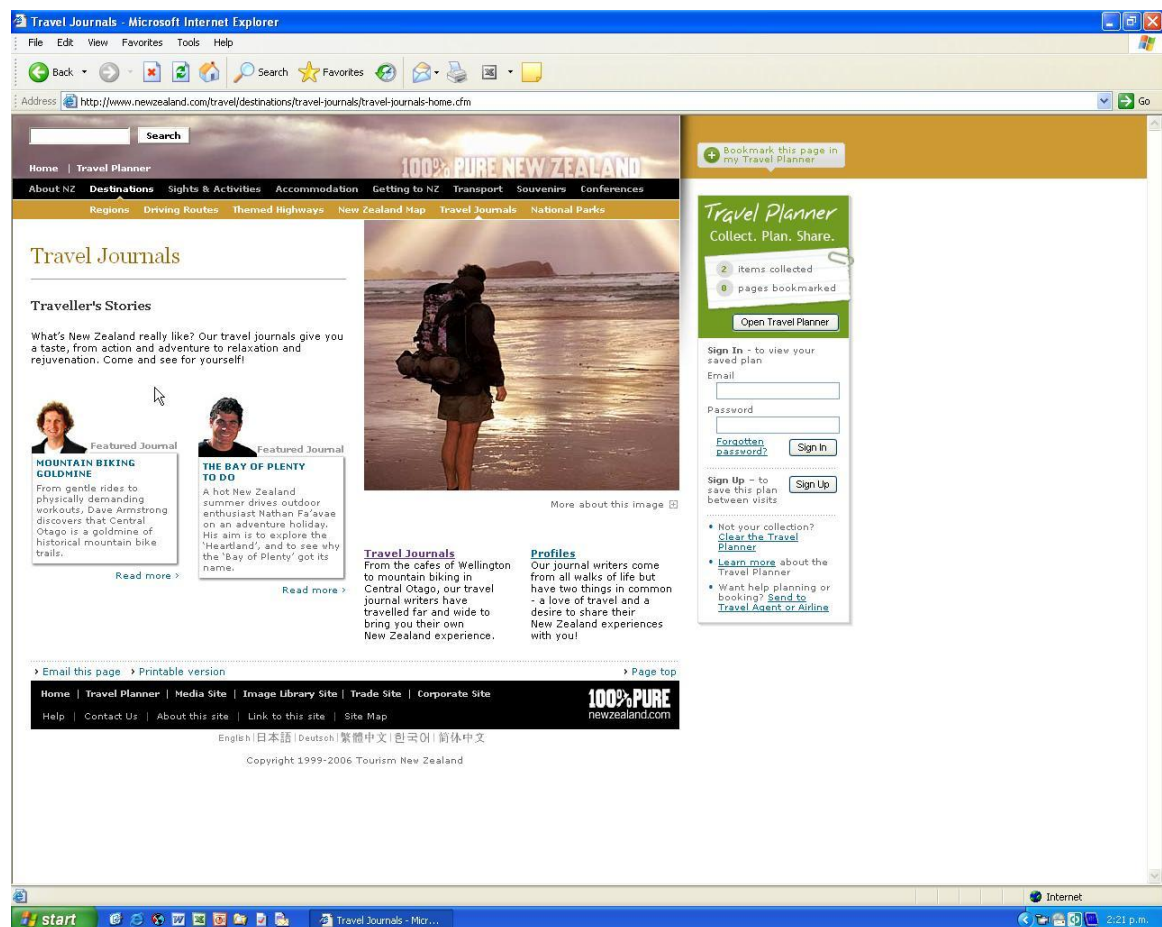


Figure 20: Travel Journals, newzealand.com website
 Morae screenshot, destinations section, newzealand.com website
 (www.newzealand.com/travel/destinations/travel-journals/travel-journals-home.cfm, July 2006)

Applying Mitra and Watt's (2002) metaphor, this section of the website provides a 'traveller voice' narrating stories of New Zealand. It offers an opportunity for participants to see how other people experienced places, and for those who had already been there to relive their experiences and to make comparisons.

'I clicked on it because I think it's interesting to read about people's actual experiences of it because I suppose especially with a tourism website they are trying to sell a destination so obviously they are going to put out all the positive aspects...whereas if you actually read someone's journal you're able to get a sort of real view and a real experience so yeah I kind of prefer reading stuff like that.'

