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Cook Islands Visitor Survey Results

July – September 2016

Prepared for Cook Islands Tourism Corporation

by

New Zealand Tourism Research Institute
Auckland University of Technology

www.nztri.org

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Executive Summary

This report focuses on the characteristics, expectations and expenditure patterns of tourists who visited the Cook Islands. The data presented is drawn from an online departure survey (<http://www.mycookislandsvisit.com>). The survey period covered in this report is 1 July to 30 September 2016. There were 1,489 individual respondents to the survey - representing a total of 3,114 adults and 522 children in the expenditure analysis (this equates to 9% of all visitors during the period – based on the 2015 visitor arrival data for the July to September period from the Cook Islands Statistics Office).

The majority (74%) of visitors surveyed come from New Zealand, 15% come from Australia. Visitors are well educated (69% of visitors have some form of tertiary education) with a relatively high annual household income (47% earn over NZ\$100,000 per year). Nearly half of the visitors (46%) travel with one companion. Solo travellers are relatively rare (5%).

Over half of the visitors surveyed (57%) are first time visitors to the Cook Islands, a further 26% have visited once or twice before. The main purpose of the visit is holiday-making (81%). The average length of stay in the Cook Islands is 8.9 nights. The majority (93%) of the visitors stay either one or two weeks. Twenty one percent of the visitors surveyed visited Aitutaki in addition to Rarotonga.

Visitor spend prior to arrival in the Cook Islands (\$2,050 per person) has decreased slightly from the 2015/2016 annual average (\$2,121 per person). Spend on the island (per person per day) is \$148 which is higher than the 2015/16 annual average of \$147, but slightly lower than the same quarter for the previous year (\$152 for July to September 2015).

The average local spend per visitor during the whole trip is \$1,317. If the pre-paid spend amount and the local spend are combined, it is estimated that each visitor brings \$2,137 to the Cook Islands economy (or approximately \$240 per day). This figure is slightly lower than the \$2,138 average for 2015/16, and the figure of \$2,161 for the same quarter last year (July to September 2015).

Water-based activities are characterised by the strongest participation levels. Cultural interactions and land based activities are characterised by the highest overall satisfaction ratings. Visitor satisfaction levels with Cook Islands services are high. The most appealing elements of the Cook Islands experience are the beautiful natural environment, the friendly local people, the peacefulness and relaxing atmosphere of the islands, the activities and attractions and entertainment and events on offer. The least appealing elements of the Cook Islands experience are considered to be the lack of public services and facilities, and the poor quality and value for money in terms of food and beverage.

Overall satisfaction on the part of visitors is very high: 92% of those surveyed state that they want to return to the Cook Islands, and 98% would recommend the Cook Islands to friends or family. The overall satisfaction level is consistent with the previous year.

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Introduction

The Cook Islands government, local businesses and communities require a clear picture of the characteristics, expectations and expenditure patterns of visitors to the nation. This information is needed to enable the effective planning and development of the tourism industry and to highlight its crucial role within the broader Cook Island's economy. Visitors to the Cook Islands are asked to complete a web-based survey within two weeks of the completion of their visit. The Cook Islands online International Visitor Survey has run since mid-2012 and is continuing through 2017.

This report presents the results from July to September 2016. Over this three month period, 4,147 visitors were contacted by email to take part in the survey, and 1,489 responses were received: a conversion rate of 35.9%. These responses cover a total of 3,114 adults and 522 children. The conversion rate for this period is higher than the 2015/16 annual average (30.2%), but slightly lower than July to September 2015 quarter (36.3%).

The data presented includes detailed information on:

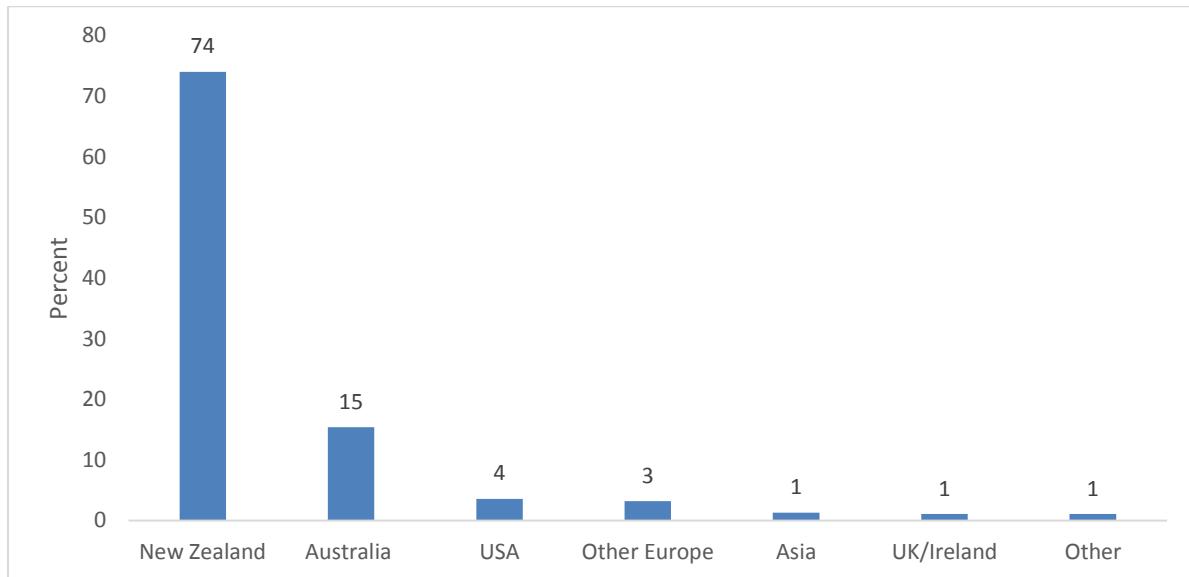
- The characteristics of visitors to the Cook Islands (age, gender, education, country of origin, income, purpose of visit, travelling companions, number of previous visits, length of stay, airline used, islands visited)
- Visitor information obtained about the Cook Islands, the factors influencing in the travel decision making process, and booking information.
- Visitor expenditure (amount of money spent prior to arrival and while in the Cook Islands, items of spending)
- Visitor satisfaction (most and least appealing elements of the visit, overall satisfaction, satisfaction with activities)

Wherever there are significant and/or notable variations from the 2015/16 annual averages or the 2015/16 July – September quarterly figures these are highlighted in the discussion that follows.

Visitor Characteristics

The majority (74%) of the visitors surveyed come from New Zealand (Figure 1). The second largest visitor group is from Australia, with 15% of respondents. USA, Europe, Asia and Great Britain represent the other main source markets.

Figure 1: Country of origin (n=1350)



Auckland, Canterbury, Waikato and Wellington account for 66% of the New Zealand visitors. For visitors from Australia, the regions of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland generate the largest numbers of visitor arrivals (81%) (Figure 2-3).

Figure 2: New Zealand visitors (n=998)

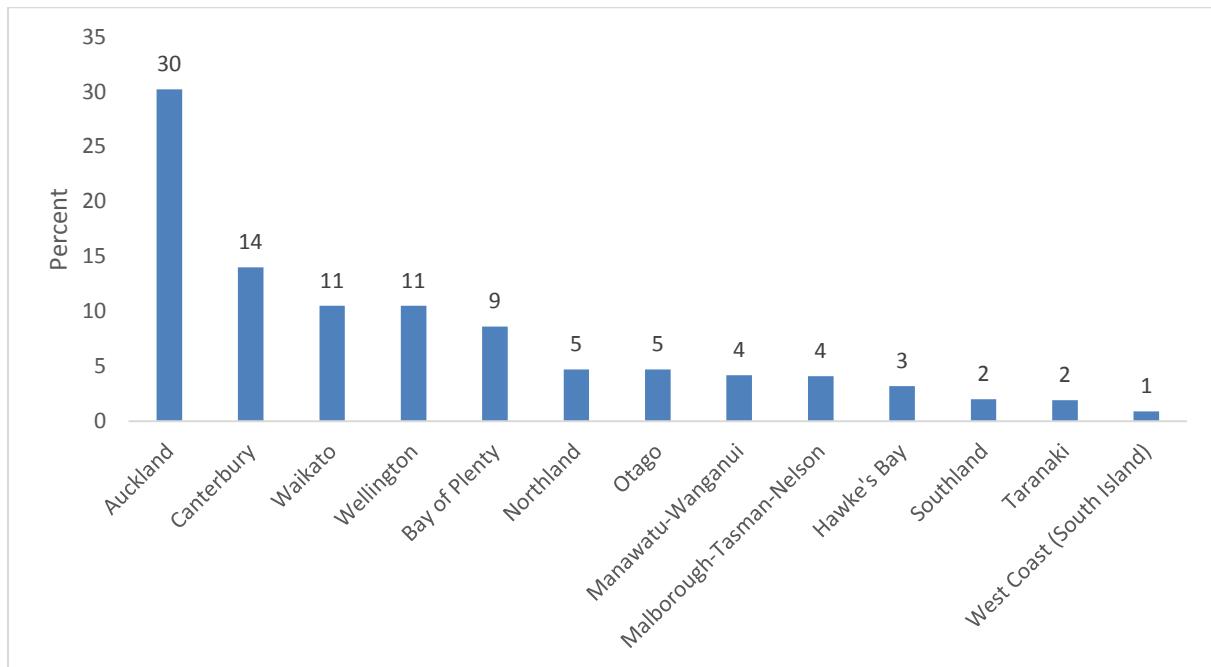
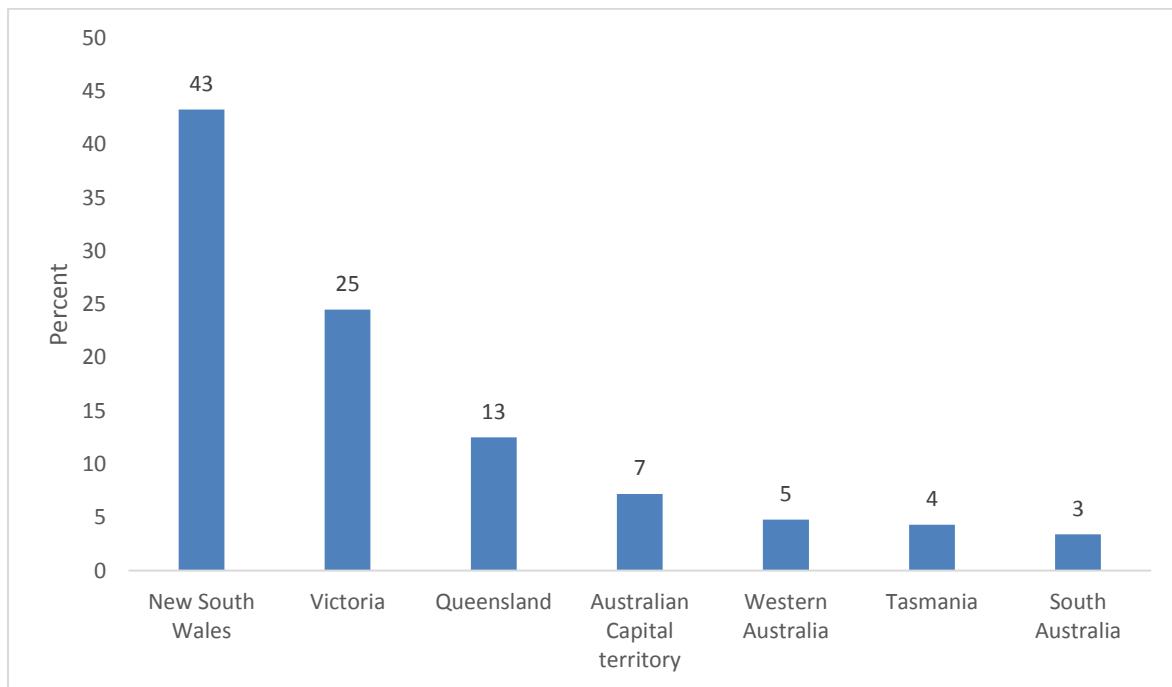
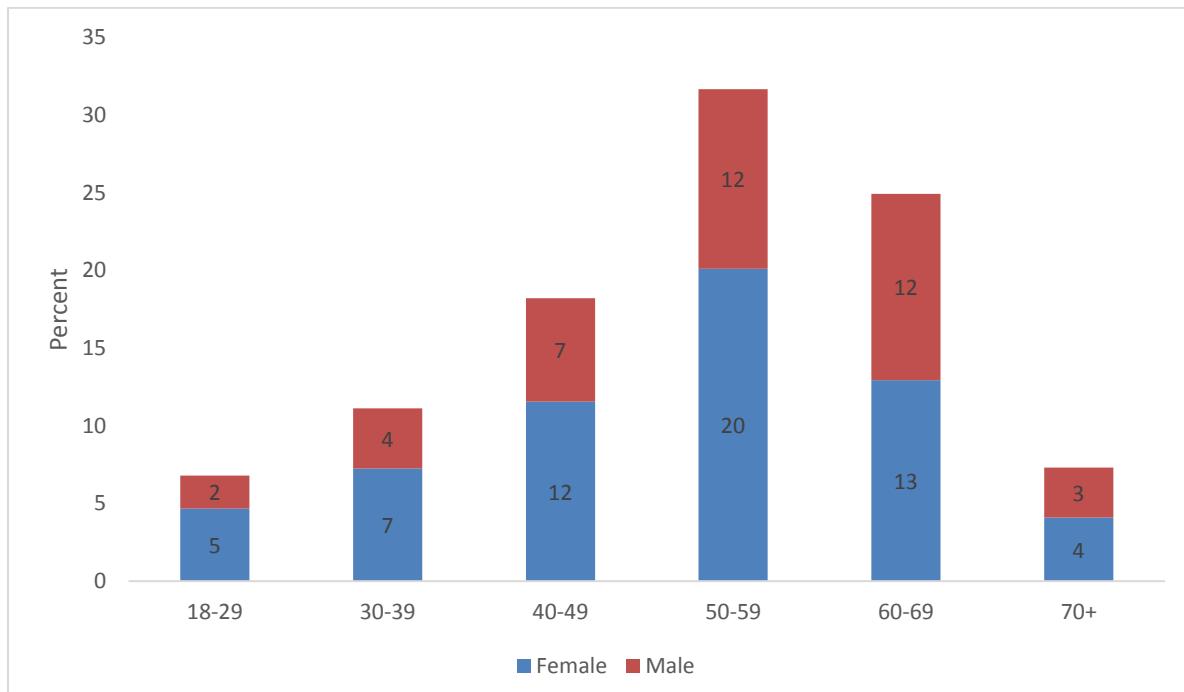


Figure 3: Australia visitors (n=208)



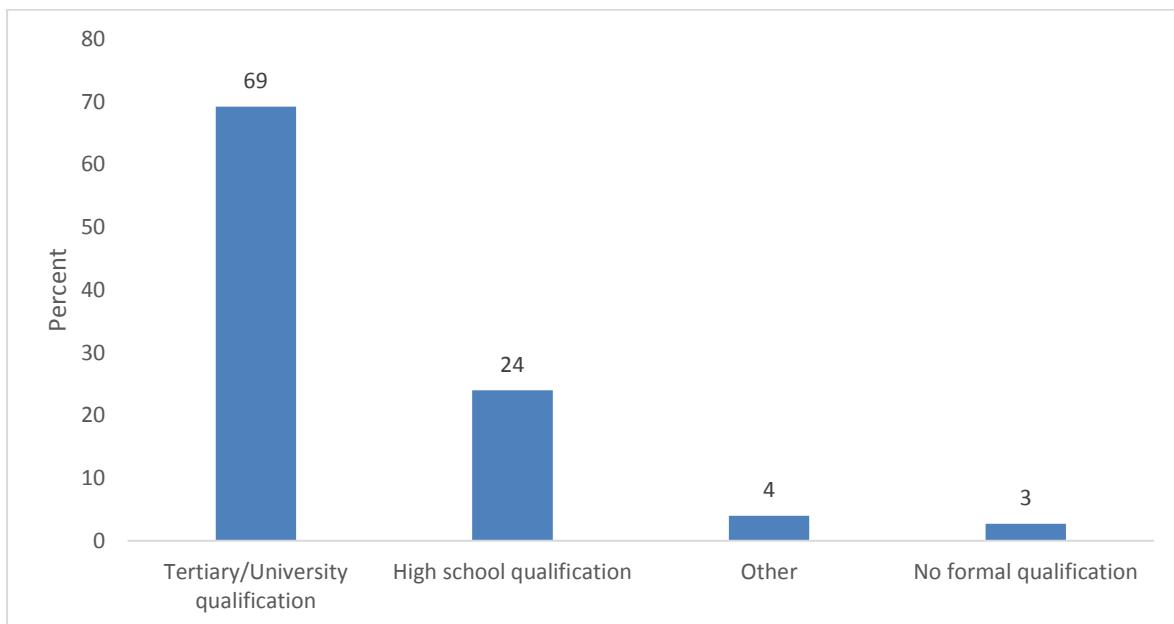
More women (61%) than men (39%) completed the survey (Figure 4). The most significant age categories are the 50 to 59 year (32%) grouping, followed by those aged 60 to 69 (25%) and the 40 to 49 age group (19%). There are relatively few travellers in the 70 plus age bracket (7%).

