

Dunedin Tourism Operators Perceptions of Environmental Certification Schemes in New Zealand

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Abstract

The importance of successfully adopting a sustainable approach to environmental management has been identified as critical to ensuring the future prosperity of the New Zealand Tourism Industry. With the New Zealand Tourism Strategy emphasising environmental certifications role in guiding business focus towards environmental performance, while also providing economic and socio-cultural benefits, it is appropriate that this study should focus on an examination of tourism operators and their awareness of and involvement with these schemes.

A quantitative study was undertaken using an internet based survey to sample all of the tourism operators in the target region of Dunedin. A questionnaire was administered to all tourism operators identified by a database collected primarily by the regional tourism operation (RTO) in the area, Tourism Dunedin. Forty nine usable questionnaires were collected, representing a 10 percent response rate.

In October 2009, 26 percent of respondents had gained an environmental certification, with another 10 percent indicating that they intend to do so. Involvement with environmental certification requires an investment of resources including time, staff, money and knowledge which are often only available to SME's in scarce amounts. Several potential benefits of environmental certification were identified by operators, although the majority of respondents believed that the perceived barriers were too great to peruse certification.

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Chapter 1 : Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In 1987 sustainable development was brought to the forefront of international discussion through the publication of the Brundtland Report (also known as 'Our Common Future') by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED 1987, Robinson 2004). This promoted an international focus on the future sustainability of human economic, environmental and social-cultural development. The increasing global focus on sustainability has required organisations to become more aware of their role in contributing to society and to the environment if they wish to be successful over the long term (Weaver 2006).

Sustainable development is widely associated with the physical environment but it is of equal relevance to the social and economic performance of business internationally (Netja, Shahbudin and Amran 2010). Operators need to be aware of their global responsibilities and incorporate into their organisations business strategy their organisations sustainability issues. If these actions are not addressed it can lead to a loss of business opportunities and competitive advantages which can affect the performance of the operation over the long term (Robinson, Anumba, Carrillo and Al-Ghassani 2006). As a result, the managers of several organisations are shifting away from the traditional shareholder perspective of a business's responsibilities to a stakeholder perspective, which focuses more specifically on their roles regarding society and other external stakeholders.

Growing concern about the linkages between tourism systems and climate change has recently fuelled the desire of several stakeholders in the tourism industry to begin operating in a way that encourages the sustainable development of this planet and its resources (Gossling, Hall and Weaver 2009). Netja et al. (2010: 85), based on the works of Kell (2003) and Waddock (2003), observed that "it seems that organisations are changing to become more sustainable, ecological

and ethical in practise.” Many operators in the New Zealand tourism industry are now focusing on improving the sustainable management and operation of their businesses (Lee and Moscardo 2005), demonstrating that some tourism operators understand the worth of incorporating sustainable practices into their business and are modifying their operations in an effort to become more environmentally sensitive. Recent research suggests that the number of visitors interested in the environmental performance of businesses is increasing and that competitive advantages can be generated by businesses that are performing sustainably and effectively advertising this fact. Unfortunately, several unethical businesses have begun to market themselves as performing effectively to attract members’ of this growing consumer segment (Wight 1993). Environmental certification schemes are a result of this behaviour and are designed to assist businesses to be more sustainable while also setting standards that tourists understand and promoting those standards to tourists.

The New Zealand tourism industry is currently trying to collaborate among its stakeholders to create initiatives that they believe will help to construct a more sustainable tourism industry (NZTS 2007). The sheer diversity of the many different stakeholder groups involved makes creating a homogenous goal for the industry difficult as stakeholders share different perceptions of the viability of potential solutions pertaining to achieving a sustainable tourism industry (Hall and Kearsley 2001). Faucheux, O’Conner and van der Stratten (1998: 4) observed that “differing views exist as to appropriate ways to conceptualise and measure what is to be sustained, or is not being sustained but should be and so on” and insinuated that the industry must figure out ways to become more efficient in its sustainable management and reduce the negative impacts that are caused by tourism on the natural environment. The natural environment is one of the New Zealand tourism industries key assets (Higham, Carr and Gael 2001) and the basis of the 100% Pure campaign that is used to market New Zealand internationally (Tourism New Zealand 2009). One key idea produced by one of the New Zealand government organisations responsible for managing tourism in New Zealand, the Ministry of Tourism (TMT), is that all New Zealand

tourism businesses should attempt to become environmentally certified. They suggest that will help improve their environmental performance, by encouraging them to perform environmental audits, to identify areas in which they may improve their sustainable practices within their operations (NZTS 2007).

1.1.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter begins by examining the scope of the New Zealand tourism industry before introducing the key terminology that will be employed by this study in Section 1.2. Section 1.3 introduces the study population that will be inspected by this research and the rationale used to justify their selection. The following Section, 1.5, establishes the aim of this research and objectives that are required to complete this aim.

1.2 Study Context

Tourism is one of the worlds' largest industries, contributing approximately 3 percent of the worlds' export of services and generating approximately US \$826 billion dollars in international tourism receipts in 2008 (UNWTO 2009). Tourism is also one of the largest industries in New Zealand and forms an integral component of New Zealand's economy (NZTS 2009). It is the main export earner in New Zealand, providing nine percent of GDP each year. It provides employment for 10 percent of the New Zealand workforce. New Zealand's tourism industry is expected to continue to grow with international visitors estimated to increase at four percent per year while domestic visitors are predicted to increase by a small amount (0.8% growth per year) (NZTS 2009). International visitors account for almost 20 percent of New Zealand's total export earnings (NZTS 2009).

New Zealand is branded internationally as a nation with a strong environmental focus (NZTS 2007). It uses the natural environment as a central component of the tourism product and many of the tourism products and experiences on offer rely on areas designated for conservation

(Rowe and Higham 2007). Tourists often desire a natural setting to host their tourism experiences (Chon and Sing 1995), and New Zealand is a popular choice for a nature related holiday (Hall 1997).

Traditionally many of the tourists visiting New Zealand are attracted by its unique natural environment, (Higham et al. 2001, Higham and Carr 2002) with Craig-Smith and Ruhanen (2005: 181) observing that “the natural environment and climatic conditions are very important determinant of the attractiveness of the Oceania region as a holiday destination.” International and domestic tourists have begun to express concern in the environment (Higham et al. 2001), so it is appropriate for the industry to provide sustainable options in all facets of tourism to ensure they are catering for a more environmentally sensitive consumer base (Claver-Cortes, Molina-Azoran, Jorge and Lopez Gamero 2007).

New Zealand is perceived to have good environmental management by many international visitors (Fairweather et al. 2005). This may be attributed to the way that the country is marketed internationally through Tourism New Zealand’s 100% Pure marketing campaign (Tourism New Zealand 2009). It is a focus of the New Zealand tourism industry to ensure that New Zealand’s natural environment is maintained at a high quality that may be sustained into the future (NZTS 2007). If this is to be achieved then the industries future must be developed with a focus on the sustainability of the natural environmental, to ensure that the industry will safeguard its most valuable asset.

The New Tourism Strategy to 2015 (NZTS 2007) recognises the importance of the tourism industry to the New Zealand economy and stresses the need of the industry to adopt sustainable practices to ensure its future prosperity (NZTS 2007). The strategy recommends all operators review their environmental management practices and attempt to gain an environmental certification (NZTS 2007), most specifically highlighting the Qualmark Green responsible tourism enviro-rating (Qualmark Responsible Tourism 2009). The strategy emphasises that gaining an

environmental certification under the new Qualmark Green environmental certification scheme should be a priority for operators of all tourism businesses (NZTS 2007). The theory behind the introduction of the Qualmark Green nationally applied standard is that environmental certification could produce a sustainable standard for the industry that operators will strive to achieve in order to gain the benefits of becoming environmentally certified. Gaining an environmental certification from an environmental certification scheme that is recognised and backed by a reputable accreditation agency can potentially provide many benefits for tourism operators and tourists themselves (Fennell 2003).

Conveying the ethical standpoint of a business has traditionally been the responsibility of the operator (Fennel and Malloy 1999). Recently the industry has experienced the advent of eco-labelling through environmental certification schemes. These schemes have been developed to indicate to visitors the level at which the business is performing environmentally, assisting them in their purchasing decision by reducing the amount of time required to assess the operator's commitment to the environment and sustainable practices. This study will investigate the perceptions of tourism operators in Dunedin, New Zealand regarding the environmental certification schemes currently operational in New Zealand.

1.2.1 Defining Environmental Certification, Accreditation and Eco-labels in the Tourism Context

The terminology used in the literature surrounding environmental quality standards in tourism is often confusing to researchers, members of the industry, and laymen. The similarity of several terms has led to research that is often either unclear or misinformed. This section is designed to introduce the key terminology related to environmental management systems and used in New Zealand that will be used frequently throughout this study.

Certification is defined by Fennel (2003: 193) to be "A process by which an individual is tested and evaluated in order to determine his or her mastery of a specific body of knowledge, or some

portion of a body of knowledge.” The definition of certification for the tourism industry is provided by Honey and Stewart (2002: 4) who determine that “certification within the tourism industry refers to a procedure that audits and gives written assurance that a facility, product, process service or management system meets specific standards. It awards a logo or seal to those that meet or exceed baseline criteria or standards that are prescribed by the program.”

Environmental certification in the tourism industry is usually carried out by environmental certification schemes. The term environmental certification scheme was defined by Honey and Rome (2001: 17) to be any “voluntary procedure that assesses monitors and gives written assurance that a business, product, service or management system conforms to specific requirements. A marketable logo or seal is awarded to those who meet or exceed baseline standards.” The marketed seal that is awarded to businesses is often referred to as an ‘eco-label.’ Fairweather, Maslin and Simmons (2005: 83) identified a tourism eco-label to be “any form of certification giving assurance that the tourist operation or activity is conducted according to known standards that enhances the environment or at least minimises environmental impacts.” An eco-label is an award that can be used to advertise the environmental performance of a business. Font, Hass, Thorpe and Forsyth (2001: 22) identified eco-labels used to promote businesses in the New Zealand tourism industry to be “methods to standardise the promotion of environmental claims in New Zealand by following compliance to set criteria, generally based on third party, impartial verification.”

A verifying body or environmental accreditation agency is a third party operation that sets the standards and verifies the credibility of an environmental certification scheme. Fennel (2003) proposed that accreditation is “a process by which an association or agency evaluates and recognises a program of study or an institution as meeting certain predetermined standards or qualifications. It applies only to institutions and their programs of study or their services.” In

other words, the accreditation agency certifies the environmental certification schemes themselves (Weaver 2006).

The two most prevalent accreditation agencies promoting eco-labels in New Zealand are Green Globe (Figure 1.1: A) and Qualmark, the latter through the recently established Qualmark Green enviro-rating (Figure 1.1: B) (see Section 2.5). The next section of this thesis provides some orientation surrounding tourism stakeholder's perceptions of environmental certification and eco labels before further expanding on this information in Chapter Two.

Figure 1.1 Example of Eco-Labels



A) Qualmark (2009 a). B) Green Globe (2009)

1.2.3 Stakeholder Perceptions of Environmental Certification and Eco-labels

The operators' perception of the importance of environmental certification is crucial to its success as the sustainable development of tourism at a destination depends on the motivations and strategies of the tourism operators, as well as the motivations and strategies of the destination management in place (Carey and Gountas 1997)(see Section 2.3). Previous research into tourism operators' perspectives on environmental certification in New Zealand (Cheyne and Barnett 2001, Rowe 2004, Rowe and Higham 2007 and Chafe 2007) is included in Section 2.5.

Research into tourists' perceptions of eco-labels and environmental certification schemes suggests that they understand the perceived benefits of environmental certification and eco labels and would support their further development (Fairweather et al 2005, Chafe 2007).

However, regardless of their expressed opinions, tourists are often perceived by operators to be primarily concerned with the quality and economic value of their tourism experience (Chafe 2007) and not the environmental impact that it causes.

This research adds to the body of knowledge on tourism operators' perspectives on environmental certification by studying the opinions and perceptions of tourism operators in Dunedin, New Zealand regarding environmental certification schemes, their potential impacts on their business and the sustainable future of the tourism industry in New Zealand.

1.3 The Study Population: Tourism Operators in Dunedin

1.3.1 Selection of Participants

Tourism operators have been selected due to their critical role in the development of the tourism industry (Section 2.2) and their subsequent involvement with eco-labelling and environmental certification (2.5). As the industry looks to improve sustainable practices it will be useful to see what the operators involved in facilitating this development think about environmental certification and eco-labelling, and the potential effect that it might have on their businesses and the tourism industry more broadly. The Dunedin market has been selected due to its reputation as the wildlife capital of New Zealand. Dunedin markets itself based on this reputation and therefore has a motivation to perform well in the areas of environmental protection and sustainability. This research will adopt a positive approach, collecting observable data through a measurable approach.

1.3.2 Dunedin Tourism Industry Description and Key Dunedin Tourism Statistics

Dunedin is a popular tourism destination located in the Otago region of the South Island of New Zealand. It received 858,412 total commercial visitor nights in the 12 month period (March 2009 to February 2010) with domestic nights comprising 57 percent of this total (Commercial

Accommodation Monitor 2010). It is the main centre of Otago and the gateway to the rest of the region because of its size, location and international airport (Tourism Dunedin 2009). Dunedin's tourism industry is focused primarily around its unique natural attractions and diverse Victorian and Edwardian heritage.

1.3.2.1 Visitor Profile

Approximately 70 percent of the visitors travelling to Dunedin are visiting the region primarily for a holiday (43%), or to visit friends and relatives (27%) (RVM 2009). The region's attractions are the most popular motivation for visiting Dunedin, with 56 percent of visitors highlighting these as being a major motivation to visit Dunedin (RVM 2009). The Regional Visitor Monitor noted that "although (Dunedin's) specific and unique attractions remain the main draw card for visitors over time, fluctuations in their importance as holiday motivators suggests scope to promote these attributes further" (RVM 2009: 13). How to best promote these attributes is a serious consideration for the city. Effectively marketing the city is a difficult task. Visitors said they expected Dunedin to be a safe (65%) and friendly place (71%) with a clean and pure environment (51%) featuring beautiful scenery (60%) and unique wildlife (34%) (RVM 2009). Dunedin finds its points of difference from other regions in the RVM through its reputation as a unique destination with interesting attractions. Dunedin seems to provide a more specialised tourism product than other RVM regions as these activities and attractions are more popular when compared with the benchmark, while all other categories are much less popular. Almost half of the 73 listed "Attractions and Activities Seen/Done in Dunedin" could be considered to be nature related (35 of 73 or 48%). Among the most popular things to do in the city are noted to be visiting the Otago Peninsula (32%) and going on a scenic drive (33%) (RVM 2009). Delivering in the areas of friendliness, safety and beautiful scenery continues to be a prerequisite in meeting the expectations of visitors. The following research question and resulting objectives

were developed to investigate tourism operators' perspectives of environmental certification schemes for tourism businesses currently in place in New Zealand.