'it's quite easy to exaggerate a places appeal...In a way one city is much like another city or towns being quite similar and advertising to make a big deal of a farmer's market or something. You're not really going to travel four or five hours to see this town just because they have a market.'

After I went black water rafting or skydiving or something you're so pumped that had I logged on right away, I would have been like "I have to tell people about this".'

Other people's accounts can give a 'real sense of the place' and can provide a more personal feeling of connection with a region.

'I think this is something I would look at when I know where to go to get more information about the place I want to go to. It's always good to have information from people who have actually been there.'

'It's another handy way, I suppose, of getting a personal account of a place rather than just a guide book or something. '

'That's nice ... I think that's always good to read something about any place you go from people who have been there and who recommend what you should see... and where to go

Although it doesn't have many pictures you get the impression that this page can tell you things that you don't find somewhere else. I think it's mainly the word secret which tricks you [laughs].'

However the language of these travel journals (figure 20) often appeared to the viewers as too polished, too contrived, looking as if they were written by marketers rather than 'real'

travellers. ‘Who wrote this? It’s too neat and tidy, look at all the headings....it reads more like a guidebook or a brochure’ was a typical response to the content of the Travel Journals after reading a few pages.

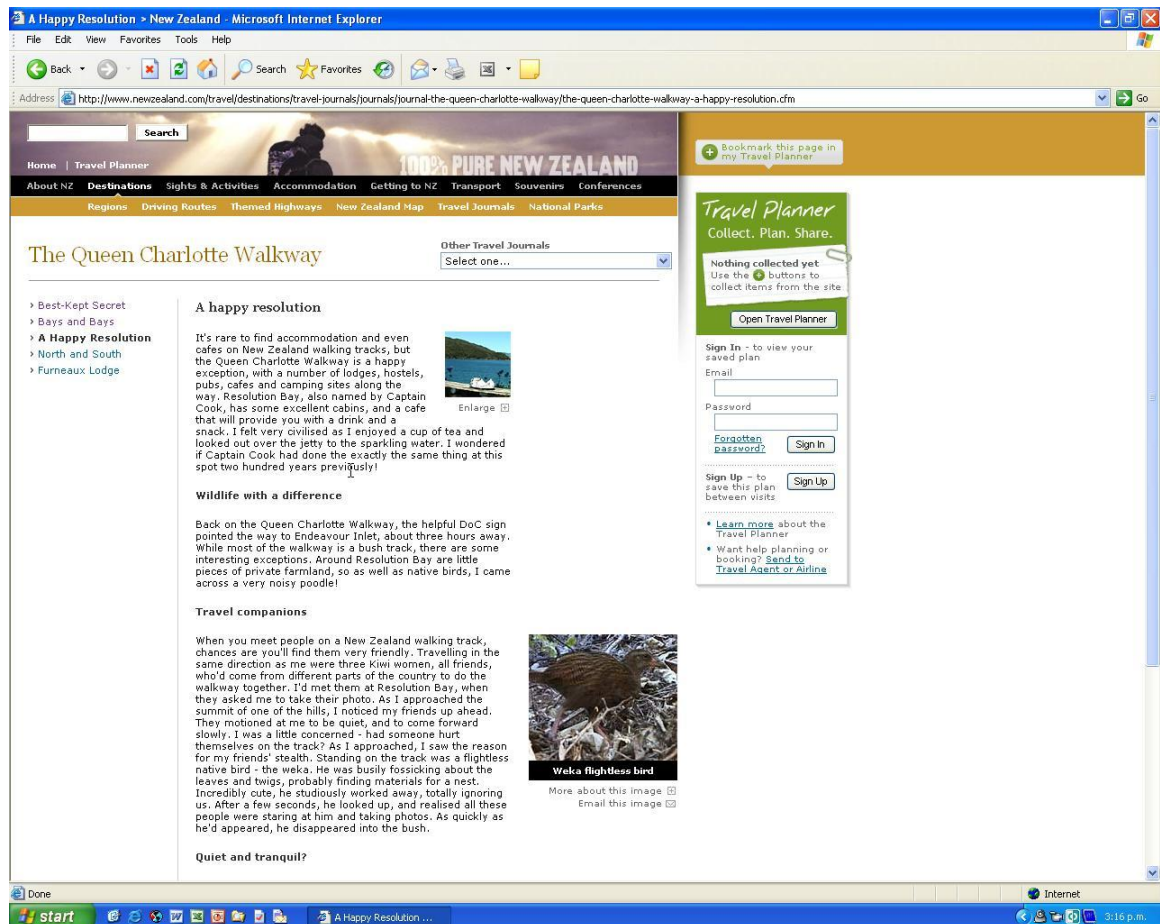


Figure 21: Travel Journals: Queen Charlotte Walkway, newzealand.com website

Morae screenshot, destinations section, newzealand.com website

(www.newzealand.com/travel/destinations/travel-journals/journals/journal-the-queen-charlotte-walkway/the-queen-charlotte-walkway-a-happy-resolution.cfm, July 2006)

Participants analyzed the credibility of a narrative presented on a website the same way they would evaluate the plausibility of a plotline in a film. The emotional impact on a visceral level, the resonance of the situation depicted with their own frameworks on a vicarious level, and the eloquence of the metaphors presented on a voyeuristic level, all contribute to the overall success of the website’s message.

The authenticity of the story provided is not inherent (Peterson 2005: 1086) but is rather ‘a claim that is made by or for someone, thing, or performance and either accepted or rejected by relevant others.’ Because messages through the Internet are ‘inscribed with the identity and emotions of the speaker’ (Mitra and Watts 2002: 491), individual identities and roles also play an important part in these online representations.