Figure 4: Distribution of age and gender (n=1368)



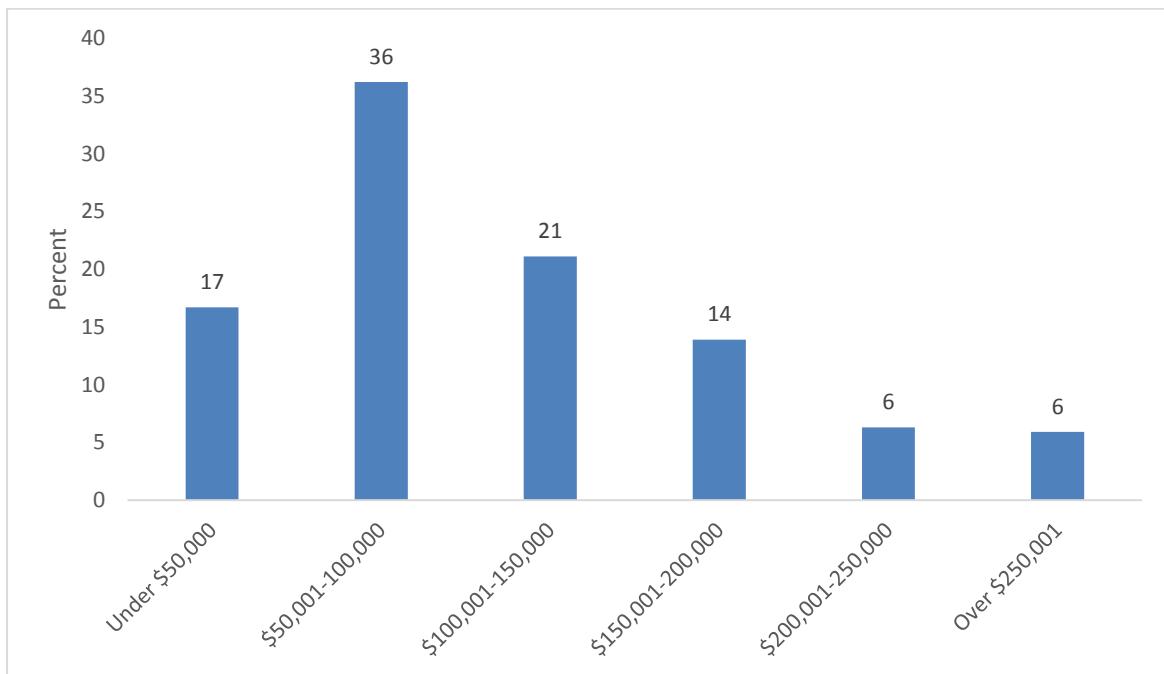
Visitors are well educated: more than two-thirds (69%) of those surveyed have some form of tertiary qualification, with a further 24% having completed a high school education (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Highest qualification (n=1364)



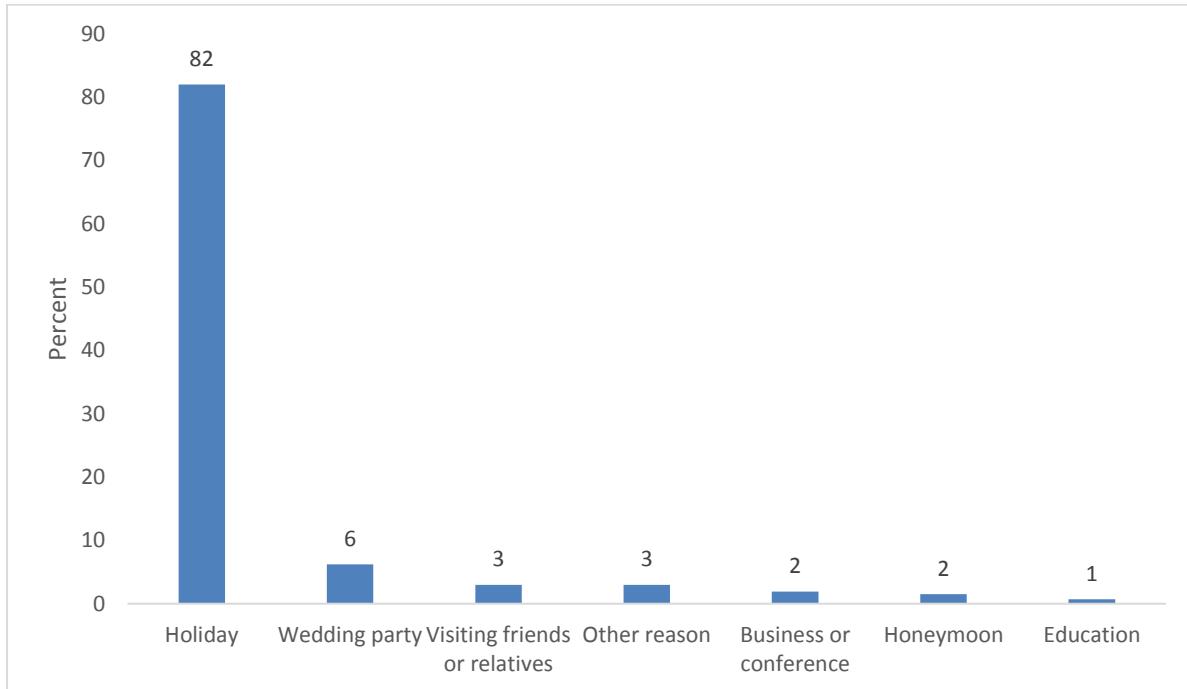
Over a third of visitors (36%) have an annual household income of between NZ\$50,001 and NZ\$100,000. Nearly a quarter (21%) of those surveyed earn between NZ\$100,001 and NZ\$150,000. A further 26% of respondents have a household income of over NZ\$150,000 per year (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Annual household income in NZD (n=1144)



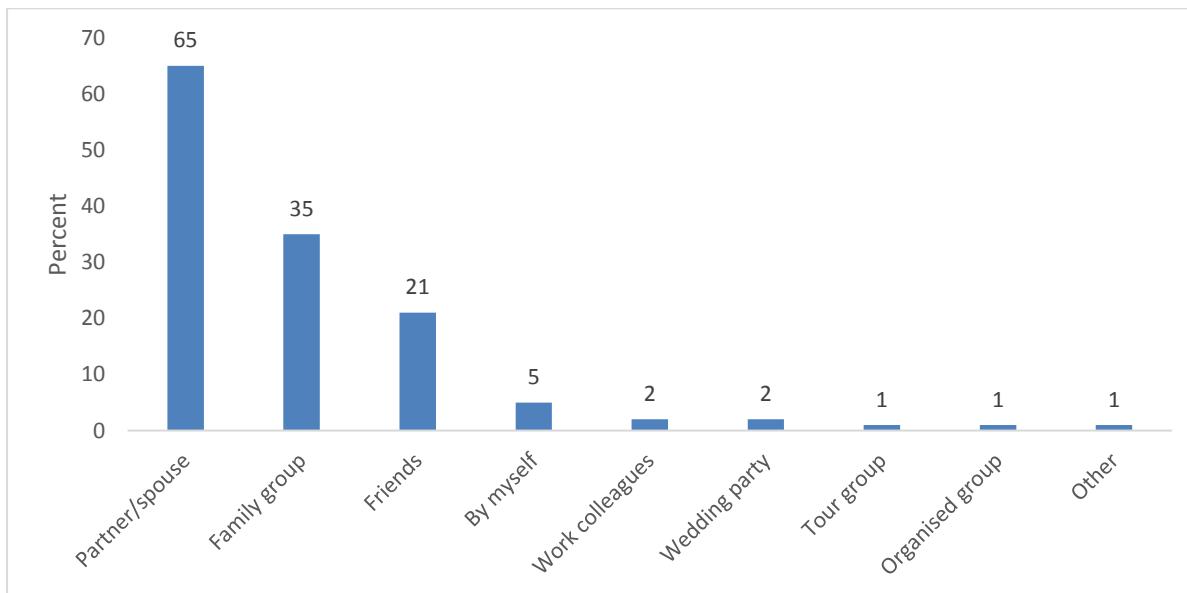
More than three quarters of visitors surveyed come to the Cook Islands for a holiday (82%). Other reasons given include attending a wedding (6%), visiting friends and relatives (3%), for a honeymoon (2%), for business and conference (2%), (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Main purpose of visit (n=1489)



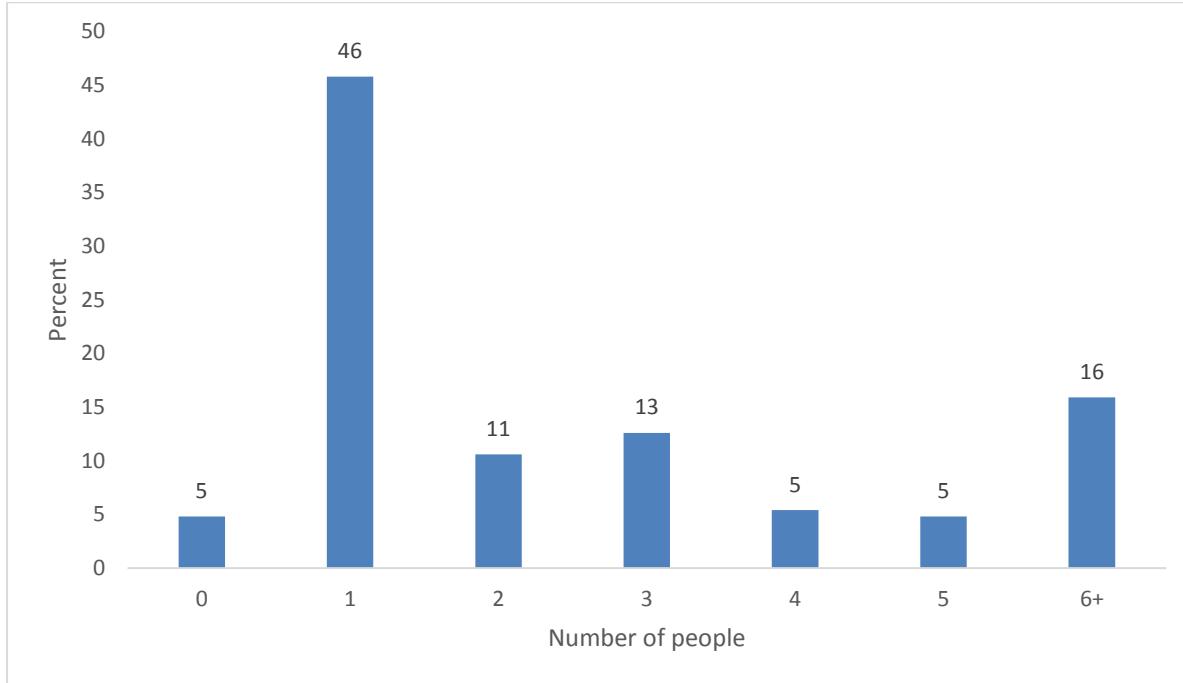
Most visitors (65%) surveyed travel to the Cook Islands with a partner or spouse. Visitors also often travel with other family members (35%), with friends (21%), or travel alone (5%). Those travelling with colleagues, in an organised group or as a part of a wedding party represent a smaller share of the sample (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Travelling with whom? (n=1484)



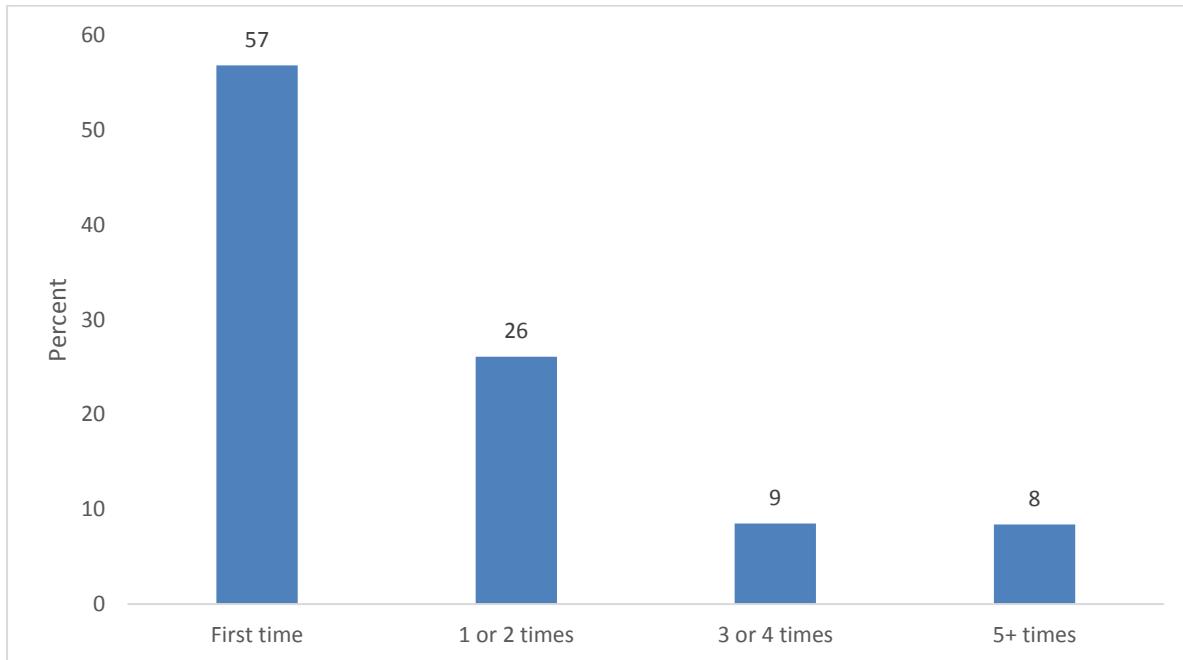
Nearly half of the visitors (46%) travelled with one companion on their visit to the Cook Islands (Figure 9). Travel groups larger than 4 people were not very common, with the exception of wedding parties.

