New Zealand as a Safe Adventure Destination – Is it a Reality?

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A dissertation submitted to
Auckland University of Technology
In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Tourism Studies (MTourS)

2014

School of Hospitality and Tourism

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Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

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Abbreviations

ACC – Accident Compensation Corporation

ATTA - Adventure Travel Trade Association

CAANZ – Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand

HSEAAR – Health and Safety in Employment (Adventure Activities)

MNZ - Maritime New Zealand

MBIE – Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment

NID – National Incident Database

NZMSC – New Zealand Mountain Safety Council

NZPIA – The New Zealand Parachute Industry Association

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to my supervisor Dr Hamish Bremner for guiding me throughout the period of my Master's dissertation. His insights and a very practical approach towards the subject were an inspiration. His thought-provoking advice, and constant encouragement, along with his suggestions have been helpful to refine my research methods and direction.

A special thanks to AUT for giving me such a wonderful platform to hone my skills and develop my abilities.

I also thank my thesis team mate Aditya Veer his support and penetrative ideas which always helped when I was in a tight spot. He has been there to guide me through tough times and keeping me motivated to give my best during the course of this study.

My sincerest gratitude goes to my parents for being a pillar of emotional and intellectual support and for giving me this opportunity to study so far away from home. I am also grateful to my brother, sister and friends for believing in me. Their constant encouragement and inspiration made this journey possible and successful.

Thank you.

Purvi Salla

Abstract

Adventure tourism has grown rapidly over the years playing a vital role in the economic growth of New Zealand as well as attracting numerous travellers from across the globe to the country. However, the adventure tourism industry has recently been in the limelight due to a multiple number of accidents in the adventure activities, which in turn have affected the country's image as a safe adventure destination. The human and health costs associated with adventure incidents have lead the media to focus on the legal accountability of commercial adventure companies.

The overall aim of this research is to analyse the safety practices adopted by the operators and examine the safety management framework implemented in the adventure tourism industry in New Zealand. A content analysis of news articles, blogs, and social networking sites was complimented with an analysis of adventure operator's websites for safety precaution information adopted and published. Furthermore, the Health and Safety in Employment (Adventure Activities) Regulations 2011 were examined.

The results suggest that there are significant loopholes in the new regulations, that there is considerable scope for improvement in the information provided on operators' websites, and there is an ongoing perception that there is a lack of safety precautions. These results are compounded with the fact that the number of reported incidents/accidents within the adventure tourism industry have not decreased during the research period.

Key Words: Adventure Tourism, Risk, Safety, Regulation, New Zealand

Chapter One: Introduction

Research Context

Tourism is an important economic sector for many countries in a globalised world (Yu-Hui, 2011). Adventure tourism is a rapidly growing sector of the tourism industry internationally and a major sector in which tourism activity is growing in New Zealand (Bentley, T., Cater, C., & Page, S., 2010a). The adventure tourism industry is made up of various commercially operated outdoor adventure activities that blend adventure and excitement (Bentley, Page, Meyer, Chalmers, & Laird, 2001b). Adventure travel has been developed out of a broader growth of traditional outdoor and wilderness recreation (Ewart, 1989). It has broadened its scope and appeal among travellers who want to "experience" a vacation by participating in specific activities that are adventure based (Ewart, 1989; Hall & Mcarthur, 1994). According to Sung, Morrison, and O'Leary (1996), the notion of adventure in past leisure and recreation studies can be linked to a tourism perspective by defining adventure travel as 'a trip or travel with the specific purpose of activity participation to explore a new experience, often involving perceived risk or controlled danger associated with personal challenges, in a natural environment or exotic outdoor setting' (p. 66).

New Zealand is considered a major adventure destination and its adventure tourism industry is growing rapidly (Bentley et al., 2010a). In 2012, over 500,000 international holiday tourists participated in some form of adventure activity during their stay in New Zealand. Of those 500,000 participants, 52% were male and 48% were female. The holiday tourists that engaged in adventure tourism activities in New Zealand spent $ 1.6 billion in 2012. International holiday tourists who participate in adventure tourism

activities in New Zealand each spend an average $3,200 (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2012a).

Table 1: Participation in Adventure Tourism by Market

Country of Origin	Percentage of Tourists Participating in Adventure Tourism in 2012
Netherlands	**73%**
Germany	**71%**
Singapore	**67%**
UK	**67%**
Canada	**59%**
Australia	**55%**
USA	**54%**
Korea	**45%**
Japan	**29%**
China	**15%**

Source: Derived from Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (2012a).

Of tourists from New Zealand's holiday visitor markets Dutch, German, Singaporean, UK and Canadian tourists are more likely than others to participate in adventure tourism activities while in New Zealand. Visitors from New Zealand's key Asian markets – Korea, Japan and China – are the least likely to participate in adventure tourism. Only 15% of Chinese tourists take part in some kind of adventure tourism while in New Zealand.

The top adventure activities participated by tourists as explained in Figure 1 are Jet Boating followed by Glacier walking, Luging, Bungy Jumping and Sky Diving. Skiing, Kayaking and White Water Rafting are the least participated in compared to other activities.

Figure 1: Top Adventure Activities

Participation in Adventure Tourism Activities - Top 10 (Holiday Tourists only)
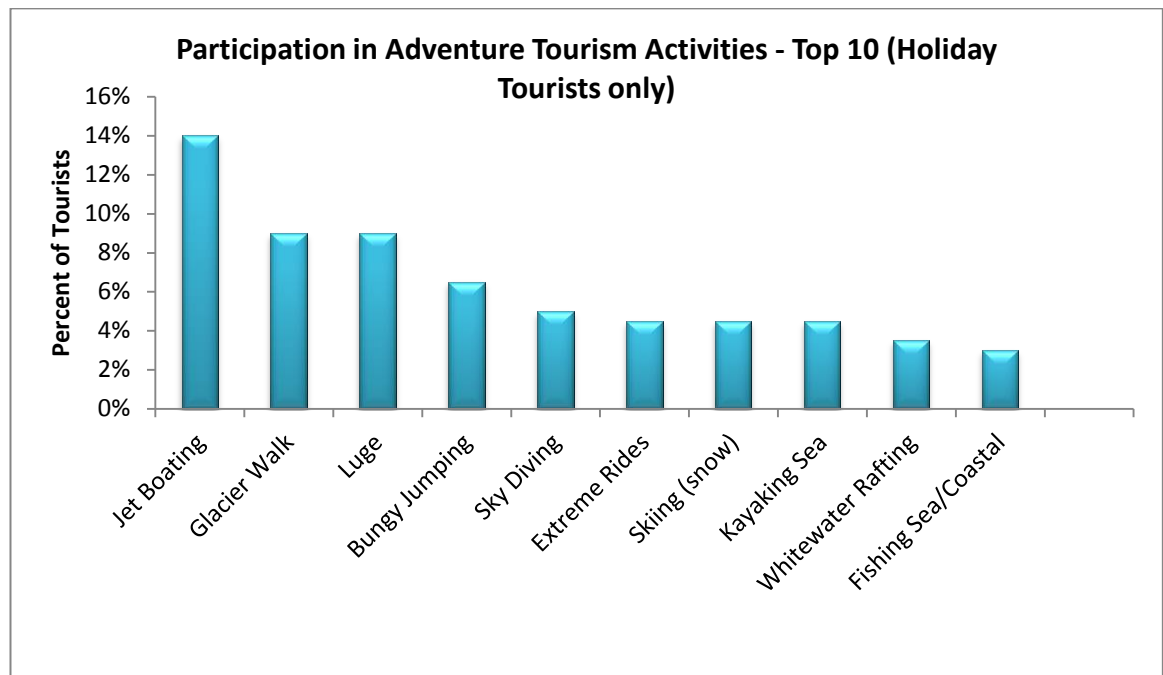
Source: Derived from Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (2012a).

Adventure tourism is a major sector in the tourism market. Adventure tourism safety has received attention and the risks associated with adventure activities are very high (Bentley, Page, & Macky, 2007), with a series of widely publicised incidents in recent years. Risk management has become a major issue for organisations involved in all areas of adventure tourism – including adventure sports centres, specialist tour operators and trekking companies (Bentley, 2005; Bentley et al., 2007; Smartt and Chalmers, 2009).

There has been a growing controversy recently as to whether New Zealand can manage the risk involved in adventure tourism. The tourists' decision in selecting an adventure destination is significantly impacted by the safety precautions adopted by the host region (Bentley, Meyer, Page, & Chalmers, 2001a). The increase in the number of reported accidents and current media interest of incidents occurring in the adventure

tourism sector has a major effect whether adventure tourists choose New Zealand as a destination or not (Monasterio, 2006). Furthermore, it is important to determine and constrain these risks, considering the impact that accidents/fatalities have on participants and their families as well as the operators involved.

Figure 2: Participation in Adventure Tourism (Holiday Tourists only)
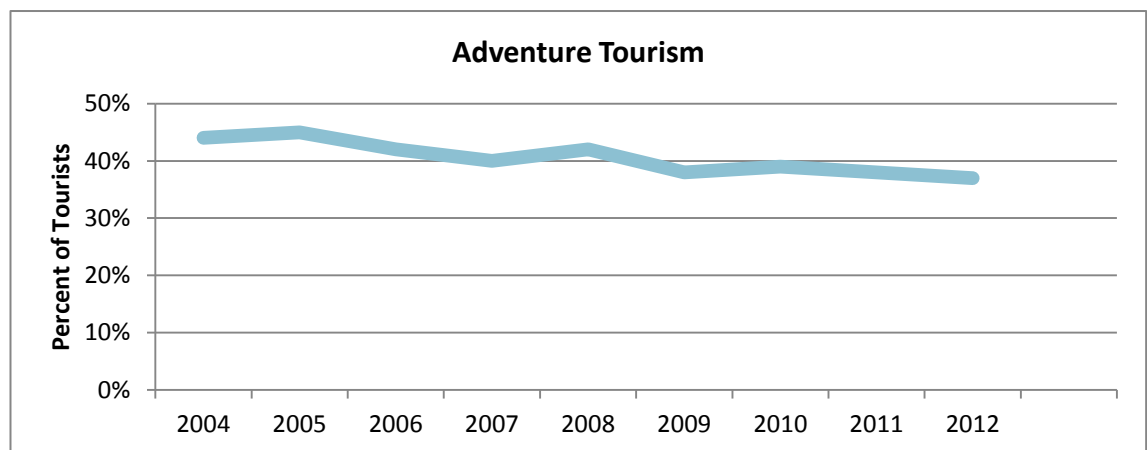
Source: Derived from Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (2012a).

Figure 2 shows the percentage of holiday tourists participating in adventure tourism has declined. Therefore, it is important to identify the cause of accidents in adventure activities, to understand their occurrence in depth and to evaluate reasons behind the controversies occurring in New Zealand's adventure tourism industry. The number of accidents is surprising for an industry, which is based on experiences, tourist enjoyment and consumption of imagery and intangible elements. Negative events such as accident or injury or at the most extreme, death can have a severe negative influence on the industry (Bentley & Page, 2007).

The New Zealand government and tourism industry have been increasingly concerned with the safety and management of adventure activities (Department of Labour, 2010).

Adventure tourism inherently carries risk for participants. No amount of risk management can eliminate this, but the traveller has an absolute right to expect that all the safety measures have been taken to eliminate avoidable risk. Unfortunately, that was not the case in the Fox Glacier crash in which four sky divers and one pilot lost their lives due to negligence of safety precautions (NZ Tourist Safety, 2013a). After this incident the risks associated with adventure tourism and adventure sport activity was increasingly highlighted in media reports of fatalities and serious injuries to overseas and domestic participants in such activities in New Zealand. Hence for the safety of adventure tourism in New Zealand, the Department of Labour has introduced three different adventure regulations (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2012). They are as follows:

- **Adventure regulation**: The Health and Safety in Employment (adventure activities) Regulations 2011 sit under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992. They require those commercial adventure tourism and outdoor operators in New Zealand who provide adventure activities to undergo safety audits and to become registered (Department of Labour, 2012).
- **Part 115 Adventure Aviation:** This prescribes the requirements for the certification and operation of a person conducting an adventure aviation operation (Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand, 2012).
- **Maritime Act**: - This applies to every operator and driver of a commercial jet boat who is operating or driving a commercial jet boat on a river (Maritime New Zealand, 2012).