Pauwels (2005: 605) argues that although direct forms of ‘face to face’ interaction are often regarded as more ‘truthful’ than online ones because they allow the receiver can see cues such as body language and tone of voice, the absence of these ‘real-life cues’ in computer-mediated communications may in fact allow people to reveal *more* of their identities. This is because the communicator does not have to deal with the immediate consequences that may occur in a negative reaction to a live conversation such as rejection, laughter, and judgmental comments. Also the asynchronous nature of the communication in weblogs and forum postings allows the creator some time for reflection, and the opportunity to provide a more thoughtful and possibly accurate expression of their opinion on a matter than one constructed in direct conversation. Pauwels (2005: 605) points out that, like any communication, representations of opinion over the Internet involve techniques for ‘identity construction, impression management and conscious self-presentation.’

Goffman (1959), in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, frames human behaviour as a form of play where people perform particular roles in given situations in order to manage the impressions of other. Performances are made in order to match up to the perceived expectations of the audience and mismatches between the actor’s performance and the audiences expectations will have negative consequences that may include a loss of

credibility. Similarly Turner has shown the negative emotional responses associated with a misread or mismatched role in a given situation include fear, anger, uncertainty and blame. Both Peterson (2005) and Hughs (2000) have pointed out how impressions of institutions, products and places are managed in a similar manner through various ‘voices’ in different mediums. These can include press releases, forum postings, documentaries and virtually any other form of communication. Therefore different voices, when they are eloquent or authoritative, act as authentication devices. Their credibility is determined by the resonance of their argument, and the provider of the voice, with the intended audience. Many of these online voices exist in the form of user generated content such as blogs and wall postings in social networking sites rather than opinions expressed through mass media such as traditional news networks. The personal connection to the provider of the voice is therefore much stronger, showing in effect that for backpackers as for other online communicators:

the struggle over meaning and authenticity of a voice also becomes connected to the individual identities (as opposed to the corporate images of media moguls) of every single speaker in the discursive space of the Internet. (Mitra and Watts 2002: 491)

6.9 Representations of backpackers

A key theme in participants’ commentary on backpacker imagery was the appropriateness of the picture compared with their own impressions and experiences of backpacking. The ‘Backpacking New Zealand’ section (figure 21) of the website was often their first point of interest when on the newzealand.com website. Examples of how representations fit with self image are apparent in the differences in opinion expressed by participants when they examined this web page.



Figure 22: Backpacking New Zealand, newzealand.com website

Morae screenshot, activities section, newzealand.com website

(www.newzealand.com/travel/sights-activities/activities/land-activities/backpacking-new-zealand/index.cfm, July 2006)

Some were reminded of other images of New Zealand that they had seen, and thought it typified what they had associated with New Zealand: mountains and lots of hiking.