Figure 9: Number of companions on trip (n=1470)



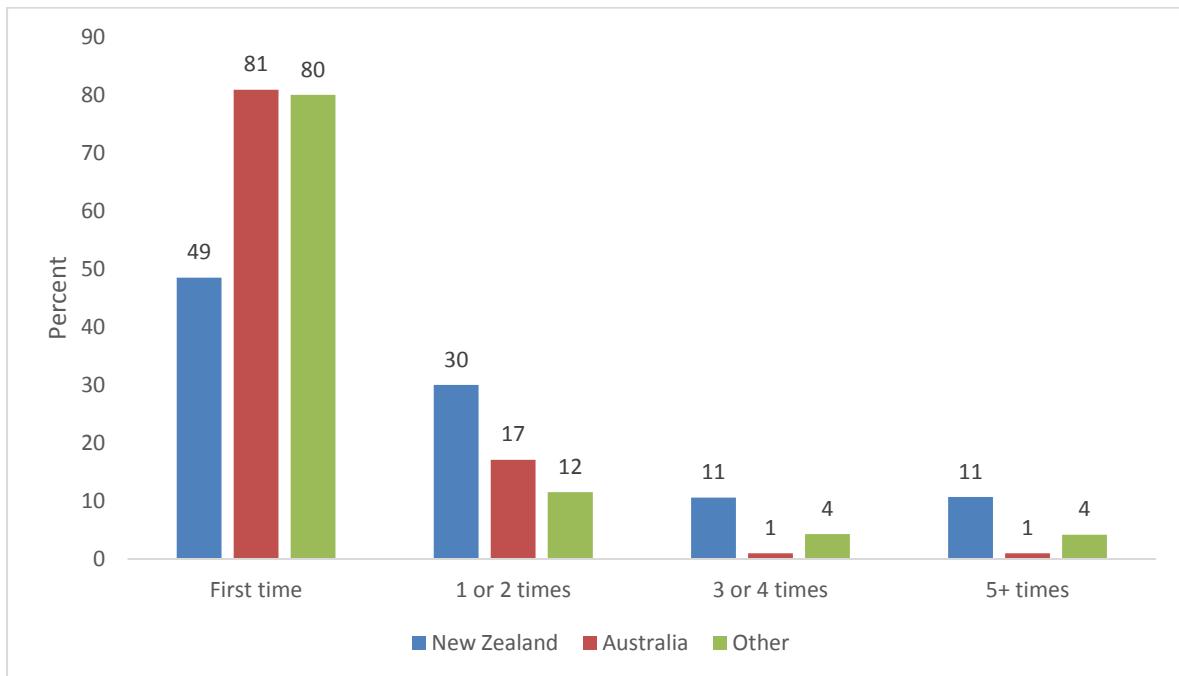
Over half of the visitors (57%) are on their first visit to the Cook Islands. A further 26% have been to the Cook Islands once or twice before. A smaller group (17%) have visited three or more times (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Number of visits to the Cook Islands (n=1356)



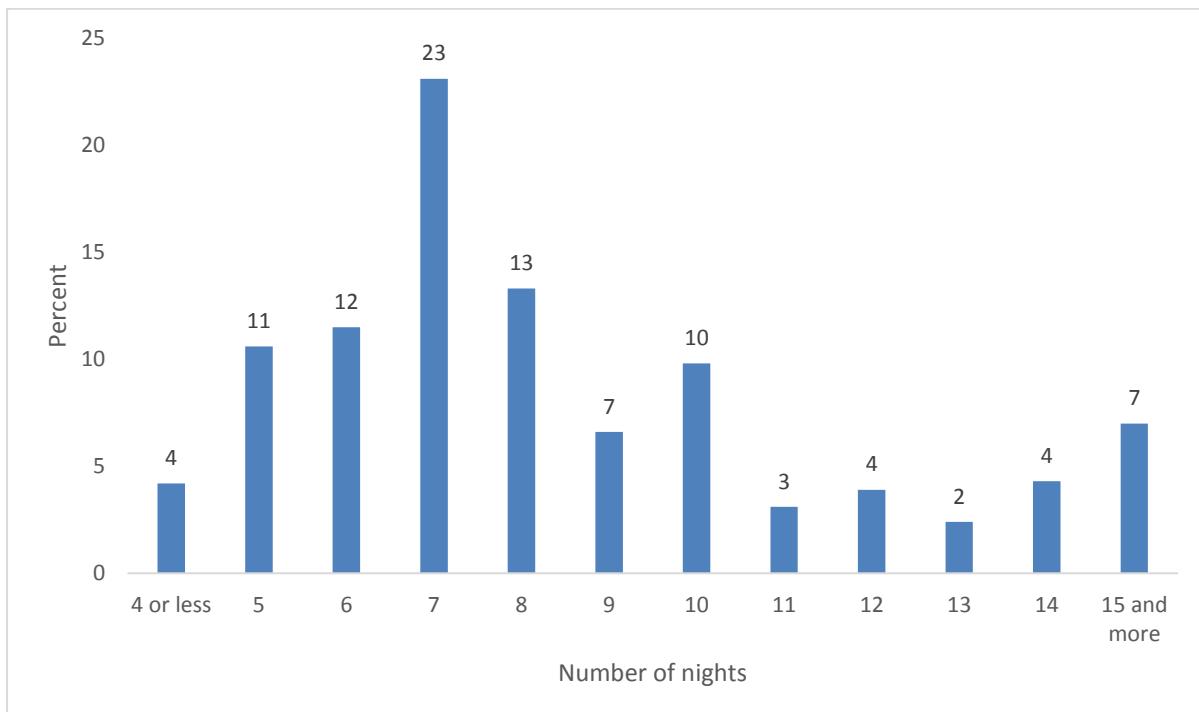
New Zealanders are more likely to be repeat visitors than those from other source markets (Figure 11). Over half of the surveyed visitors from New Zealand (52%) have visited the Cook Islands before compared to only 19% of visitors from Australia and 20% from other countries.

Figure 11: Number of previous visits to the Cook Islands – country breakdown



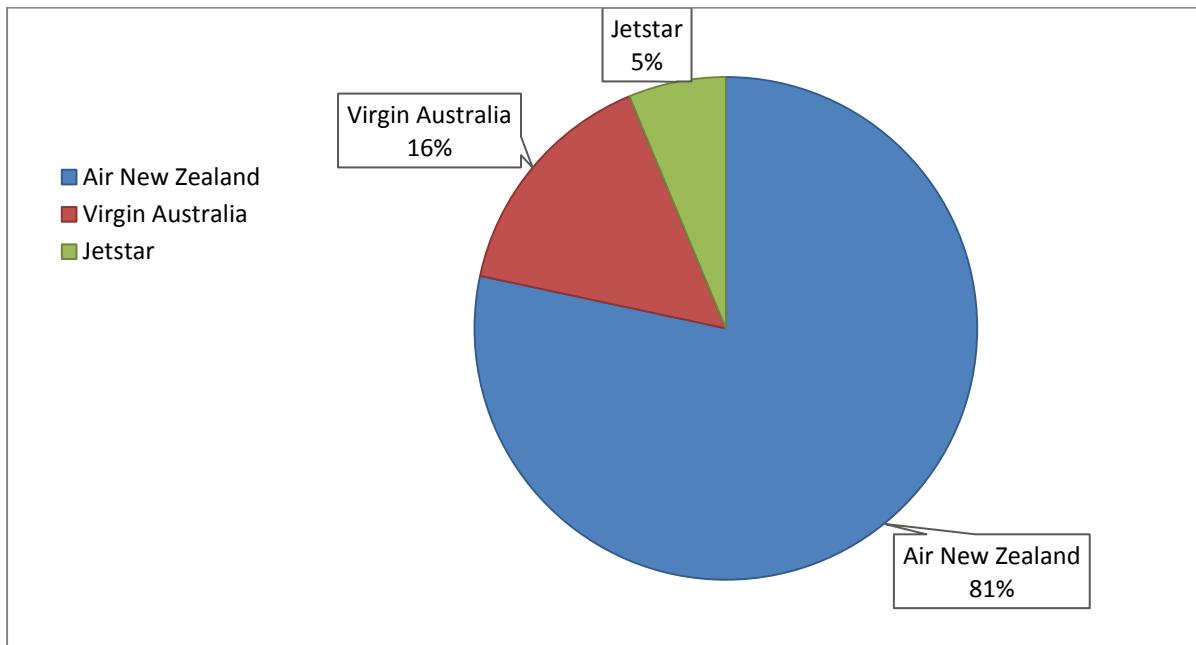
The average length of stay in the Cook Islands is 8.9 nights with 80% of visitors spending 10 or fewer nights in the country (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Length of stay in nights (n=1478)



The majority of visitors (81%) travel to/from the Cook Islands with Air New Zealand, a further 16% visitors fly with Virgin Australia (Figure 13), followed by five percent of visitors travelling with Jetstar. Visitors that arrived by Air Tahiti and private charter plane make up less than 1% of arrivals.

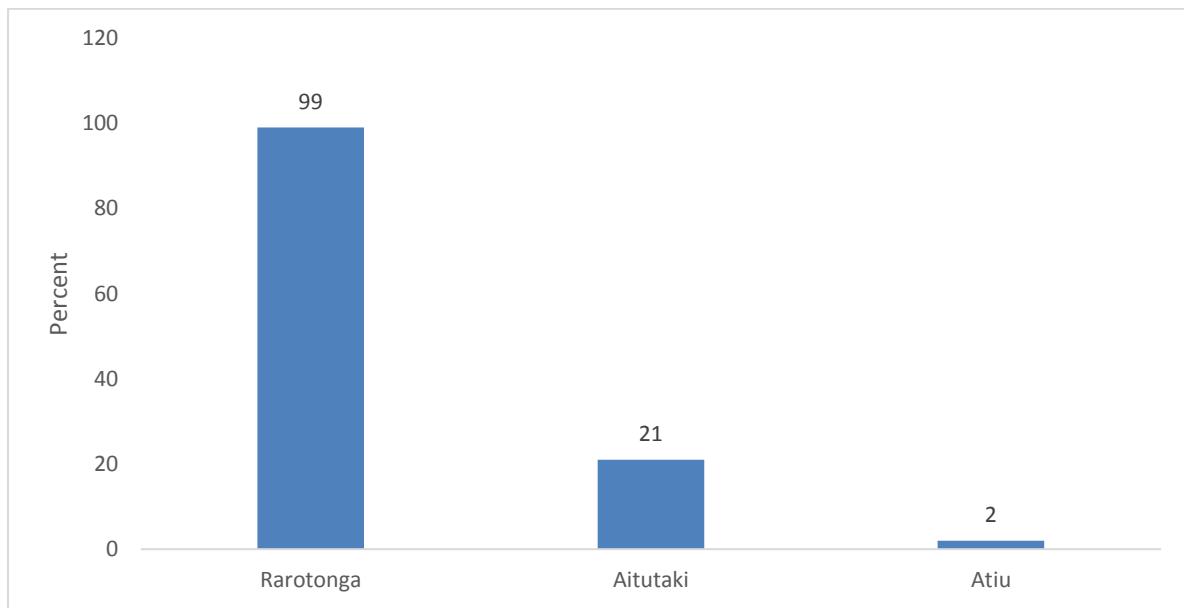
Figure 13: Mode of transport (n=1485)



For 92% of visitors, the Cook Islands is the sole destination for their trip. For 8% of the visitors surveyed during the July to September period the Cook Islands is part of a larger journey, including some visitors who are on an around-the-world trip. For those travelling to other countries as part of their recent trip, the top destination mentioned was New Zealand (60%), followed by travel to Australia (25%), North America (21%), other pacific countries (19%), and Asian countries (12%).

The vast majority (99%) of visitors to the Cook Islands spend time on Rarotonga, with Aitutaki being the second most visited island (21%) (Figure 14). Other islands are rarely featured in the survey responses, with Atiu for example receiving fewer than 2% of visitors.

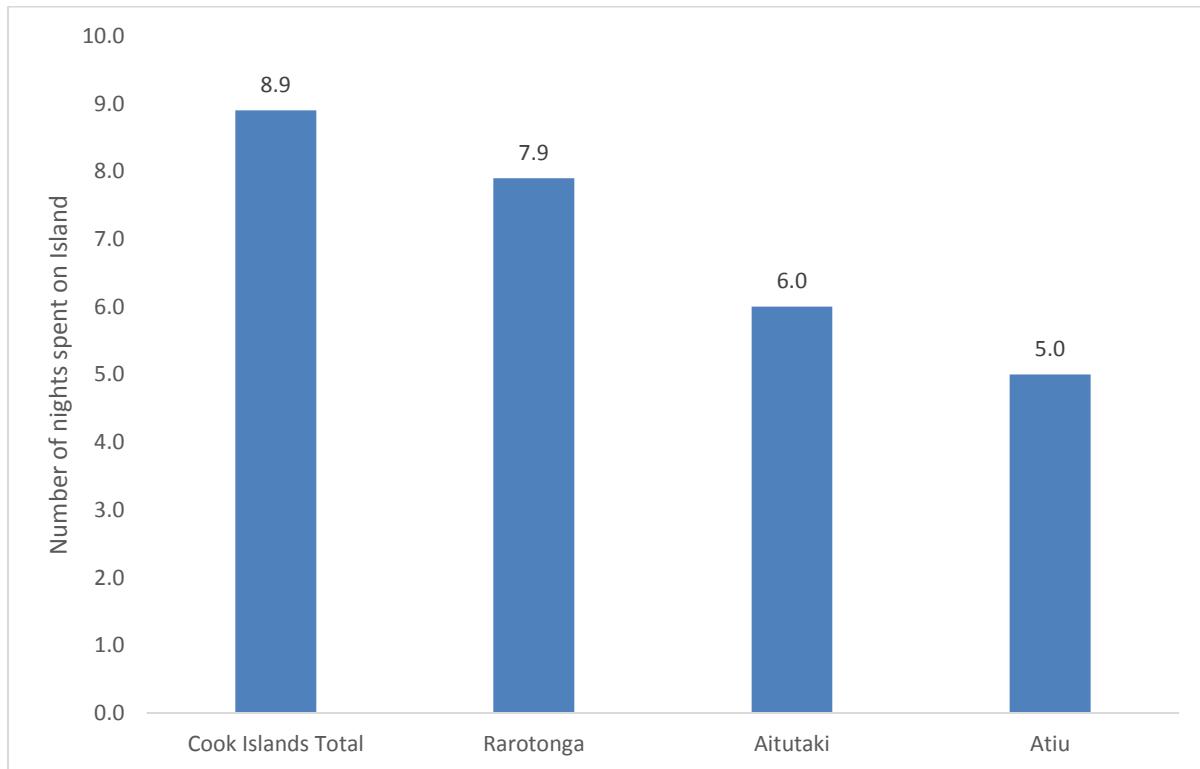
Figure 14: Visited Islands (n=1489)



Note: Respondents could visit more than one island, so total does not add up to 100%.

The average length of stay on Rarotonga is 7.9 nights (Figure 15). For the visitors that went to Aitutaki, the average number of nights spent on the island itself is 6. Visitors to Atiu spent an average of 5 nights.