Despite the introduction of new regulations for adventure activities there are continuous injuries documented due to recent incidents for example, a recent jet boat crash in Queenstown injured two tourists (Thomas, 2013). The emotion related to such incidents recurred when the results of the inquiry into the Carterton ballooning accident in which eleven tourists died stated that the accident was the result of safety procedures not being

followed by the operator and governing body. Those results also stated that the pilot had taken drugs just before flying, which is a similar cause to that in the Fox Glacier accident in 2009 in which all tourists died. This shows that there are some organisations operating at a low standard. The 2013 death of a man while participating in a rope climbing course indicates possible loopholes in the new regulations that allow operators to operate at lower standards (Rutherford, 2013).

The continuous occurrence of accidents in adventure activities clearly indicates that New Zealand still lacks safety in adventure tourism and need strict regulation to fill in those gaps. Therefore the primary aim of this research is to examine safety practices in New Zealand's adventure tourism industry. Using a content analysis method, this research contributes to the field of the importance of safety in adventure activities by analysing adventure operators' safety standards and highlights the gaps in the new government adventure regulations.

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Analyse the government regulation of adventure tourism in New Zealand.
2. Evaluate tourists' perception of these regulations specifically as well as adventure tourism in New Zealand more generally.
3. Assess the published safety information of adventure tourism operators on their websites.

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This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Following this introduction specifying the research objectives and the background information of the study, chapter two is a literature review that provides in-depth knowledge of the adventure tourism industry.

Chapter two defines the term 'adventure tourism' and adventure activities in general. Risk, is discussed in terms of types of risk and the perceptions participants in adventure tourism have of risk. Next, the chapter discusses the importance of Web technology in tourism and provides information on the importance of web-based marketing and social networking websites in promoting tourism destinations.

Chapter three gives an overview of the method used to carry out this research being a content analysis of adventure operators' websites, newspaper articles, social media, and blogs.

Chapter four provides the findings and arranges them in terms of the main themes discovered during the analysis. A discussion of these findings is also provided in relation to the research objectives.

Chapter five concludes the research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Adventure Tourism in General

Adventure tourism has grown rapidly with the advent of the commercialisation of recreation (Buckley, 2006c). Tourism is defined as travel outside a person's normal environment for more than 24 hours and not more than one consecutive year. A trip may be classified as an "adventure" trip if it involves two of the following three elements: (1) interaction with nature or (2) interaction with culture or (3) a physical activity; while the core of adventure is a trip which involves all three elements (Adventure Travel Trade Association, 2011, p. 5).

Buckley (2006a) considers adventure tourism to be a guided commercial tour where the principal attraction is an outdoor activity that relies on features of the natural terrain, generally requiring specialised sporting or similar equipment, and which is exciting for the clients taking the tour. Characteristics of the clients may differ based on different skills, demographics, emotions, expectations and experience, but they all use the same tour (Buckley, 2007).

Not all outdoor activities are adventurous in nature. There is a fine line separating adventurous outdoor activities from recreational outings. Recreational excursions usually take a relaxed and non-threatening approach. The outcome of such an activity is generally well known and the point of interest is the achievement of the outcome. Adventurous quests, on the other hand, rely on thrilling the person through risk-taking. The most important idea behind this activity is the manner of accomplishing it and the emotions that the person experiences while performing it. There is a deliberate approach

to adventurous activity, notwithstanding the fear of uncertainty arising out of the known and unknown factors that could threaten a person's life or well-being. Engaging those factors head-on is the most challenging aspect of the experience, if not the activity itself, and as such, accomplishing it requires both physical and mental skill (Walle, 1997). As Ewart (1989, p. 60) observes:

> What distinguishes adventure activities from those more commonly associated with outside recreation is a deliberate seeking of risk and uncertainty of outcome. While both forms of recreation involve elements of skill… only in outdoor adventure activities pursuits is there a deliberate inclusion of activities that may contain threats to an individual's health or life.

Boorstin (1961) approached this in a similar fashion and suggests that tourists are either mass tourists or adventurers who seek thrills and excitement in an activity by exposing themselves to danger. This observation is suggestive of decreasing participant satisfaction when a participant is engaged in an adventure with decreasing risk factors. Correspondingly, Ewart (1985) notices that increasing skill levels among experienced adventurers encourage them to explore increasing degrees of risk. The risk of physical threat is also accompanied by social risk. Physical risk is concerned with the safety and health of the individual, whereas social risk relates to facing embarrassment in public for surrendering to fear. However, the degree of risk cannot be measured on a common scale; it is perceived differently by different people and is dependent on the skill and experience level of the adventurer. Nonetheless this standard "risk theory" maintains that adventure is inevitably linked to risk (Walle, 1997).

The term 'adventure', and the concept it defines, has been extensively studied and widely discussed by numerous researchers. Lyng (1990, 2005) calls adventure "edgework", an exercise in navigating a thin line between "life and death, control and

uncertainty, order and chaos, etc." Zweig (1974) views adventure as an episode or event, summarizing Simmel's (1971) illustration of "a beginning and an end much sharper than those to be discovered in the form of experience". Arnould and Price (1993) elaborate it further, describing it as an "extraordinary experience" and having a "dream-like quality", for its distinctive nature from ordinary life. The different types of adventure that can be experienced in the tourism industry range from soft (e.g. hot air ballooning in France), to medium (e.g. going on safari in Tanzania), to hard (trekking in Nepal). Differentiating activity types in this way allows tourists to evaluate the risks involved and to make an informed choice (Simmel 1971).

Adventure tourism is a growing subset of the tourism market (Beedie & Hudson, 2003) that offers activities and programmes where there may be a perception that the outcomes are uncertain. Adventure tourism may be defined as "commercially operated activities involving a combination of adventure and excitement pursued in an outdoor environment that incorporate a broad spectrum of activities ranging from high-risk adventure (e.g. white water rafting) to low-risk ones (e.g. tramping)" (Bentley, Page, & Laird, 2001, p.32).

Contrary to these popular descriptions, Walle (1997) suggests a contrasting definition of adventure tourism, establishing it on an insight model. He suggests that adventure tourism is highlighted by a pursuit of knowledge and insight that outweighs the risks. Many researchers are under the impression that pursuit of adventurous activities is motivated by the imminent experience of risk, and, as such, often confuse adventure with risk taking (Ewart, 1989; Miles, 1978; Yerkes, 1985). These models maintain that risk exposure needs to be highly regarded by potential adventure tourists and many

experts in adventure tourism have focused on that idea, despite adventure being widely conceptualised as pertaining to dealing with various distinct phenomena (Ewart, 1989). As a result, other motivational and behavioural insights concerned with adventure are regularly neglected by researchers, and the wider perspective of the term 'adventure' is not given the prominence it merits. This limits the potential of adventure tourism and the scope of marketing from being completely realised, reducing the description of adventure as "taking place in the risky wilderness" (Miles & Priest, 1990, p. 159).

2.1.1 Types of Adventure Tourism Activities

Table 2 lists a number of activities which Weiler and Hall (1992) and Sung, Morrison and O'Leary (1996) describe as being examples of adventure tourism. The hybrid nature of an adventure tourism experience being conducted on either a commercialised or non-commercialised basis is demonstrated when one considers activities such as fishing, bushwalking and bicycle touring. These activities are easily and quite often conducted as a self-organised recreational trip rather than as a professionally guided trip.

Table 2: Examples of Adventure Tourism Activities

Arctic trips	Rappelling
Backpacking (Bushwalking, tramping)	River kayaking
Bicycle touring	Rock- climbing
Bird watching	Rogaining
Bungy jumping	Safaris
Camping	Sailing
Cross- country skiing	SCUBA diving
Dog sledding	Sea kayaking
Fishing	Skiing
Four wheel drive trips	Sky-diving
Hang Gliding	Snorkeling
Horseback riding	Snow shoeing
Hot-air ballooning	Soaring
Hunting	Spelunking
Jungle exploring	Survival and wilderness training
Motorcycling	Trekking
Mountaineering	Walking tours
Mountain biking	Windsurfing
Nature trips	Whitewater canoeing
Orienteering	Whitewater rafting
Paragliding	

Source: Derived from Page (1997).

2.1.2   An Overview of the Adventure Tourism Industry

Tourism has made a vast impact on the world's economy. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, tourism had contributed $USD 2 trillion to GDP in 2012 Considering the direct impact, indirect consequences, and induced outcomes of the tourism industry, it was able to generate one-twelfth of employment opportunity in the world (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2013). Undeterred by the difficult economic situation in most of the tourism markets around the world, tourism continues to grow and develop. A study jointly conducted by The George Washington University, the Adventure Travel Trade Association, and Xola Consulting in 2010 valued the adventure tourism industry to be $USD 89 billion internationally (Adventure Travel Trade Association, 2011). In 2012, tourism's contribution to GDP increased by 3%, and is further predicted to increase by another 3.1% in 2013 (World Travel and Tourism

Council, 2013). The adventure travel sector of the tourism industry is currently in a development phase, and measured a 17% rise in sale receipts during 2010-2011 globally. Adventure tourism achieved 26% market penetration in 2010; consequently approximately one in four trips may be attributed as being adventure travel. If this growth follows predicted trends, adventure tourism could very well contribute to about 50% of travel by 2050 (Adventure Travel Trade Association, 2011).

The adventure travel sector has also contributed to the emergence of tourism businesses. As mentioned in the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) industry report, 79% of tourism boards have described an emergence or growth in the private sector of adventure tourism in their destination. The ATTA also noted an increase in total revenue for 63% of tour operators in the adventure tourism category, with an average increase of 17.3% in revenue. Less than 50% of tourists recognised adventure tourism as a standalone sub-sector of the tourism industry, according to a 2007 survey, but today almost 90% consider it in that way (Adventure Travel Trade Association, 2011). An increasing number of tourists are pursuing a travel experience which involves physical activity, interaction with the local culture and bonding with nature. In response to this emerging interest of tourists, various destinations are improving their brand image and upgrading their capacity by forming public-private partnerships and improved networking. Policies are also being revised to aid the promotion of the local region as an attractive adventure tourism destination (Wait & Hairman, 2013).

Due to the strong association between adventure tourism and the cultural and natural resources supporting it, there is an exclusive potential for promoting conservation of the local environment and social culture in the long term. This also helps stem the excess

leakage of revenue and maintains the spending of tourist money in the destination economy. A focused and integrated approach from the industry, the government, local communities and supporters can develop sustainable projects and lead to profitable initiatives being undertaken. These stakeholders need, in particular, to develop an approach that is suited to the local environmental, social, political and economic landscape (Adventure Travel Trade Association, 2011). Adventure tourism has the potential to encompass an increasing number of types of activities and trips as new and innovative products are offered by tour operators, entrepreneurs and the destination itself.

Consumers of adventure tourism tend to be young, educated, affluent, active thrill seekers who spend significant sums of money in their pursuit of adventure (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie, & Pomfret, 2003). Adventure travellers are often demanding and discerning consumers while on holiday, and travel to some of the most remote, extreme environments of the world to satisfy their need for emotional highs, risk, challenge, excitement, and novelty (Corr, 1995; Miles & Priest, 1990). From an industry perspective, many new adventure destinations and tourism products have evolved to serve the demands of adventure consumers. For example, one study found there were more than 400 adventure tourism operators in New Zealand, and that 11% of visitors to the country used these adventure products (Bentley et al., 2001c).

2.1.3   Adventure Tourism Industry in New Zealand

Tourism is New Zealand's biggest export industry, earning NZD9.6 billion of the country's foreign exchange earnings. Tourism directly or indirectly contributes almost 9% of gross domestic product for New Zealand. In the year ended March 2012,

international tourism expenditure in New Zealand was NZD9.6 billion. When combined with domestic expenditure of NZD13.8 billion, this makes the tourism industry worth NZD23.4 billion annually. This is an increase of 2.4 per cent from the previous year (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2012b). New Zealand is internationally recognised as a country where adventure tourism and adventure sports are undertaken by a large proportion of its residents as well as its visitor population (Bentley et al., 2006b).

Since the 19th century tourism has played a vital role in New Zealand's economy, but only after the 1980s, with a significant increase in international visitor arrivals, has tourism been transformed into an integral sector of the country's national economy. The significant increase in visitor arrivals has led to a growing demand for outdoor recreational activities, including adventure activities (Cloke & Perkins, 1998; Page & Mayer, 1996; Ryan, 1997). Especially in New Zealand, adventure tourism has been a dominant sector in the development of tourism industry activities.

Promotion of New Zealand adventure tourism generally involves spectacular scenery and glimpses of Maori tradition (Ryan, 1997). Adventure activities in the South Island's mountains have been a combination of various adventurous activities since the 19th century. Recently adventure tourism has gained prominence in promotional activities for tourism in New Zealand, While adventure activities such as mountaineering in the South Island has comprised a small part of the mix since the 19th century, more recently aspects of nature and adventure tourism have been given much more prominent emphasis in promotional activities and adventure has begun to take on a centrally important role.