1.4 Research Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 Research Question

The aim of this study is to answer the research question:

“What are Dunedin tourism operators' perspectives on environmental certification schemes currently in place in New Zealand?”

1.4.2 Research Objectives

To answer this question, this study will identify tourism operators in Dunedin perspectives regarding:

- 1) their awareness and involvement with environmental certification in New Zealand;
- 2) joining an environmental certification scheme;
- 3) the potential impacts of environmental certification on their business, and
- 4) the impact of the current economic crisis on their perceptions of environmental certification.

1.5 Thesis Outline

Chapter Two begins by reviewing the topic of sustainable development, highlighting key concepts and milestones in its progression, before introducing its key links with tourism in Section 2.2. The relationship between sustainable development and tourism is discussed in Section 2.3, which highlights the public sector organisations planning and implementing the sustainable development of the tourism industry as well as the legislation that they have

developed to facilitate this development. Section 2.4 introduces ethical business practises and the concept of triple bottom line reporting to illustrate why a business would operate with a concern for the environment, why a business would report on their environmental performance and how they would go about transmitting this information. The next Section, 2.5, introduces tourism related eco-labels currently in place in New Zealand and reflects on research into the perceptions of tourist's and tourism operators surrounding environmental certification, which is followed by an examination of how the conceptual framework in Section 2.7 on which the research that this study will conduct is to be based was formulated.

Chapter Three details the method and methodology adopted by this study, justifying the use of the positive approach to research and detailing the way in which the research was developed conducted, collected, organised and analysed. The research approach and the rational for selecting this approach are highlighted in Sections 3.2. The following Section, 3.3, is concerned with the questionnaires design, layout, pre testing and amendments. The study area parameters and sample selection procedures are determined in Section 3.4, which is followed by sections on the questionnaires administration (3.5) and verification (3.6). The coding and processing of the data is described in section in section 3.7 before the limitations encountered by the study are discussed in 3.8.

The results of the study are presented and discussed in Chapter Four, which begins by creating a profile of respondents based on their demographic information in Section 4.2. Section 4.3 summarises respondent's awareness of and involvement with environmental certification. Respondent's perceptions of environmental certification systems are presented and discussed in Section 4.4 which is followed by a section highlighting respondent perception surrounding the impact that environmental certification would have on their business in Sections 4.5 and 4.6. Section 4.7 describes how the current economic environment has impacted on Dunedin tourism operators' attitudes regarding environmental certification schemes.

The thesis is completed in Chapter Five, which begins by summarising the results of the study and illustrating how they have answered the primary research question and each of its' objectives in Section 5.2. The future implications of this study are broken down into practical and academic terms in Section 5.3. Future research avenues are discussed in Section 5.4, before Section 5.5 brings the study to a close with the concluding statements.

Chapter 2 : ‘Environmental Certification and Environmental Sustainability’: A Review of Current Literature

2.1 Introduction

Ecosystem damage can lead to an irreversible loss of resources (Schmidheiny 1992, Faucheux et al. 1998), resources that the New Zealand tourism industry is dependent on as the backbone of its product offer and international marketing strategy (NZTS 2007). Implementing the fundamental actions that will be required to achieve the sustainable development of the industry is difficult. Businesses are slow to subscribe to the concept for many reasons (Morhardt 2002). Businesses measuring their performance based on the traditional single bottom line approach will generally only subscribe to an idea if it can be proven that it makes sense financially (Reinhardt 1999). As the consumption levels of the world have accelerated, with much of this inefficient and ill planned, businesses are beginning to realise the value of long term investments and savings. Many businesses now measure their performance based on a TBL approach (Brown et al. 2006). The segment of consumers interested in a business’s ethical behaviour and environmental performance is also increasing. Businesses that are aware of this increase of interest from ‘green consumers’ have attempted to take advantage of this growing demand and advertise their businesses as ‘eco-friendly.’ As the number of businesses using their environmental performance to advertise their business increased, verification agencies were introduced to test their validity (Font et al. 2001, Font 2002). Today businesses that wish to brand their business as environmentally friendly and use this to market themselves to tourists can do so through an eco-label. Eco-labels are designed to transmit the environmental performance of a business at a glance through using a recognised brand (Fennell and Malloy 1999). Those who are interested in a business that is using an eco-label can make an informed judgement on their level of environmental performance based on proven standards that they are familiar with (Kozak and Nield 2004). The success of eco-labels is dependent not only on the

validity of the eco-label but also on the perceptions of tourism operators and consumers as it is these groups that subscribe to and are influenced by the eco-label.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the body of knowledge that exists regarding the relationship between tourism, ethical business practises, sustainable development and environmental certification. It begins by explaining the link between sustainable development and tourism development in Section 2.2, before providing a review of the current relationship between tourism development and the environment, describing how it is planned for and developed, and the organisations responsible for doing so in section 2.3. An overview of the concept of ethical business practises and environmental reporting is included in Section 2.4 to illustrate why environmental certification schemes and other forms of environmental reporting were created and have gained popularity. It investigates the current state of environmental certification in New Zealand by introducing the most recognised environmental certification schemes in the country and describing their key actions in implementing the sustainable development of New Zealand in section 2.5 which also provides a review of tourist and tourism operator perceptions regarding environmental certification and eco-labelling in New Zealand. Section 2.6 discusses highlights key information from the Regional Visitor Monitor, before Section 2.7 introduces the conceptual framework that the research approach adopted by the study is based on.

2.2 Tourism Development and Environmental Sustainability

2.2.1 Sustainable Development: Key Concepts, Developments and Tourism Links

Managing the sustainable development of the New Zealand tourism industry has been identified as crucial to ensuring its future prosperity (NZTS 2007). This section is designed to introduce environmental sustainability and its key concepts before highlighting the key events starting with the publication of the Brundtland report in 1987 (WECD 1987). The section concludes by

introducing the links between sustainable development and tourism, acting as a precursor to Section 2.3.

2.2.1.1 Sustainable Development: Key Concepts

Human activity is constantly changing the environment. The expansion of industrial activity during the 20th century has introduced several actual and potential harmful impacts upon the environment (Faucheux et al. 1998). The concept of sustainable development was introduced to the international political agenda through the World Commission on Environment and Developments' (WECD) Brundtland report (1987). The report included the definition of sustainable development that is most commonly employed today. The WECD define sustainable development to be "paths of human progress which meet the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (WECD 1987: 43).

The definitions of sustainability are undoubtedly normative as they orient scientific and descriptive analysis alongside policy studies. Costanza's (1991) definition of sustainability identified three factors that comprise the balance required to achieve appropriate sustainable development:

"Sustainability is a relationship between human economic systems and larger dynamic, but normally slower-changing ecological systems in which 1) human life can continue indefinitely, 2) human individuals can flourish, and 3) human cultures can develop; but in which effects of human activities remain within bounds, so as not to destroy the diversity, complexity and function of the ecological life support system."

Elkins and Jacobs (1995) highlighted the fact that reducing the environmental impact of human activity provides the basic physical condition required for the compatibility of sustainable development and economic growth. They note that a financial condition exists, as reducing the

environmental impact of an activity is likely to cost money through required investments in more eco-efficient technologies. However, these costs may be rectified and eclipsed by the potential cost savings introduced by altering resource and waste management systems to improve environmental quality and/or their product offer. Changes in production or policy to encourage environmental sustainability may set in motion future developments that could turn out to be economically more efficient or product improving. This could also give rise to entirely new products in the future. Each of these definitions refers to a long term perspective that requires planning and a need for intervention if the goal of sustainable development is to be achieved.

Constanza and Patten (1995: 193) identified three questions that complicate the task of defining sustainability:

1. What systems or subsystems or characteristics of systems persist?
2. For how long?
3. When do we assess whether the system or subsystem or characteristic has persisted?

They noted that a systems sustainability can only be evaluated after there has been enough time to observe if estimations and predictions about the desired future state of the system hold true. Therefore sustainability can only be assessed “after the fact” (Constanza and Patten: 194). Determining what characteristics of the system or subsystem should be sustained is a complex issue. Definitions of sustainability often feature a list of desired characteristics that are most often associated with achieving global socio-economic goals while maintaining the Earths ecological life support system. Selection of these systems must be based on “consensus on these characteristics as desirable social goals” (Constanza and Patten: 194) and accurate scientific information pertaining to their requirements must be used to create them.

Sustainability refers to a maintaining something in its perceptual state, while development implies change: “a progression from an existing situation to a new, ideally superior, state” (Matheison and Wall 2006: 290). Combining the two notions introduces the idea of a state of perpetual change, with no designated longevity. Choosing a particular system or subsystem over another and choosing particular characteristics over one another “hides the hierarchal interactions between systems and subsystems over a range of scales in space and time” (Costanza and Patterson: 195). This introduces the final complication, for how long? Sustainability cannot mean something that lasts forever as nothing in the entire universe, not even the universe itself, is infinite. Based on this realisation, Costanza and Patterson (1995) argue that sustainability can only be defined in relation to a specific system and its relative lifespan. They insist that a system is only sustainable if it can effectively exist in a nominal state of behaviour in which sustainability is not compromised for as long as or longer than its expected existence time.

Swarbrooke (2001: 3) provides a very simple definition which includes the key concepts surrounding sustainable development, defining it as “development which meets our needs today without compromising the ability of people in the future to meet their needs.” There is a common core theme in all of the definitions. Each of them refers to limitations to a sustainable use of resources and the need to maintain the environment for the future. The following section describes the development of the discussion surrounding environmental certification, highlighting key reports and milestones.

2.2.1.2 Key Reports and Milestones

Table 2.1 provides a review of several key reports or milestones in the progression of the international debate on sustainable development. The production of the Brundtland Report in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development exposed the concept of sustainable development to the public in the form in which it is currently most related to (WCED

1987). The Brundtland report highlighted the necessary elements required to achieve a sustainable system summarised by Wall and Mathieson (2006: 289):

1. Maintain ecological integrity and diversity;
2. Meet basic human needs;
3. Keep options open for future generations;
4. Reduce injustice;
5. Increase self-determination;

In order to achieve these objectives the following actions it would be necessary to:

1. Revive economic growth;
2. Change the quality of growth;
3. Meet essential needs such as for jobs, food, energy, water and sanitation;
4. Conserve and enhance the resource base;
5. Reorient technology and manage risk;
6. Merge environment and economics in decision making.

(WECD 1987)

A year later, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was formed as mankind theorised that they were having an effect on the Earth's climate and acknowledged the need to assess this impact scientifically (SDT 2009). In 1990, the International Institute for sustainable development was formed and began producing the Earth Negotiations Bulletin. The bulletin was designed to provide daily summary information about Environment and Development negotiations to improve the transparency of the international policy making process (IISD 2010). The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 introduced the Agenda 21, a set of actions intended to be employed globally to achieve international sustainable development. The conference was the first to consider tourism and the ramifications that sustainable development may have on the industry (Wall and Mathieson 2006).

Table 2.1 Key Reports and Milestones

Year	Key Report or Milestone	Description
1987	Our Common Future (Brundtland Report).	<i>Produced by the WCED this report on the future of Environment and Development popularised the term “sustainable development” combining social, economic, cultural and environmental issues and global solutions.</i>
1988	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is formed.	<i>The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is established to asses’ scientific, technical and socioeconomic research on climate change and evaluate mankind’s role.</i>
1990	The International Institute for Sustainable Development is formed.	<i>The IISD begins publication of the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, developed to act as the authority on international negotiations on environment and development.</i>
1992	UNCED Earth Summit in Rio De Janeiro Changing Courses Report.	<i>The earth summit introduced Agenda 2, a wide-ranging blueprint for action to achieve sustainable development worldwide. The Business Council for Sustainable development published this report to establish business interests in promoting sustainable development.</i>
1993	First Meeting of UN Commission on Sustainable Development.	<i>Designed to ensure that the UNCED is followed up, and to enhance international cooperation.</i>
1994	China Develops China’s Agenda 21.	<i>China sets an international example for national strategies on sustainable development.</i>
1999	Launch of the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes.	<i>A tool developed to provide guidance to investors looking for both socially responsible and profitable companies that follow sustainable development principles.</i>
2002	World Summit on Sustainable Development.	<i>Held in Johannesburg 10 years after the UNCED, promotes “partnerships” as a non-negotiated approach to sustainability.</i>
2005	The Kyoto Protocol.	<i>The Kyoto protocol is a legally binding agreement among developed countries that sets limits on greenhouse gas emissions and begins to establish the Clean Development mechanism for developing countries.</i>
2008	World Food, Fuel and Financial Crises Converge.	<i>Global food prices skyrocket by 43% in one year, increasing energy demand from economy’s including China and India and the mortgage lending collapse in the united states causes financial institutes to falter and markets to tumble, sending the world into recession.</i>
2009	Copenhagen Climate Negotiations.	<i>This global convention focuses mainly on the large emitters such as the United States and China. Unfortunately is unclear whether the actions being undertaken by large emitters are meeting the global reductions’ that science has deemed necessary for sustainable development.</i>

(SDT 2009)

As international business interest in sustainable development increased, so did the amount of research into the subject being published. The Changing Courses report (Schmidheiny 1992), published in 1992 by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, suggested a new avenue for sustainable business development. The report suggested actions that will bring about the fundamental changes necessary to instigate sustainable development in a business sense, both in terms of economic behaviour and international relations to establish business interests in promoting sustainable development (Schmidheiny 1992). In 1993 the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development followed up the UNCED with the first meeting of the UNCSD, which was designed to enhance further international co-operation. The first international example of integration of the Agenda 21 principles was provided by China who developed national strategies regarding sustainable development of their population and environment (ACCA 21).