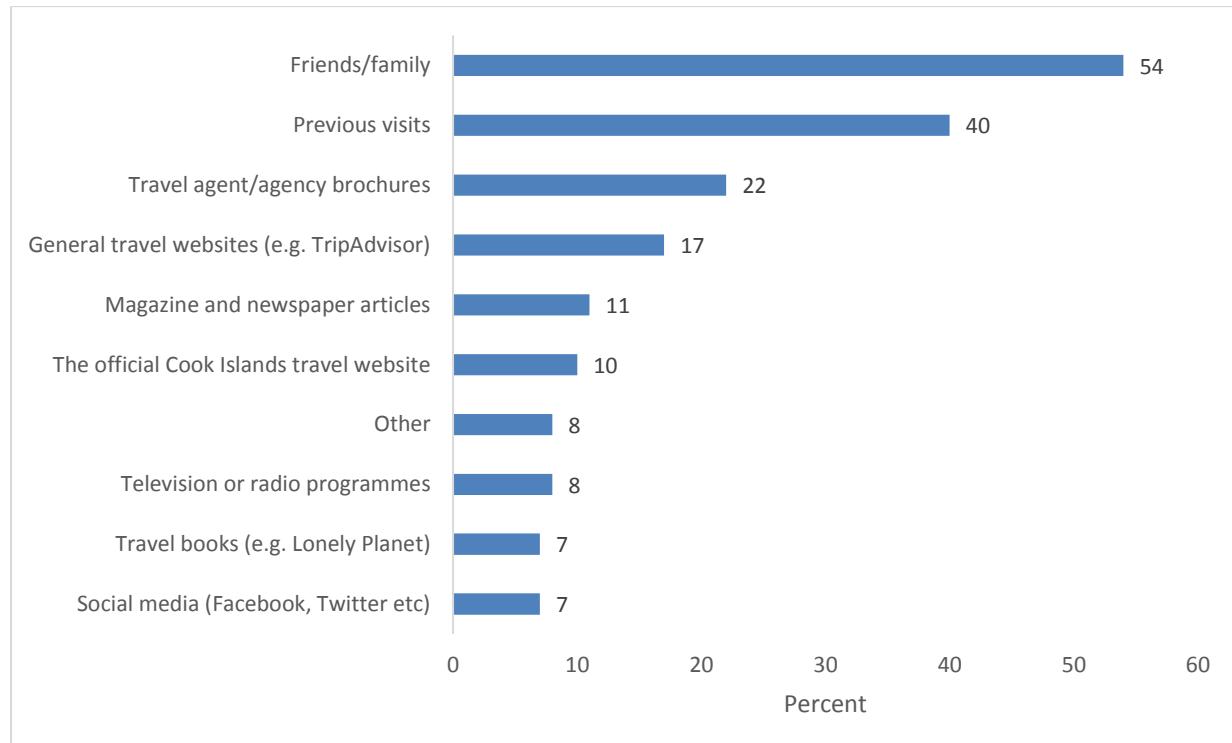
Figure 15: Average length of stay in the Cook Islands and on each island (n=1460)



Information Sources and Purchasing Behaviour

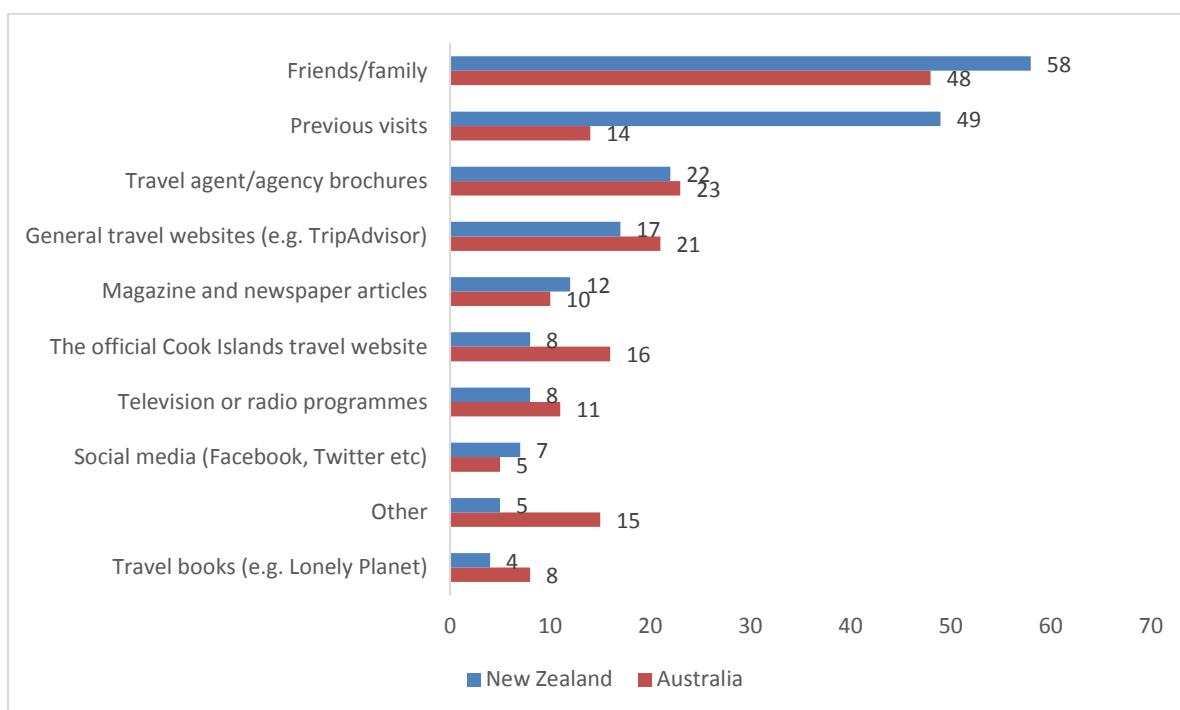
Participants were asked how they had found out about the Cook Islands as a holiday destination for this trip, and to rank the three sources of information that were most important in this respect (Figure 16). Over half (54%) of respondents ranked word of mouth from friends and family members as the most important influence, followed by previous experience (40%), travel agents (22%), and general travel websites (e.g. Tripadvisor) (17%).

Figure 16: How did you find out about Cook Islands as a destination (n=1488)



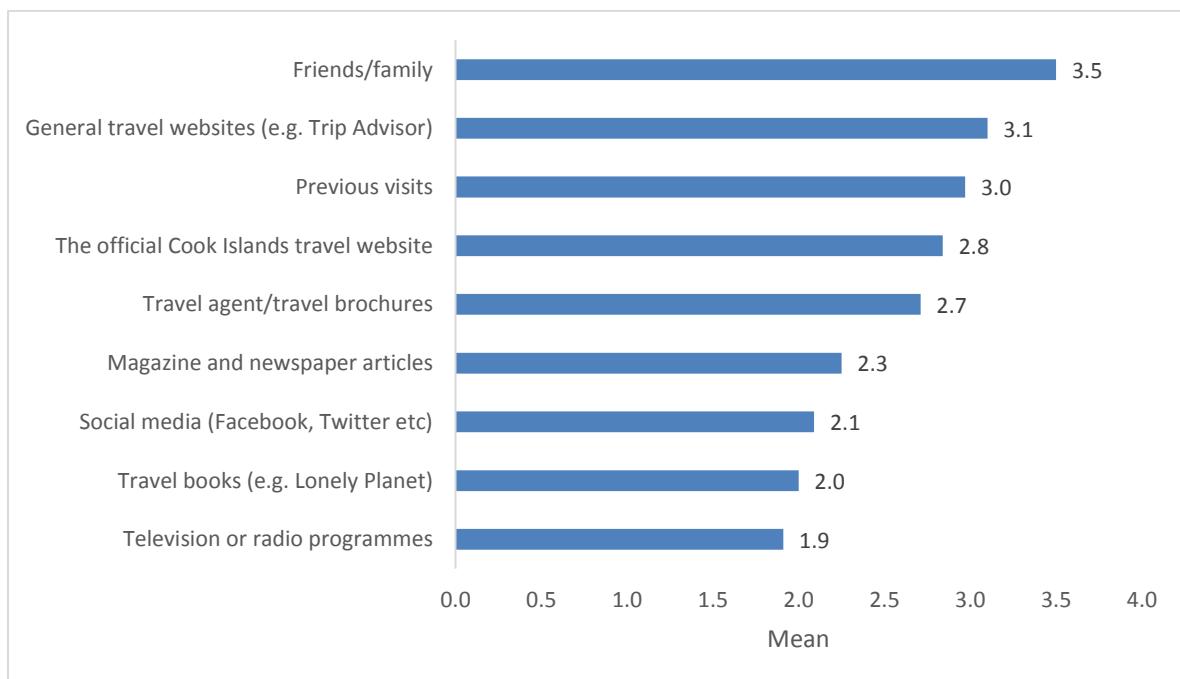
Visitors from New Zealand are more likely to seek information about a destination via word of mouth from friends and family members (58%). There are more repeat visitors from New Zealand than Australia and this is reflected by the fact that nearly half of visitors from New Zealand (49%) ranked their previous visits as the most important information source (Australian visitors 14%). Australian visitors were more likely to rank travel websites, and travel books as the most important influence.

Figure 17: How did you find out about Cook Islands as a destination – country breakdown



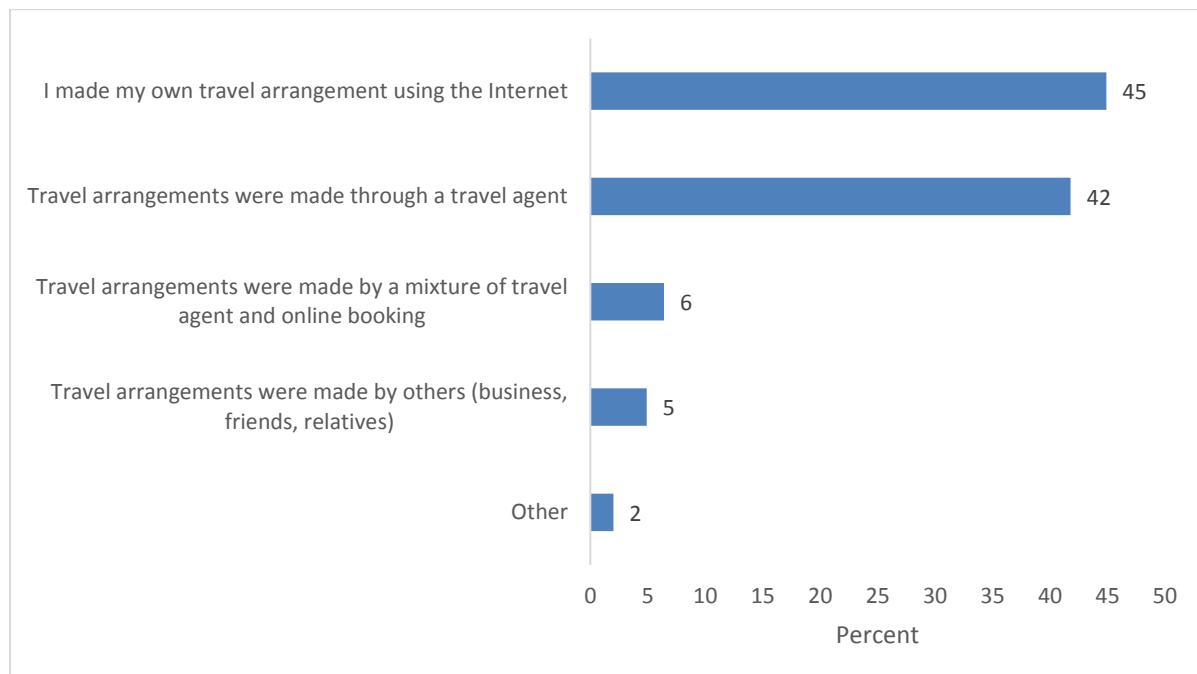
When visitors were asked to rank the importance of the listed information sources used to plan their trip, friends and family members are ranked as the most important source (3.5) (Figure 18). Other important information sources are general travel website (3.1), previous visits (3.0), the official Cook Islands travel website (2.8), and travel agent/travel brochures (2.7).

Figure 18: How important were the following sources of information when planning your trip (n=1271)



Nearly half of visitors surveyed (45%) make their own travel arrangements through online websites or have booked directly with hotels or airlines (Figure 19). The smaller amount of visitors surveyed (42%) purchased a pre-paid trip through travel agents, followed by 6% of visitors whose travel arrangements were made by a mixture of travel agent and online booking.

Figure 19: How did you purchase your travel to the Cook Islands (n=1485)

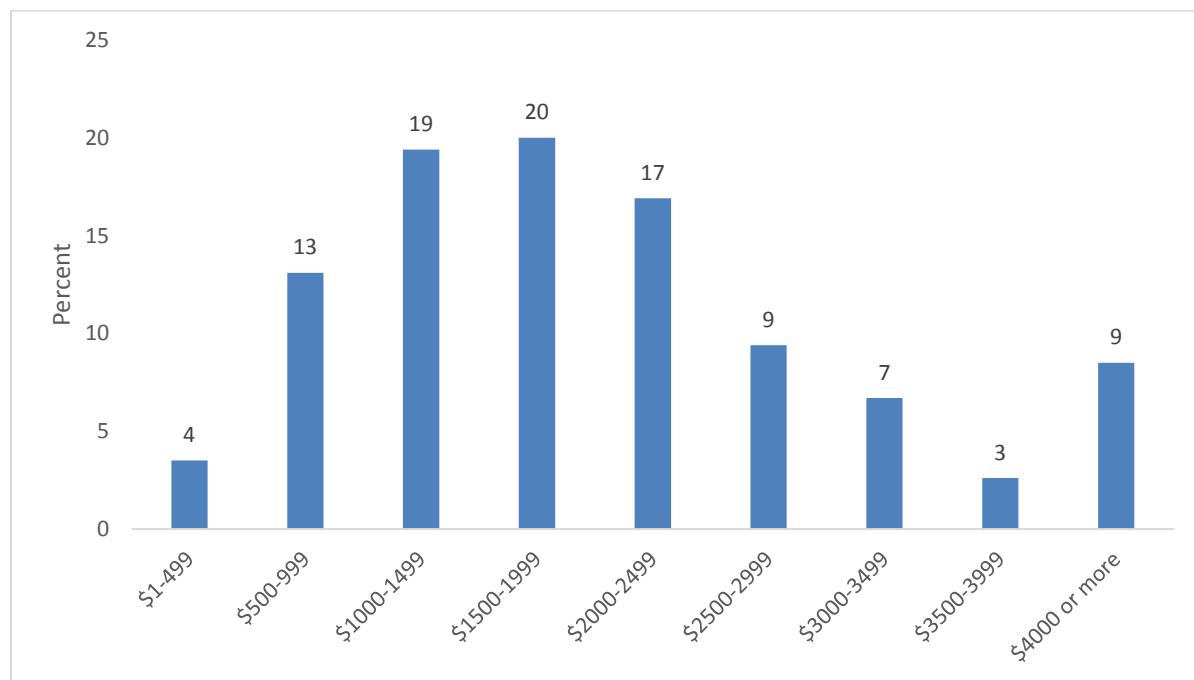


Visitor Expenditure

The survey asks a range of questions about visitor expenditure, both prior to arrival and while in the country. All the figures below are based on respondent estimates of their own spending and any others they spent money on (e.g. spouse, children). The following pre-paid expenditure section is based on the number of adults and children that respondents included in their cost estimates: 3,636 people comprising 3,114 adults and 522 children.

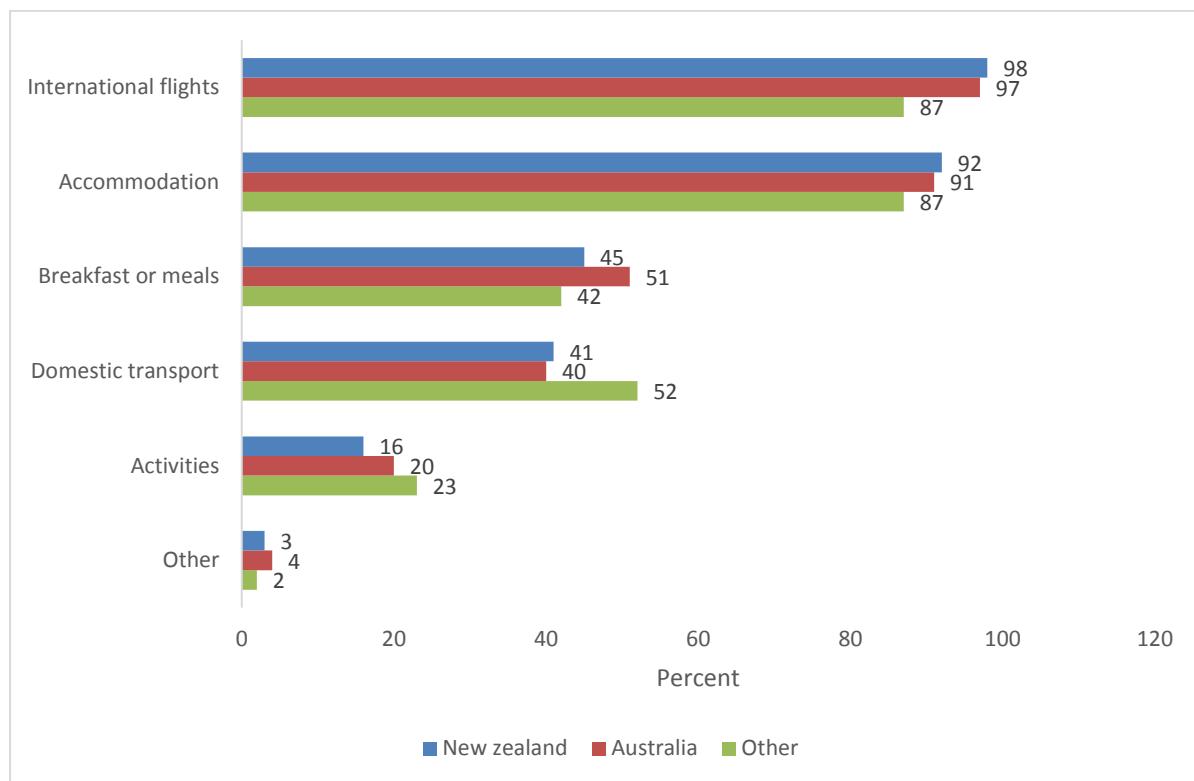
On average, visitors to the Cook Islands spend NZ\$2,050 per person prior to arrival. Over half (56%) of the visitors spend between NZ\$1,000 and NZ\$2,500 prior to arrival. These figures are slightly lower than the data from the previous year (average spend of NZ\$2,121 for 2015/16) and in the same quarter for 2015/16 (NZ\$2,173) (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Amount of money spent per person prior to arrival (n=1157)



In addition to international flights and domestic transport, spending prior to arrival usually includes accommodation: in 92% of the cases for New Zealand and 91% for Australian visitors, and for 87% of visitors from other countries (Figure 21). Approximately half of visitors prepaid for breakfast and meals prior to arrival (45% for New Zealand, 51% of Australian visitors, and for 42% of visitors from other countries) which is higher than the data from the previous year and in the same quarter for 2015/16. Activities are much less likely to be included in pre-paid expenses.