'It's really about being active, being outdoors. Really exploring not just getting to a place by bus and just getting off the bus taking a picture. Really hands on if you really want to see a place, a really original place then you need to do some walking.'

'I would hike but I'm probably not the greatest hiker. My parents used to drag me along when I was a child. I will do it [hiking] but at my own pace. I'll do it when I want, it's not a case of 'I'm here for three weeks [so] today I'll do it even though I don't feel like it'. So I'll either do it when I feels like it or if I meet somebody who wants to also do it and I think 'yeah lets do it, it's going to be fun !' [it's] a motivational kind of thing. It's always about the people you travel with if you get a connection with the person then you have a lot of fun even if you're doing the crappiest job in the world, like... fruitpicking.'

Many liked the connotations of the image depicting a cyclist on a dirt road, saying that it encapsulated the independent nature of the travel experience they desired.

'it's about being active, being out there ... just being .. independent and not being dependent on a bus company or .. a tour company it just creates the feeling that.. you can do it on your own or you can find people like in the first picture, however you want to do it.'

If you want to discover the "real" new Zealand it's best for you to get out there, get active... just feel it basically.'

'These pictures match exactly the pictures that I had in my mind having been here two weeks. People with backpacks with the mountains and having the lakes and the beautiful scenery. All the pictures that I see are really about contrast. Really original looks the same as it has for years and years.'

'It creates the picture that it's not overused, [not] mass tourism ...you can still be independent, you can still ... explore new Zealand the way you want to.'

Other participants did not identify with this image, seeing it as representing tramping or hiking rather than backpacking. They questioned the fact that backpackers in the picture were wearing jeans, and this made them skeptical about the image. Participants wanted to identify themselves within an image portrayed, to feel an affinity between themselves and the place or activity pictured. Some asked if the website was created by a tourism department because backpacking is described there as a kind of holiday. Backpacking, they thought, was a much more involved experience than a holiday. The latter was a short trip 'when you go for a couple of weeks and have accommodation all sorted' and involved 'just hanging around' as the primary activity.

'It seems to me that the person who wrote the text might not be a backpacker ... it sounds strange [for example] "more and more people are now choosing this kind of holiday"...I think backpacking is more... a way of life in the sense that...It is a holiday in the end [but] you're also working and trying to make a living.'

'That's tramping to me, not backpacking. To me when you say backpacking in New Zealand and you show that ... I thought that meant tramping not backpacking.'

'Backpacking is not so much a vacation as it is like ... more significant you're not just going to take your mind off [things] you're going to learn about something. ..you want to do it all.'

Backpacking was associated more with socialising and meeting different backpackers.

Many participants felt that the emphasis of the experiences portrayed should be on people interacting with others, not with scenery.

'I wouldn't put a backpacker in a scenic picture, I would put them getting off a bus with a big pack... carrying everything on your back literally, thinking of hostels, bunk beds... being in a city, ...in your typical backpacker clothes: zip off shorts, very neutral multifunctional boots, day back, sweater, layering.'

The clothing depicted was also seen as unrealistic

'Is he wearing jeans? You don't wear jeans with a backpack on, you're just gonna boil. When you put them in a [scenic] background it's automatic that you are going to be camping in the middle of nowhere to me.'

Clothing for backpackers was seen to be about functionality, and it was appropriate to sacrifice appearance for this reason, to allow the traveller to be more interactive with their environment.

'If I see a girl doing her hair in the morning I think woah, high maintenance, you really shouldn't. I don't know how you are going to survive you are putting way too much energy into making yourself look good and you're missing out. You can't be high maintenance and be a backpacker. You're focusing so much on looking good you're not going to go tramping, doing anything that makes you dirty or makes you look stupid in front of boys... You're just too young really. If you're high maintenance you're obviously caring too much about what people think of you to have a good time. .. back in high school mentality. You're carrying a backpack around, you're not going to look good doing it.'

'Backpacking is not about sitting drinking a martini; it's about...doing physical stuff I think. I regret not surfing while I was here, being on the beach, getting in the waves.'