Queenstown is marketed as "The adventure capital of the world" and is able to attract tourists from around the world interested in adventure tourism. It is important to acknowledge that Queenstown has always attracted tourists, both international and domestic, mainly because of its scenic beauty. Recently, its image has changed into an adventure destination, representing a wealth of activities like bungy jumping to canyoning. It offers a well-developed tourism infrastructure that supports its character as an adventure tourism destination (Buckley, 2006a).

2.2 Risk and Safety Factors

> Nothing is risk in itself; there is no risk in reality. But on the other hand, anything can be a risk; it all depends on how one analyses the danger, considers the event (Ewald, 1991, p. 199).

Ewald (1991) implies anything can be a risk, but 'risk' is highly influenced by the individual's perception of what constitutes risk. Risk has been defined from different perspectives and in different ways. Beedie (1994, p.13) defines risk as 'an uncertain outcome, and any threat to one's physical, mental and social wellbeing'. Risk and adventure go hand in hand, as stated by Martin (1996). Outdoor adventures involve taking risks, being prepared to be on the edge and expecting the unexpected. The very meaning of adventure becomes void when there are no surprises. Risks involved during participation in adventure activities have been classified into absolute risk, perceived risk and real risk. These concepts are referred to frequently in the outdoor and experiential learning literature (Beedie, 1994; Bentley et al., 2010b; Dickson & Tugwell, 2000; Haddock, 1993; Priest & Gass, 1997). Haddock (1993) defines these three values of risk as:

Absolute Risk: This is the highest level of risk inherent in a natural situation in the absence of any kind of safety controls.

Real Risk: The highest level of risk that exists for that particular situation in the presence of safety controls.

Perceived Risk: The risk assessed by the individual (based on their subjective opinion) who is about to engage in that activity.

Various aspects of society, including wealth, demographics, technology and media, affect the way each individual perceives risk and reality. These perceptions are also heavily influenced by public outrage, which may further be influenced by numerous factors such as :

1. The voluntary choice of the individual to accept or reject the risk.

2. The individual's level of control to prevent or mitigate the risk.

3. The assessment of risk vs. the reward.

4. The organisation's reputation for trust and care, in the eyes of the public.

5. The familiarity people have with the activity, such as football versus base jumping.

(Slovic, 2000, p.17)

Knowing that perception of risk by each individual is unique to that person, one can assume that this determines the reasons behind accepting a particular risk and its extent (Dickson & Dolnicar, 2004). Researchers have also highlighted the qualities defining 'adventure'. Most agree that essential to adventure is the presence of risk.

2.2.1 Risk vs. Adventure

After analysing several studies in the literature on risk and accidents in adventure tourism, the research also suggests that acceptance of risk is greater if the risk activity is performed voluntarily or without any guidance (Slovic, 2000). For example, research conducted by Bentley, Page and Laird (2001c) on adventure tourism accidents in New Zealand found that participants did not perceive high risk in activities which, based on accident statistics, posed the highest risk, like horse riding and four-wheel motor biking. Research by Smartt and Chalmers (2009) implies that accidents in horse riding were common amongst people over the age of 40 years, and included bystanders, horse handlers or other people engaged in horse-related recreational activities. Traditionally however, young female riders are most at risk. In terms of accidents involving equestrian pursuits, 98.2% of injury occurs during horse riding and less than 2% during horse racing, polo and rodeo. This clearly highlights the lack of proper risk management or of a safety framework designed for horse-related activities outside of those listed (Smartt & Chalmers, 2009).

Risk is a major element of the adventure tourism sector. Risks in the industry are very real and the lack of sufficient risk management can lead to tragedy, which became evident in the Glenridding Beck and Lyme Bay water sports tragedies in the United Kingdom, where adventure turned to misadventure, leading to several deaths (Smith & Espiner, 2007). Risk and accidents have been investigated more than most other aspects of adventure tourism and recreation (Buckley, 2006c). The adventure experience paradigm as suggested by Martine and Priest (1986) advocates that there is an optimal level of risk which brings about greatest satisfaction with an adventure experience. Tourists interested in 'hard' adventure tourism activities, which involve a rush of adrenaline through their mind and body, are more exposed to risk. 'Hard' adventure

tourism can be defined as activities that require great personal involvement – especially in training – and heightened risk. Other adventure tourists enjoy a certain degree of risk in their adventures, even if there is a need to control the perceived risk they are exposed to for their overall enjoyment and experience (Bentley, 2005). It has been analysed that participants in adventure tourism or recreation accept these risks to some extent as a vital part of the destination's environment because they are more interested in this type of environment (Cater, 2006). In fact, it is assumed that leisure activity is more likely to accept the presence of risk, as suggested by the British Medical Association's report on this topic:

> Nobody sincerely believes that all recreational activities can be made free of risk. Indeed, some degree of risk is one of the attractions of many kinds of recreation, and it is clear that people in general are prepared to accept far higher levels of risk in recreation than they would be at work, say, or as the result of the operation of a nearby industrial facility (BMA, 1990, p. 146).

This analysis suggests that risk is an important attraction of certain activities, which means that, directly or indirectly, risk is engaged with leisure activities (Cater, 2006). Indeed, research with adventure tourism participants in New Zealand's self-acclaimed 'adventure tourism capital', Queenstown, found that those engaging in adventure tourism activities sought the experience of fear and thrills (perceived risk) from their participation in commercialised adventure activities, rather than actual risk and an uncertain outcome (Cater, 2006).

It has been identified that risk is desirable and that the perception of that risk is highly subjective. In creating an adventure tour product, leveraging the issue of perception is very valuable. It is possible to create activities that have a genuine risk profile but are perceived to be much more risky than they actually are. This has been termed 'psychological risk' (Francis, 2011).

2.2.2 Safety in Adventure Tourism

Although the UN-World Tourism Organization and other similar organisations highlight the importance of safety and wellbeing for tourists and travellers, these issues have been largely ignored and have received minimal attention in most tourism research (Bentley & Page, 2007). The kinds of unique and thrilling experiences that the adventure tourism industry provides to travellers are, more often than not, situated in an environment filled with real hazards. Such hazards have an alarmingly strong potential for causing severe accidents, possibly even death. These accidents could result in complications and legal predicaments for hosts of organisations in adventure tourism (Morgan, 1998). How individuals manage safety when participating in adventure tourism activities has received relatively little attention from tourism and safety management researchers (Bentley, Page, & Walker, 2004; Bentley, Page, & Laird, 2000), although several studies have shown that safety is an important consideration when people undertake adventure activities (Carr, 2002; Central Market Research Associates, 1995; Hall & Mcarthur, 1994). Carr (2002) suggested that most international tourists are giving considerable importance to safety, as they are seeking guided mountaineering experiences, which means they are seeking the safest wilderness experience possible.

Client safety is major risk management concern for the adventure tourism sector internationally and in New Zealand. However, if all the risk and adventure is managed out of the experience it will cease to be attractive and exciting (Bentley, Page, & Edwards, 2008).

The NZ Maritime Safety Authority survey of white water rafting participants in Queenstown, New Zealand, stated that people had total faith in the guides with regard to

their safety, but were confused about the safety instructions and unsure when and how they might need to use the safety skills they were taught. Furthermore, 38% of participants expected more pre-water training than they were given and 25% felt that a rafting trip was more dangerous than they had expected (Central Market Research Associates, 1995). Lack of proper safety information leads to an increase in the numbers of accidents in adventure tourism activities (Smith & Espiner, 2007).

When an accident involving tourists occurs, certain distinct situations determine the focus of the blame attached to such an incident. It is contested by Johnston (1989) that accidents are tied in to adventurous experiences. In her research on activities in the mountains of New Zealand, she reports that in this particular context criticism is directed at the individual tourists involved in an accident and they are accused of not taking adequate care or precautions. Such views by the participants, and society at large, lends support to the view that training and education should be conducted at an individual level and diverts the need to regulate and enforce certain restrictions on the activities in question (Johnston, 1989). Nevertheless, accident reports demonstrate the fact that the operator has a major role in contributing to adventure calamities and disasters, or can be held liable for them (Page & Mayer, 1996). For instance, in terms of the need for training and education previously alluded to, an operator could be held responsible for an accident on account of imparting inadequate advice to the adventurer on the risks and hazards involved in those activities (Mittelstaedt, 1995).

Carter (2006) stated that, in today's contentious society, operators and licensing authorities are increasingly held accountable for risk management, and they have to establish in law courts that they complied with the appropriate procedures. He further

maintains that an important aspect of adventure tourism is that participating adventurers hand over responsibility for risk management to the adventure activity providers. Despite this justification, the attitudes held by adventure tourists about the obligations for safety and risk management have not been studied in depth. In this case, a New Zealand study analysing people's perception of natural hazards could provide some enlightenment and most individuals accept they are personally responsible for natural hazards. However, on account of people's preference to participate in certain activities and agreeing upon a financial contract with the operator, the public attitude concerning responsibility in the context of commercial adventure tourism could be different (Smith & Espiner, 2007). Notwithstanding limited empirical evidence, it is very probable that society might find it harder to accept injury and death in a commercial context of adventure tourism (Cloke & Parkins, 2002). Weber (2001) stresses that the responsibility for managing risk and the activity's environment is determined by the context (commercial or non-commercial) in which the adventure happens. Therefore, society has different expectations regarding risk in a commercialised setting and gives increased importance to matters of safety in commercial adventure tourism. Berno et al. (1996) also agree that the perspective of a participant in an adventure activity is influenced by the commercial context of adventure tourism. So, not unlike those who seek the 'safe' thrills of a horror movie or roller coaster ride, tourists may engage in highly exciting adventure tourism activities with the perception that they are placing themselves at minimal risk of harm due to the nature of the tourism context (Berno et al., 1996).

Adventure tourists cannot be assumed to fathom the real scope of the threats and perils associated with the activities they participate in and the dangers they expose themselves to. Consequently, the duty of risk management is rightly judged to lie with the operators

(Gold, 1991). Public awareness regarding this issue has compelled an adoption of transparency in the operations of the adventure tourism industry, providing methods by which tourists can analyse the risk they are exposing themselves to (Bentley et al., 2001c; Cater, 2006). However, apart from accepting full responsibility for the safety of participants in an activity, it is expected that operators inform tourists of, and help them understand the risks and hazards involved in, such activity.

Davidson (2008) constructed social narratives to explore society's views on the responsibility and risk involved in adventure activities. Such social narratives were identified by Davidson in newspapers that reported three mountaineering accidents in New Zealand at the end of 2003, which varied in causes and circumstances. The first incident was on Mt Cook and resulted in the deaths of four Latvians, supposedly caused by unawareness on their part of climbing conditions particular to New Zealand. The second incident involved the deaths of three mountain guides who were on an expedition on Mt Tasman with three clients. The death toll included one of the clients, and the accident was attributed to specific circumstances, sparing the participants sole responsibility. The third incident, also on Mt Cook, occurred shortly before the second incident on Mt. Tasman and was clearly caused by inexperience and the use of improper techniques. The nine Malaysians participating had no experience on snow or of icy conditions and were fortunate to be rescued. Hence, Davidson (2008) argues that society needs to identify both the risks involved in outdoor adventure activities and who is responsible for managing those risks. The Mt Tasman incident highlights society's rationale for accepting inherent risks and hazards when confronted by the natural terrain and environmental conditions.

Millington, Locke, and Locke (2001) make a useful point of searching for explanations about the boundaries of adventure tourism. Adventure tourism tends to be associated with high levels of activity by the participant, most of it outdoors. Adventure travellers expect to experience various degrees of risk, excitement and tranquillity, and expect to be tested personally. In particular they are explorers of unspoilt, exotic parts of the planet and also seek personal challenges. This description indicates the existence of several possible risk scenarios for the participant in adventurous activity. Such scenarios not only include the experience of secluded, wild and obscure locations, but also the desire for extreme risk-taking on encountering personal challenges, since it has a fundamental value to adventurers who are profoundly motivated to seek it (Smith & Espiner, 2007).

2.3   Web Technology and Tourism

The tourism product is an unusual product because it exists only as information at the point of sale, and cannot be sampled before the purchase decision is made. Its intangibility as well as high price and purchase risk require a high level of involvement in making purchase decisions. Thus the information-based nature of the tourist product, on the one hand, and the global reach, multimedia capability, ease of use, interactivity and flexibility of electronic/online marketing, on the other hand, make the Internet "a prominent medium in tourism marketing" (O'Connor & Murphy, 2004; Oh, Kim, & Shin, 2004).