Figure 21: Items included in money spent prior to arrival



It is difficult to estimate accurately the proportion of the pre-paid spend that flows to the Cook Islands. For the purposes of this study, and based on previous research in the region, we conservatively estimate that 50% of the pre-paid spend is allocated to airfares. Of the remaining 50% of the pre-paid spend, 80% of this flows back to local operators. In total this means that for every pre-paid dollar, 40 cents flows to the Cook Islands. We assess that the pre-paid spend figure per day flowing back to local operators, excluding flights, is NZ\$92 and for the average total visit is NZ\$820 (over 8.9 nights).

The total spend per visitor per day while in the Cook Islands (excluding any pre-paid expenditure) is NZ\$148 (Table 1). This figure is slightly higher than overall spend figure for 2015/16 (NZ\$147) and slightly lower than quarter in 2015/16 (NZ\$152). The majority of money spent locally is on accommodation (42%), restaurants, cafes and bars (23%), and shopping (8%). These per person expenditure figures are based on 1489 survey responses covering a total of 3,512 people (3,065 adults and 447 children).

By multiplying daily spend by the average stay (8.9 nights) we can see that each visitor spends on average NZ\$1,317 during their time in the Cook Islands. The total figure of what is spent locally and what flows back to the Cook Islands from pre-paid expenses is therefore NZ\$240 per visitor per day (\$148+\$92), or NZ\$2,137 (\$1,317+\$820) for each visitor.

Table 1: Average visitor expenditure in the Cook Islands (per person per day)

Expenditure Items	Overall n=3512	
	Mean (NZ\$)	(% of spend)
Accommodation	63	42
Restaurant, cafes and bar	34	23
Shopping	11	8
Vehicle rental	8	6
Activities	8	6
Domestic flights	7	5
Groceries	7	5
Cruising	2	2
Other	2	2
Internet cost	2	2
Petrol	1	1
Public transportation	1	1
Total Expenditure	148	100

Table 2 provides an overview of the in-country expenditure by the visitor's country of origin. Visitors from Australia have the highest average spend per day at NZ\$188. By comparison, European visitors spend on average NZ\$60 less per day (NZ\$123).

Table 2: Average expenditure per visitor per day by country of origin

Expenditure Items	n=115	n=489	n=2679	n=89
	USA/ Canada	Australia	New Zealand	Europe
Accommodation	52	70	63	63
Restaurant, cafes and bar	25	39	34	30
Shopping	17	14	11	10
Activities	8	10	9	7
Vehicle rental	9	9	9	5
Groceries	10	7	7	6
Domestic flights	9	7	6	20
Other	2	2	2	1
Internet cost	2	3	2	4
Cruising	2	3	2	4
Petrol	1	1	2	1
Public transportation	1	1	1	1
Total spend (NZ\$)	\$139	\$165	\$148	\$152

Average Australian spend per person for this quarter (NZ\$165) was slightly lower compared to the 2015/16 average of NZ\$168, but higher than the same quarter in 2015/16 (NZ\$160).

New Zealanders' spend of NZ\$148 per person per day was up from the average of \$143 for 2015/16, but slightly lower than the same quarter in the previous year (NZ\$150). European visitor spend at NZ\$152 per person per day was slightly down from the average for 2015/16 of NZ\$159, but higher than the same quarter in the previous year (NZ\$141). Visitors from USA/Canada spend of NZ\$139 for this period was lower than the 2015/16 average of NZ\$155, and the same quarter in 2015/16 (NZ\$161).

Visitor Satisfaction

Visitors were asked to indicate their overall satisfaction with their experience of the Cook Islands on a scale from 1 ‘very dissatisfied’ to 5 ‘very satisfied’ (Figure 22). Two thirds (66%) of the visitors surveyed were ‘very satisfied’ with their overall experience of the Cook Islands. Very few visitors (2%) were unsatisfied with their visit (a score of 2 or lower out of 5).

Figure 22: Overall satisfaction with experience of the Cook Islands (n=1377)

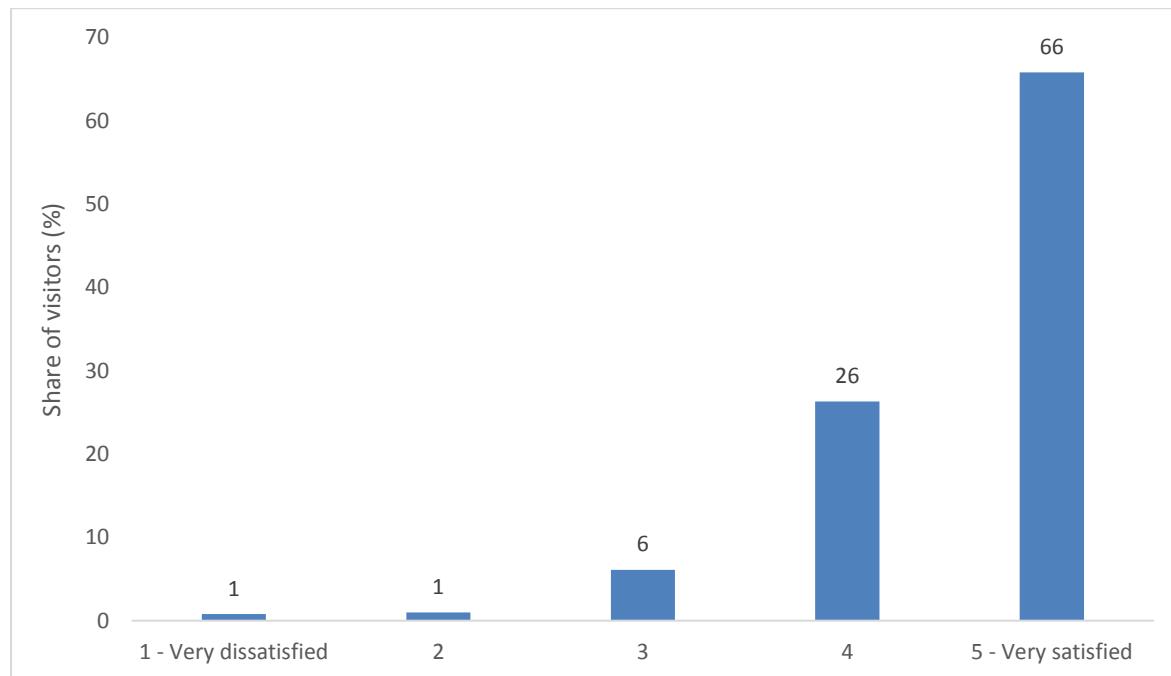


Figure 23 shows the percentage of respondents who undertook an activity while on their visit to the Cook Islands. Almost all visitors participate in water activities and visit at least one restaurant or café during their trip. Most of the respondents (87%) visit a local market, and 57% of visitors experience an Island Night and Feast Show.

Figure 24 shows the level of satisfaction with these activities. Visitor satisfaction is generally high for all activities undertaken (almost all registering more than 4 out of a possible high of 5). Activities involving cultural interaction (average satisfaction of 4.5) and land-based products (4.5) rank the highest, followed by shopping (4.3) and water-based experiences (4.3). It should be noted that some activities e.g. kitesurfing, bonefishing, and whale watching are characterised by relatively low numbers of participants (n=34-45).

Figure 23: Degree of participation in activities (n range=34-1456)

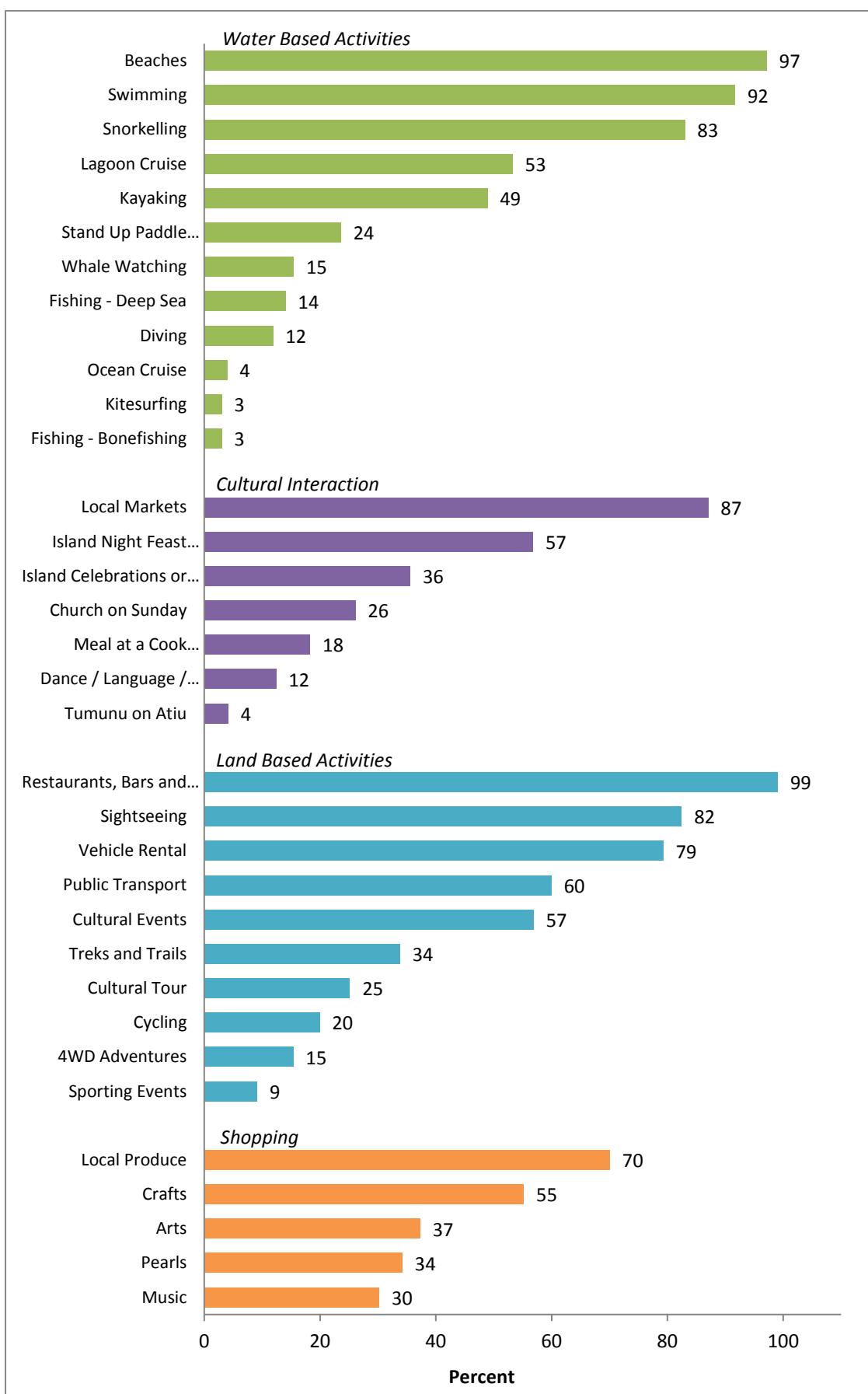
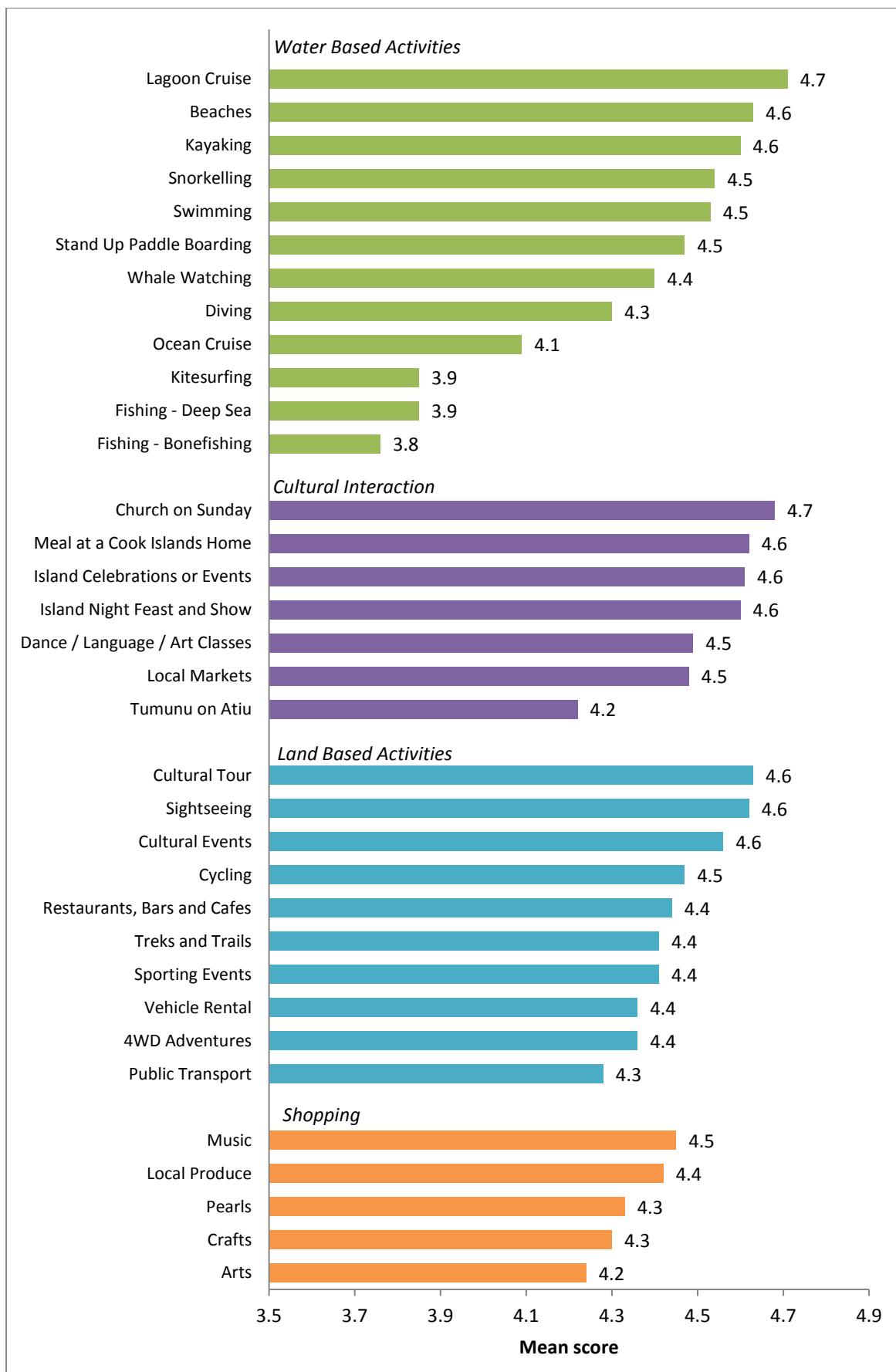