Ideas about backpacker identity affected the way in which participants saw the images.

They revealed a need to identify themselves within an image portrayed. Website imagery

also has to be seen to be catering to backpackers, to create an affinity between them and the place or activity being represented. The congruity of the clothing depicted here plays an important part in judgments about the authenticity of the representation. Nippert-Eng (1996: 51) has pointed out ‘clothing’s essential linkage with self and its provocative power’ arguing that because clothing is attached so closely to the wearer, it is an ever present and immediate prop to a particular expression of self. For some participants jeans and made up hair were not an appropriate uniform for backpackers. Shaffer (2004: 147) lists the backpack itself as the most essential signifier of self-as-backpacker:

With the backpack on, I felt bound by the expectations of those around me. On the one hand, I felt more courageous, independent, and worldly, even though I was not. To put it in other words, I felt less like a tourist. The backpack gave me confidence that I could complete the journey successfully.

Kjolsrod (2003: 463) points out that costumes and props are important because ‘human beings operate more easily when some of the attributes of characters and situations are visible’. Wearing a backpack makes it easier for one to think like a backpacker; seeing someone else wearing a backpack makes it much easier to recognize them as a backpacker. Postrel (2003: 113) uses two phrases, ‘I like that’ and ‘I’m like that’ to explain how authenticity can be personally determined. One can see another person’s appearance, for example hair, jewelry or apparel and think ‘I like that’. Others can go a step further in their appreciation, deciding that whatever signals they perceive from this particular expression of style conforms to their personal constructions of self and identity, and adopt the style themselves in a declaration to others that ‘I’m like that.’ Pine and Gilmore (2007: 94) suggest that this same process occurs in ‘every personal decision and economic purchase that people make’ where offerings (I like that) must match self image (I’m like that). The quotes by some of the participants in this study indicate that the corollary is also true, one

can see a depiction of a particular outfit or style of appearance and decide ‘I’m not like that’, thus rejecting the offering.

This means that there are several aspects to the way in which an image appeals through different levels of processing. On a visceral level it needs to be aesthetically pleasant in the way, for example, of calm blue water, green land, sunny skies, and or exciting action shots. On behavioural and reflective levels the image has to depict activities that allow the viewer to engage with them. Kotler and Gertner (2004: 43) take the view that this process of authentication is dominated by schemas. This is because, in situations of low involvement especially, people tend to be ‘sloppy cognitive processors’ who ‘resist changing or adjusting their cognitive structures’ preferring to adapt what they are seeing ‘to fit what they know’. In the case of learning about a country they may add information not present or rearrange material to make it more compatible with existing knowledge. They are also more likely to notice things they expect to see which confirm their expectations. The exceptions to this are when misrepresenting an image has a negative effect on them or if there are evident benefits to revising their existing schemata. One result of is that ‘country images can be persistent and difficult to change’ (Kotler and Gertner 2004: 43).

While Kotler and Gertner’s depiction is accurate is also downplays travellers’ active engagement in the processes of authentication. More agency can be attributed to them by considering how the theme of personally constructed authenticity fits with the notion of adventure. Wanderer (1987: 21) cites Simmel’s (1965) insight that it is the *form* and not the *content* of an experience that makes the adventure. He reframes an adventurer as ‘an ephemeral role incumbent engaged in symbolic work’.

The adventure is presented in terms of symbolic conversions of the content of life's experiences—physical things, social things, events, and persons—

into objects of adventure. The form of experiencing engages the adventurer in symbolic work in which she or he symbolically synthesizes, antagonizes, and compromises Simmel's fundamental categories of life: certainty-uncertainty, chance-necessity, and passivity-activity (Wanderer 1987: 21)

In other words, adventure is a state of mind; whether in front of a computer screen or on a tour bus, people are adventurers if they think they are.