Tourism is a key element of modern societies. The information-intensive nature of the tourism and travel industry suggests an important role for web technology in the

promotion and marketing of tourist destinations and tourist operators. The rapid development of the Internet and World Wide Web is having profound impacts on the industry. In fact travel and tourism is one of the fastest growing segments on the Internet (Burgess, Parish, & Alcock, 2011).

The tourism industry is also characterised by its offering of complementary business. For example, tourists often use a range of services including air travel, car hire, accommodation and tours. These services are typically provided by a number of different organisations. A well-designed website creates opportunities for partnership with numerous affiliates and can assist providers in planning a plethora of tourism and travel services and, for the consumer, helps to ensure that the right choices are made, resulting in more enjoyable experiences. It can also equip consumers with a range of tools to facilitate the travel planning process from information search to destination and product/service consumption as well as post-consumption engagement (Burgess et al., 2011).

The Internet has become the primary means by which destination marketing organisations communicate with prospective tourists (Hwang, Gretzel, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2006a, 2006b; Morrison, Taylor, & Douglas, 2004). In the face of very strong competition, destination marketers are increasingly trying to design their web sites as a tool to influence travellers' decision-making process (Werthner & Klein, 1999).

Figure 3: Web Technology in the New Zealand Adventure Industry

 Source: Derived from newzealand.com, (2013)

In the 12 months to April 2013, 30% of visitors to the New Zealand site consumed adventure content. Eleven percent consumed extreme adventure content and 9% of business listing referrals went to adventure operators (72,000 referrals). Adventure seekers are more likely than the average visitor site the information from within Australia or New Zealand (Wait & Hairman, 2013).

The Internet offers great potential to influence consumers' perceived images, including creating virtual experiences of a destination. According to Internet Week's survey, more than two-thirds of travel and hospitality companies view the Internet as a significant competitive weapon within their industry and about 60% describe the Internet as being a substantial source of new customers (Gretzel & Xiang, 2010). According to The Travel Road Decision (2011), 87% of people use the Internet to plan their trips.

Table 3: Influence of the Internet on Travellers' Decision-Making Process

Source: Derived from Think Travel with Google, (2011)

Table 3 shows that the Internet was the dominant source in travellers' decision-making process. On the demand side of the tourism market, an increasing number of people are using the Internet to search for information because the World Wide Web provides more in-depth materials and richer content than do conventional promotional agents (Govers & Go, 2003; Heung, 2003; Vincent, 2003).

Figure 4 : Adventure Seekers' Traffic to newzealand.com by Market

Source: Derived from Wait & Hairman, (2013)

For the New Zealand adventure tourism market, adventure seekers are more likely to be present in Australia and New Zealand, whereas Chinese tourists are far less likely to view any content other than campaign pages, reflecting the low likelihood of them entering the adventure seekers' segment.

2.3.1 Social Media Applications in Tourism

Social media are playing an increasingly important role as information sources for travellers (Gretzel & Xiang, 2010). The Internet has fundamentally reshaped the way tourism-related information is distributed and the way people plan for and consume travel (Buhalis & Law, 2008). As the Internet plays an important role for the e-

marketing of city destinations (Sigala, 2003; Yuan, Gretzel, & Fesenmaier, 2006), Web 2.0 tools and applications also create both threats and opportunities for organisations developing and maintaining destination management systems and portals. O'Reilly (2005, p. 2) defines Web 2.0 as:

> the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an "architecture of participation," and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences.

According to Galtung and Ruge's (1999: p. 25) theory of news values, the "more negative an event in its consequences, the more probable that it will become a news item". This emphasis has implications for the public perception of the hazards involved in activities such as mountaineering. The media is the primary device by which most people gain information about risk (Furedi, 2005; Kasperson and Kasperson, 1996). By accentuating negative events, the media renders them 'more available for public recall and leads to over-estimation of the frequency of their occurrence' (Singer and Endreny, 1993: p. 82). Kasperson and Kasperson (1996: p. 97) see the mass media as one of society's 'risk communicators', responsible for the 'amplification and attenuation' of risk. In particular, they argue, the mass media influence individual and social views of risk through the extent of their coverage and the way in which it is framed. The implications of the media representation of risks in outdoor pursuits appear paradoxical. On one hand, it may promote participation. For example, the media coverage of disastrous attempts to climb Mount Everest has been attributed with intensifying rather than deterring public interest in climbing the mountain (Breashears, 1997; Heath, 1997; Nordland, 1997). Industry observers tend to agree that the media has played a role in

creating greater public awareness of, and interest in, adventure pursuits (Allen, 1987; Creyer et al., 2003; Heath, 1997). Advertising has provided a high degree of exposure, while the marketing value of risky sport illustrates its appeal to a youth-oriented popular culture (Johnston and Edwards, 1994; Shoham et al., 1998). In other contexts, the media's focus on the dangers of adventure activities is seen to threaten participation. Beedie and Bourne's (2005) analysis of the newspaper reporting of a fatal accident during an educational outdoor excursion, for example, raises concerns that the media fuels perceptions that such accidents are more frequent than they in fact are; and that this, in turn, may deter schools from offering educational experiences outside the classroom, particularly where these involve elements of risk (Davidson, 2008).

2.3.2 Blogs or Weblogs

Weblogs began as personal writing spaces that regularly store and update multimedia content (in reverse chronological order) and links of interest to the author. Thus, blogs are used for recording an author's journey and sharing it with others by using links, trackbacks, comments, taglines, archives, permanent links, blog rolls and other means (Blood, 2000). Weblogs are defined as a "site consisting of dated entries" (Blood, 2000), whereby entries are episodic or conversational in a diary or "story telling" format. Motivated by different reasons, (Forrester Research, 2006; Rosenbloom, 2004) such as documenting one's life, providing commentary and opinions, expressing deeply felt emotions, articulating ideas through writing and forming and maintaining a community forum, weblogs are a "New form of mainstream personal communication" for millions of people to publish and exchange knowledge/information and to establish networks or build relationships (Rosenbloom, 2004).

Numerous examples of general and/or specific blogs have been created in the tourism industry, such as tripadvisor.com, hotelchatter.com, bugbitten.com, placeblogger.com, realtravel.com, travelpod.com, igougo.com, gazetters.com, and theadventureblog.com (a B2B log for travel agents) etc. Many travellers and tourists also develop and maintain their own blogs for sharing their experience with others and distributing their feedback about travel suppliers for achieving fun, social recognition, prestige and/or self-expression (Sigala, 2010).

Blogs have the power of perceived to be impartial information and the electronic word-of-mouth that proliferates online can be like a virus. Hence, blogs are becoming a very important source for international travellers to get travel advice and suggestions. Moreover, when reading others' travel experiences through weblogs, it also creates a willingness in the reader to travel and visit the same destination or suppliers (Du & Wagner, 2006; Sigala, 2010). Indeed, the latter is because blog content can 1) attract attention/eyeballs of other Internet users and increase traffic on a website, 2) create interest for users who can now seek more and additional information, 3) develop someone's desire to visit a destination and/or buy the product and 4) foster an action (e.g. book a hotel or organise a trip to a destination). Of course, it should be noted that the power of blogs can also be negative, i.e. spreading a tourist's bad experience to millions of online Internet users (Lin & Huang, 2006).

Nowadays, many blogs are presented in a video format (video blog). The first travel website to implement video blogs exclusively was endlessEurope.com. Due to the multimedia features of video content and the intangible nature of the tourism product, it is argued that blogs will have a much greater impact and influence on travellers'

decision making and on the evaluation of alternative tourism products and suppliers than they have currently (Sigala, 2010).

2.3.3   Social Networking

Social networking sites have also witnessed increased success and use. Facebook, which has over 500 million users worldwide, is now one of the biggest social networking sites in the world. Its advertisers have quadrupled since 2009, with 176 billion display advertisements being placed in the first quarter of 2010 (Bloomberg, 2010). This shows that advertising is a major asset to both tourism businesses and Facebook; and information can be targeted easily at a wide demographic range of users. Thus, both blogs and social networking sites have become large resources from which tourists can make decisions (Jenkin, 2010).

Many social networking websites have been created in the tourism industry, allowing travellers, prospective or otherwise, to network with one another based on shared interests or attributes. Such websites include:

- tripmates.com,
- gusto.com,
- triporama.com,
- triphub.com,
- traveltogether.com,
- wayn.com.

Travellers log into websites and create a personal profile detailing their travel experience and interests, then network with others to share travel advice and stories, and even plan trips together. Hence, social networking websites have a tremendous impact on how tourists nowadays create, organise and consume tourism experiences. Websites such as tripup.com, traveltogether.com and travelpost.com enable tourists to create an itinerary and e-mail it and share it online with others, who in turn can edit, modify and enhance it, post it back to others for further comments and/or invite and read other travellers' comments and advice on the trip they have organised in order to finally achieve a consensus and proceed to a group booking (Sigala, 2010).

The impact of social networking features for persuading potential travellers to select a particular hotel and/or destination is very powerful, because through social networking websites, travellers can search website content based on keywords and stories contributed by other travellers that may be more relevant and make more sense to them than keywords and experiences being created and pushed by the website developers themselves (Sigala, 2010).

Table 4: Percentage of Travellers Who Agree or Strongly Agree with the Following Statements

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons

Source: Derived from Think Travel with Google, (2011).

Recent research (see Table 4) has validated the importance of the Internet for tourists' planning. The Tourism Industry Association of New Zealand (2009) found that 26% of respondents used online reviews as a tool for planning a New Zealand trip, 15% used

online reviews of destinations or activities, and 11% used online travel itineraries or blogs as a main tool to plan their New Zealand trip in the previous six months. Overall, this shows that 35% of respondents used an online planning tool, which was greater than an earlier study found gained advice from friends or relatives (27%) (Boyd, 2007).

On the other side of social media and Web 2.0, different applications provide tourism companies with unique opportunities to easily and quickly reach scores of people understand the market's reaction to their offering and use this information in their business development. Opinions, reviews and recommendations of millions of tourists in different travel-related social media sites have exerted an influence on the tourism industry to adapt the Web 2.0 effect and to deal with the new needs and expectations of tour.

In summary, an opinion or recommendation from a third source i.e. web technology, social media, blogs or weblogs and social networking sites along with the risk, safety and the precautions used in order to assure the safe travel of a tourist has an impact on the tourist's decision-making. Therefore it is important to examine what the adventure operators are portraying, the implementation of the new regulatory framework, and what the perception of potential tourists are to such.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This research was conducted using a qualitative research approach. In tourism and hospitality research, increasingly greater use is being made of research gathered by a holistic-inductive paradigm. This paradigm is oriented towards qualitative methods (Jennings, 2010). Qualitative research strategy usually focuses on words, rather than numbers, in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Smith, 2010). This research is based on the ontological paradigm described as constructionist, which implies that social properties are outcomes of the interaction between individuals, rather than phenomena out there and separate from those involved in construction. This research also adopts an interpretivist epistemological approach. In this position the researcher focuses on the understanding of the social world through the examination of the participants' interpretation of that world (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

3.1   Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was chosen as a research tool to analyse the documents relevant to the research question and objectives. This method is often used to study a wide range of textual data – for example, various types of media messages, interview transcripts, discussion boards in virtual communities, and/or travel diaries (Finn et al., 2000; Lasswell et al., 1952). Tourism-related communication can also be found in non-tourism contexts, such as letters to newspaper editors and in academic research papers (Finn, Elliott-White, & Walton, 2000; Lasswell, Lerner, & Pool, 1952; Smith, 2010).

Qualitative content analysis can be defined as: "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through systematic classification process

coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hseih & Shannon, 2005, p. 1280). This definition illustrates that qualitative content analysis emphasises an integrated view of speech/texts and their specific contexts. This research method goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from text to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). However, some researchers question the validity of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative content analysis (Finn et al., 2000; Krippendorff, 2004).

Qualitative content analysis is an inductive research method that allows themes to emerge from the studied document and it also recognises the importance of understanding the meaning of an analysed item within the context it has appeared in (Bryman & Bell, 2007). By contrast, quantitative content analysis is a deductive research method. The process of how themes are extracted is often left implicit and important themes are pointed out through the use of exploratory quotation taken from the studied document (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Coding is an integral part of the chosen content analysis approach. In this research this was done manually in an inductive way, which means emergent themes were extracted from the data set through careful examination and constant comparison of relevant documents relating to the research question and objectives rather than having predetermined categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Smith, 2010).