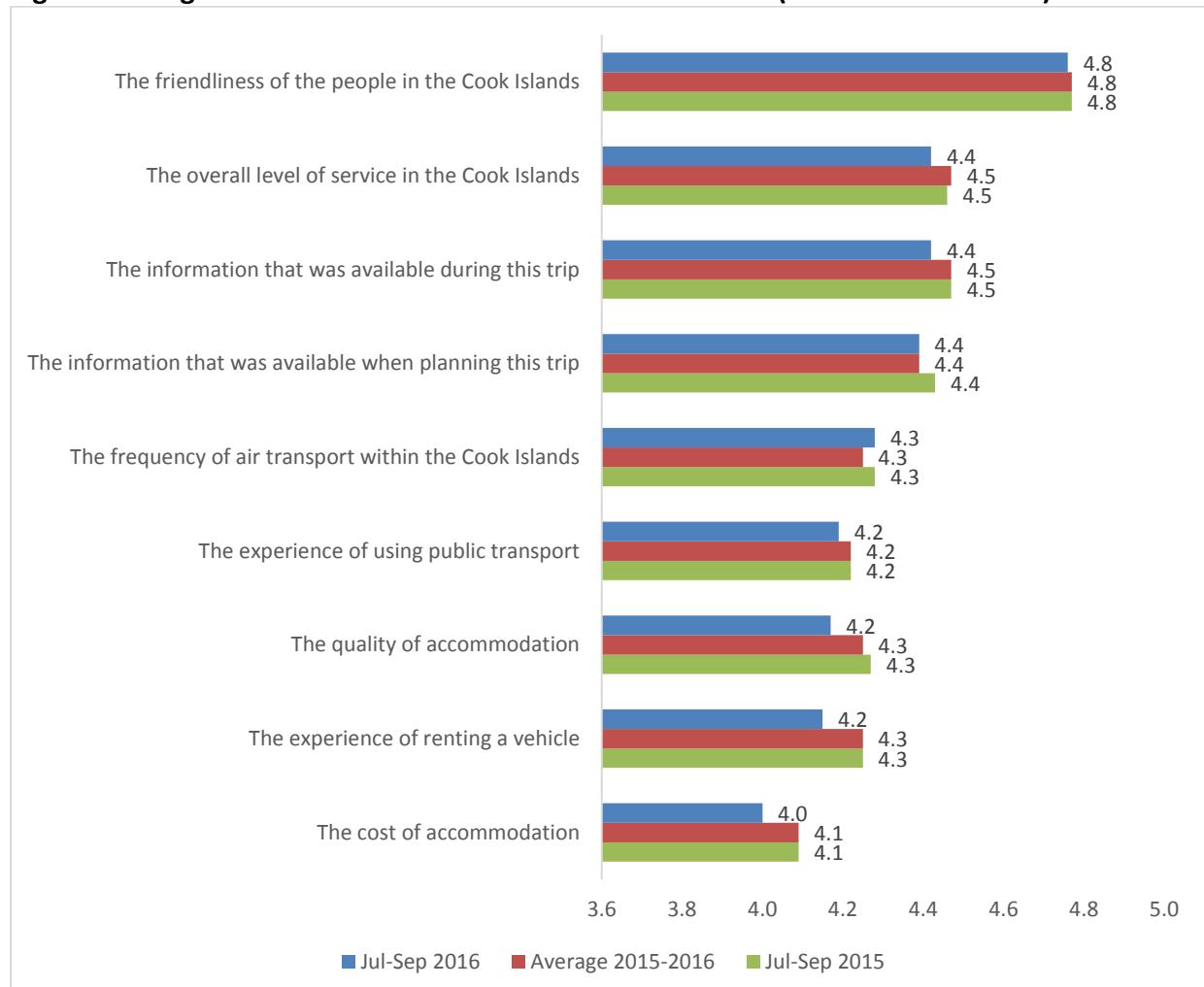
Figure 24: Degree of satisfaction in activities participated in (mean score out of 5)



Visitors were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with nine different statements relating to their most recent visit to the Cook Islands. Responses from the period of July to September are compared to the annual average for 2015/16, and the same period of 2015/16 (Figure 25). Respondents have consistently given the friendliness of the people in the Cook Islands the highest score.

As can be seen Figure 25, the level of satisfaction with the friendliness of people in the Cook Islands, the available information for planning this trip, the frequency of air transport within the Cook Islands, and the experience of renting a vehicle is the same compared to the average for 2015/16 and the same quarter of 2015/16. Visitor satisfaction levels with the overall level of service, available information during this trip, the price and quality of accommodation, and the experience of renting a car are slightly lower than the same quarter in 2015/16. Overall visitor satisfaction levels are fairly consistent with the previous findings and no rating fell below 4 out of 5.

Figure 25: Degree of satisfaction with Cook Islands services (mean score out of 5)



Most appealing aspects of the Cook Islands

Visitors were asked “What did you find most attractive or appealing about the Cook Islands on your most recent visit?” (Table 3). The most appealing elements of the Cook Islands experience are the friendly and helpful local people and traditional culture (49%), beautiful and clean natural environment (48%), the peacefulness and relaxing atmosphere of the islands (28%), and the tourist attractions and activities on offer (22%). Smaller numbers of visitors mentioned aspects such as food and beverage (12%), the convenience and safety of the Cook Islands (7%), accommodation (6%), and the level of service experienced (4%). These figures are consistent with the annual average for 2015-2016 where respondents rated the top three most appealing aspects as the ‘environment’ (51%), ‘local people’ (49%) and ‘atmosphere’ (29%).

Table 3: Most appealing aspects of the Cook Islands (n=1263)

Themes	Share of respondents (%)
Local people & culture	49%
Environment, cleanliness & weather	48%
Atmosphere	28%
Activities, attractions, and entertainment & events	22%
Food and Beverage	12%
Convenience & safety	7%
Accommodation	6%
Overall good experience	6%
Level of service	4%
Un-commercial	2%
Undecided	1%

* Share of respondents who made a comment that falls into each theme. Respondents could give more than one answer, so total does not add up to 100%.

Local people & culture

Nearly half of the respondents (49%) noted that the most appealing part of their visit was their interaction with local people and culture in the Cook Islands with comments about the friendliness, welcoming nature and helpfulness of local people and its unique local culture. Key words that dominated the responses included ‘friendly’, ‘lovely’, ‘amazing’, ‘wonderful’, ‘warm’, ‘helpful’, ‘beautiful’, and ‘welcoming.’ Respondents referred to the artisanal products and local cultural performances in addition to referencing the overall enjoyable aspects of Cook Islands culture. Comments included:

“The friendliness of the people - all we met were genuinely welcoming and made the holiday experience second to none.”

“Friendly honest local people always happy to help and share the Cook Island culture and experiences.”

“The amazing manaaki of the people they were all very friendly and welcoming.”

“Beautiful friendly people, incredibly gracious and wonderful sense of humour.”

“How fantastic the tour operators were (especially the Koka Lagoon Cruise people), how friendly most people were, the feeling of a special relationship between Cook Islanders and NZers.”

“I unexpectedly discovered the beautiful nature of the cook island people. That is what I took away with me. Everything was lovely and we had a great time but the heart of the cook islanders took my heart.”

“Loved the Cultural Show - part of the Cool Island celebrations.”

“The night at the Te Mara Nui cultural show was the highlight for us.”

“It was exciting to be able to connect with artisans who were happy to pass on knowledge of tivaevae stitching, which the ladies in our group were keenly interested in.”

Environment, cleanliness & weather

Just under half of the respondents (48%) considered the natural beauty, the ‘warm’ and ‘clean’ waters, and climate to be the most appealing aspects of their Cook Islands experience. Visitors used words such as ‘beautiful’, ‘lovely’, ‘amazing’, ‘fantastic’, ‘gorgeous’, ‘charming’, ‘and ‘unspoilt’ to describe the environment. Most comments here focused on the beauty and the cleanliness of the beaches and lagoons, the pleasant weather, the pristine water, and the beauty of the islands in general. Comments included:

“The environment - good level of facilities without the natural environment being spoilt.”

“The cleanliness of the island and the beaches was noticed and appreciated. Accessibility of the ocean. The lovely sunsets.”

“The scenery and blue lagoon. Lots of photo opportunities.”

“The sea was beautiful, being around the wildlife and all the fish and the friendly dogs.”

“The weather enabled us to relax and enjoy the beach snorkelling.”

“The beauty of the Islands. The lagoons were stunning and the mountains of Raro were gorgeous!”

Atmosphere

More than one in four visitors surveyed (28%) focused on the relaxed atmosphere of the Cook Islands. They considered the Cook Islands to be very peaceful, relaxing, and laid-back, which

made a good holiday to rest. Respondents used words such as 'quiet', 'relaxing', 'laid back', 'peaceful', 'fantastic', 'excellent' and 'slow pace' to describe the overall atmosphere of the Cook Islands. Comments included:

"Loved the relaxed, happy laid back lifestyle."

"The relaxed feeling and no rush just sit back and enjoy."

"We found it very relaxing, our accommodation was excellent. We had business to discuss so enjoyed the relaxing clean laid back time."

"Extremely relaxing, from the moment you step off the plane. Beautiful beaches and water. My 2 little girls were in heaven playing in the pool or on the beach or coming out with me on the kayak to look at all the fish."

"Relaxing, a really "easy" place to holiday."

Activities, attractions, entertainment & events

Activities, attractions, entertainment and events were mentioned by 22% of respondents as the most appealing elements of their visit to the Cook Islands. Most comments in this category focus on water-based activities such as swimming, snorkelling, diving, sailing and lagoon cruises. Land-based activities that respondents mentioned included the experience of travelling around the island by scooter or a hired car, shopping, cycling, hiking, attending church services, cultural tours and events, and local markets. Comments included:

"Beaches where fantastic with excellent swimming and snorkelling."

"The beach where we stayed at the Cooks Bay Villas was not private but not busy and the waters beautiful for swimming, snorkelling."

"Snorkelling in the lagoons. Hike over the top to see the needle, scenery and views. Saturday market. Lagoon cruise from Muri and associated activities. Touring the inland roads on the scooters."

"The Vaka Lagoon Cruise on Aitutaki - they took us to some beautiful locations and were very entertaining and informative."

"The dancing/singing competition we went to was beautiful and energetic. The snorkelling was stunning and very peaceful."

"The night markets at Muri and the highlight was our day trip to Aitutaki and our amazing lagoon Cruise."

Food and beverage

Just over one in ten respondents (12%) mentioned food and beverage as the most appealing aspect of their trip. Their comments focused on the quality and range of food and beverages available in the Cook Islands. They used words such as 'great', 'lovely', 'fantastic', 'excellent' 'amazing' ,and 'fresh' to describe the food. Many visitors commented on the selection of good cafes and restaurants, and on the availability of great fruit. Comments included:

"The abundance of fresh fish, fruit and vegetables."

"Fantastic food including the fresh fruit and vegetables at road side."

"High quality fresh local foods and ingredients available in the markets."

"Tupuna's Restaurant - fabulous food in a relaxed setting."

"The restaurants were very good throughout the island."

Convenience and safety

The convenience and safety of the Cook Islands as a holiday destination were mentioned by seven percent of respondents as an appealing aspect of their trip. In particular, they referred to the ease of getting to the Cook Islands, and also of getting around the islands, the wide use of the English language, the convenience of using the New Zealand dollar, and the feelings of safety. Comments included:

"Of course for us coming from NZ the fact that English (or Cook Island Maori) is spoken made it really easy. And NZD makes it easy too! "

"Easy for New Zealanders. Most food is from NZ, currency is NZ, entry and exit are easy, flights are not long, language is easy, cook island Maori is familiar."

"Familiarity of currency and produce. Language being English is a bonus as well. Ease of transportation for us was a big plus having a family member that had recent hip surgery and although she is young she still needed to travel using motorized transport. The size of the Island was great too. It made it so easy to do many different things in a short space of time. Loved the "nothing is a problem' attitude too."

"It was easy to get around, N.Z. currency and we felt very safe."

"Great scenery and a very safe roadway when riding around on the scooter."

Accommodation

Six percent of respondents noted that the accommodation they stayed in was an appealing aspect of their visit to the Cook Islands, referring to the quality of the offering, the setting, the level of service, and the warm welcome from their hosts. Comments included:

“Fab hotel friendly staff lovely beaches view from my hotel room.”

“Beachfront accommodation at Sans between Your Toes is excellent.”

“Accommodation exceeded our expectations (upgraded our room and gave us a late checkout). Diversity of food and prices were reasonable.”

“Our accommodation was absolutely beautiful and the service for excellent!”

Overall good experience

Another six percent of visitors surveyed simply stated that their whole experience was a good one, and that they ‘loved everything’. Some visitors expressed their desire to visit the Cook Islands again in the future. Comments included:

“The friendly people, the feeling of safety and the relaxed lifestyle. We love the Cooks!”

“Everything - the Cook Islands are my most favourite place in the world! It is paradise.”

“Everything. It was our 11 time coming to your beautiful Island. Gets better every year.”

“Everything was lovely. We preferred the quieter Aitutaki to Rarotonga.”

Level of services

Four percent of visitors commented on the service they encountered while in the Cook Islands as being an appealing feature of their trip. Respondents had positive comments on the local hospitality they experienced, especially mentioning the friendly and helpful staff at the restaurants, bars, hotels, and resorts. Comments included:

“The friendliness of the people and service providers.”

“On Aitutaki the friendly welcoming people with excellent service.”

“The friendliness and service from the staff at Lagoon Breeze Villas.”

Un-commercial

Two percent of respondents mentioned the Cook Islands as being a place that is not over-commercialised or over-developed. Some visitors also emphasised the importance of preserving the destination from mass tourism development and keeping it the way it is. Comments included:

“The resorts have not become over commercial. The identity of the Island was not affected by the invasion of well-known fast food restaurants, and there were no large obtrusive neon signs, this maintained the Cook Island's identity. The town and houses

were well maintained which made the island really pleasant to look at and experience.”

“... the Cooks doesn't change, no high rise big resorts. Just the real simple relaxed time.”

“The lack of shops meant less opportunity to shop so it was commercial free.”

“Truly island way of life, no pressure, no chains e.g. McDonalds, fast food restaurants.”

Least appealing aspects of the Cook Islands

Visitors were also asked “What did you find least attractive or appealing about the Cook Islands on your most recent visit?” Nearly a quarter (23%) of the visitors responding took the trouble to note that they found nothing was ‘unappealing’, that ‘everything was perfect’, or that the only unappealing aspect was that there was ‘not enough time!’ or ‘when it was time to leave’. These visitors expressed that they “loved it!” and ‘will come back for another holiday’. There were, however, a number of areas that did attract comments (Table 4). These comments ranged from the issues of public services and facilities, accommodation conditions, rubbish and natural environment care and to disappointment with the weather. Each theme is discussed in more depth below the following table.

Table 4: Least appealing aspects of the Cook Islands (n=1298)

Themes	Share of respondents (%)
Public services, facilities and infrastructure	18%
Accommodation	14%
Stray animals and mosquitos	12%
Customer Service	11%
Price of good and services	11%
Food and beverage	11%
Attractions and activities	10%
Rubbish and natural environment care	9%
Poor weather	7%
Rental cars or scooters	5%
Flight related issues	4%
Local people	3%
Too touristy	1%

* Share of respondents who made a comment that falls into each theme. Respondents could give more than one answer, so total does not add up to 100%.

Public services, facilities and infrastructure

One of the least appealing aspects for visitors is the lack of public services, facilities and infrastructure in the Cook Islands (18%). Many of the comments were about the condition of local roads with dangerous potholes and the lack of street lighting, which affected the ability to drive at night. Some people also complained about the lack of safe, well-formed footpaths. Others expressed their disappointment with other aspects: the lack of Internet access, the lack of rubbish bins, and the poor public transport and facilities, such as public toilets, bus services and high taxi prices. Comments included:

“The road safety was concerning; small children hanging out of car windows and sitting on the back of trucks. No safety helmets for bike and motorbike riders.”