The launch of the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes in 1999 provided investors with a tool to help them find socially responsible companies that are also profitable and follow sustainability principles, a reflection of the demand for companies successfully incorporating this ethos. Ten years after the original Earth Summit, the World Summit on Sustainable Development reinforced the message of international sustainable development, promoting partnerships as a necessary requirement of a successful integrated approach to sustainable development (WSSD 2002). Two years later the first concrete steps towards setting limits on greenhouse gas emissions for developed countries with the creation of the Kyoto protocol. The protocol is a legally binding agreement entered into voluntarily by developed countries which also begins to establish the Clean Development mechanism for developing countries (UNEP 2005).

The necessity of adopting a more successful approach to development was reinforced by the convergence of the international food, fuel and financial crises in 2008 (SDT 2009). The Climate Change debate was introduced to the forefront of international discussion by the Copenhagen

Climate Negotiations in 2009 which acted as a review of the actions being undertaken by large emitters such as China and the United States. It is difficult to evaluate whether the actions are enough to meet the global reductions that the IPCC has deemed necessary to achieve sustainable development (UNEP 2009).

2.2.1.3 Links to Tourism Development

The emergence of sustainable tourism has coincided with the increasing global focus on sustainable development (Mathieson and Wall 2006). Since the end of World War 2 the global tourism industry has expanded considerably and continues to grow. The tourism industry has proven to be resilient in the face of crisis. Only major crises, such as the September 11 terrorist attack using commercial passenger airlines, have caused decreases in the growth of the industry (Weaver 2006). The scope of the industry now reaches almost every place on the world's surface, and as a result almost any place on the entire world's surface can be considered to tourism destination, making the issue of tourism sustainability universally relevant (Mathieson and Wall 2006). There are two main schools of thought regarding tourism development, advocates and pundits (Weaver 2006). Advocates support the development of tourism, stressing the economic, environmental and socio-economic benefits of tourism. Tourism introduces money into the economy, stimulates investment and creates jobs through trickle down effects. It can promote cross cultural understanding, provide incentives to preserve and maintain a destination as well as its unique environmental, cultural and historical assets (Weaver 2006). Pundits argue that tourism development will eventually lead to unacceptable levels of environmental, socio-cultural and economic costs for a destination if unregulated.

Early discussions into sustainable tourism development were centred in the academic realm. Debate surrounding sustainable development in the tourism sector has focused primarily around becoming environmentally, socially and economically sustainable (Swarbrooke 2001). The concept first received worldwide public attention in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit and its agenda

21 release (Weaver 2006). The tourism industry has been at the forefront of the development of environmentally friendly development. Its development can instigate the sustainable development of the environment and the economy, as it has a vested interest in conservation zones, and it creates jobs within destinations (Swarbrooke 2001). The advent of intense international political discussion surrounding climate change has influenced a focus on the environment among stakeholders within the tourism industry as tourism relies on the natural environment and is a large polluter (Becken and Patterson 2006). Climate change threatens to change this natural environment dramatically (Mather, Viner and Todd 2005). This is part of a two way relationship between tourism and climate change as tourism has direct and indirect effects on climatic change itself. Tourism contributes to climate change through its consumption of fossil fuels with the emission of greenhouse gasses caused by this consumption (Becken and Patterson 2006). Instead of “advocating the perpetuation (even growth) of tourism as an end in itself” Mathieson and Wall (2006: 195) hypothesised that it may be more appropriate to ask how tourism may contribute to the more broadly conceived goal of sustainable development.

2.3 Tourism Development and Sustainability

The concept of sustainable development generally involves the minimisation of negative impacts and maximisation of the positive impacts to maintain the long term viability of resources. Weaver (2006: 3) constructed a definition sustainable tourism development modified from the definition provided by the 1987 Brundtland report, defining it as “Tourism development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The term remains very flexible and contested and often the interpretation of its definition can mean almost anything to anyone depending on their personal interpretation. Some only see the minimal requirements whereas some see almost all that sustainable tourism encompasses, which can be attributed to the complexity of both the term and the systems in place in the tourism industry.

In order to achieve a sustainable tourism industry, tourism must be planned for and developed appropriately. Much debate exists regarding the best way to appropriately manage the balance between tourism development and the environment (Buckley 2001, Higham and Carr 2007). Tourism is based on consumption of the environment and therefore the stakeholders involved with tourism at a destination have an interest in ensuring that the quality of the environment is not compromised by the tourism activities taking place there (Urry 1995).

Often tourism experiences are hosted sensitive natural environments that are highly susceptible to the impacts tourism can cause (Powell and Ham 2008). Tourism places considerable stress on resources at the destination, most notable of all, the natural environment (Weeden 2002). It was noted by Carey, Gountas and Denis (1997: 430) that “tourism development at the destination level is led primarily by the tourism operator,” although many factors will shape this development. Tourism can contribute positively to the sustainable development of regions, particularly in sensitive areas that attract tourism use, if planned for appropriately. According to Claver-Cortes et al. (2007) the industry needs to recognise the need to develop sustainable practices to ensure a viable future. Stakeholders of a destination and its tourism industry must collaborate to form a sustainable tourism plan to ensure the destination is maintained and conserved in a sustainable manner that meets all stakeholder needs as well as the needs of the destination itself (Claver-Cortes et al. 2007).

Consumers are becoming more aware of impacts caused by their tourism experience, and many are making efforts to minimise the negative impacts that their tourism experience generates. As a result several operators are searching for a sustainable balance between providing for themselves, their environment, and the tourism industry as a whole (Claver-Cortes et al 2007). Unfortunately, often the degree of pro-environmental activity undertaken by a business or a destination relates directly to the economic benefits of these actions (Claver-Cortes et al 2007). To ensure that tourism development is sustainable there must be a collaboration formed

between those responsible for tourism management in the region and those responsible for managing the protected areas of the region (Powell and Ham 2008). Often, tourism is viewed as both a contributor to environmental degradation in protected areas as well as being contributor to the sustainable development of these areas. Managers of protected areas are faced with the very difficult task of balancing the conservation of resources in protected area with allowing the tourism related activities situated there to take place (Black and Crabtree 2007).

As attested to in this chapter so far, the personal efforts of operators are not the only factors that are shaping the sustainable development of the tourism industry in New Zealand. The next section of this chapter introduces several key players and legislation responsible for directing this development and describes the way that these key players formulate their sustainable goals, objectives and benchmarks.

2.3.1 Planning and Implementing the Sustainable Development of Tourism in New Zealand

The sustainable tourism development of a destination is also shaped by the national and local government. The government is involved on many levels in shaping this development. The national government provides the legislation that tourism development is based on. The Resource Management Act 1987, The Local Government Act 2002, and several others all describe the way those involved in tourism development must conduct their business.

2.3.2.1 *The Resource Management Act*

Ever since it was introduced in 1991 the Resource Management Act (RMA) has provided the basis for tourism planning and development in New Zealand. It delegates the conditions of use of the resources that the tourism industry and other industries rely on, setting guidelines that outline the way these resources may be used legally (Hall and Kearsley 2001). The intent of the RMA is to promote the sustainable management of New Zealand's physical and natural resources by providing a comprehensive framework for planning water and soil management,

coastal waste disposal management, land use planning, pollution controls and how the land is subdivided by providing “a comprehensive, consistent and integrated process for allocating and managing resources.” (Hall et al. 1997: 57) The RMA moved away from the former zoning approach to allocating resources adopted by the government to an approach that considers the effects of activities, rather than their intrinsic nature (Hall and Kearsley 2001). Hall et al. (1999: 57) identified the impact that the act has on tourism, highlighting that “the tourist industry had a clear stake in the successful operation of the Act, insofar as it is both a developer and user of natural resources, with a heavy reliance of the continued reputation of New Zealand as a ‘clean and green’ destination.”

All levels of government are allocated some responsibility for the implementation and operation of the act. They are guided through a series of policy statements and also granting resource consent for those activities deemed to be consistent with policy. At the regional levels councils are required to give a regional overview that sets out the objectives and specific policies designed to promote its sustainable development through the production of a regional policy statement. Also, each regional council is required to manage the effects of activity on the coastal environment through creating a regional coastal plan. District and city councils are involved in the context of national and regional policies and are responsible for the operation of a district plan, which “manages land use and subdivision and controls noise, traffic amenity and nuisance as well as visual impact” (Hall et al. 1999: 57). The act has not caused any serious conflicts regarding tourism development so far. After it was initially introduced businesses expressed their concerns about the acts planning procedures as they perceived them to be lengthy and expensive. The RMA is constantly being evaluated and updated to negate any concerns that may have arisen from the public.

2.3.2.2 The Role of The Ministry of Economic Development (MED)

The Ministry of Economic Development is a division of the New Zealand government responsible for stimulating the economy. Its' purpose is "to foster economic development and prosperity for all New Zealanders" (MED 2010 a). One of the MED's key strategic priorities is to "help New Zealand firms to use environmental integrity for economic advantage" (MED 2010 a).

The MED acknowledges that "New Zealand has a favorable international positioning with a reputation for being clean and green, and a fair and honest place to do business" (MED 2010 a). It believes that New Zealand must ensure that these perceptions are maintained by consistently improving the environmental performance of tourism businesses. They believe that if this is achieved then New Zealand can become a "source of sustainability solutions for other countries" (MED 2010 c).

This will require New Zealand tourism businesses to become more environmentally sustainable and to demonstrate this effectively. As awareness grows among consumers about the impacts of their holiday decision making choices on the environment they have become more stringent when selecting tourism products or services. The ministry's hypothesis is that to foster this development New Zealand requires a "high quality eco verification system" (MED 20010 c).

The MED identified four actions to foster suitable business development. To assist New Zealand in its move towards a more sustainable business scenario the MED will:

1. Ensure New Zealand firms are able to use a range of effective environmental management tools to measure and to promote their environmental integrity in world markets.
2. Ensure that the government, through its procurement requirements and decisions, encourages suppliers to incorporate sustainability into their goods and services.

3. Support sustainable tourism in New Zealand through leadership of the New Zealand Tourism Strategy to 2015.
4. Ensure that the Governments engagements with business sustainability issues reflect business needs.

(MED 2009 c)

2.3.2.3 The Role of the Ministry of Tourism

The Ministry of Tourism (TMT), formed in 2002, is a semi-autonomous body of the Ministry of Economic Development, located within the Industry and Regional Development (I&RD) branch of the Ministry of Economic Development. Its purpose is to provide tourism related policy advice to industry stakeholders and to conduct tourism research, as well as manage tourism data sets for the country (TMT 2009). One of the key focuses of the Ministry is to develop and manage the implementation of the New Zealand Tourism Strategy to 2015. The strategy's goal is to provide vision and direction for the future of the tourism sector in New Zealand (NZTS 2007). The New Zealand Tourism Strategy to 2015 estimates that the tourism industry will be the primary contributor to the New Zealand economy in 2015. The strategy outlines four desirable outcomes regarding the industry's future, outlined in Table 2.2, with the third outcome specifically stating and emphasising the need to ensure the industry's sustainability (NZTS 2007). Sustainability is defined by the New Zealand Tourism Strategy to 2015 to be "the concept of managing environmental, social, cultural and economic resources for present and future generations. In the context of tourism, this refers to present and future visitors and host communities" (NZTS 2007: 78).

To achieve this vision the strategy suggests that to assess and improve the sustainability of their business all operators should consider, and try to achieve, environmental certification (NZTS 2007). The idea is to create a single standard for the tourism industry which will potentially help in conveying accurate and reliable information to tourists and consumers about the

environmental standpoint of a business. The importance of all sectors of the industry becoming environmentally certified is a point repeated frequently throughout the strategy. The TMT is responsible for the creation of the New Zealand Tourism Strategy Implementation plan and is involved with its implementation in various capacities (TMT 2009 b).

Table 2.2 Desired Outcomes of the New Zealand Tourism Strategy and the Challenge Involved

Outcome	Challenge
1) New Zealand delivers a world class visitor experience.	In a competitive international environment, it is vital that we capitalise on many of the wonders that New Zealand has to offer. We must deliver products that are high quality, authentic, unique, and are delivered with superb service.
2) New Zealand’s tourism sector is prosperous and attracts on-going investment.	Our goals for the industry can only be realised if we can ensure continued profitability for those involved, and secure the investment required to continue evolving our product.
3) The tourism sector takes a lead role in protecting and enhancing the environment.	These actions are essential to protect tourism’s greatest asset, and ensure the on-going prosperity of our tourism industry.
4) The tourism sector and communities work together for mutual benefit.	Tourism is a major contributor to many regions of the country. It is important that communities and operators build strong relationships and recognise each other’s’ important contribution.

(NZTS 2007)

In 2008 the TMT produced eight guides of best practice, each targeted at a specific segment of tourism operators, to help them make their businesses more sustainable (TMT 2009 c). They recommend that all businesses should attempt to gain recognition for their environmental performance achievements, suggesting that becoming environmentally certificate is the best way to do so. They recommend for all tourism related businesses Qualmark, but also suggest schemes such as Green Globe and carboNZero depending on the specific requirements of each business (TMT 2009 a).

2.3.2.4 The Role of the Department of Conservation

The Department of Conservation (DoC) is a government funded agency whose challenge is to manage the natural and historic heritage assets for the future benefit of all New Zealanders “by conserving, advocating and promoting natural and historic heritage so that its values are passed on undiminished to future generations” (DOC 2010 a). The legislative mandate directing the DOC is the Conservation Act 1987, as well as other key pieces of legislation such as the National Parks Act 1980 and the Reserves Act 1977 (DOC 2010 b).

The Department’s key functions as set out in the Conservation Act 1987 are:

- to manage land and other natural and historic resources;
- to preserve as far as practicable all indigenous freshwater fisheries, protect recreational fisheries and freshwater habitats;
- to advocate conservation of natural and historic resources;
- to promote the benefits of conservation (including Antarctica and internationally);
- to provide conservation information; and
- to foster recreation and allow tourism, to the extent that use is not inconsistent with the conservation of any natural or historic resource.

(DOC 2010 b)

2.3.2.5 The Role of the Dunedin City Council

Ensuring a sustainable future for Dunedin is one priority of the local government organisation the Dunedin City Council (DCC) (DCC 2009 a). The council works in collaboration with a number of other stakeholders including the Department of Conservation (DOC), property developers, the

Historic Places Trust, private investors and many others in guiding the sustainable development of the city's future (DCC 2009). The council must also consult with the public in order to make appropriate decisions regarding the city's future as its residents are a major stakeholder in relation to any development. The Dunedin City Council is governed by the Local Government Act 2002, which states that creating a sustainable future for the city is a key priority of New Zealand councils. Section 10 of the act indicates that a key purpose of local government bodies is to "promote the social, environmental and cultural well beings of communities, taking a sustainable development approach" (DCC 2009 a: 29).