This is also known as 'open coding'; headings and notes are written down while reading the documents. This process will be repeated several times to ensure that all contents are covered by a heading or notes (Hseih & Shannon, 2005). These repetitive steps creates a

tree-like figure and it is continued as far as possible (Nickerson, 1995). The findings that are produced in qualitative content analysis do not present themselves as countable units or statistical data but uncover themes and patterns and categories that are relevant to the topic (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

3.2   Research Design

The research is based on data sources that are in the public domain. All the items analysed for this dissertation refer to safety in the adventure tourism industry in New Zealand. News articles were chosen for study based on their online publication referring to safety and adventure tourism in New Zealand. In total 72 news articles were selected between the years 2011 to 2013 on the issues portrayed to the general public about adventure tourism regulation. Every news article in the study was analysed for specific content. The criteria for selection of articles were based on five keywords - adventure, tourism, regulation, safety, and New Zealand. Any time one of the keywords was in the headline, the article was further analysed for its relationship to adventure regulation in New Zealand. The New Zealand Herald provided the majority of articles although other news sources included The Otago Daily Times, Radio New Zealand News, ABC News, Stuff.co.nz, and TV3 news.

Web blogs, and social networking sites were analysed between the years 2011 to 2013 (since new regulation was introduced in 2011) in order to assess the safety methods adopted in adventure activities. These blogs were selected using the same key words as well as following up from information provided in the newspaper articles. The blogs included; Wordpress.com, Staying safe abroad, Sqift: Travel IQ, Cynthia Yildirim's Political blog, E2NZ.org.

Adventure operator's websites were also analysed. Forty nine websites were analysed to find out what safety information has been published and used by the operators. The selection of websites was based on one adventure activity from each of the three types of adventure regulations.

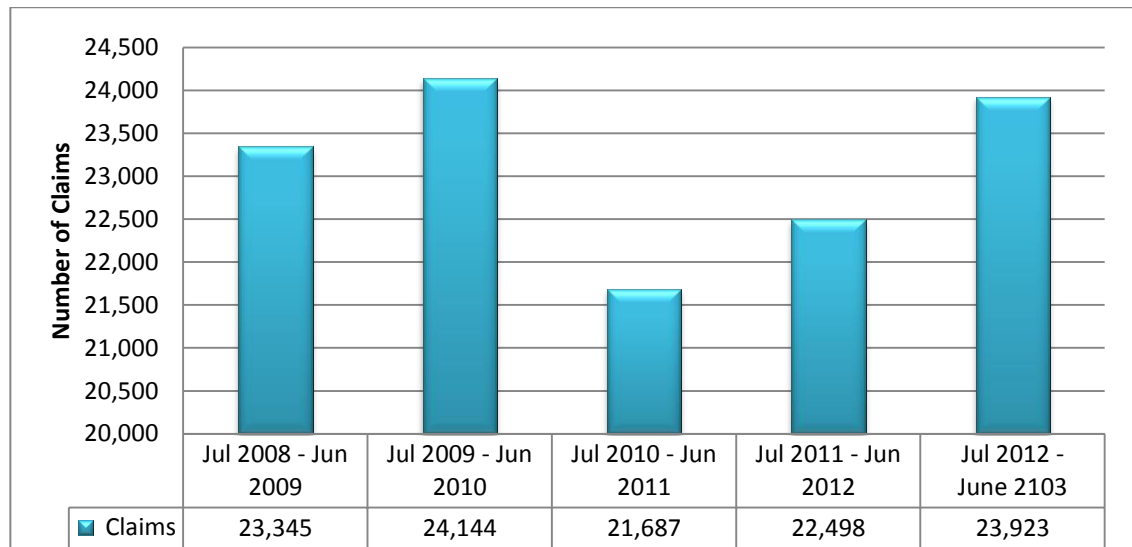In order to support the research, ACC (Accident Compensation Corporation) and NZMNSC (New Zealand Mountain Safety Council) data were analysed to obtain statistical information related to accidents in adventure activities. The adventure regulations were also analysed to identify the responsible organisations behind the accidents while simultaneously analysing which activities are incorporated under which of the three regulations.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

The most popular of the adventure activities in New Zealand include jet boating, glacier walking, bungy jumping, sky diving and white water rafting (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2012a) and the significance of accidents and injuries within this sector has been examined from both a visitor perspective and the adventure tourism operator perspective by several researchers for more than a decade (Bentley et al., 2001a; Bentley & Page, 2007; Bentley et al., 2008; Bentley et al., 2006b). According to research conducted by Bentley (2009), there were more accidents involving falling from a height or tripping while participating in adventure activities in New Zealand than in Australia. This result implies a lack of safety management procedures followed by New Zealand tour operators when compared to Australian operators (Bentley et al., 2010b). For example Thrillseekers Adventure was fined NZD 40,000 when an Australian tourist was seriously injured when she "slipped" out of a bungy harness at the old ferry bridge over the Waiau River near Hanmer Springs (E2nz.Org, 2011b).

A recent report prepared by the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) (2013b) shows that injuries are still associated with adventure activities. New adventure regulations were introduced in 2011. Examination of the number of injury claims after the year 2011 shows there is change in the number of claims in adventure activities. There is a drop in the year in which the regulations were introduced (from 24,144 in the previous year to 21, 687 in the year of introduction), then a gradual rise over three years from 21,687 to 23,923 between the years 2011 to 2013 (see figure 5).

Figure 5: Injuries in Adventure Tourism Activities

	Jul 2008 - Jun 2009	Jul 2009 - Jun 2010	Jul 2010 - Jun 2011	Jul 2011 - Jun 2012	Jul 2012 - June 2103
■ Claims	23,345	24,144	21,687	22,498	23,923

Source: Derived from Accident Compensation Corporation, (2013b)

Indeed, a pressing reason for opening a wider debate on these issues is that New Zealand provided a culture of minimum safety standards for adventure tourism in the absence of tougher regulation of adventure tourism (E2nz.Org, 2013b), and New Zealand's tourism industry has been damaged by recent accidents (E2nz, 2011) such as the Dart River safari jet boat crash (Maas, 2013) and the quad bike accident at *Riverlands Adventures* in Te Kohanga (E2nz.Org, 2013a; Maas, 2013).

Safety issues now assume a greater role in the considerations which some holidaymakers and tourists give to choosing a destination. It is very important to make sure tourists are safe when they participate in any adventure activities and that operators are following safety guidelines. Even if risk and adventure are interrelated, measures to mitigate risky adventure activity are highly influenced by individuals' perception of risk and the type of adventure activities participated in. Even accepting that the presence of

risk is an important factor in adventure-based activities, any adventure destination that lacks risk management of adventure activities is itself risking adventure-related accidents. In today's technical world where social media and websites are the first connection point for tourists travelling to an adventure destination it takes very little time to change any destination's image from a safe to a dangerous destination. Therefore it is very important to ensure tourists are safe when they participate in adventure activities. This therefore raises questions about the operators and the legislation associated with the wellbeing of visitors.

4.1   Perceived Lack of Safety Precautions

Accidents and safety in adventure tourism activities are a major theme that has been in the limelight for more than a decade in the New Zealand adventure tourism industry. Events such as accidents have the potential to create a negative impact on the tourism industry when tourists select destinations. The safety needs of international tourists are a significant aspect of the health and safety services of tourism destinations (NZ Tourist Safety, 2013b, 2013c).

It was observed that the highest incidences of injury were reported for activities that involve the risk of falling from a height while in motion. Risk of falling from heights should be considered in prevention measures, as this is a common risk factor in adventure tourism activities. Recently a man died in a popular high wire play-ground at Tree Adventure, West Auckland. Tree Adventure is a popular forest Adventure Park with 110 high-wire activities. Some participants in Tree Adventure stated that safety was lacking even before the accident, and showed concern about the carelessness of the operators and the lack of trained staff in the organisation (Rutherford, 2013). According

to ACC statistics (2013a), incidents reported related to falls and skids in adventure. There is a lack of proper accident prevention measures in the tourism industry (NZ Tourist Safety, 2013b), and this leads to the key problem of lack of cooperation between healthcare professionals, tourism operators, and other public sector areas involved in tourism, says Andrew Little, Labour Party's tourism spokesperson (Little, 2013).

In 2004 a Queenstown company named Fly By Wire was fined over injuries to a tourist in a plane crash, where the tourist was left severely damaged and almost died due to loss of blood. He was severely disabled as a result (Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment, 2004). Adventure tourism safety was questioned by a UK family after an accident in September 2010 when a Skydive New Zealand plane crashed soon after take-off from a Glacier airstrip, killing four tourists. Four skydivers and a Queenstown pilot were also among the fatalities (Onenews, 2012). An investigation report stated that the plane was overweight and became unbalanced, and the sky diving pilots had taken drugs just before taking off (Nordqvist, 2013).

A tragic accident in Wairarapa, New Zealand, on the 7th of January, 2012 was the worst aviation disaster in adventure tourism, when 11 people died in a hot air balloon crash (The New Zealand Herald, 2013a). As the victim's family stated, it was an avoidable accident that occurred due to the pilot having illegal drugs in his blood system before taking off;

> On the 7th Jan 2011, our Aunt Valerie Bennett and Cousin Denise Dellabarca along with eight other people went on a trip of a lifetime in a balloon ride over the Wairarapa. This should have been an amazing experience they would remember for years to come; instead they were taken from us in an avoidable tragedy caused through errors of judgement, by a well respected pilot impaired by the short and long term use of cannabis. (Backhouse, 2013)

Recently a 19-year-old British tourist was killed while participating in quad biking on a farm in Katikati, in the North Island. Reports suggest the main reason for the death was a lack of safety measures provided by the operator, for example written instructions and the provision of crash helmets. There have been 37 deaths while quad biking since 2008 and three since Boxing Day, 2012 (E2nz.Org, 2013b). The Dart River Jet Safari accident cost an American tourist a broken collarbone (Thomas, 2013). The main reason for this accident was the carelessness of two Jet Safari drivers. They were subsequently fined $3000 and their licenses were cancelled (Edens, 2013).

Figure 6: Campaign on New Zealand Tourists' Safety

Source: Derived from NZ Tourist Safety, (2013b).

New Zealand tourists' safety was in the limelight again when Chris Cocker commented on a report issued on the Fox Glacier accident, stating that the pilots in the cases of sky diving had taken drugs before flying and both accidents were completely preventable (NZ Tourist Safety, 2013a). The report also stated that in the Fox Glacier accident the pilot did not hold a current medical certificate, which showed a disregard for complying with the rules. The Fox Glacier accident report said the regulatory oversight of commercial ballooning in New Zealand was not sufficient to ensure a safe and

sustainable industry for the public. There were safety concerns that non-commercial balloon pilots – which was not the case here – could take non-paying passengers for a balloon flight without any prescribed training, knowledge or medical certificate (Backhouse, 2013). Andrew Little, the Labour Party's tourism spokesperson, also supports this view by stating, 'the families are correct when they say New Zealand is too blasé about health and safety and this accident was yet another wake up call to do better' (Little, 2013).

Where safety is a prime feature in selecting a tourist destination, negative events such as tourist injuries and fatalities have the potential to severely damage the image of the tourism industry, which is increasingly subject to the 24-hour globalised media (Bartlett, 2012). Media reports of negative tourist incidents can easily turn an 'incident' into a 'crisis' for a destination, because the tourism sector is more than ever before subjected to media scrutiny (Schwartz, 2012). Figure 6 shows the campaign against New Zealand started by Chris Coker, the father of a tourist who died in a Fox Glacier plane crash. He started this website to warn tourists about New Zealand's lack of safety (NZ Tourist Safety, 2013b). For some tourists, if any adventure activity is regulated then they expect to be safe. As one traveller on Dan Roberts' website commented,

> "One doesn't expect to die while participating in adventure activities in destinations such as New Zealand or Australia, where participants put all their trust in the operator without actually thinking about the inherent risk" (Roberts, 2009).

One adventure traveller suggested that, while participating in activities like jet boating, canyon swinging or heli-biking, they do expect some amount of safety assurance from operators because they are paying so much for the activity, whereas some activities are exceptional and risk is expected, like climbing Mount Everest. Some commented that

while considering some adventure destinations they expect any tourists to be careful even if the activities are regulated. One respondent stated,

> "one has to be careful about adventure tourism in Sri Lanka and Laos as the safety record of some of the operators is appalling while there are excellent companies too" (Roberts, 2009).

But when tourists select destinations like New Zealand and Australia they expect to be safe. One commented saying,

> "one feels safe in places like New Zealand or Australia because of their image as a safe destination, but when we think of destinations like Zambia, Albania or Laos, even though the destination is covered with safety regulation there are few incidents of accidents. So it very necessary to select these destinations on the basis of the operators' experience, especially with lesser-known destinations" (Roberts, 2009).