“The main road surface around the Island really needs some work!”

"I think there should be stricter rules about tourists driving scooters - I got hit by a scooter while walking down the road."

"The footpaths at Muri Beach. This is our twelve visit to the island and the footpaths are just the same. With the night market at Muri and tourist traffic picking up the footpaths are seriously in need to an upgrade before someone gets hurt with the heavy traffic."

"Not enough rubbish bins in public places. As a result of this too much rubbish on and around the beaches."

"Public transportation. A bus service every hour for one way."

"I used the public toilet in town and also in Titikaveka and it was a terrible experience. I couldn't use the toilets in Titikaveka as it was dark and dirty."

"The level of Internet access was poor and expensive."

"The cost of taxi service was too expensive."

Accommodation

The high cost and poor quality of accommodation was a concern for a number of visitors (14%). Visitors surveyed mentioned that the cost of accommodation is expensive for the value received, that some accommodation places are in need of an upgrade of facilities and services. Comments included:

"Prices too high. Accommodation not very clean in general."

"Poor service for what was paid for the accommodation. No fresh towels given any days unless asked for, had to wait until 9pm to get into room upon checking in, no daily servicing of rooms."

"The cost of mobile telephone communication, internet supplied by the hotel and very poor television reception and coverage of major sporting events."

"The service at the hotel. The beds unmade until Dinner time, unclean bathrooms and fridge .Meals took such a long time to be served."

"The staff at our resort worked long hours 9pm one night till 3pm the next day then to start again at 12 that evening. The staff lacked enthusiasm, and as we had to wait ages to be served we travelled elsewhere for the rest of our stay."

"Service at the hotel was poor. One night our room was not serviced because the staff that got paid went out drinking and didn't turn up for work."

"Some poor service at our hotel accommodation .For example the frig had not been cleared out and stale bread was found at the back of the frig. Also annoying was a

TV was left on throughout the night in a neighbouring room which the reception desk said was a welcoming tool for clients arriving during the night.”

“The resort was tired and needed maintenance. Seemed to be light on staff. Eg meals cooked and sitting on bar with no waitress to deliver to table. Had to get myself. Cleaning of rooms perfunctory. (If at all) Lack of equipment for water sports, or restricted access to equipment. Like towels, canoes.”

Stray animals and mosquitos

The stray dogs, noisy roosters, mosquitoes and sea slugs continue to be an annoyance or a worry for 12% of respondents during their time spent on the islands. Respondents used a variety of words to describe this theme including ‘noisy’, ‘disliked’, ‘annoying’, ‘attacking’ and ‘terrifying’. Comments included:

“The call of the roosters at the resort at 4:30 in the morning (a shot gun would have been handy).”

“The amount of dogs roaming around. I was pushed around by a big dog when I was walking in the water. Scary. We saw dogs on the roads in front of traffic. In restaurants when we were eating. On beaches. We heard them fighting at night. Also the roosters went all night and the chooks at a cafe in town were always under our feet. I would not go back because of the dogs and chickens roaming around.”

“Mosquitoes in the dining room at the hotel. I was eaten alive.”

“Little ants that got into everything in our kitchen/food!”

“The same complaint that I have always had about the Cooks that is the dogs and chickens that roam at will and bark and crow all night.

Customer service

Eleven percent of visitors surveyed complained about the poor customer service received during their visit in the Cook Islands, notably in restaurants, shops, hotels and vehicle rentals. Visitors commented about ‘rude’, ‘unfriendly’, and ‘unhelpful’ staff. Customer service was considered ‘slow’, ‘bad’, and ‘disappointing’. Comments included:

“Some poor service at our hotel accommodation .For example the fringe had not been cleared out and stale bread was found at the back of the fringe.”

“I had expectations of friendly smiling people and just didn't get that! When we landed we were kept waiting for 3/4 hour in a hot van while the other visitors got off the plane. I felt the hospitality was lacking and the locals need to be better trained in customer service, but that may have been my expectations.”

“We had a bad experience at the hotel we stayed in which left a bad taste, the staff were rude, the place was run down and we felt we didn't get value for money at all.”

"The service in restaurants is absolute rubbish. I prebooked at several bars and restaurants for a group of 15 and all places services was crap took an hour to open a bottle of champagne, didn't have glasses, didn't put the next bottle in the fridge got the food order wrong and the owners sat there drinking while there staff treated us rudely."

"The service of the people in the shops especially the local cook island people, not helpful, no smiling, even when spending money in the shop ,still don't like to help when you ask questions etc, they act like you are a nuisance."

Price of goods and service

A number of visitors (11%) mentioned the price of goods and services as the least appealing aspect of their stay in the Cook Islands. These visitors made comments about the cost, the poor value for money and the price of things, especially for items such as accommodation, food in stores and restaurants, and internet. Comments included:

"To keep in touch with my family by mob phone. 30 mins approx cost me \$400."

"The cost of buying food from supermarket and lack of WIFI."

"Cost of travel between islands."

"Had become very expensive and it was impossible to buy fruit."

"I wish I had known that taxi rides were costly and not always easy to book as i think I might have rented a car so I could have eaten out more easily of an evening and enjoyed a greater variety of dining experiences. Dining at Manuai was costly and not necessarily value for money."

Food and Beverage

Eleven percent of visitors commented on the cost, quality and availability of food and beverage in the Cook Islands. Respondents complained about the price and quality of food, the lack of local produce (especially fresh fruit, veggies and fish), and the limited eating options available outside the resorts. Some visitors also mentioned the poor customer service in restaurants and the recurrent closed establishments such as shops and restaurants. Responses covered food and beverage options, such as restaurants, resort dining, shops and markets. Comments included:

"I didn't like the cultural night/buffet dinner. I think the show was very modernised and for the amount of money you pay the food was cold and dry and we waiting a long time to be able to eat. Also the drinks were expensive, i would have liked to see non-alcoholic drinks included in the \$100 ticket."

"The food was the only major let down of our trip. The price and then the quality was poor."

"Lack of food outlets that sold coffee shop type food, sandwiches, rolls, pie, cake. Choices seemed to be fast food (Hamburger / Fish and Chips) or a full/main meal."

"The expensive food that was low in quality. Specifically the lack if available fresh fish."

Attractions and activities

Ten percent of visitors surveyed commented that attractions and activities are one of the least appealing aspects of their visit, the focus was usually placed on: limited attractions and/or activities, negative experiences of swimming/snorkelling because of the environment issues or weather, poor condition of the roads and trails, lack of information and signage, and lack of activities in the evening or weekends. Comments included:

"The lack of child friendly activities. If you were not staying at a resort with a kids club, you were doomed to endure bored children."

"Disappointed in the coral and snorkelling experience."

"We weren't able to book a cultural show because it was fully booked. We were given a few complementary activities at the hotel without cooking but we couldn't participate due to our traveling days (activities were not offered on the days were there). Those activities contributed to us making the choice of going to the Rarotongan over another accommodation and this was very disappointing."

"We found the lagoon much less attractive than expected and in particular for swimming, It was not possible to swim, even at high tide, because of the broken coral and jagged volcanic rock underfoot, We did not go to the Cook Islands to swim in a swimming pool."

Rubbish and natural environment care

Several visitors (9%) mentioned waste management and the lack of care of the natural environment in the Cook Islands as unappealing factors. The poor condition of the lagoons and beaches, polluted water, degraded coral reefs, and threatened marine life concerned a group of visitors. Four percent of visitors mentioned they couldn't continue doing activities in these lagoons because of the algae, and they were worrying about the quality of the lagoon. Rubbish on the beaches and streets and the burning of trash were also often commented upon. Comments included:

"Such a shame the green growth in Muri lagoon was so looking forward to paddle boarding there but gave it a miss. Lagoon full of green growth and sea slugs and it smelt."

"The pollution in the Muri Beach lagoon, the slight septic smell and green alge in the water. I sought local advice before booking and was not told of the pollution."

"Concerned about the pollution when swimming in the Aitutaki Lagoon. We heard that one resort advised the guests not to swim that week - sewage leak."

"There was a lot of rubbish around - and some of the homes need a tidy up."

"The rubbish on the beaches and roadside. It is such a shame on such a beautiful island there is rubbish on the beaches and roadsides."

"Unfortunately we found quite a lot of broken glass in the lagoon at popular swimming/snorkelling spots."

Other unappealing aspects

Other unappealing aspects mentioned by visitors include: poor weather (the amount of rain and the wind), rental cars and scooters (quality, cost, service and the process of getting driving licenses), flight/airline-related issues (influent, cost, arrival and departure times), law and Legislation, local people (unfriendly, hard to get involved with them), and the fact that the destination is becoming too commercialised/touristy (over-developed, loss of authenticity).

Comments included:

Poor weather

"The weather, it was quite overcast and rained for 1 whole day which was a bit disappointing."

"It rained 3 days up 4. We couldn't do many things in Rarotonga due to the rain."

"The weather was a bit cold/windy/rainy/thunderstorm to really enjoy the beaches."

Rental cars and scooters

"Rental car company, they did not have my car ready, I had to take bus instead and it took months to get refund because their credit card machine and computer were all broken."

"Having to sit a theory and practical exam in order to ride a 50cc scooter while in possession of a full NZ driver's licence. This took a lot of time. The ability to rent and ride scooters (at 40km/h) is a real attraction for the island. It needs to be made simpler."

"Was surprised crash helmets not compulsory on scooters and having to hire them."

"The hiring of motor scooters. We thought it was a ridiculous time consuming system and questions asked pertaining only to Rarotonga that weren't relevant to the driving of the vehicle. Simplify it!"

Flight-related issues

"Our Air NZ flight to Raratonga. It was a very old aircraft, we flew business class and the cabin was more akin to domestic economy. We were very unhappy with this flight, we contacted Air NZ and were not happy with their response."

"Air New Zealand's aeroplane had an electrical fault and so we were delayed coming over. We also were delayed at the rarotonga airport due to air NZ loosing luggage."

“Very high cost of flight to Aitutaki.”

Local people

“The locals where often rude and indifferent to us being there.”

“People grumpy and discontent with the government and the pay they received and the import of people to work in the service industry getting \$3.00 per hour and other locals \$6. Very unhappy people...”

“Some locals were not friendly, (intolerant/nasty) including hotel staff.”

Becoming too commercialised/touristy

“It was a lot more touristy than I'd anticipated ... the place was full of kiwis! I've only ever been to one other pacific island (Samoa) and it was a very different experience.”

“It is slowly becoming more developed. I suppose you cannot stop 'progress' but more development and Westernization is not a good thing.”

“The increasing commercialism of Rarotonga.”

Suggestions to improve the visit to the Cook Islands

When asked if there was anything that could have improved their visit to the Cook Islands, just under half (48%) of respondents said ‘yes’. Suggestions mentioned by respondents focused on public services and infrastructure (20%), accommodation (14%), a longer stay (13%), environment/safety/animal care (11%), entertainment, activities and transport (9%), attitude of locals and service levels (8%), quality/cost of food and beverages (7%), weather (7%), flight schedules in and out of Cook Islands (5%), and value for money (3%). Comments on these themes included:

“Cheaper public transport - that doesn't blow out horrendous smoke pollution. Better roads, and better road safety (helmets, enforcing speed limits etc).”

“Improved phone and internet to assist us to communicate with people and services within Cook Islands and to stay in touch with home.”

“Some more specific information about opening times and more information about shuttles from and to the airport. As the owners of my accommodation weren't around enough to ask.”

“I just hope the government and the people work together to make Cook Islands the beautiful paradise it deserves to be. More shops and cafes that look more attractive, clean and most of all with staff that have the knowledge about customer service and food safety. Also, the police should enforce a law about underage teenagers getting into a club because I had an experience where my niece was allowed into a club without the proof identification.”

"A pamphlet or guide to all of the walking tracks, including any flora and fauna of note to be seen on the tracks. Also, road names and signs for the side roads leading to the interior, and signs for the start of all the subsidiary walking tracks."

"Someone should be employed to remove all the rubbish along the roads."

"Service at the resort was poor and their table and bar service was slow and most orders forgotten. Everywhere else on the island was great."

"A longer stay! We especially loved Aitutaki so I would go there again. I would also like to visit Atiu next time."

"The sewerage problem in the Muri Beach area needs urgent action as it is polluting the main beach area."

"Nerves with some of the wandering dogs although they are lovely and friendly, driving made me anxious with them around."

"The market could be open more than just Saturday as it is nice to shop while on holiday."

"More local arts and crafts. It was really hard to find any good quality small gifts to take home. School kids and women and should be encouraged to take up arts and craft. They could make a lot of money from us tourists!"

"More advertising of the Constitution Week activities which may allow tourists to plan time to attend and see real local performers. More and easier to read road signs."

"Customer services, locals in retail other than CITC need to be trained people skills, a smile and greetings would go a long way to a sale."

"More locally grown fruit and vegetables. Really surprised at the lack of tropical fruit available to buy and the lack of fish to buy in Aitutaki."

"If the interisland flight frequency was higher I could have visited more islands."

Reasons to return to the Cook Islands and recommend to others

The majority of visitors (92%) indicated that they would consider re-visiting the Cook Islands in the future. This figure is slightly lower than the 2015/16 annual average of 94% and the identical quarter in 2015 (94%). The main reasons given by the visitors to return to the Cook Islands are the overall great experience that the islands offer and the wish to experience this again (39%), peacefulness and relaxing atmosphere of the islands (35%), the beauty of the islands (22%), and the friendly local people (18%). Other reasons given include: the tourist attractions and activities on offer, convenience with regards to travel time, and the opportunity to visit friends and relatives.

The overall great experience is the major attraction for visitors to return to the Cook Islands, 39% of the comments by visitors were about how great the islands were, that they ‘just loved it’ and that the Cook Islands are the best place to relax and unwind. Comments included:

“I have now been four times and wouldn’t hesitate to come again, I absolutely love Rarotonga.”

“It has to be the best holiday destination for a restful holiday break.”

“Loved everything about the place.”

Over a third (35%) of the visitors commented that the slow pace of life, the relaxed nature, peacefulness and the Cook Islands ‘lifestyle’ are other reasons for visitors to revisit the Cook Islands. Comments included:

“Just a magnificent, relaxing holiday location.”

“For a relaxing time in a beautiful place.”

“It was unspoiled and provided quiet and beautiful natural surroundings to relax in.”

“So easy to have a very relaxing holiday. Love snorkelling and scootering around the island. The meals (night market, Vaima, Waterline, Tamarind House) were fantastic.”

The beautiful natural scenery and the warm climate of the islands are mentioned by over one fifth (22%) of the visitors as a reason to return to the Cook Islands. Key words used to describe the scenery include ‘beautiful island(s)’, ‘warm climate’, ‘and unspoilt’, ‘beautiful scenery’. Comments include:

“Beautiful. We got engaged while we were there!”

“There is no stress. It is beautiful everywhere you go.”

“It is a beautiful island with places of historical significance to Polynesian people.”

“The pure beauty of the island, simplicity and laid back approach unspoilt by tourism.”

The friendly local people are mentioned by 18% of the visitors as an important reason for their return. The visitors mentioned the kindness and helpfulness of the local people during their stay on the islands. Words used to describe the local people of the Cook Islands are ‘friendly’, ‘wonderful’, ‘beautiful’, ‘lovely’ or simply that they ‘loved the people’. Comments include:

“We love the people and the islands. This was our 6th year in a row.”

“Loved the friendliness and simplicity. Great people, restaurants and beaches.”

“Beautiful Island, peaceful lovely people.”

Attractions and activities that can be done ‘next time’ in the Cook Islands or the wish to

explore the islands further are mentioned as a reason to return. Snorkelling is the activity that is mentioned most often as an activity driving a desire to return. Some visitors are inspired by their trip to come back and visit other islands on their next visit to the Cook Islands.