Discursive constructions of experience as adventure are actively framed in a process of authentication. Jones and Smith (2005: 937) draw on interpretive approaches to identity formation to suggest that the construction of authenticity is based on 'a series of rhetorical claims which are legitimized by established cultural discourses, while at the same time re-working them'. Tourists seek adventure and use their imaginations to create adventurous places; they will even 'travel in search of the original ... where it never existed' Timothy and Boyd (2003: 245). Such practices demonstrate that authenticity is not necessarily 'synonymous with historical accuracy' (Peterson 1997: 5). A prime example of how a non-existent place can be considered authentic can be found in the way in which New Zealand came to represent J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth (Jones and Smith 2005, Morgan et al. 2004). The Lord of the Rings movie showcases New Zealand scenery as it creates Tolkien's mythical world. Riley et al (1998) point out that content within a film, such as symbolic content, themes, performers, and landscape features can serve as markers that attract visitors to a place. In these cases the 'associated location' becomes 'tangible evidence of the icon' (Riley et al 1998:924).

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This thesis has explored human experiences in the context of computing and travel. What has emerged from the research is the similarity of underlying themes in each of these areas: self and other, authenticity, roles, and emotions. Because play and adventure frame how people experience both computers and travelling they constitute a key theme for understanding this relationship. Simmel (1971) has described adventure as a state of mind where one moves attentively from the cares and concerns of everyday life to the different and unexpected. Travel is a classic application of this phenomenon which involves physical relocation from the everyday, and also a movement of the imagination. Ordinary acts performed in a different place can have new significance and enjoyment as they are framed through the perspective of the traveller whose attention is removed from the demands of everyday life and redirected to the pleasure of travel.

Similarly computers offer an ‘escape’ from everyday life. They provide simulations through games, websites, and multimedia to capture the imagination. Computers are ‘interactive beasts’ that allow active play and participation in the creation of ‘what if’ scenarios (Turkle 1997). Humans can engage in a creative relationship with a computer to explore images of self and place. Significantly for this research, computers, and media in general, can provide scripts for the performance of specific roles. Shaffer (2004), for example, says that before she set off to explore Europe as a backpacker, she needed some form of guide on how to *behave* as a backpacker. Many forms of media including guidebooks, documentaries, film, brochures, and websites clearly also have a part in shaping how people experience place.

This framing of experience has two parts: the nature of particular places, and how one should behave when traveling. Both involve anticipation, imagination, and imagery constructed from available representations. Not all sources of scripting information are considered to be appropriate to a particular traveller. For example, Shaffer (2004: 145) says of choosing her guidebook that ‘like performance roles, there were guidebooks that were written for me, and there were others that were not’. She rejected both those that appeared to be catering to younger ‘party oriented’ backpackers and others that offered information for wealthy luxury oriented travellers. Like Schaffer, participants in this research choose their scripts according to how well they fitted with both self-image and their views on how the traveller role should be played. The scripts themselves, then, are liminal constructions formed by combining external and internal knowledge.

In this thesis, access to this process of construction was through travellers’ narratives. Participants told stories about themselves, about their travels, and about what they were experiencing as they interacted with the website. They were seeking some sense of an ‘authentic other’ – place, person, experience. New Zealand, for them, was a space of nature and adventure that, free from the stress and complexities of everyday, allowed them to connect with both nature and friendly locals and play the role of an adventurer. Here the nature of the particular relationship between participants and ‘other’ is important: the authenticity of this tourist ‘other’ is not an inherent quality. Instead it is the product of a ‘probing comparison between self and Other’ filtered by the ‘self’s longings’ (Bendix 1997: 17).

Sometimes these stories were about past travels and experiences in New Zealand, prompted by the images and text describing places they had visited; at other times these were stories

of anticipation, about how they expected to experience a particular place. Elsrud (1998: 312) points out that travel provides 'a period of time that is not to any large extent structured around clock-time, duties or obligations of the home culture' and that alternative structures are provided by the backpacker culture through 'routines, common travel routes and mythology'. Backpacker culture also accredits status to travel practices that are perceived to be adventurous and difficult to achieve since, as Elsrud (1998: 313) puts it, 'It takes some work and effort' to assume the role a 'real' traveller.

Role is a particularly valuable theoretical concept here because its flexibility of meaning and use permit a range of analytical applications to capture ideas of behavioural expectations for particular situations, normative behaviours for defined status positions, and resources for acquiring status. The term also embraces the idea of role as strategic presentation of self (Goffman 1959) and Callero's (1994) view of roles as 'cultural objects that signify who people are, what they are doing, and how they should be treated' (Turner 2007: 132).