Many tourists safely undertake adventure activities in New Zealand. However, as discussed earlier, every adventure activity involves some amount of inherent risk. There have been number of serious accidents involving Australian and other international tourists, some resulting in death. Accordingly there is a perception that there is a lack of proper safety standards in New Zealand and operators do not follow what safety standards there are. It was suggested that travellers' need to be careful about the risk involved in every adventure activity and need also to be aware of the safety standard of individual operators. It was strongly recommended that travellers inquire with individual operators about the safety standards they adhere to; whether these standards applied across the industry and the risk involved in every activity (E2NZ, 2011).

There have been numerous accidents involving British tourists; which also include extreme sports accidents. It is always important to check that tourists are covered by

insurance when participating in extreme sports activities. If tourists intend to visit remote areas then it is necessary to check with local authorities before setting out. It is always important to submit tourists' personal details to visitor information centres or family or friends and to keep updated about the weather, which keeps changing in New Zealand (E2NZ, 2011).

Several campaigns have been started against the New Zealand adventure tourism industry. An example is shown in Figure 6, which exhibits a campaign against New Zealand, the important issue being the lack of tourist safety in New Zealand. Media displays like this can have negative effects on a destination's image.

Figure 7: Facebook Page on NZ Tourist Safety
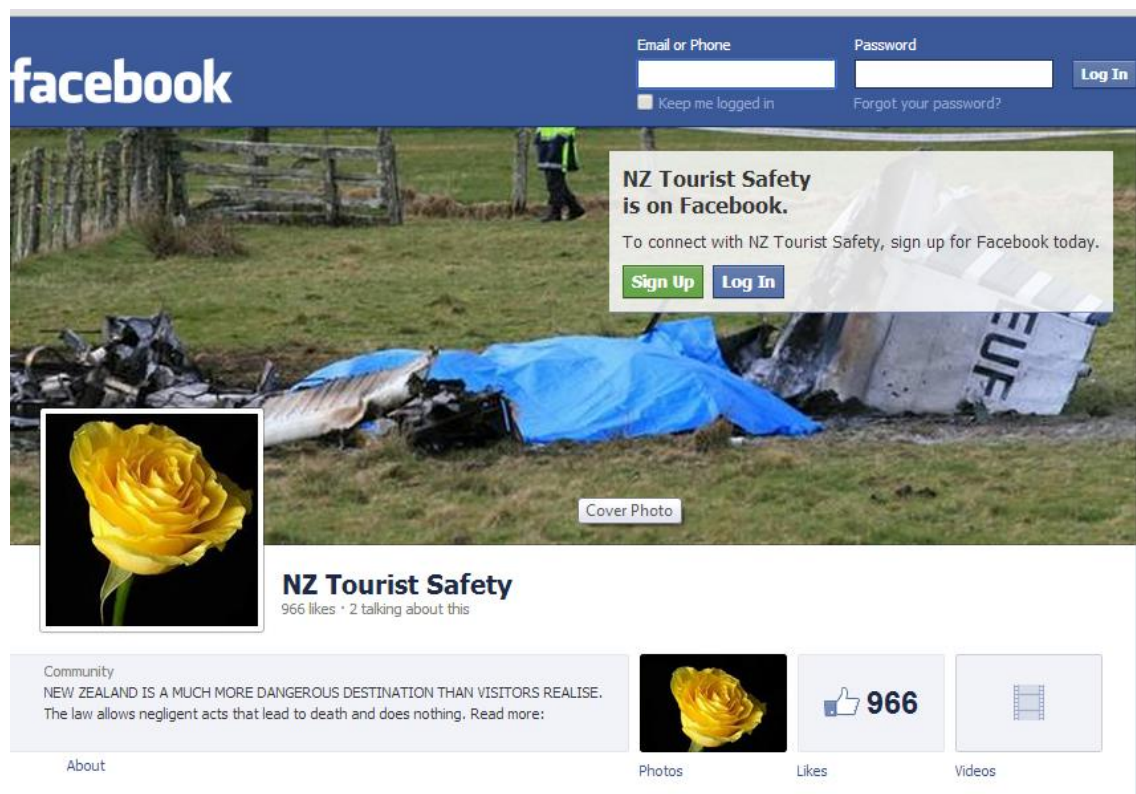
Source: NZ Tourist Safety, (2013c).

The number of people who have 'liked' this Facebook page (966) shows that there is agreement with the campaign's approach to the issue and that a number of people are

aware of the problem. A survey was conducted by the NZ Herald (Auckland's only daily newspaper), on adventure tourism safety. The most common response was that there is need to introduce much tighter regulation and more strict safety guidelines or frameworks for operators. According to readers, a common reason for accidents is operators failing to follow the guidelines properly. The hiring of seasonal staff instead of professional staff was a major concern among readers (E2NZ.Org, 2011a). One of the tourists doubted Prime Minister John Key's promotion of New Zealand as safe destination (3news, 2012) stating,

> The Prime Minister has not "gone further" in advocating drug testing. He is merely sidestepping, to evade admitting that government simply cannot "ensure safety" – as so many blithely call for it to do (The New Zealand Herald, 2013b).

New adventure regulations were introduced three years ago, but accidents still occur in adventure activities. However, while considering the number of accidents in the adventure industry there is no change in the number of accidents and the safety of tourists is still uncertain.

4.2   Loopholes in New Adventure Regulations

Gaps in the new adventure activities regulations was one of the concerns repeated several time by tourists as well as operators in news articles and social media websites.

In 2009-2010 the Department of Labour reported on and reviewed risk management and safety in adventure tourism (Haines, 2012). It stated that there are gaps in the safety management framework which allow some adventure and outdoor commercial sector businesses to operate at lower standards than those that the paying public should reasonably expect and that experts within the industry consider acceptable (Roxburgh,

2010). While these gaps remain, there is a possibility of harm to individuals and their families, as well as damage to New Zealand's reputation as an international visitor destination and to the industry's reputation (Haines, 2012). Therefore, in August 2010, Cabinet agreed to establish regulations that would require adventure activity operators providing certain defined type of adventure activities to register by obtaining a safety audit from an accredited provider.

There are three different types of government regulatory bodies in New Zealand for different types of adventure activities based on land, water and air. These are the NZ Transport Agency, The Civil Aviation Authority and Maritime NZ. Each have specific legislation that relates to their particular areas of authority.

- **Land – Water Based** - Health and safety in employment (Adventure Activities) regulation, 2011 (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2011)

- **Air Based - Part 115** – Adventure Aviation (Civil Aviaiton Authority of New Zealand, 2012)

- **Maritime Act 82** – Jet Boating (Maritime New Zealand, 2012)

Table 5 gives brief information about different adventure activities covered under the three different government regulations.

Table 5: Types of Adventure Activities Covered Under Different Adventure Regulations

Health and Safety in Employment (Adventure Activities) Regulation, 2011	Part 115 - Adventure Aviation 2012
Note Each activity listed in this schedule is an example of an adventure activity, but only to the extent that Regulation 4(1)(a) applies to the activity. Abseiling or rappelling (if done outdoors) Bridge swinging Bungy jumping Canoeing Canyon swinging Canyoning Caving Glacier walking High ropes course crossing, high wire crossing, or use of a zip wire Kayaking Mountaineering Off-road vehicle driving Quad biking or trail biking River boarding Rock climbing (if done outdoors) Scuba diving Snow activities (if done outdoors and outside a patrolled ski area) such as the following: (a) skiing:(b) snowboarding	Gliding Mircolights Tandem hang gliding Tandem paragliding Hot-air ballooning Tandem skydiving
	Maritime Rules 82 Commercial Jet Boat operations - River

Source: Derived from Civil Aviaiton Authority of New Zealand, 2012; Maritime New Zealand, 2012; Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, (2011).

While analysing the new adventure regulations some gaps were observed related to activities. Peter Bosco, whose daughter died in the Manawatu Gorge in 2009, (Radio New Zealand News, 2013; The New Zealand Herald, 2011) stated,

> "Having looked at the new standards, I already have concerns and there are some gaps in the regulatory system".

The regulations fall short in including all the adventure activities under one regulation. It was observed that only 17 adventure activities were included in the Health and Safety in Employment (Adventure Activities) Regulation (HSEAAR) and the rest, like skydiving, rafting and jet boating, are included under adventure aviation and Maritime New Zealand (MNZ) .

Importantly, regulation does not include educational institutions such as schools and clubs and providers of services to these institutions. This is a significant issue as the deaths of six students and a teacher at Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre in 2008 attests to. In 2012 the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council summarised a report on incidents in non-ski activities in the National Incident Database (NID). Almost 67% of victims were aged 10-19 years and adventure activities that had the greatest number of reported incidents were kayaking/sea kayaking, rock climbing, ropes and high ropes, mountaineering and camping (New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, 2012).

Figure 8: Proportion of Reports by Organisation Types in 2012
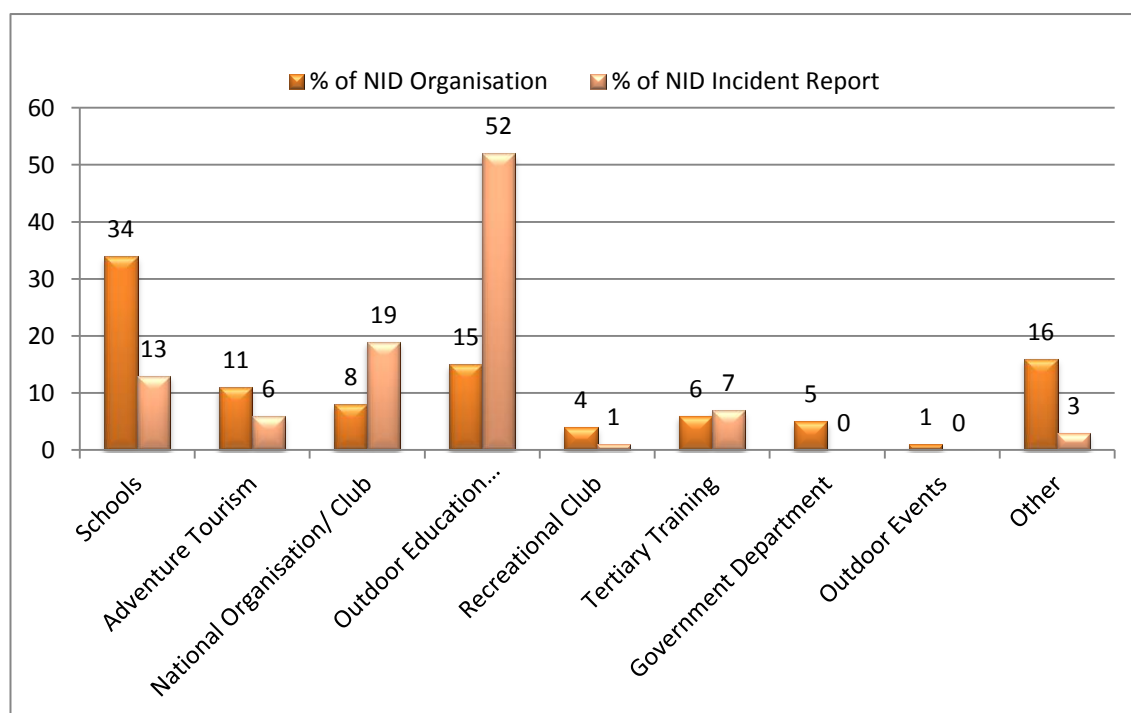
Source: Derived from New Zealand Mountain Safety Council (2012).

Figure 7 shows that the highest number of incidents was reported by organisations like outdoor education centres (52%), national organisations/clubs (19%) and schools (13%). Adventure tourism reported 6% of incidents. A major gap in the new regulations is that the organisations reporting the greatest number of incidents are not covered by the regulations.

The regulation does not include activities like abseiling, rappelling and rock climbing if they are conducted indoors. These activities are included only if they are conducted outdoors. So if there is an accident indoors then a different set of regulations apply. Assurances on the safety measures and training of unskilled employees have been given although it is difficult to maintain know-how for seasonal staff. Enhancing safety audit procedures will help, though providers are not bound to reveal to their customers the hazards in the activities (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2011).

The rules also cover only companies that guide or instruct people, not those that hire out bikes or kayaks (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2011, p. 4). As stated by one tourist,

> "In a way you could say these regulations are disincentives because you could just give out the equipment and let people go" (Perry, 2013).

Mountain bikes are not vehicles in terms of this regulation and they are excluded (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2011, p. 5). Mountain bikes are considered as amusement devices and they are covered under the Machinery Act 1950 (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 1950, p. 15). When tourists participate in any adventure activity they consider it as part of adventure tourism as a whole. They are not aware of these different pieces of legislation. The fragmentation is very misleading for tourists.