The DCC's definition of sustainable development is sourced from the 1987 Brundtland report, which defines sustainable development as "a balanced inclusive approach that seeks to meet the needs of today's generation, without reducing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (DCC 2009 a: 29). It attempts to reinforce the concepts of responsible resource use, consideration of future generations over the long term, and taking personal responsibility regarding the effects of our decisions socially, environmentally, culturally and economically. A sustainable development approach requires the council to take into account:

- The social, economic and cultural well-being of people and communities.
- The need to maintain and enhance the quality of the environment.
- The reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations.

(DCC 2009 a: 29)

To ensure that the residents' opinions are represented in this process, the Local Government Act 2002 requires councils to undertake community consultation. This process involves speaking and consulting with the residents, organisations and businesses in Dunedin to develop a set of community outcomes "which describe the kind of city that we want to live in" (DCC 2009 b). These outcomes must be formulated and agreed upon every six years; and progress reports on

these outcomes must be produced every three years. Development of these outcomes began in 2006/7 and will be updated again in 2012/2013. The council is then forced to use these outcomes to form the basis of their long term planning for sustainable city development.

Table 2.3 Results of Dunedin’s Community Consultation

Area of well being	Outcome
Economic Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wealthy Community • Accessible City
Environmental Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and healthy people • Sustainable City and Environment
Social and Cultural Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and Learning • Supportive City • Active City

(DCC 2009 a)

Dunedin has formulated seven outcomes which are centred within three broad areas, economic wellbeing, environmental wellbeing, and socio cultural wellbeing. Each area has four priorities for action and a number of indicators designed to measure the progress on achieving the outcomes and priorities. Table 2.3 provides a summary of the outcomes of this research (DCC 2009 a).

Creating a sustainable city and environment is one of the community’s seven outcomes, grouped in the environmental wellbeing area by the DCC. The vision of Dunedin’s community is to create a city that makes the most of its unique natural and built environment. The sustainability of the city is measured by nine indicators in four different categories of assessed community priorities (DCC 2009 c). Dunedin has introduced three new indicators under the third community priority (natural environment/biodiversity and landscapes) to add further scope to the analysis. A detailed summary of this information is provided in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Dunedin’s Community Priorities and City Indicators

Community Priority	City Indicator(s)	Trends
1. We enhance our place through quality developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride in the cities look and feel 	<p>The percentage of residents who feel a sense of pride in the way Dunedin looks and feels has declined from 82% to 72% since 2002. (DCC 2009 d)</p>
2. Our heritage and quality design is valued and protected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of listed buildings • Number of listed buildings demolished • Perception of the value of the cities architecture 	<p>These areas have remained static. (DCC 2009 d)</p>
3. We value the natural environment, biodiversity and landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of reserves in council , DOC and private QEII covenant • Air Quality – Number of Days PM10 Standards exceeded Recreational water quality (Number of beach closures) • Recreational water quality (Number of times it is not safe to swim at popular swimming locations) • Areas of Significant Conservation Value (Hectares and km) 	<p>The areas of reserves have remained static whereas the number of days that the PM10 air quality standards have been exceeded has declined. The other indicators are new. (DCC 2009 d)</p>
4. We actively promote sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The percentage and amount (tonnes) of collected and domestic solid waste recycled • Total CO2 emissions (tonnes/yr) • Dunedin water consumption (average per residential unit per day) 	<p>The amount of waste recycled has increased, while the average daily water consumption is decreasing. (DCC 2009 a)</p>

The results of the community consultation suggest that Dunedin's public strongly values their city and its unique natural biodiversity and want to enhance the city through quality development of its natural and built attributes. The DCC wants to "promote development that withstands the test of time without detriment to the environment" (DCC 2009 c). This indicates that operating sustainably is of a high priority to all Dunedin's stakeholders, not just those involved with tourism.

It is hard to assess the level at which Dunedin is operating sustainably because currently many businesses do not advertise their commitment to sustainable development to the public. Currently they are not required to do so and often will only do so if they forecast receiving benefits from doing so. Also, it can be difficult to the casual tourism consumer to differentiate between legitimate claims of respect for the environment and those who are advertising sustainable practises only to reap the associated benefits. The next Section, 2.4, will discuss ethical business practises and their employment in the tourism industry.

2.4 Ethical Business Practises and Environmental Reporting: Positioning Eco-labels within Ethical Business

2.4.1. Exploring Ethical Business Standards within the Tourism Industry

There are three dimensions that comprise the requirements of societal responsibility identified by Brown (et al 2006): economic, environmental and social. Faucheux et al. (1998: 1) identified three dimensions of environmental damage caused by human activity:

1. The threat posed to human life, health and continuing economic activity improvements to the functional, productive and assimilative capacities of ecological systems.
2. The threat to the natural world – the loss of biodiversity, the disappearance of particular habitats and the extinction, locally and globally, of particular species of flora and fauna.

3. The threat to socially, aesthetically and culturally significant environments, both rural and urban.

Triple bottom line (TBL) reporting moves away from the traditional financial bottom line approach adopted by many companies for most of the 20th century by incorporating measuring the ecological, financial and social performance of businesses (Brown 2006). The most commonly held conception of triple bottom line reporting presumes that all three components can be calculated in monetary terms. Historically the quintessential symbol of the bottom line is a business's net income reported on the financial statements of publically held companies. Many conducting a TBL assessment of their business try to apply economic values when reporting the other categories when in many cases this is not appropriate. Unfortunately, this does not often give an accurate reading of what exactly they are trying to measure. Businesses have to search for appropriate ways to measure and report environmental and social performance. Natural resources, for example, are classified into 3 non-interchangeable categories (Brown et al 2006: 15):

1. **Critical Resources** - *Resources that without which the biosphere could not sustain life and must not be violated (ozone layer, critical biomass etc.).*
2. **Sustainable, Substitutable or Renewable Resources** – *Resources which are renewable or which can substitutes reasonably be expected to be found (fossil fuels).*
3. **Artificial Resources** – *Resources created through the transformation of natural resource that are no longer in harmony with the natural ecosystems (machines, roads, products waste).*

A businesses social responsibility is measured by social capital. Social capital was conceptualised by MacGillivray (2004: 123) as “creative trust” and represents “the stock of networks,

stakeholder relationships and shared rules that help organisations and their surrounding communities work more effectively.” Creative trust, unlike financial and environmental capital, is not inherently depleted when it is used. Using economic capital and non-renewable natural resources creates a depletion of these assets (MacGillivray 2004). Using social resources on the other hand often increases its stock and value. A successful relationship exchange of knowledge and trust will most likely result in an increase in trust and knowledge between both parties. Although the categories have different goals, objectives and performance criteria they are interrelated and changes in any category will have an impact of some impact on the others (MacGillivray 2004).

Unfortunately, the triple bottom line reporting conducted by companies is nothing more than the traditional financial bottom line with some minimal attention to social and environmental concerns tagged on the side (Adams, Frost and Webber 2004). Sustainable reporting has been designed to help business measure their performance more effectively, but if it is not conducted correctly then the process is flawed and its value is reduced (Adams et al. 2004).

2.4.2 The Business Case for Operating with Consideration for the Environment

Morhardt (2002) identifies two main schools of thought articulated when discussing why a firm might want to improve its environmental performance. The first insists that improving a business’s environmental performance should be treated like a standard business decision (Reinhardt 1999). If said improvement is predicted to be good for business when analysed based on the standard financial and time considerations then it should be made. If not, then the decision would be made against it (Reinhardt 1999). This school of thought does not consider the impact of the decision beyond the direct impact on the business. The second school of thought takes into account the relationship between the economy and the environment. They stress that a lack of consideration surrounding a company’s environmental performance may cause some degradation of the natural resources and the structure of the ecosystem that the

company or some other stakeholder relies on (Reinhardt 1999). This could affect the prosperity of a company and entire industry in a negative fashion even though their impact not likely to appear on the balance sheet over the short term (Morhardt 2002).

Several factors have slowed the awareness and adoption of advancements in technologies and techniques that can improve environmental performance, as well as save costs (Morhardt 2002). Firstly, cost reduction usually receives the most attention during times of financial adversity in which normal income sources are strained or depleted. Secondly, during the hiatus between a business experiencing a period of financial adversity or environmental sensitivity, often brought on by through the instalment of new government regulations, emerging cost saving technologies and procedures often go unnoticed. Thirdly, updating technologies requires investment that is often considered beyond the capacity of the business during times of financial hardship or waning profits. Finally, introducing new technologies is likely to be disruptive to current production initiatives as they often require investment into facility and infrastructure modification and replacement or other updates, including employee training, and acceptance of new management paradigms that may be unappealing or unfamiliar to existing managers (Morhardt 2002).

Short term financial gains are often generated by decreasing energy and materials use. “It is almost always possible to decrease costs by using less energy, water and raw materials, and by decreasing waste that must be disposed of, all of which will lessen environmental impacts “ (Morhardt 2002: 26). Immediate savings can almost always be made by a business that is not actively minimising their energy and material use for some time. Energy and water use can often be reduced with very little effort at conservation and this reduction can translate into considerable financial gain for a business over the short term. Usually over the long term these reductions will plateau and further reductions may not occur until new technologies or techniques are implemented (Morhardt 2002).

2.4.3 The Business Case for Environmental Reporting

Currently several companies providing tourism related products and services claim to be operating in a manner that is promoting the sustainable development of the tourism industry (Weaver 2006). Stakeholders such as green tourists or industry regulators trying to judge for themselves the credibility of these claims ideally need access to mechanisms that measure through external evaluation their quality credibility. Also, companies themselves will often require these mechanisms to assist their own sustainable development (Weaver 2006).

Many companies are already committed to acceptable levels of environmental performance and are systematically improving performance because it saves costs, reduces risks, and seems the ethical thing to do. In 1996 the ISO 14001 environmental standard for environmental management was introduced. This increased the amount of environmental information that a company had on hand, allowing them to use this information to make improvements that assisted their environmental performance (Weaver 2006). Managers have recognised the potential positive impacts of dispersing this information to the public and have begun to look for effective ways to do so. More and more companies are making their environmental and social performance public (Morhardt 2002), especially in those industries that are perceived as having a large impact in these areas.

“In order to reap the benefits the firm must be able to communicate the differentiating features to the customers through some form of environmental or sustainable reporting, labelling, advertising, or other means” (Morhardt 2002: 19). Being seen as environmentally insensitive is not a desirable company asset. Even though not all customers want to pay more for environmentally sensitive goods, there are many that will boycott a business that seems to degrade or ignore it.

Companies produce environmental reports for a number of reasons, summarised by Morhardt (2002: 28):

- To increase management awareness of environmental and social issues.
- To increase employee satisfaction and loyalty.
- To influence customers and differentiate the product.
- To reassure leaders and insurers.
- To encourage financial analysts and investors.
- To pre-empt government regulators.
- To defuse environmental activists and other critics.

Currently within the tourism industry emphasis is being placed on the usefulness of intermediaries such as environmental certification schemes and the eco-labels that they promote in order to achieve long term sustainable goals (Carey et al. 1997). This is reflected in the most recent New Zealand Tourism Strategy to 2015, which recommends that all businesses attempt to become environmentally certified and carry an eco-label (NZTS 2007).

The ethical standards of tourism stakeholders are continuously changing and evolving throughout the international tourism industry. In 2001 Swarbrooke articulated this change, noting that;

“Since the 1980’s, there has been a growing interest in the ethical standards of businesses. Several stakeholder groups, for example socially responsible operators, nongovernmental organisations, green consumers, and governmental regulators and agencies are increasingly demanding information related to the social and environmental dimensions of businesses. This has been a response to numerous

scandals relating to unethical or irresponsible actions on behalf of companies” (2001:

3).

Different tourism operators have different ethical viewpoints regarding social, economic and environmental priorities (Fennell and Malloy 1999). A company’s ethos and performance regarding business ethics and ethical products are now seen as a source of differentiation from their competitors and thus a potential source of competitive advantage if used effectively by operators (Weeden 2002). “For many organizations, this is part of a wider campaign to be seen as ethical, in the belief that this may improve their competitive position within the market” (Swarbrooke 2001: 7). Ethical tourism operators are now moving away from traditional price based competitive strategies in an effort to discover new forms of competitive advantage to separate them from their competitors (Fennel and Malloy (1999), Swarbrooke (2001), Weeden (2002)). An operator’s ethical behaviour will therefore most likely have some bearing on the consumer during their purchase decision, although currently it is difficult to determine just how big a factor this will be (Weeden 2002). Gaining an environmental certification from a reputable program can allow those operators who are operating ethically with a focus on the environment to separate themselves from those operators that are not in the eye of the casual tourism consumer. This choice is essential as “within a democratically governed society, information provides the basis on which citizens and their representatives stipulate and regulate the parameters within which organisations are required to operate” (Brown, Dillard and Marshall2006: 4).

Environmental certification has been developed as a tool for operators to easily transmit information about the ethical nature and the environmental performance of their business to prospective consumers (Fennell and Malloy 1999). Historically the marketing of some operators has been exploitive of the customer with some businesses claiming that they are operating with a focus on and commitment to the environment while in reality they are not, and are only

transmitting this information to consumers in an attempt to attract a visitor segment that is growing in popularity (Wight 1993). This process of falsely advertising businesses environmental performance to attract environmentally friendly guests is known as green washing (Wight 1993). Although short term economic benefits can be achieved by improving the environmental performance of a business many of the other short term benefits will come from green marketing. This is the main factor influencing businesses to promote their business with references to sustainable management and environmental consideration when in fact these are not areas in which they are performing effectively; they are merely providing the illusion of sustainability (Font et al. 2001).

A range of quality control mechanisms exist, ranging on a spectrum between internal and voluntary controls and external and obligatory controls, such as laws and government regulations. As noted by Font (2002: 203), “the lack of methods to enforce sustainable management and regulate green messages in tourism has led to an increasing number of voluntary initiatives in the form of codes of conduct, manuals, awards and eco-labels.” Award schemes such as environmental certification schemes and the eco-labels that they promote constitute an intermediary mechanism (Weaver 2006).