"I'd like to have more time to relax and do more swimming and snorkelling."

"The convenience on water activities such as swimming, snorkelling and kayaking."

"Been 4 times and love the place. Will endeavour to spend more time in outer islands."

Another reason to come back to the Cook Islands is the convenience of a holiday with regards to flight times from New Zealand, the currency and English as the local language. Especially for visitors from 'close-by', e.g. New Zealand and Australia, a holiday to the Cook Islands is an easy and loved getaway.

"Like the ease of getting around, NZ money."

"The journey is not too far from NZ and of course the weather."

"Relaxing holiday with great climate and short travel from Australia."

Other reasons mentioned by a smaller group of visitors to revisit the Cook Islands are that it is a safe, clean and family friendly destination, visiting family and friends, food and beverage, affordable, local culture and that the Cook Islands are still sort of 'unspoiled' and not too commercialized.

Of the visitors who added reasons why they would not want to return to the Cook Islands (8%), the majority simply stated that they 'had been there and seen it all', some of the visitors added, especially return visitors, that they want to 'see other places'. Some visitors commented that a holiday to the Cook Islands is expensive and that it has become way more expensive over the last five to ten years. Other factors included a lack of activities, poor service, and long distance to the Cook Islands (from long haul markets). Comments include:

"Although a lovely break away. The activities are all, been there, done that, no need to do it again."

"I would love to see other islands now."

"It was beautiful, but it is too far for us. Next time we are that far I will visit some other islands."

"Poor service from the resort and highly overpriced."

Under half (41%) of the visitors mentioned that they would definitely include the outer islands in their next visit. Over half (54%) of visitors indicate they will "maybe" visit outer islands next time. Most (89%) of the visitors surveyed in this quarter mentioned they would like to include 'Aitutaki' in their next visit to the Cook Islands. 'Atiu' was the second most mentioned island at 29%; another 19% of visitors stated that they would like to visit Mangaia, 13% of the

respondents would like to visit Mauke. A small number of visitors mentioned Manihiki, Penrhyn, Pukapuka, Mitiaro, or as many as they can visit. Only three percent mentioned the high cost of visiting outer islands as a barrier for not visiting.

Nearly all visitors surveyed (98%) said that they would recommend the destination to their family and friends which is consistent with previous survey periods. Thirty-eight of visitors surveyed stated they would recommend the Cook Islands to others because of the ‘atmosphere’. Respondents felt that the Cook Islands was a great place to ‘relax’ and ‘unwind’, and said they would recommend the Cook Islands as a good holiday destination for those who are looking for a ‘relaxing atmosphere’.

Over one third (35%) of visitors surveyed stated that they would recommend the Cook Islands to others based on their own ‘great experience’. These visitors described their trip to the Cook Islands as a ‘wonderful island experience’, and said that they just ‘loved everything’ about it. These respondents also often described the Cook Islands as a ‘paradise’ and ‘heaven on Earth’.

Twenty-seven percent of respondents said that the ‘beautiful’ and ‘clean’ natural environment of the Cook Islands was a reason to recommend the island nation to others – including the beautiful scenery, great beaches and lagoons, the warm climate, and its unspoilt natural attractions.

Nineteen percent of respondents mentioned the ‘friendly’ local people as a reason to recommend the Cook Islands to friends and relatives. Other words used to describe the local Cook Islanders included ‘friendly’, ‘wonderful’, ‘great’, ‘happy’, ‘warm’ and ‘amazing’.

Other themes that were mentioned included the safety and convenience of the islands as a destination – especially for New Zealanders and Australians (12%), the attractions and activities available (4%), food and beverage options (4%), the islands being a family-friendly destination (3%), a safe destination (3%), some of visitors already have recommended (3%), the culture of the island (3%), the affordability of the holiday (2%), and the service level(1%). Comments on why visitors would recommend the Cook Islands to others included:

“It's an ideal relaxing and happy holiday. There are also many activities to do for all budgets and age groups.”

“I have been four times now and talked my friends into the trip as they were all first time visitors. I am always recommending Rarotonga to new zealanders that want a relaxing fun filled holiday.”

“It's clean, not far away, NZ dollars, good climate, fantastic food and fabulous people.

“Because it is a great place to relax and unwind, whilst being big enough that there is plenty to do as well.”

"It is such a beautiful island, you feel at home, there is so much to do and experience, the foods is beautiful, the people are beautiful. I tell everyone they need to visit at least once."

"I have recommended already, because it is a beautiful place with wonderful people."

Only 2% of visitors would not recommend the Cook Islands to others and this is largely based on the high prices and value for money.

Final observations

This report shows that the Cook Islands tourism industry generally performed well during the July to September 2016 period. Visitor satisfaction levels and the desire for return visitation have remained very high, and it is clear that the destination is making a generally positive impression on visitors. Visitor yield has remained relatively high after the significant increase seen in the previous (April-June 2016) quarters and it will be important to see if this trend is sustained for the rest of the year. The increase in yield over the mid 2015- mid 2016 period is largely accounted for by increased accommodation spend.

Despite the overall positive performance and growth in visitor spend this report again highlights that there is room to enhance the visitor experience and to increase the economic yield and broader community benefits associated with tourism. As with previous reports, this quarter's research highlights issues around the lack of public services, facilities and infrastructure in the Cook Islands. There are also some concerns from visitors around environmental degradation and the value for money/quality of service provided by accommodation and food/beverage operations that need to be addressed. The on-going concerns around stray dogs should also be noted.

Overall visitor satisfaction and willingness to return are high. It is vital now to build on this positive performance and to convert it into even greater economic benefits for local people. It is critical to find ways to build on and develop the visitor experience in a manner that enhances local economic linkages. By developing new product offerings, and more importantly, enhancing the quality and 'value added' of existing activities and experiences, the tourism industry can increase visitor satisfaction, and enhance the generation of local economic benefits. The 2016/17 annual report will review this theme in more depth as the related data mining focuses on better understanding the 'soft adventure' market.

Appendix – Cook Islands Visitor Survey



NEW ZEALAND TOURISM
RESEARCH INSTITUTE



简体中文

Cook Islands Visitor Survey

Information for participants

Kia Orana and warm Pacific greetings to you. As a recent visitor to the Cook Islands, we invite you to participate in research designed to improve the visitor experience as well as support us to make good decisions for tourism in our beautiful island nation. The research is funded by the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation and conducted by the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute at AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand.

If you are a permanent Cook Island resident, thank you for your interest but this Survey is focused on non-resident visitors to the Islands.

We would like to know about your most recent visit to the Cook Islands and ask you to complete this Visitor Survey within two weeks of your trip if possible.

Participation is entirely voluntary. To participate in this research, simply click on the button below. The Survey asks a number of questions where you select your answer from a range of options given. Some questions ask you to type your comments in your own words into the box provided. We would appreciate it if you could fill this survey out as accurately as possible. All questions are optional. The survey will run until the end of 2017.

This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

[Take the survey](#)

All answers are confidential and can in no way be linked to your personal details. By taking the survey you are giving consent to be part of this research.

Aggregated results of this research may be used in journal and conference publications. A summary of the results of this research will also be available on www.nztri.org in 2017.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT:

This survey is about your most recently completed visit to the Cook Islands. We would ask you to complete this survey within two weeks of your return home if possible.

(If you are a permanent Cook Islands' resident, thank you for your interest but this survey is focused on non-resident visitors to the Cook Islands)

By completing the survey you are giving consent to participate in this research.

1. When did you arrive in the Cook Islands on your most recent visit? (format dd/mm/yyyy, e.g. 26/06/2015)

2. How many nights did you spend in the Cook Islands on your most recent visit?

3. What was the main purpose of your visit?

- Holiday (1)
- Wedding party (2)
- Business or conference (3)
- Visiting friends or relatives (4)
- Honeymoon (5)
- Te Maeva Nui 2015 (50th Constitution Celebrations) (12)
- Special event - sporting (6)
- Special event - cultural (7)
- Volunteering (9)
- Education (8)
- Other reason, please specify (11) _____

4. How did you get to the Cook Islands? (tick as many as apply)

- Airline - Air New Zealand (1)
- Airline - Virgin Australia (2)
- Airline - Air Tahiti (3)
- Ferry (4)
- Private charter plane (5)
- Private boat (6)

5. Who were your travelling companions? (tick as many as apply)

- a) No one - I was by myself
- b) Partner / husband / wife
- c) Family member(s)

- d) Friends
- e) Work colleagues
- f) Tour group
- g) Organised group (e.g. school, sports etc)
- h) Wedding party
- i) Other _____

6. How many people accompanied you on this trip?

- a) 0 - travelled by myself
- b) 1
- c) 2
- d) 3
- e) 4
- f) 5
- g) 6
- h) 7
- i) 8
- j) 9
- k) 10+

7. How did you find out about the Cook Islands as a destination? (tick as many as apply)

- Previous visits (1)
- Friends/family (2)
- Travel agent/agency brochures (3)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter etc) (4)
- Television or radio programmes (5)
- Travel books (e.g. Lonely Planet) (10)
- Magazine and newspaper articles (6)
- The official Cook Islands travel website (cookislands.travel/nz) (7)
- General travel websites (e.g. TripAdvisor) (8)
- Other (9) _____

8. How important were the following sources of information when planning your trip to the Cook Islands?

Previous visits (1)

Friends/family (2)

Travel agent/travel brochures (3)

Social media (Facebook, Twitter etc) (4)

Television or radio programmes (5)

Travel books (e.g. Lonely Planet) (9)

Magazine and newspaper articles (6)

The official Cook Islands travel website (cookislands.travel/nz) (7)

General travel websites (e.g. Trip Advisor) (8)

9. How did you purchase your travel to the Cook Islands?

- Travel arrangements were made through a travel agent (1)
- I made my own travel arrangement using the Internet (2)
- Travel arrangements were made by a mixture of travel agent and online booking (5)
- Travel arrangements were made by others (business, friends, relatives) (3)
- Other - please specify (4) _____

10. Which islands did you visit on this trip? Please provide additional information when prompted on the following page.

- a) Rarotonga
- b) Aitutaki
- c) Atiu
- d) Mangaia
- e) Mauke
- f) Other

11. How many nights did you spend on each island?

- a) Rarotonga
- b) Aitutaki
- c) Atiu
- d) Mangaia
- e) Mauke
- f) Other

12. Please select the accommodation(s) you stayed in the Cook Islands? (Hold down the Ctrl key to choose more than one accommodation)

13. How satisfied were you with the following aspects in terms of your recent visit?

The level of service provided at this accommodation (1)

The quality, availability and maintenance of facilities provided at this accommodation (2)

The overall value for money (3)

14. On your most recent visit to the Cook Islands, please indicate below (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is ‘very dissatisfied’ and 5 being ‘very satisfied’) the activities that you engaged in and how satisfied you were with your experience.

Water based activities:

- a) Beaches
- b) Swimming
- c) Snorkelling
- d) Diving
- e) Kayaking
- f) Fishing - Deep Sea
- g) Fishing - Bonefishing
- h) Lagoon Cruise
- i) Ocean Cruise
- j) Whale Watching
- k) Kitesurfing
- l) Stand Up Paddle Boarding

Cultural interaction:

- a) Island Night Feast and Show
- b) Meal at a Cook Islands Home
- c) Church on Sunday
- d) Island Celebrations or Events
- e) Tumunu on Atiu
- f) Local Markets
- g) Dance / Language / Art Classes

Land based activities and Touring:

- a) Restaurants, Bars and Cafes
- b) Cultural Events
- c) Sporting Events
- d) 4WD Adventures
- e) Cultural Tour
- f) Treks and Trails
- g) Cycling
- h) Sightseeing

- i) Vehicle Rental
- j) Public Transport

Shopping:

- a) Pearls
- b) Arts
- c) Crafts
- d) Music
- e) Local Produce e.g Coffee, Coconut Oil etc

Please tell us about any other activities you participated in:

SPECIAL EVENTS

As part of the survey, we are helping the Ministry of Cultural Development to better understand the impact of the Te Maeva Nui 2015 (50th Constitution Celebrations). If you participated, please answer the following questions in this section.

What did you attend in Te Maeva Nui 2015 (50th Constitution Celebrations)? Please select all that apply.

- Float parade (1)
- Cultural performances (2)
- Trade days (3)
- Other, please specify (4) _____

Answer If Did you attend Te Maeva Nui 50th National celebration while in the Cook Islands? Yes Is Selected

Q77 Did you make any purchases at the Te Maeva Nui 2015 (50th Constitution Celebrations) this year?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Did you make any purchase at Te Maeva Nui this year? Yes Is Selected

Q78 How much did you spend at Te Maeva Nui 2015 (50th Constitution Celebrations) (in NZ\$)?

Answer If Did you attend Te Maeva Nui 50th National celebration while in the Cook Islands? Yes Is Selected

Q79 Overall how satisfied were you with your experience of Te Maeva Nui 2015 (50th Constitution Celebrations):

9. On your most recent visit, how satisfied were you with the following (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 being 'very satisfied')?

- a) The information that was available when planning this trip?
- b) The information that was available during this trip?
- c) The cost of accommodation?
- d) The quality of accommodation?
- e) The experience of renting a vehicle?
- f) The experience of using public transport?
- g) The frequency of air transport within the Cook Islands?
- h) The overall level of service in the Cook Islands?
- i) The friendliness of the people in the Cook Islands?

15. What did you find most attractive or appealing about the Cook Islands on your most recent visit?

16. What did you find least attractive or appealing about the Cook Islands on your most recent visit?

17. Is there anything that could have improved your visit to the Cook Islands?

- a) No
- b) Yes

EXPENDITURE

Information on how much money you spent during your visit helps the planning and development of the Cook Islands economy.

We would appreciate it if you could fill out this section as accurately as possible.

18. In the expenditure estimates you will provide below, how many people are included (including yourself)?

- a) Adults
- b) Children (0- 16 years old)

18.1 Please indicate below the total value of what you paid prior to your arrival to the Cook Islands (including purchases made via travel agents or the internet), in the currency specified below:

- a) NZD
- b) AUD
- c) GBP
- d) USD
- e) EUR
- f) CAD
- g) Other - please specify: _____

18.2 What does this amount above include? (tick as many as apply)

- a) International flights
- b) Accommodation
- c) Meals
- d) Domestic transport
- e) Activities
- f) Other

19.1 After you arrived in the Cook Islands, how much do you estimate that you spent in each island (Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Other island(s)) in local currency (NZ\$)?

- a) Accommodation
- b) Restaurants, Cafes & Bars
- c) Vehicle Rental
- d) Petrol
- e) Domestic flights
- f) Public transport
- g) Cruising
- h) Groceries
- i) Shopping (e.g. souvenirs, clothes)
- j) Activities (e.g. water sports, sightseeing)
- k) Internet cost
- l) Other

20. Was your recent visit to the Cook Islands part of a bigger trip?

- a) Yes

b) No

21. Would you return to the Cook Islands? Why?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If yes, would you include the following outer islands? (tick as many as apply)

- Aitutaki (1)
- Atiu (2)
- Mangaia (3)
- Mauke (4)
- Other (5) _____

22. Would you recommend the Cook Islands to others? Why?

- a) Yes
- b) No

23. How satisfied were you with your overall experience of the Cook Islands (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is ‘very dissatisfied’ and 5 being ‘very satisfied’)?

24. Please add any comments you would like to make about your overall experience of the Cook Islands.

ABOUT YOU

25. How many times have you been to the Cook Islands prior to your most recent visit?

26. Your age group:

- a) 18-29
- b) 30-39
- c) 40-49
- d) 50-59
- e) 60-69
- f) 70+

27. Your gender:

- a) Female

b) Male

28. What is your highest qualification?

- a) No formal qualification
- b) High school qualification
- c) Tertiary/University qualification
- d) Other

28.1 What is your approximate annual household income in your home currency? Please use the following format: e.g. 50,000 and specify currency in question below:

- a) NZD
- b) AUD
- c) GBP
- d) USD
- e) EUR
- f) CAD
- g) Other - please specify

29. Where do you live? (Please select from list of all countries)

Survey Powered By Qualtrics