The new regulations applies only to operators who voluntarily register their organisations (Department of Labour, 2012, p. 8). It is not clear which operators are running adventure tourism businesses, nor is it entirely clear that all operators are registered (Radio New Zealand News, 2012). The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, which is overseeing the project, revealed that just 52 out of an estimated 600 operators had signed up to a voluntary public register (Radio New Zealand News, 2013). It was also reported that out of the first batch of 30 operators instructed to commence the registration process, a third had not taken steps to engage a safety audit provider.

As one tourist commented:

> "I am disappointed but not surprised New Zealand has been slow on the uptake for the new safety regulations, what kind of message is it sending out to the rest of the world? If New Zealand becomes known as a dangerous country to holiday in, it will be difficult to recover from that" (Radio New Zealand News, 2013).

It will take three years to completely audit all 17 activities included in the new regulations, which means some operators are still operating without being regulated or audited. The father of one victim commenting on the fact that auditing will take place every three years said that,

> "The café is inspected annually and all you can get from a café is amoebic dysentery. They should have some public notice displayed stating when the operator was last audited" (Radio New Zealand News, 2013).

The regulations focus only on basic requirements like communication, management supervision and safety hazards and is no more rigorous than that (The New Zealand Herald, 2013b). Concerns were also expressed about the auditing process of the new regulations. In 2012 Labour Minister Simon Bridges said the Ministry will start targeted auditing of 1500 adventure activity operators from November 2014. However, it is unclear whether all businesses are regulated, or whether some business are still operating without regulation (Xinhua, 2013).

Some operators, including Queenstown tandem hang gliding and paragliding company Sky-Trek, are not happy about the new standards. Co-owner Shai Launel said,

> "After the meeting the new regulation meant more money for the bureaucrats" and was "not going to help with the safety" (Dodgshun, 2011).

Some operators have shown concern about the new regulations and they want to stop any further regulatory system. A director of canyoning.co.nz in Queenstown, Mark Enright, said,

> " It has been an avenue for councils or regulatory bodies clipping your ticket, and we really want to stop that" (Newstalk ZB Staff, 2013).

There were also suggestions from some tourists that if operators are held responsible for accidents then tourists should be allowed to sue the company. One tourist said,

> "Once the operators realise that they face multi-million dollar compensation claims and possible legal action, they will pay attention. Not until". (The New Zealand Herald, 2013b).

Despite the new adventure regulations and the promotion of New Zealand as a safe adventure destination, there still are gaps in the regulations which lead to accidents continuing to occur in the adventure activity industry. As one tourist commented,

> "Regulations will not avail safety. Operators will continue as they always have. They interpret regulations as liberally as they can to gain as much latitude as they can, and adhere only to that. This will never ensure safety. It will only 'breed the smug complacency of printing "Certified by Govt" on a brochure" (Blackstock, 2013).

A diverse response was observed to the call for adventure regulation by the adventure travellers in adventure blogs. Some think that people make their own choice to

participate in adventure activities and overdoing safety spoils the experience. As one tourist commented,

> "Doing adventure activities in a less regulated environment is like stepping back to those good old days where people were held responsible for their decisions and didn't pass the buck onto someone else in a nice cash payout" (Roberts, 2009).

For some tourists it is important to regulate all adventure activities, whereas for others if adventure activities are regulated then it affects their adventure experience. On that opposite perception one tourist mentioned,

> "I found the Sydney Bridge climb one of the most boring experiences of my life – being effectively taught for an hour how to climb a ladder. We amused ourselves while climbing the actual bridge with a debate as to whether it would be technically possible to kill yourself and came to the conclusion that it was not" (Roberts, 2009) .

In general, regulations fall short of including all the adventure activities and there are still loopholes that allow providers to operate at lower standards that lead to accidents. At the same time, considering risk as an important factor of adventure activities, a well-planned regulation is suggested.

4.3   Responsibility by Operators

One theme extracted while analysing news articles was that of operators' negligent behaviour in following safety procedures. As one tourist stated,

> "You see the tremendous enthusiasm of these operators and their passion for their work yet some operators seem careless about safety. Careless operators risk ruining the reputation of the entire industry" (The New Zealand Herald, 2013b).

According to the 2012 National Incident Database (New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, 2012), four primary causal factors reported for incidents by participants were:

Participant-related Factor: This was the major reason for incident reporting, covering approximately 71% of incidents. It usually involved bad judgment or not following instruction/procedures properly (82%), lack of communication (12%) and inadequate practice or preparation (6%) (New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, 2012, p. 29). Here, it is the operator's responsibility that participants are communicated with properly about the procedures, and are taught and assisted to follow procedures for the activity (Department of Labour, 2012, p. 10). This suggests that operators are not following the regulations properly. After a recent accident in Tree Adventures, participants reported concerns over the operators' carelessness in safety briefing procedures (Rutherford, 2013).

Environment-related Factor: 40% of incidents reported were environment-related incidents. Environmental factors included terrain (60%), slippery surface (4%), and water (22%) (New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, 2012, p. 29). Operators are responsible for safety of participants who are exposed to dangerous terrain and dangerous water-bodies, as explained in the operators' guidance (Department of Labour, 2012, pp. 11 -13).

Leader-related Factor: Operators' following their safety procedures improperly plays a major role in Leader-related factors. In total, 28% of incidents reported were leader-related factors and 33% of such cases specified inadequate supervision, including checking equipment. Some claimed inadequate training or failure to follow policies

(New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, 2012, p. 30). A recent victim was Australian tourist Chelsea Callaghan, 38, who was killed on a Riverlands Adventures quad bike tour in October 2012. Ms. Callaghan suffered fatal head injuries in the north Waikato accident. Subsequently, the owner of Riverland Adventures was charged with her manslaughter. A lack of proper information provided on safety procedures was the reason cited (Maas, 2013). Riverland Adventures' website states that no previous quad biking experience is necessary for those on its tours. It provided only a 15-minute session on how to ride a quad bike before participants embarked on a tour (Riverland Adventures, 2013).

Equipment-related Factor: 16% of incidents reported related to equipment failure. The reasons were inadequate physical condition, inadequate design of equipment and unfamiliarity with equipment/skills, and wrong or faulty equipment (New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, 2012, p. 30). This shows that these operators were irresponsible in checking their equipment. One recent example was at the Navis Bungy Swing in the Navis Canyon in Queenstown. Harness failure left a participant dangling by her armpits.
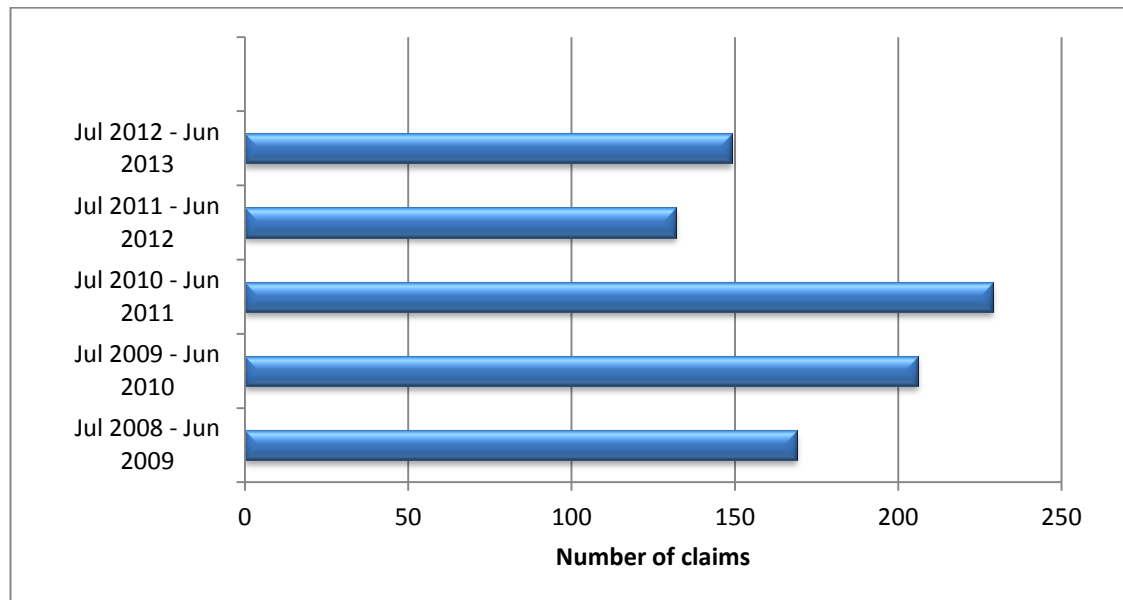
Figure 9 Participant Hanging Due To Harness Failure

Source: Derived from E2NZ. Org, (2012)

Figure 9 shows equipment-related injury claims to the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) between the years 2009 –2013 in adventure activities.

Figure 10: Equipment Related Injury

Source : Derived from Accident Compensation Corporation, (2013b).

The above table shows that number of claims reported between the years 2009-2013 has fluctuated. But for the purpose of this research, the focus is on claims after 2011; in 2011 new adventure regulations were introduced so data were observed between the years 2011 and 2013. It was observed that highest number of claims was in 2011 and then there was a decrease in 2012. An increased number of claims in 2013 suggest that there is a lack of safety or equipment check on the operators' part. Operators are responsible for making regular safety checks of equipment. The increased number of claims also proves that there is still safety gaps related to equipment during participation in adventure activities.

4.4   Content Analysis of Adventure Activity Operator's Websites

For the content analysis of adventure activity operators' websites, the selection was based on one adventure activity from each type of adventure regulation (see Table 6). All the operators in New Zealand from each activity were selected to analyse operator's safety standards in each activity.

As the data set was of a manageable size, data analysis was conducted manually. Hence, computer-based data analysis tools were not required and were not used for this research. In total 49 adventure activities' operators' websites were analysed, as explained in Table 6.

Table 6: Selected Adventure Activities

	Government Regulation	Adventure Activity	Total Number of Operators
Land Based	Health and Safety Adventure Activity regulation, 2011 (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2011)	Bungy jumping	11
Air Based	Adventure Activity Aviation Regulation (Civil Aviaiton Authority of New Zealand, 2012)	Sky diving	14
Water Based	Maritime Act (Maritime New Zealand, 2012)	Jet boating	24
		Total	49

The purpose of the websites is to promote an operator's business and attract tourists to a particular destination or operation. Website features thus play an important role in communicating with potential tourists, by enhancing users' comprehension and

experience, and thereby facilitating their evaluation and selection of destinations before the actual visit (Yu-Hui, 2011).

The decision-making process for tourism-related travel is heavily influenced by the workings of operators. This is in part due to high expectations being placed on the operators, in terms of safety issues, regarding the particular activity or its associated destination. Tourists are more likely to depend on the safety judgement of the operators, as they are expected to assess risk more critically than could the general travelling public. Nevertheless, the increasingly competitive and complicated work environment of operators is testing their precautionary safety advice. They tend to treat safety issues in a low-key manner, in favour of marketing the activity and destination, in contrast with the general public's desire to travel safety (Lovelock, 2003).

It is found that website features not only expedite users' decision-making, but also create an enjoyable online experience. This is the first place where tourists come in contact with operators and make a decision (Yu-Hui, 2011). Travellers are also becoming increasingly well-informed through an enhanced destination information-base, contributed to by a range of media, and most notably the Internet. These trends make it necessary now, more than ever before, that operators provide appropriate safety information and practices with respect to any matters related to adventure activities that might ultimately impact upon the personal safety of their clients (Lovelock, 2003). Thus adventure activities' operators' websites were analysed to find out how operators publish and promote safety information on their websites. The main purpose behind this analysis is to find out, after the introduction of the new adventure regulations, how many operators are focusing on the safety of tourists and providing proper safety

information to tourists, that is, to find out how operators are dealing with risk on their websites.

In total 49 adventure activities' operators' websites were analysed. While analysing websites the focus was on looking for any information exhibited on different adventure activities covered under different regulations, as explained in Table 7, that correlated to regulatory certification,. Any information mentioned on the website related to any of the regulations was immediately selected.

Table 7: Operators Displaying Regulatory Information on Website

Regulations	Number of operators displaying regulatory information on websites
Health and Safety Adventure Activity regulation , 2011	4
Adventure Activity Aviation Regulation	6
Maritime Act	5
Total	15

The result of an analysis of the adventure operators' websites in Table 7 shows that out of 49 adventure operators' only fifteen operators displayed information about the regulations pertaining to their operation. Of those fifteen operators only four directly displayed Health and Safety Adventure Activity regulation, 2011 (HSAAR) and only two operators displayed a Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) certificate on the first page of the website so that it could be recognised easily by tourists. Twelve operators disclosed information related to the regulations. Among those twelve operators only four explicitly mentioned regulation: for example, Agroventures stated, "As a business, Agroventures has to comply with New Zealand legislation and we are regulated by the

Department of Labour, under the Amusement Park Devices Act and Maritime New Zealand" (Agrodventures, 2013).