2.5 Eco-labels

Eco-labels, which began proliferation early in the 1990’s, are defined by Font et al. (2001: 3) to be “methods to standardise the promotion of environmental claims in New Zealand by following compliance to set criteria, generally based on third party, impartial verification.” Eco-labels are a product of businesses seeking a point of differentiation from their competitors (Font et al. 2001). Operators must meet a series of criteria identified by an accreditation agency in order to be able to receive the backing of its eco-label certification (Fairweather et al. 2005). Effective eco-labels require both certification and accreditation. Certification is a process that indicates to interested parties that a tourism provider complies with a specific standard related to the natural

environment through an endorsement from the environmental certification scheme (Font 2002). Accreditation involves accreditation agencies independent from the certification agency that evaluates a program of study or some institution as meeting certain standards (Font 2002). Essentially the certification schemes certify the tourism business while accreditation agencies certify the certification schemes (Weaver 2006). Ensuring that the standard is acceptable and not just a case of green washing is important to ensure the legitimacy of the environmental certification itself. Certification schemes need to be investigated to reveal whether or not they are suitable to promote sustainable development (Font 2002). This process is designed to ensure that the certification is accepted by the industry and respected by consumers and operators, and that target markets recognise the certification and understand its meaning (Font 2002). Operators are more likely to select well respected and established eco-label to promote their business (Kozak and Nield 2004). Branding using an eco-label through an environmental certification scheme can be a useful tool for operators trying to communicate the expected standard of environmental quality of their business to potential customers. The higher the level of recognition for a brand the more likely it is that that the brands image will be effective in promotion to potential markets (Kozak and Nield 2004).

The organizations that pay for the development of an eco-label are known as funding bodies (Font et al. 2001). The funding body of an environmental certification scheme usually involves a government agency or non-governmental organisation instead of a tourism industry organisation or company, as their mandate of the former is more likely to be to attain broader social goals than an industry related company or organisation that may have a more personal mandate. The awarding body tends to be a separate third party entity, although in smaller schemes it is sometimes included as a branch of the funding body. The awarding body promotes the scheme to the wider tourism market. It works with the accreditation body that develops the criteria upon which the certification is based. The accreditation agency is provided with information from the awarding body based on their assessments on behalf of the applicants. If

the benchmarks are achieved then the business is provided with an eco-label from the awarding body, with which they can begin to promote their business (Font et al. 2001, Weaver 2006). The identification of benchmarks is an extremely important part of any evaluation. "Benchmarks are values against which the relative performance of an indicator is assessed, often in terms of what is desired" (Weaver 2006: 28). Benchmarks require a predetermined frame of reference, usually based on a prior or desired future state. It may be derived from a business or destination that is currently determined to demonstrate an example of best practise. Benchmarks can vary considerably depending on several factors including the business, the destination and the sustainability model being incorporated.

2.5.1 Benefits of Participation with an Eco-label promoted by an Environmental Certification Scheme

A company promoting itself through an eco-label is trying to generate external recognition for its sustainability practises and accomplishments, and accentuate the validity of these claims. Successful eco-labels are recognised, respected and patronized by consumers and other stakeholders (Kozack and Nield 2004). Brand visibility and recognition from the target market is a key factor to the success of the eco-label over the long term (Fairweather et al. 2005). Recognition is mainly generated from the reputability of the funding and accreditation bodies responsible with verifying and investing in the eco-label (Font 2002). Visibility is increased when the eco-label is possessed by a relatively large number of companies. The strongest endorsements for eco-labels are provided by consumer advocacy groups, government and also any high profile environmental or industry related organisations (Weaver 2006).

Often an interested party may be unsure about the quality of the visitor experience that an operator provides (Higham and Carr 2002). Becoming certified from a recognised environmental certification agency that is verified by a reputable accreditation agency allows operators performing with a regard for the environment to gain recognition from consumers and further

separate themselves from their counterparts. “Eco-labels can be used as an effective tool to make potential markets aware of a destination’s environmental quality and to influence destination choice” (Kozak and Nield 2004: 142). Organisations that fail to effectively report their good image lose any competitive advantage which could be created if reported clearly to the public. Eco-labels are relevant to several different parties including consumers of tourism good and services and also to “governments wanting to assess whether the industry can be trusted to regulate some aspects of its own environmental performance in a sustainable manner” (Weaver 2006: 15).

If the eco-label is effective then it will generate positive publicity that could translate into an increase in business from consumers that factor the sustainable nature of businesses into their travel decisions. Becoming environmentally certified can benefit businesses if the factors mentioned previously are addressed. An effective eco-label has the potential to raise the prestige of the business in the eye of the consumer, providing leverage to charge a premium price. Businesses bearing an effective eco-label are differentiated from businesses that have not obtained the endorsement, providing a source of competitive advantage (Weaver 2006).

Research conducted by Lee and Moscardo (2005) has indicated that eco-labels can potentially be useful in promoting the sustainable development of New Zealand. An eco-label provides a reputable indication for visitors of the standard of quality of the environmental performance of a tourism operator. It can assist visitors in their planning and purchasing decisions by providing them with an outlook of a destinations operator’s environmental management standards allowing them to more easily identify which operators are providing environmentally friendly products and services (Fairweather et al. 2005).

The potential benefits of becoming environmentally certified extend beyond assisting with business marketing and increasing a business’s environmental performance. For example, becoming part of the Green Globe network allows operator’s access to potential colleagues who

may have valuable knowledge they are willing to share (Kozak and Nield 2004, Parsons and Grant 2007). Members of Green Globe are presented with an opportunity to meet with colleagues to promote an informational exchange in a collaboration referred to as a benchmarking network. These networks provide access to information that may have previously been difficult to attain (Kozak and Nield 2004).

2.5.2 Weaknesses Associated with Eco-labels

There are still flaws inherent in many of today's eco-labels. Kozak and Nield (2004: 146) indicated that "the quality standard or eco-label needs to be recognised and reliable". Often eco-labels suffer from a lack of recognition from stakeholders and a resulting lack of participation from businesses. If an interested party is unsure about the eco-label's reliability or if it is not recognisable, then the eco-label is less effective. Often this is due to the credibility of the accreditation agency required to assess the schemes criteria. The proliferation of eco-labels internationally has led to confusion and reduced the effectiveness of eco-labels. As eco-labels are relatively recent phenomena, there is a lack of convincing evidence that those tourism products and services with eco-label certification are more sustainable than their non-certified counterparts (Kozak and Nield 2004). This is a serious problem due to the multitude of eco-labels that exist today. Some schemes require nothing more than the payment of a registration fee and do not involve any auditing or verification process which contributes to industry green washing (Wight 1993).

Becoming environmentally certified requires an investment of resources by operators that includes time, staff and money. Often this investment of resources is viewed as a major deterrent to becoming certified (Cheyne and Barnett 2001, Rowe 2004). The price of becoming environmentally certified is determined in most cases on a sliding fees scale. It depends on the size and type of the operation. As a rule of thumb, the price is initially determined by the type of

operation will rise with the size of the operation. Some operations such as Green Globe also factor time as a member into their awards (Green Globe 2010).

2.5.3 Eco-labels in New Zealand

As previously noted, the New Zealand Tourism Strategy mentions two environmental certification schemes that they believe would be useful in promoting the sustainable development of the New Zealand tourism industry. This section is designed to provide some background on both schemes and indicate their role in achieving the goals of the New Zealand tourism industry.

2.5.3.1 Qualmark and Qualmark Green

Qualmark, established in 1993, is New Zealand's most popular tourism certification agency (Qualmark 2009 a). Qualmark is a public and private sector collaboration between Tourism New Zealand and the New Zealand Automobile Association that is run on a non-profit basis to assist travellers and the tourism industry to understand the quality standards of a business (Qualmark 2009 a).

Qualmark has recently introduced a new environmental certification standard to its certification scheme, Qualmark Green, into all its assessments of tourism businesses. Implemented in 2008, Qualmark Green has three achievable enviro-ratings, enviro-gold, enviro-silver and enviro-bronze (Qualmark Responsible Tourism 2009) which are awarded based on Qualmarks assessment of the environmental performance of the business. It is an expansion from their traditional role as an accreditation service providing quality indicators based on service, facilities and infrastructure (Qualmark 2008 a). Qualmark Green is completely integrated into the Qualmark certification process as all Qualmark evaluations now include the Qualmark Green environmental performance assessment. All businesses that are registered with the Qualmark scheme are now also assessed under the Qualmark Green standard. It is a compulsory part of

the standard that comprises five percent of the overall Qualmark grading. Qualmark Greens assessment is based on recognition for actions in five key areas relating to environmental and social initiatives. These are:

1. Energy efficiency.
2. Waste management.
3. Water conservation.
4. Conservation.
5. Community.

Source: Qualmark (2009 a)

Businesses are assessed and then given their Qualmark rating and a further Qualmark Green certification if their business meets the benchmark criteria. Therefore, environmental certification under the new Qualmark Green system is free for all members of Qualmark if they achieve the benchmark (Qualmark 2009 a).

Qualmark Green 'enviro-ratings' are the promoted eco-labels in the 2015 strategy (NZTS 2007). The strategy promotes the certification of operators in all segments of tourism in New Zealand, mentioning the Qualmark certification system frequently when recommending how operators can help to demonstrate their commitment to environmental performance. Several key actions required to implement the strategy effectively regard the formulation of the new eco-verification system specifically identifying Qualmark as either a lead agency or a key contributor to successful implementation. Several of the key actions regarding Qualmark and their new eco-verification system are included below:

Regarding the first priority of the NZTS to 2015, "New Zealand delivers a world class visitor experience."

- Action 1.10: Broaden Qualmarks coverage by adding new categories into the existing range of grading and endorsements, and increase the uptake of Qualmark by tourism operators (NZTS Implementation Plan 2007: 4).
- Action 1.11: Make sure that Qualmarks assessment systems are consistently applied, and are recognized and supported by the industry (NZTS Implementation Plan 2007: 4).

Regarding the third priority of the NZTS to 2015, “The tourism sector takes a leading role in protecting and enhancing the environment.”

- Action 3.2: Understand and use the value of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) as the basis for the tourism sectors actions to enhance the environment (NZTS Implementation Plan 2007: 22).
- Action 3.5: Develop indicators for the sector at both a national and operator level) to measure, manage, and monitor environmental impacts, and use these to evaluate performance over time (NZTS Implementation Plan 2007: 23).
- Action 3.8: Help consumers to make informed product choices that align with their environmental values by using environmental ratings and labeling, and making consumers aware of environmental certification schemes (NZTS Implementation Plan 2007: 25).
- Action 3.17: Tourism operators must regularly audit the amount of waste that they produce, take steps to reduce, reuse and recycle waste, and provide facilities that encourage visitors to do the same (NZTS Implementation Plan 2007: 29).
- Action 3.19: Make sure that tourism operators use the environmental elements in Qualmark to lift their environmental performance, and look at ways of increasing the uptake of these elements across the sector (NZTS Implementation Plan 2007: 30).

- Action 3.20: Work with Qualmark or other service providers to build operator capability in delivering environmentally sustainable products or services (NZTS Implementation Plan 2007: 30).

2.5.3.2 Green Globe

Currently in New Zealand the most common internationally recognised environmental certification scheme is Green Globe (Parsons and Grant 2007). Green Globe is worldwide environmental certification scheme designed for specifically tourism that responds directly to the pressing environmental issues that are currently affecting the Earth, including climate change and destruction of biodiversity in the environment (Parsons and Grant 2007). Green Globe is operating in an increasingly competitive international market in which brand recognition and respect is essential in ensuring the effectiveness of an environmental certification scheme.

Green Globe bases its assessments on a business's environmental performance relating to carbon dioxide emissions, water, paper, waste management and energy use, as well as the amount of time that they have been registered as a member of the scheme (Sustainability Intelligence 2009). Green Globe has four standards achievable by operators, bronze, silver, gold and platinum. The 10 key areas that are determined by Green Globe to be fundamental to improving the environment are:

1. Waste minimisation, reuse recycling.
2. Energy efficiency, conservation, management.
3. Management of freshwater resources.
4. Waste water management.
5. Hazardous substances.
6. Transport.
7. Land planning and management.

8. Involvement of staff, customers and communities in environmental issues.
9. Design for sustainability and partnership for sustainability.
10. Corporate social responsibility.

(Sustainability Intelligence 2009)

Table 2.5 provides a comparison between the characteristics of the two certification systems, highlighting that they are very similar aside from the scope of the scheme (international vs. national focus).

Table 2.5 Comparing and Contrasting Qualmark Green and Green Globe

Characteristic	Qualmark Green	Green Globe
Operator submitted audit	Yes	Yes
On-site audit	Yes	Yes
Fee structure	Sliding scale	Sliding scale
Annual enrolment fee	Yes	Yes
Different standard level	Yes	Yes
Government support	Yes	Yes
International focus	No	Yes
Level of certification	Multi-tiered (Provides basic and advanced levels of certification)	Multi-tiered (Provides basic and advanced levels of certification)

2.5.4 Tourist Perception Surrounding Environmental Certification Schemes and Eco-labels in New Zealand

Currently, visitor recognition of eco-labels in New Zealand is only modest (Fairweather et al. 2005). Fairweather et al.'s (2005) research indicates that most visitors to New Zealand they largely unaware of eco-labelling, with only a third of visitors having seen or heard of eco-labels. Although visitors displayed a relatively low knowledge of eco-labels, a large percentage of visitors expressed interest in eco-labelling as well as indicating an apparently genuine concern

towards the environment, suggesting that eco-labelling would help visitors make their purchasing decisions (Fairweather et al. 2005).

Research into visitors to New Zealand suggests that they are in favour of eco-efficient planning options for tourism businesses (Fairweather et al. 2005, Kelly et al. 2007, Weeden 2002). Although the amount of support for eco-efficient options varied among the results of the studies of Fairweather et al. (2005), Kelly et al. (2007) and Weeden (2002) the overall consensus was that eco-efficient planning options are desirable in comparison to business as usual scenarios. This information adds weight to the suggestion that incorporating eco-efficiency is a potential source of competitive advantage for a tourism business (Kelly et al. 2007).