Interaction between people is a process of role-taking and role-making where each person perceives the other's role in a given situation and adopts a complementary role, for example buyer/seller, employer/employee, parent/child. An understanding of another person's role is dependent on successful interpretation of the signs provided by that person, and the situation. It is important to be able to trust these signs. Turner (2007: 121-122) points out that humans have a fundamental need to trust others in order to enter into exchanges to have their needs met.

When we experience trust, other needs are more readily met, thus ratcheting up the positive emotions that come from not only trusting others but also from feeling that self will be verified, that exchanges of resources will

realize a profit, and the a sense of group inclusion will be achieved, and that the situation is as it appears.

In order to make judgments on the authenticity of a particular role people ‘carry inventories of roles in their stocks of knowledge’ (Turner 2007 132) that are accessed in transactional situations, including the purchase of travel experiences. Similarly, people make use of their stocks of knowledge when interacting with media, so that the signs provided by a representation must be an appropriate response to the role that the consumer of the sign wishes to play, and thus promise a trustworthy and ‘authentic’ experience.

This role-play has an important impact on the effectiveness of particular representations in media (new or traditional) to a given audience. Backpackers interviewed in this thesis had strong views on who a backpacker was and how a backpacker should experience place. Backpackers, to them, were thoughtful adventurers who took the time and effort to really engage with a place and its locals. Imagery through text, video, and pictures that did not appear to tell a story that was congruous with these views was rejected as too ‘commercial’ or ‘touristic’.

Pine and Gilmore (2007: 5) argue that authenticity has overtaken availability, price and quality as the primary criteria for differentiating between products. Offerings are therefore chosen by consumers on the basis of how well those purchases ‘reflect who they are and how they inspire to be in relation to how they perceive the world’. Jannsen (2007:11) points out that tourism is a liminal experience where potential tourists engage with representations through marketing and popular culture in a kind of ‘imaginative hedonism’. The product of these imaginings is more than simply a ‘referential framework for trip planning’, it is guide for how one should experience place. Lagerkvist (2004: 324) argues that Swedish tourist

writers' experiences of a post world war two New York were 'a highly scripted practice' and that their perspectives on place articulated and perpetuated an overarching 'medial attitude' directing tourist gazes and performances.

New media and 'the explosion of travel related weblogs and Internet sites' (Jannsen 2007:11) that provide not only travel information, but also virtual tours and personal accounts of places and events, make travellers more able to compose personal scripts and to propagate their own views on place. Pine and Gilmore (2007: 17) observe that the most recent medium for self expression is through social networking websites such as Youtube, Myspace and Facebook, which 'enable people to share what they find funny, sad, outrageous, patriotic, telling, compelling, and pretty much any other objective that might apply to one's view of life.' These opinions are also expressed in personal blogs, online reviews, and 'pretty much any website with a published comment field'. At the heart of this is the narrative. Shaffer (2004: 57) points out that backpacking in particular is a form of 'tourism that tries to resist the trappings of tourism' and as such is a 'constant negotiation of identity'. A sense of authenticity in travel is created through 'narrative moments' in journals and postcards where a traveller documents both their trials and tribulations in moving off 'tourism's beaten path' to new discoveries of self and place. Many participants listed backpacker bulletin boards as valuable sources of information, and several indicated that they would like to create some kind of online record of their travels.

The idea of the mirror self, reflected back to us through the judgments of others, comes from Cooley's (1902) social psychological explanation of the constructed nature of social selfhood. Today it is widely recognized that individuals see themselves through the extending range of available media. Photographs, paintings, films, webcams all allow us to

take on other points of view as we define and redefine personal and social identity through existence as both subject and object of such representations. At the same time we also define our selves by identifying with the stories told through traditional technologies of diary, fiction, and other forms of written text.

New media afford an extended repertoire of self-definition effects through the convergence of computer graphics, video, audio, images and text. New media also allow people to very easily tell their own stories, and thus present themselves to a potentially very large Internet audience without the cost, effort, and delay associated with such traditional channels of communication as print and television (Mitra and Watts 2002). For creators of new media, this can only strengthen the importance of considering aspects of self image and role play. Marketers in new media must understand the stories that their audience are telling in order to create complementary engaging stories of their own.

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TRCNZ report 2003/1

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