Others operators stated they were "following new regulatory safety procedures", "covered under new adventure regulations" and "regulated by NZPIA". The remaining eight operators mentioned they were "regulated under the Department of Labour". The websites of 35 operators lacked any information related to regulatory certification.

In 2010 the Department of Labour produced a review of risk management and safety in the adventure and outdoor commercial sector in New Zealand to explore operators' views about improving safety management in the New Zealand adventure tourism industry (Department of Labour, 2010). The result of the review produced a number of principles by which operators could improve their safety management framework (Department of Labour, 2010, p. 38). They are as follows:

1) Employing experienced staff.
2) Communicating sound operating procedures to customers and staff.
3) Providing clients with good information about activities, and equipment.

In total 49 operators' websites were analysed (refer Table 7) to find out standards of displaying safety information.

Figure 11: Safety Information on Websites
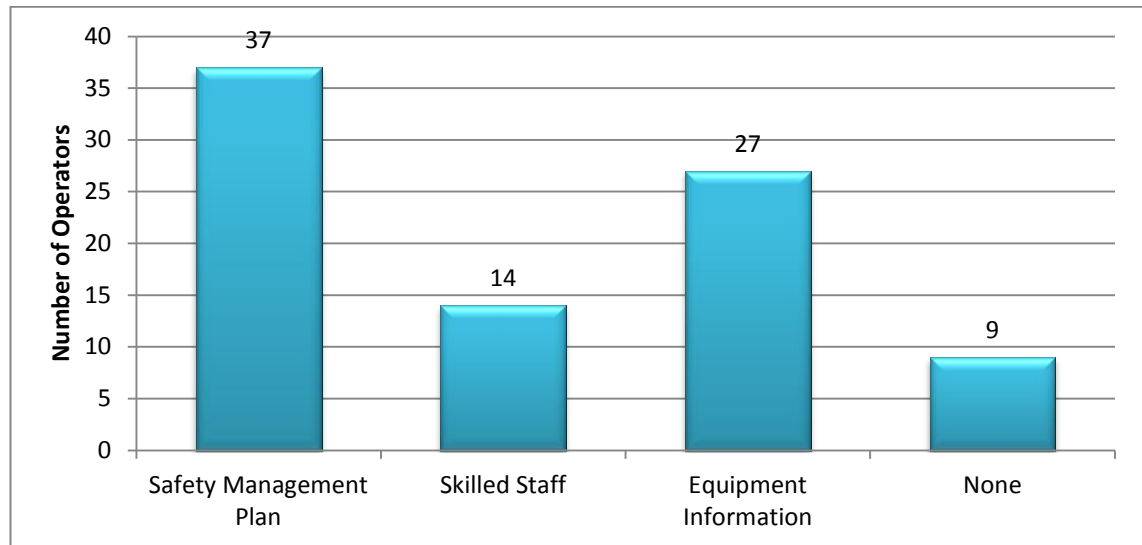
The result of the operators' website analysis (Figure 10) shows:

- **Safety Management Plan**: 37 operators displayed information related to their safety management plan. As per the 2010 review by the Department of Labour, a safety management plan includes policies, procedures, and control mechanisms to avoid hazards (Department of Labour, 2010, p. 38). Despite 37 providing information, the most common listing was to provide lifejackets; only 10 operators published information about safety procedures to follow while participating in an adventure activity and only 3 operators published a detailed description of methods to follow to avoid hazards.

- **Skilled Staff**: 14 operators' websites displayed information about skilled instructors or hired experienced staff.

- **Equipment Information**: 27 operators published descriptions of the type of equipment used, the year of manufacture and how often equipment is changed or serviced. The remaining operators did not display any information other than bland statements relating to the "safety and comfort of customers".

The above analysis shows that the highest number of operators provided information on life jackets and a smaller number of operators provided safety procedures, followed by information about employing skilled instructors. Not all operators published safety information. The ones that did publish information did not make a feature of the information and finding safety information on operators' websites was difficult as the information provided was not easily accessible and it took the researcher considerable time to explore the websites to find the relevant information.

Official travel destination websites are the most commonly used online sources to seek information and to influence tourists' decisions in selecting a destination (Méndeza, Muñoz-Leivaab, & Sánchez-Fernández, 2013). At the same time operators failed to provide safety information, which is very important in order to avoid accidents in adventure activities. As previously discussed this may impact economic benefits for the tourism industry because more tourists than before now depend on online information while selecting a destination. In that case failure by operators to include safety information might discourage some tourists from participating. Even after the introduction of the new adventure regulations, there still some operators who are not considering the importance of safety in the adventure tourism industry.

4.5 Discussion

The findings presented a reasonable baseline picture of the New Zealand situation signifying concern about a lack of safety in New Zealand's adventure tourism industry. The findings indicate the distribution between the actual state of the industry at present and the perspective towards the new rules. There is lack of awareness about risk management in adventure tourism and a lack of adequate regulation to cover all adventure activities. Risk is an important element of adventure therefore it is very important to manage risk in all adventure activities and perception of risk for every tourist varies with the type of adventure activities tourist participated in. Safety is an important element for any tourist while selecting an adventure destination. However risk and adventure are interrelated and the lack of proper management of risks can lead to accidents and the death of tourists. To select a tourist destination or operation many tourists use information tools such as online multimedia like websites, blogs and social networking websites and promotion on multimedia which can influence the choice of activity. Therefore online news articles and operators' websites were analysed to find out safety practice in adventure tourism in New Zealand. After performing a content analysis of news articles the themes extracted are:

- Perceived lack of safety precautions

- Loopholes in adventure tourism regulation

- Responsibility by operators

The themes that have been extracted are important issues for the adventure tourism sector in New Zealand. Taking action on aspects of these themes is essential to create the image of New Zealand as a "safe adventure destination". Adventure is a burgeoning

sector in the New Zealand tourism industry and it is very important in attracting visitors to create successful adventure tourism destinations.

To promote and develop any tourist destination in this fast-growing tourism industry it is very important that the government regulatory system and operators perform their duties properly and not blame each other for any incidents. This was an issue raised by Andrew Little (Little, 2013):

> "It's tempting to go down the path of ever more detailed and specific regulation but history tells us that just transfers responsibility away from operators. There are bigger issues at play here. Leadership, not blame-shifting, is required".

Even three years after the introduction of new adventure regulations accidents continue to occur in adventure tourism activities. This regulation does not assure safety as there are still gaps that allow some operators to operate on lower standards and that lead to tragedies in adventure activities.

Gaps in adventure regulation have been identified as one of the important themes in regard to safety in adventure tourism in New Zealand, especially the gap in required audit processes that allows operators to function at lower safety standards. It was observed that auditing processes will start from 2013, that is, three years after new the regulations were introduced. Auditing is scheduled every three years from the date of registration but there are still some operators not yet audited or registered.

Another problem with the regulatory system is that it covers different types of adventure activities under one regulation. Many adventure activities were exempted from the

regulations. Any indoor activities like indoor skiing and abseiling are not included in the regulations. There is no regulatory system responsible for these indoor activities. The key organisations that provide adventure activities like educational organisations, clubs or recreational centres are not covered under these regulations. It was also observed that these organisations have the highest accident ratio.

The loop holes in including all the adventure organisations under one regulation. The regulations do not include organisations that provide equipment on hire or to rent. If tourists have an accident and equipment is hired from that particular type of organisation then they are not responsible if there is something wrong with the equipment.

There is a lack of wide acceptance of regulation among some adventure operators. Some operators object to the burden of more paper work for certification of their adventure activity. Some of them doubt the effectiveness of this regulation for their particular operation. The registration of an adventure operation involves some fees, and for some operators it is an extra unnecessary expenditure and is inadequate to assure safety in adventure tourism.

There are also issues regarding operators' negligent behaviour in following safe adventure activity procedures. It was observed that a common reason for adventure incidents was faulty equipment, lack of communication and not providing proper safety information to tourists.

Operator's websites significantly influence tourist's decisions in selecting an adventure activity or destination. New Zealand's adventure operators' websites lack safety guidelines for tourists participating in adventure activities. Very few operators publish safety procedures, equipment used and their regulatory certificate. As suggested by one of the tourists, it is important to display regulatory certificates on websites to make tourists aware whether an operation is regulated or not. It is important to brief tourists about any hazardous or risky activities they are exposed to before they participate in any type of adventure activities. The websites' analysis shows that operators do not provide proper safety information and adventure is promoted as fearful and wild, which discourages some adventure tourists from participating in adventure activities.

Overall, multiple issues have been identified regarding safety in adventure tourism in New Zealand. It was observed that to assure safety in adventure activities, a tougher regulatory system is required. It is important that government as well as operators strictly follow safe operating procedures. There is a need for proper planning that does not have any loopholes that allow adventure providers to operate at low safety standards; and responsibilities must be assigned to each responsible entity. Operators' websites should be improved in terms of publishing more detailed and clearer safety information and adventure promotional standards to attract tourists to New Zealand.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Adventure tourism is a burgeoning sector of the tourism industry nationally and internationally and has been a major driver of growth for tourism industry in New Zealand (Callander & Page, 2003). New Zealand is the inventor and leader of bungy-jumping, and has the perfect setting and natural resources to offer a wide-range of adventure activities on land, water and air. However, in the past few years the New Zealand adventure tourism industry has been in the limelight for its risk management and safety procedures due to multiple accidents leading to serious injuries or death of the travellers participating in some adventure activities. Tourists' safety in New Zealand is a major issue that has attracted the attention of many travellers internationally leading to percentage decline in numbers of tourist participation in those activities.

Promotion of New Zealand as the "Adventure capital of the world" is controversial because, despite adventure tourism been a major factor of growth in the overall tourism industry in New Zealand, the issues affecting the industry have been neglected to a certain extent by both the operators and the governing agencies. Instead of working together in order to improve the safety of the travellers both are engaged in allegations against each other. Finally, when considering the research question and objective of this dissertation specified in the introduction a number of facts were discovered during the analysis of the research topic.

After examining 49 operators website and 72 news articles it was found that the safety methods adopted by the operators are perceived to be fairly low which has been explained in previous sections of this dissertation. The information published on the operators websites are not accurate and also lacked detailed and conveniently accessible

and specific safety information that might influence tourists' decisions about participating in adventure activities. All these factors indicate a somewhat negligent attitude of the operators towards the safety measures to be adopted for the given adventure activities along with their direct clientele. Not only that but the new regulations formed also have a number of loopholes. The major failing that was highlighted while examining the articles was there is no new regulation formed for the activities that have the highest risk and accidents recorded. The other issue was non implementation of government regulations and guidelines by the operators and lack of follow up by the governing agencies. Therefore the numbers of accidents in the adventure activities are increasing and may impact the image of the country.

Adventure tourism is an important subset of the New Zealand tourism industry and has grown rapidly over the years. There is still a considerable scope for adventure tourism operators and providers of recreational activities to take action and raise the standard of client safety. Operators can ascertain whether their clients have sufficient knowledge, experience, fitness levels and understanding of potential dangers before allowing participation in the particular activity. Communicating safety instructions may be particularly problematic due to language and cultural difficulties but the challenge for operators is to ensure all participants have understood the safety guidelines before participating in any adventure activity. On the other hand retaining the high level of risk and challenge and to ensure that it is delivered in a well-managed context is important. One cannot manage out all the risks but one can minimise injury by better management systems for those activities which demand greater attention to participant engagement in the same. All of these factors can enrich the tourist experience by giving a competitive edge along with correct safety measures required to perform the activity.

Just adopting the regulations by the operators is not going to help if they are not followed correctly. It is equally important that the government agencies monitor each operator carefully to assure that correct safety precautions are adopted for the activities. Lastly, only the combination of both can assure a steady growth in the adventure tourism industry and help in New Zealand retrieving the title of "Adventure capital of the world" along with its image of safe adventure destination.

Post Script

Just as this dissertation was being prepared for examination the New Zealand Herald, on the 9th of March 2014 reported that 'Outdoors New Zealand, the sole provider of the safety audits, has told operators it cannot accept new applications. It is struggling to deal with the "hundreds" of applications outstanding'. With only 130 operators having been assessed since 2011, there are another 400 or so that need to be audited by November 2014. At the current rate of auditing, it is clear that this deadline will not be met. This situation allows for more social media reporting on the process and inevitably the coverage is not be favourable. In the words of Chris Cocker: 'the very few promises they [the NZ government] made were false and there is no greater disrespect' (Blackstock, 2014).

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