Consumers of tourism goods and services have expressed interest in paying more for a good or service if the provider exhibits good ethical business practices and behaviour (Weeden 2002). Tourists have suggested that they would pay more for a tourism product that is more eco-efficient, such as fees for services designed to offset any negative impacts that they may have caused, but are willing to contribute only a modest amount (Kelly et al. 2007). Visitors to Dunedin indicated in the most recent RVM that they would select an environmentally friendly product or service over an alternative. However, research conducted by Chafe (2007) concludes that although previous research has indicated that tourists are very interested in environmental and social issues, travellers are not indicating this to the operators before, during or after their experience. This indicates that, while tourists appear to be concerned with environmental issues based on their expressed opinions, their behaviour is not representative of this viewpoint causing operators to be concerned regarding the viability of their responses (Chafe 2007).

2.5.5 Tourism Operator Perceptions Surrounding Environmental Certification and Ecolabels in New Zealand

Operator perspectives on eco labelling and environmental certification schemes in New Zealand have been examined repeatedly since the advent of these schemes. In 2001, Cheyne and Barnett conducted a study of 238 New Zealand operators from a variety of sectors of the tourism industry regarding their perspectives on environmental certification schemes and the potential impacts that they may have on their business. This study was conducted in conjunction with the introduction of Green Globe certification by the Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIANZ). In 2001 TIANZ disseminated general information about Green Globe certification and developing an environmental plan for a business to all members.

An environmental plan (EP) is simply a page long statement developed by operators which illustrates their business's personal commitment towards improving the environment (Rowe and Higham 2007). The EP measures environmental performance in 10 key areas identified by Green Globe (illustrated in table 2.5) that have been determined to be fundamental to improving the environment (Cheyne and Barnett 2001). These are based on the Agenda 21 key principles for sustainable development endorsed at the Rio de Janeiro earth summit in 1992. The study indicated that the majority of operators believed that becoming part of an environmental certification scheme would provide benefits for their business. They also identified many barriers to entry regarding gaining an environmental certification, including lack of knowledge and awareness regarding certification schemes and a lack of time to invest in the application process itself (Cheyne and Barnett 2001).

Rowe's (2004) study focussed specifically on New Zealand eco-tourism operators' perspectives on environmental certification schemes. The study was designed to gain some insight into operators' involvement with environmental certification schemes and to assess their awareness and perceptions about the varying aspects of these schemes. It incorporated a questionnaire

made up of mostly closed questions in which the respondents indicated their response on a five point likert scale. The questions were designed to investigate to what degree operators agreed or disagreed about specific statements about operators' perspectives of environmental certification and also their perceptions of Green Globe specifically. The study attempted to build on the earlier work of Cheyne and Barnett (2001) by including as many respondents as possible that participated in their earlier study. This allowed for comparison between operator's opinions from 2001 and 2004 to identify if any significant differences had arisen during this period.

A comparison of the results of both studies indicated that the eco-tourism industry is dynamic in nature with a consistent turnover of business entering and leaving between 2001 and 2003, while the total number of operators in the market remained rather consistent. A growing number of operators involved themselves with eco certification. In 2001, less than 10 percent of the surveyed New Zealand eco-tourism operators were members of an environmental certification scheme (Cheyne and Barnett 2001). By 2003 25 percent of the surveyed operators had become certified (Rowe 2004). The size of the operation and the duration of its existence also played a distinctive role in relation to its involvement with an environmental certification scheme. Small scale operators (defined as those with five employees or fewer) were far less likely to be certified. This has been attributed to the barriers of entry that were noted by operators to be relevant to small business such as a lack of available time, resources and awareness.

Operators who had been in existence for more than a decade accounted for just over 80 percent of the total of environmentally certified operators, suggesting that the longer a business has been operating, the more likely it is to have gained environmental certification. Operators who have been in business more than 10 years were more likely to have created and aligned themselves with a code of best practise and code of conduct than their younger counterparts (Rowe 2004). Rowe and Higham (2007) pointed out that in 2003 over 80 percent of the total

business surveyed had been operating for five years or more, estimating that it was likely that participation with environmental certification schemes would be increased.

Operators indicated that they believe that eco-tourism consumers are not extensively aware of environmental certification schemes (Cheyne and Barnett 2001, Rowe 2004). This perception is reinforced by Fairweather et al.'s (2005) study on visitor perceptions of eco-labels. Tourists indicated that they were aware of the existence of eco-labels but they had trouble identifying any or any businesses that were members of environmental certification schemes (Fairweather et al. 2005). The majority of operators also believed that while the demand for environmentally certified businesses in New Zealand was not currently strong, the demand for this type of business is rising (Cheyne and Barnett 2001, Rowe 2004). This was also proved to be quite accurate according to Fairweather (et al. 2005) who acknowledged that while general awareness of eco-labels in New Zealand by tourists was low, generally tourists still expressed that they would rather stay in a certified accommodation rather than one that was operating under business as usual scenarios. This was further reiterated by the work of Kelly et al. (2007).

Cheyne and Barnett (2001) and Rowe (2004) identified that the cost and fee structure of environmental certification schemes was perceived to be a key barrier to consideration by New Zealand eco-tourism operators even though Toth (2002) suggests that this perceived barrier may be a common misconception, fuelled by a lack of awareness among operators about the scale of the requirements. Regardless of the actual reality of the situation it is a fact that becoming environmentally certified requires an investment of money, staff and resources to some degree (Rowe and Higham 2007). Identifying the perceived barriers to accomplishing certification that exist among operators can assist those marketing eco-label certification. It allows them to market them more effectively to businesses, so that they may dispel any myths or stigmas that may exist about environmental certification and eco-labelling, and effectively explain how they are useful to businesses and why they worthy of pursuing.

Most operators indicated many perceived benefits they believed would stem from becoming environmentally certified. They indicated that gaining environmental certification would “help with public relations” (56%) and “improve relationships with the local community” (57%) (Rowe and Higham 2007: 405). However, many operators indicated that regardless of the benefits they believed they would receive from becoming certified they did not believe they had the resources to complete the certification requirements and also the money to invest in becoming certified. Almost a quarter of the surveyed operators indicated that they saw absolutely no value whatsoever in becoming environmentally certified. Far more operators considered endorsements by media and travel guides to be more effective in marketing their business than using an environmental certification scheme to attract visitors (Rowe and Higham 2007), although they noted that they didn’t analyse operators based on whether or not they were certified or involved with certification, which may identify if this has an influence on their response.

The eco-tourism operators who were endorsed under Green Globe catered primarily to the international visitor market. Green Globe is an internationally recognized environmental certification program that is the most familiar to international visitors (Fairweather et al. 2005). Most of the operators analysed by Rowe (2004) indicated that they were unsure about their perceptions of the Green Globe certification scheme. More operators believed that belonging to Green Globe would not increase profitability (41%) and consumer satisfaction (36%) than those that thought it would (11% and 15% respectively), but almost half the respondents grouped themselves in the undecided category (Rowe 2004).

Tourism operator perspective of environmental certification schemes has also been considered by Chafe (2007), who indicated a perceived contrast expressed by operators in the tourist’s indicated values and actual consumer behaviour. Chafe (2007) identified that tour operators’ view environmental certification as a way for businesses to differentiate and further distance

themselves from their competitors' products, and also as a tool to improve the overall efficiency and sustainability of their operation, through increasing their knowledge and use of sustainable practices.

2.6 Visitor Perceptions of Dunedin's Environmental Performance: The Regional Visitor Monitor (RVM) (to 30 June 2009)

A profile of Dunedin's visitors is provided by the Regional Visitor Monitor (RVM), a report developed as a joint venture between the Ministry of Tourism (TMT), Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) and six of New Zealand's largest regional tourism organisations (Tourism Auckland, Destination Rotorua Tourism Marketing, Positively Wellington Tourism, Christchurch and Canterbury Tourism, Destination Queenstown and Tourism Dunedin) which gathers information regarding visitor profiles, motivations and expectations, travel planning and patterns of activity, satisfaction and expenditure at a regional level. It is designed to allow the RTO and its local tourism partners to "identify and address critical destination and marketing issues as they arise" (RVM 2009:3). It is also useful to better understand the needs of domestic and international guests at a regional level, allowing more specific information to be generated about visitors on a regional basis.

Being environmentally friendly is considered to be of lower priority to visitors among all the benchmarked regions in the RVM in comparison to options such as being good value for money, being safe and secure, feeling comfortable and also having fun. However visitors to Dunedin believe that being environmentally friendly while travelling is more important than it is to visitors to other regions of the RVM (RVM 2009). Currently, the majority of the visitors to Dunedin indicate that they would select an environmentally friendly tourism product or service over an alternative if all factors between them are equal. One third of tourists would choose an environmentally friendly alternative on the condition that it costs no more than the non-environmentally friendly option (RVM 2009). Overall, at the year ended June 2009, only eight

percent of visitors considered Dunedin to be behind most other destinations or among the worst destinations in the world (RVM 2009). This was, however, one percent higher than the last quarterly report, published in March 2009.

Dunedin's environmental performance is rated less favourably than that of other RVM regions across all areas (Transport, Accommodation and Attractions and Activities), ranking significantly lower in areas such as attractions and transport, most visitors to Dunedin see the city as being at least average in terms of its environmental performance when compared to other destinations around the world.

The RVM identifies the signs that visitors use to judge how environmentally friendly a destination is to better understand their attitudes and expectations regarding environmental sustainability. The most important factor to tourists visiting Dunedin was how well the destination protects its plants and animals. Other areas identified as being important were how the destination manages waste, how natural areas at the destination are managed and whether water and air pollution outputs are kept to a minimum.

Interestingly, only 10 percent of visitors to Dunedin believed that having low carbon emissions was among the three most important signs of "An Environmentally Friendly Destination", although 25 percent of visitors believed that little air pollution was a major factor. This could suggest that many tourists are confused about how a destination's tourism related activities may affect the environmental sustainability of a destination, as carbon emissions are usually considered to be a major factor when considering the sustainability of a destination or a business. However, these figures are very close to the benchmark, suggesting that it is a common perception shared by visitors to all regions of the RVM (RVM 2009: 13).

This is very important to the future of Dunedin if the city is going to continue to be a successful destination. It was noted earlier that Dunedin relies on its natural attractions and its natural

environment to generate visitors. It would seem from results of the RVM that the city is falling behind in terms of environmental performance compared to comparable destinations.

The results of the most recent RVM suggest that visitors' perceptions of Dunedin's environmental performance are getting worse (RVM 2009) although only slightly, which may be attributed to statistical error. This suggests that Dunedin must improve its environmental management in order to at least become on par with the RVM benchmark. Currently the reality of visitor perceptions regarding environmental performance does not align with the way that Dunedin markets itself as a destination, similar to the way that New Zealand is marketing itself using the 100% pure campaign and the feedback generated by pundits.

Currently, the highest level of all round visitor satisfaction ratings are received by Dunedin's heritage and its nature based attractions. Historically, these have been Dunedin's most popular attractions with the RVM noting that "Dunedin is still most strongly differentiated from other regions by its wildlife and unique history/heritage sites" (RVM 2009: 39). The ratings for these destination attributes are consistent over the last three to four years. This is interesting as Dunedin's rating regarding unique wildlife (7.3%) is far higher than the benchmark figure (<7%) although the gap is declining.

Dunedin's visitor satisfaction rating is currently ahead of the benchmark for RVM regions although the rating fallen closer toward the benchmark as visitor satisfaction decreases. Coupled with this is a decline in the number of visitors that are "very interested" in returning to Dunedin. Dunedin must come up with a strategy to improve visitor perceptions of environmental performance as a destination as the natural environment is a key component of the tourism industry in Dunedin. It should look to stop the decline in visitor satisfaction with its nature based attractions as historically these are one of the main aspects of the city that are attracting visitor's.

This information suggests that Dunedin must develop their sustainable practises to ensure visitors' experiences exceed their expectations. The tourism strategy has suggested that becoming environmentally certified may assist tourism businesses ability to operate in a sustainable fashion. Becoming environmentally certified is a voluntary process that requires an investment of staff, time and resources. If environmental certification schemes wish to attract operators then they need to convince operators that becoming environmentally certified is a worthwhile investment. Therefore, it is important to understand operators' perceptions in order to understand why they would peruse environmental certification or not.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

This framework (Figure 2.1) has been developed to create continuity between the literature that the thesis has examined thus far and the research method and methodology that has been adopted by this study. It has been synthesised out of a critical review of the literature and is designed to identify the key concepts, constructs and variables that are deemed relevant to this studies empirical investigation.

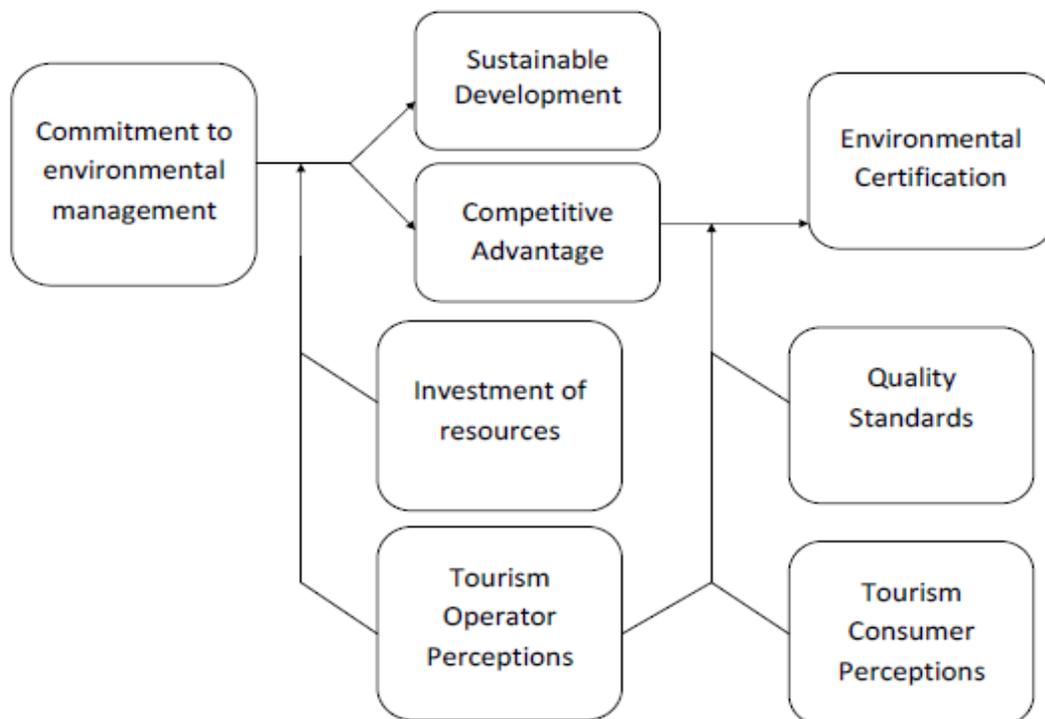
A company's commitment to environmental management is evaluated based on their performance in area's including waste, water and energy management, as well as other factors such as its outputs and commitment to social responsibility. If the company is performing effectively then we can expect that it will contribute to the sustainable development of the New Zealand tourism industry and contribute to sustainability of the in general and potentially provide a marketing advantage for businesses who advertise this fact effectively.

Two primary reasons exist regarding why a business may want to become more efficient environmentally (see Section 2.4). One reason is that a business may have identified the need to operate sustainably to assist the sustainable development of both the tourism industry and those outside it. The other is that they believe that they will gain a competitive advantage

through advertising this fact and becoming more efficient with their use of resources. In many cases operators will have identified both benefits and will be doing so in an attempt achieve both.

The amount of investment required for a business to operate with concern for the environment is directly related to the operators' previous performance. For a business that has previously operated without concern for the environment, becoming environmentally efficient will require an investment of a combination of resources including time, money, staff and knowledge. Some businesses treat operating for the environment purely as a business decision, and will only commit to the environment if it makes sense financially whereas others have recognised the benefits to themselves and to society that are generated through focusing on their environmental performance.

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework



Becoming more efficient financially requires an investment of resources on some scale, whether it is an investment of time, money, staff or even knowledge. A businesses required investment of resources is dependent on a number of variables including the size of the business, as well as other factors such as the businesses pervious commitment to environmental management. It is a logical structure that identifies and presents key factors relating to the phenomena and presents any predictions and hypothesis can be formulated and tested based on the basis of these.

Tourism operator perception is the main variable responsible for implementing environmental performance. A businesses operator is assigned by the owners of the business to make the appropriate decisions for a business. Tourism operators perceptions of environmental management are the determining factor in this process as they decide the level of environmental performance that their business will peruse as, outside of legislation governing a business to operate to legal standards, there is very little influencing a business to operate without a concern for the environment aside from the perceived benefits to their business or society. If these benefits are not communicated efficiently to operators then they are unlikely to assign resources to improve their environmental performance. Operators use environmental certification schemes to market their businesses. Environmental certification schemes are voluntary and they require a financial investment. Therefore, the benefits of these schemes must outweigh their cost in the perception of the operator. If an operator believes that the benefit of joining an environmental certification scheme outweighs the cost of the scheme then it is more likely that the operator will peruse certification. Operators are only likely to choose a certification scheme if they believe that it is recognisable and reputable.

To gain certification under an environmental certification scheme an operation needs to prove that it is fulfilling the requirements of the certification scheme and meeting the baseline standard stet out by the accreditation agency deemed with certifying the certification itself. These standards are used to transmit to whoever is interested the environmental performance

of a business through a seal or logo, separating the operation from un-certified competitors. Phenomena such as green washing (making false claims about the effectiveness of an operations environmental performance to improve the image of the business and obtain any associated benefits) Tourism consumers have expressed their interest in environmental certification, indicating that they believe it would greatly assist their tourism decision making process. However, they noted that the effect of the environmental certification scheme is based on the reputation of the scheme and their recognition of the scheme. A successful environmental certification scheme has a solid reputation for effectively regulating environmental performance in a way that promotes sustainable development and is well recognised by consumers. Both of these attributes are required if the certification is to be considered useful.

The certification that a business receives is a direct reflection of their commitment to environmental management (performance) and their financial commitment to the scheme. The level and classification of the certification that they receive is based on achieving benchmarks previously installed by the certification schemes accreditation agency. The level of a business's environmental performance is directly related to the level and classification of the certification that they receive, for example if a business does enough to meet the benchmark then they may receive a 'bronze' rating, while a business that exceeds this benchmark may receive a silver or a gold standard, relative to their performance. The scope of the certification scheme is related to the scheme that they select. The scheme that they select should be of most relevance to the customers that they are trying to attract. If an operator wants to attract more international visitors they need to select an effective scheme with an international scope.

The framework suggests that if operators obtain environmental certifications then the environmental quality of the industry will rise, or companies that obtain environmental certifications will experience an advantage over their non-certified counterparts, but that the success of these voluntary schemes is based on the perceptions of tourism business operators as

they are responsible for their adoption. These perceptions have only been studied in an ecotourism context in New Zealand. The perceptions of generic tourism operators in New Zealand have not been investigated resulting in a gap in the literature. This thesis will address this gap by studying the perceptions of tourism operators in Dunedin, New Zealand about their perceptions of the environmental certifications schemes and eco-labels in place in the country.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the concept of sustainable development, highlighting how it came to the forefront of international political discussion. It described the relationship between tourism development and the environment and illustrated how tourism and sustainable development are related. It provided a summary of how the sustainable development of the tourism industry in New Zealand is planned and implemented, including all the relevant national and local government organisations responsible for this development. The next section described how environmental certification schemes and eco-labels are being used to assist the sustainable development in the industry, which is followed by two sections highlighting the perceptions of two key industry stakeholders, operators and tourists, surrounding eco-labels and environmental certification. The following chapter highlights the research approach of the study, outlining the method and methodology adopted by the study, and providing justification as to how and why they were decided upon, before describing how the research was undertaken.

Chapter 3 : Method

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the method employed to answer the primary research question “what are Dunedin tourism operator perceptions of environmental certification systems currently in place in New Zealand.” Having completed the literature objectives of the thesis in Chapter 2, which included introducing essential theoretical concepts and constructing a profile of tourism and environmental certification developments in New Zealand, it is now possible to proceed with answering the primary research question. This chapter begins by illustrating the research approach adopted by the study in Section 3.2. The following Section (3.3) is concerned with the questionnaires design, layout, and analysis. Section 3.4 explains the study area parameters and the sample selection procedures employed by the research, which is followed by two sections which focus on questionnaire administration (3.5) and verification (3.6). The way that the data was coded and the methods of analysis employed by the study are highlighted in Section 3.7, which is followed by a section focuses on the studies limitations (3.8). The chapters is summarised in Section 3.9.

3.2 Research Approach

A dearth of operator perception studies, especially those that focus on generic tourism operators rather than a specific segment of tourism operators, is evident in the literature. Specifically, there is a lack of comprehensive research into operators’ perceptions of environmental certification systems in New Zealand outside of a few studies that focus on the perceptions of operators of eco-tourism related businesses (Cheyne and Barnett 2001, Rowe 2004, Rowe and Higham 2007)(Section 2.5). This research attempts to address this gap in the literature by empirically assessing Dunedin tourism operator perceptions of environmental

certification schemes currently in place in New Zealand. Dunedin's tourism industry finds its point of difference from its competitors in its claim to be the wildlife capital of New Zealand.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest four underlying paradigms to research of this nature: positivism, post positivism, critical theory, and constructivism. Positivists generally assume that reality is objectively given and can be described by measurable properties that are independent to the observer/researcher and his or her instruments (Brotherton 2008). Positivist studies commonly attempt to test theories to increase the predictive understanding of phenomena. Orlikowski and Barondi (1991) classified research as positivist if there was evidence of formal propositions, quantifiable measures of variables, hypothesis testing, and the drawing of inferences about a phenomena from the sample of a stated population. Positivism contends that "theories must be logically consistent and explain empirical reality."(Brotherton 2008: 32) Proponents of positivism contest that a law derived from research is only to be accepted if the same result is produced, regardless of the context, when research is repeated or replicated.

Positivist research is often used to produce quantitative data, collecting information from large samples of a population and then making generalisations about the population from the sample based on hypothesis formulated as a result of an examination of the theory and its predictions (Brotherton 2008). The nature of quantitative research allows it to be repeated easily if required. The data is simple to collect and straightforward to code and analyse (Altinany and Parashevas 2008, Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Quantitative surveying provides an efficient means of reaching a large number of tourism operators. A positivist researcher distances themselves from their object of study, focusing directly on the facts and testing them based on empirical evidence (Altinany and Parashevas 2008).

3.3 Questionnaire Design

A detailed cover letter and comprehensive four part self-administered questionnaire was developed and distributed to Dunedin tourism operators (Appendix 1: 117). Seeking mostly quantitative data, the questionnaire was designed for ease of completion and to enhance the likelihood of response. The study has identified the interval scale of measurement to be the most appropriate to collect and measure the relevant variables in the desired manner.

Table 3.1 Specific Objective(s) that each Statement/Question is trying to Achieve

Question	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4	Business Type	Business Age	Business Size	Tourist Type	Visitors per year	Involvement with ECS	DOC Concession Holder
1							✗				
2					✗						
3						✗					
4-5								✗			
6									✗		
7	✗									✗	
8	✗										
9											✗
10	✗		✗								
11	✗		✗	✗							
12-17		✗									
18	✗	✗	✗								
19-24			✗								
25	✗		✗								
26-28	✗										

The questionnaire contained 17 5-point likert response scales, as well as single option response categories and some open-ended questions to elicit more qualitative information from respondent operators. Likert scales adopt the interval scale and have a standard interval between each point (Brotherton 2008). The nature of each point on the scale is defined, allowing the difference between each point to be measured (Brotherton 2008). The likert scale component of the questionnaire requires people to respond to a statement as it asks them to

indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with it, providing the respondent with a balanced range of points to express their agreement, disagreement, or position of neutrality in regards to the aforementioned statement (Bond and Fox 2007). Likert scales are usually expressed in a common format, regardless of the choice of attitudes that they are assessing (Bond and Fox 2007). Likert scales are useful for this research because “they provide a balanced range of points for the person to express their agreement or disagreement with a statement or opinion.” (Brotherton 2008: 99) They do this by providing the respondent with an equal number of positive and negative opinions, as well as including one in the middle which is neutral (Brotherton 2008).

A review of the literature produced a number of information sources which were consulted during the questionnaires development. The overall structure, content and format of the questionnaire was loosely modelled on the research conducted by Rowe (2004) and also by Cheyene and Barnett (2001) who both investigated tourism operator perceptions of environmental certification schemes in New Zealand, with both authors focusing specifically on eco-tourism operations. Cheyene and Barnett (2001) used a mail survey of eco-tourism operators in New Zealand to achieve the purposes of their study. The list of eco-tourism operators was derived from one created by Higham in 2001, then further updated by Higham in 2003. Rowe made a further contribution to the field of research by repeating the research in 2003, using Highams’ updated list of operators, allowing for the results of both studies to be compared and contrasted in order to identify any trends or similarities between responses in 2001 and 2003. Rowe (2004) used a mail survey and a web based questionnaire to generate the data. Rowes (2004) survey generated a response rate of 36 percent with 81 operators responding to the survey. A further 7 percent of the total was lost due to a lack of completion of the survey which lead to the results being discarded, leaving a valid response rate from the survey of approximately 29 percent.

The open ended questions section of the questionnaire (questions 10 and 11) were adapted from the literature and also from an examination of media surrounding environmental certification. The specific nature of the open ended questions was self-developed by the author.

To summarise, the questionnaire was designed to address: the demographic characteristics of respondents; respondents' current awareness and involvement with environmental certification; respondents' perceptions surrounding joining an environmental certification scheme; the potential impacts of environmental certification on their business; and how the current financial crisis has impacted their perceptions.

3.3.1 Questionnaire Layout

The questionnaire was not distinctly formatted into four sections; instead similar questions were grouped together in relevant sections as determined by the researcher to aid with later analysis (Appendix 1: 117). This was done to assist respondent with their understanding by refining the flow of the information in an effort to aid questionnaire completion and increase the ease of data entry and analysis. The open ended questions were incorporated before the likert-scale response statements so that the answers provided by respondents were not guided by the information included in the statements.

3.3.2 Pre Testing and Questionnaire Amendments

Pre-testing was conducted throughout the questionnaire development process. This testing was conducted through peer and academic supervisory sources as well as sources inside the industry. From the initial conception of the questionnaire several designs were considered during the developmental phase before the final draft was considered ready for pilot testing distribution. The following changes were undertaken as a result of feedback from the pilot testing:

- 1) Creating Table 8 of the questionnaire to generate information about awareness and involvement surrounding environmental certification instead of asking individual questions which were deemed to be time consuming.
- 2) Adding a former member option to Table 8 as suggested by industry sources.
- 3) Including an additional comments section for any information operators believed pertained to the study but that had not been covered by the questionnaire.

The final questionnaire had 29 questions and took approximately 5-10 minutes to complete (Appendix 1: 117). Table 3.1 provides a summary of exactly which objective the statement is attempting to achieve. The first seven questions incorporated in the questionnaire were designed to gain information pertaining to the demographics of the operators' businesses. Question 8 was included to gain insight into operators' current awareness and involvement with environmental certification schemes currently in place within New Zealand. Three certification agencies were noted Qualmark, Qualmark Green, and Green Globe. An option of 'other' with space to note who the operator was referring to was included to take account of any certification schemes not currently included. Questions' 10 and 11 were included in an attempt to allow respondents some freedom of expression that is not constricted by the limits of the quantitative statements. The last section of the questionnaire included the likert scale responses all of which based on the research of Rowe (2004) and all included to assist in answering the objectives of this study.

3.4 Study Area Parameters and Sample Selection Procedures

3.4.1 Study Area

The study investigated "tourism operator perception of environmental certification schemes currently in place in New Zealand" and as such the respondents were required to operate within

the confines of the Dunedin Region. Geographical parameters were set by Tourism Dunedin, the local RTO responsible for the Dunedin area.

3.4.2 Target Population

The target population was defined as any operator of a business with a tourism focus that resides within the study area. The sample was derived from a database of all tourism operations in the Dunedin region constructed by Tourism Dunedin. Tourism Dunedin is in charge of marketing the city and assisting in networking the tourism businesses and stakeholders that are currently active in Dunedin. The eligibility criteria was set to include all tourism related business. The goal of the study was to identify and study as many operators as possible. In total 478 operators were deemed by Tourism Dunedin to be actively involved in the Dunedin tourism industry, all of which were invited to participate in this study. Including all businesses instead of a sample of operators offered all tourism operators the potential to respond to this study has a positive impact upon the validity of the study.

3.4.3 Sample Size

This study selected the option of converting its mail based survey to an internet based questionnaire distributed by email. Email based surveys response rates were studied by Cook, Heath and Thompson (2000), who noted that on average they generate a mean response rate of 34.6 percent. They noted several factors that may potentially alter the response rate of the survey. These factors suggest that “the number of contacts, personalized contacts, and pre-contacts were the dominant factors affecting response rates.” (Cook, Heath and Thompson 2000: 289)

Tourism Dunedin conducts several internet based surveys per year. Aoki and Elasmr (2000: 3) argue that “though there are still limitations to be overcome if the Web is used for general population survey, the Web will present advantages over traditional modes of data collection if

it is used for specific populations that are known to be Internet savvy.” They receive on average around a nine percent response rate, and consider anything above this to be a very good result. It was anticipated that this study would receive a response rate of approximately nine-11 percent. Questionnaires were distributed among all the operators included in the database. To attain a sample size of nine percent or over it was determined that at least 43 respondents need to reply to the questionnaire.

3.5 Questionnaire Administration

3.5.1 Pre Distribution Administration Process

Distribution was aided by Tourism Dunedin’s database of operators, which contains all of their contact details and email addresses. The questionnaire was coded into digital form using an online survey generator. An email containing a cover letter, approval of research form, a short foreword from Tourism Dunedin, and a link to the online questionnaire was distributed to all members of the database. Questionnaires were automatically emailed directly to the researcher upon completion and submission.

3.5.2 Pilot Testing

To test the distribution method the email containing the questionnaire was distributed to a number of peers and supervisors from academia in an attempt to identify any flaws inherent in the final questionnaires and distribution method. All of the responses to this stage of pilot testing were collected, entered into a SPSS spread-sheet, analysed to evaluate their usefulness, and then discarded to ensure that they were not included in the final results section. The quality of the questionnaire was deemed to be of a high standard and ready for distribution. After the pilot testing was complete questionnaires were distributed to all 478 members of the database.

3.6 Questionnaire Verification

Upon collection of the submitted questionnaires, non-completion checks were carried out on all questionnaires to ensure that they all included enough information to allow for comprehensive analysis. This process ensured that all likert response scale statements, demographic data, and single response questions were completed entirely. The online questionnaire generated 69 responses. Unfortunately, a significant number of participants that submitted the questionnaire for analysis (28%) did not complete the questionnaire to a standard that could be included in the results. A further four respondents completed only the first page of the online questionnaire, bypassing statements 12 to 29 and the additional comments section. This task rendered 20 of the 69 responses unable to be analysed. The results that did not include feedback on the statements have been discounted from the results. Only complete submissions have been analysed. In total, 49 respondents completed the questionnaire in full and were included in the study. This represented just over 10 percent of all tourism operators identified by the researcher. This result was similar to the predicted response rate of approximately 10 percent.

3.6.1 Determining Sample Validity

The database provided by Tourism Dunedin was recoded in to new variables for analysis as their current categories contain crossover. The database of operators is made up of accommodation providers (40%); attractions (10%); transport services (12%); tour operators (14%); businesses that provide a combination of the aforementioned categories (10%); and other (14%) for various tourism goods and services. In February 2009, 476,560 New Zealand businesses employed 1.919 million employees. The majority of businesses in New Zealand (97%) employed less than 20 people. These enterprises comprised 31 percent of all employees (Statistics New Zealand 2009). Enterprises with 100 or more employees made up <1% of the total number of enterprises in New Zealand but employed 47 percent of the total number of employees (Statistics New Zealand

2009). In other words, almost half of the workforce is employed by less than 1 percent (0.4) of all businesses. In the South Island 128,060 businesses employed 487100 employees with 10985 Dunedin businesses employing 55710 people (Statistics New Zealand 2010). This produced an average of 5 employees per business. The number of business in Dunedin and the amount of employees in Dunedin has increased steadily, from 8807 businesses employing 47,520 people in 2000, to today's current figures. This average has stayed rather consistent over the last decade at 5 employees per business (Statistics New Zealand 2010). The following Table (3.2) compares the sample result with the population.

Table 3.2 Sample Vs Population

Characteristic	Category	Sample	Population
What service does the business provide	Accommodation	55%	40%
	Tour Operator	12%	14%
	Attraction	6%	10%
	Transport	2%	12%
	Combination	12%	10%
	Other	12%	14%
No of Employees	Average	17	5

Currently, 67 Dunedin operations have gained a Qualmark rating and are included on the Qualmark website. Of these 67, 43 provide accommodation based services (64%) comprised of backpacker, guest and hosted, hotels, holiday parks, and self-contained and serviced options, 15 were attractions (visitor activities or services) (22%), and nine provide visitor transport services (14%) (Qualmark 2009 b). Twenty one of these operators have also gained certification under the Qualmark Green environmental certification scheme (31%). Of these 21 operators, 14 provide accommodation (67%), five are attractions (24%) and two provide visitor transport services (9%) (Qualmark 2009 c).

3.7 Quantitative Data Coding and Processing

All of the responses to the question were assigned a numbered code to aid analysis and data entry. Some responses needed to be recoded into new variables so that the information may be better processed, analysed, interpreted and presented. The age of the operators business was re-coded into four categories, ≤ 5 years, 6-10 years, 11-20 years, and 21+ years. The total number of employees was also recoded into four similar categories, ≤ 5 employees, 6-11 employees, 11-20 employees, and 21+ employees.

The scores of '1' and '2', and '4' and '5' on the likert scale responses have been combined to indicate more directly the amount of participants that agree or disagree with the statements. The percentages have been rounded to aid analysis using the Swedish rounding system in which .1-.4 rounds down and .5-.9 rounds up.

3.7.1 Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS. Due to the nature of the non-random sample selection method, non-parametric tests were used to identify relationships between the data. Chi squared tests were conducted to identify if there were any significant differences between the ways in which respondents were responding to the statements. The chi squared test "compares the frequencies of cases categories of one categorical variable with those in another with the values that might be expected if the two sets of data were totally independent" (Brotherton 2008: 192). The test evaluates whether between variables. It does this by calculating the probability that it could have occurred by chance. If the test produces a *p* value of 0.05 or lower the difference is assessed to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval (Brotherton 2008).

3.8 Limitations

As previously mentioned, the sample population was defined as “all operators with a tourism focus in Dunedin, New Zealand”. Dunedin relies on tourism as an economic earner and bases its tourism marketing offer on its reputation as “the wildlife capital of New Zealand”, and therefore assumes that this cross section of operators that could be representative of the wider New Zealand tourism industry.

3.8.1 Sampling Error

There is a possibility that limitations to the database could have introduced some bias based on the assumption that new, emerging businesses may not have been included. This would mean that they had no chance of being surveyed which could increase the likelihood of bias in the results.

3.8.2 Non Response

There are several questionnaires of this kind in circulation with some respondents reviewing several each year, which may act as a deterrent to responding. The questionnaire was administered during preparation for the busy summer season which may have limited the response rate. Also, the researcher relied on the goodwill of respondents as no incentive was provided as motivation to reply. Also, several operators neglected to complete all of the required sections of the questionnaire, leaving 20 out of 69 total returned questionnaires unsuitable for analysis.

3.8.3 Sample Size

Several cross-tabs had cell counts of less than 5 for more than 25 percent of the cells. Due to the low sample size it is often impossible to make statistical inferences about the data. This has

limited the ability of the researcher to conduct in-depth evaluation about the relationships between variables.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter explained the methods and methodology adopted to conduct a study of Dunedin tourism operators perceptions of environmental certification systems currently in place in New Zealand. The questionnaire produced some useful information that was hindered by a number of limitations. The data produced by the questionnaire is presented, analysed and discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 : Results and Discussion

4.1 Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the results of the research. This study has attempted answered the research question “What are Dunedin tourism operators’ perspectives on environmental certification schemes currently in place in New Zealand?” by identifying tourism operators in Dunedin’s perspectives regarding; 1) their awareness and involvement with environmental certification in New Zealand; 2) joining an environmental certification scheme; 3) the potential impacts of environmental certification on their business; and 4) the impact of the current economic crisis on their perceptions of environmental certification. The chapter begins by profiling respondents with a discussion of their demographic characteristics in Section 4.2. The following Section, 4.3, discusses their current level of awareness and involvement with environmental certification. Sections 4.4 and 4.5 profile Dunedin tourism operators’ perceptions on joining an environmental certification scheme and environmental certifications impact on their business. Section 4.6 provides a summary of operator perception on the main benefit that they believe environmental certification would have on their business, and Section 4.7 highlights how the current economic environment has impacted Dunedin tourism operator’s attitudes regarding environmental certification. The chapter is summarised in Section 4.8 which also provides orientation for the following chapter.

4.2 Profiling Dunedin Tourism Operators

This section describes the demographic characteristics of respondent’s to the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire have been summarised in Table 4.1. Profiling respondents indicates how accurately the sample represents the population that it is investigating.

The businesses ages were evenly distributed throughout among the four predetermined categories. 24 percent of the respondents indicated that their business was five or less years old, twenty seven percent of the businesses were between six and 10 years, 22 percent were 11 to 20 years old and the remaining 27 percent indicated that they were 21 years old or older.

Table 4.1 Dunedin Tourism Operator Profile (n = 49)

Characteristic	Category	Response (%)*
Number of employees	≥ 5	43
	6-10	22.5
	11-20	18.5
	21+	16
Operate throughout the year	Yes	94
	No	6
Age of operation	≥ 5 years	24
	6-10 years	27
	11-20 years	22
	21+ years	27
Predominant type of customer	International	51
	Domestic	45
	Unknown	4
Guests main motivation for travel	Leisure	82
	Business	16
	Other	2
DoC concession holder	Yes	6
	No	94
What service does the business provide	Accommodation	55
	Tour Operator	12
	Nature Based Attraction	6
	Transport	2
	Combination	12
	Other	12

* Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Almost half of the operators who responded to this questionnaire employed five or fewer staff members including both full and part time employees. These operators made up 43 percent of the total respondents. There were more responses generated by businesses with five or fewer employees than there were by all businesses with 11+ employees.

The vast majority of the operators that responded to this study indicated that their business operates throughout the entire year. Less than seven percent of respondents indicated that their businesses do not operate throughout the year. Just over one quarter of respondents (27%) of respondents to Rowe's (2004) study did not operate throughout the year, but the majority of operators (73%) did.

Over half of the operators who responded to the questionnaire provide accommodation based businesses, with 62 percent of respondents indicating that their business provides accommodation, and 90 percent of this segment indicating that it was the only service that their business provides. One in ten operators indicated that they run a nature based attraction. Just under half of these respondents operate their nature based attraction in conjunction with another tourism related service such as a tour operation or accommodation. Approximately one in eight respondents indicated that they provide some other tourism related service. These results were similar to the way that the database that the sample is drawn for is distributed (Section 3.7).

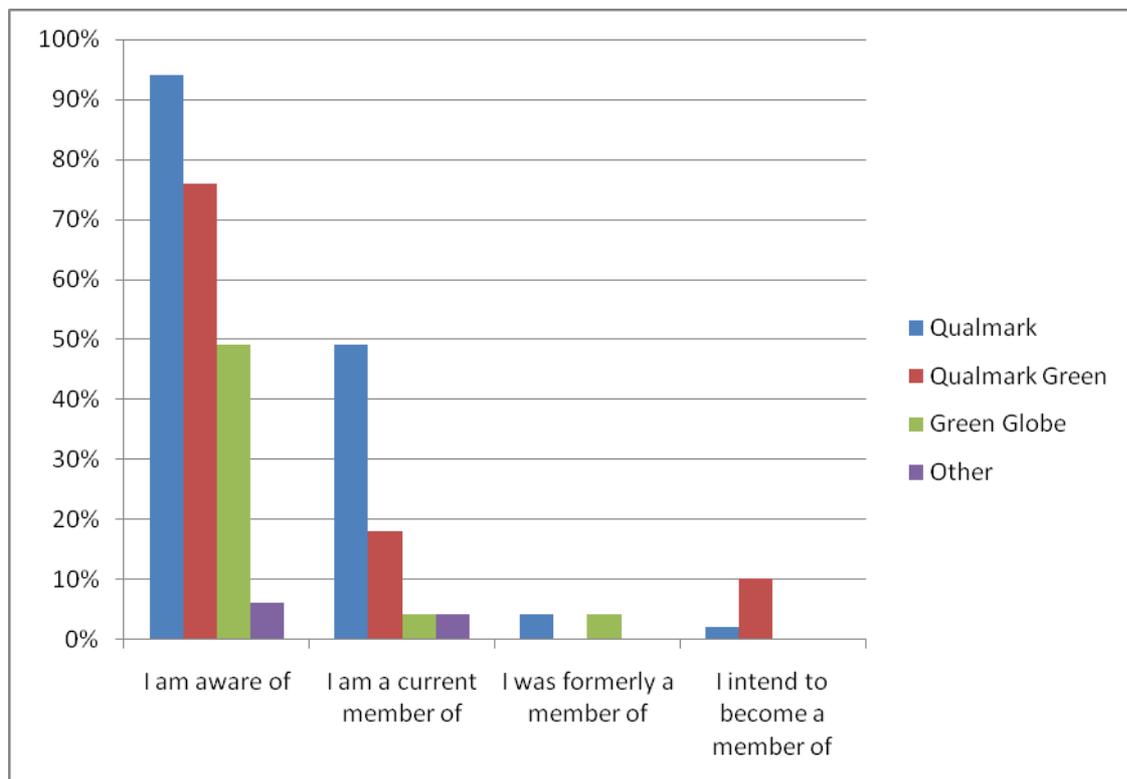
Operators were asked to indicate whether they received mainly domestic or international visitors. Just under half of the respondents (45%) indicated that they cater primarily to domestic visitors. Just over half of the respondents examined indicated that the majority of visitors to their operation were from a destination source outside New Zealand (51%). Less than five percent of operators indicated that they were unaware of their guests' origins. Most of the businesses catered primarily to leisure travellers (82%). Approximately four out of every five operators indicated that leisure was their guests' main motivation for travelling.

Respondents to the questionnaire indicated a large range in the number of visitors that each respective operation received each year, from as low as 100, to as high as 120,000, in more than one case. Unfortunately, several operators (29%) did not have the information required to answer this question, with 14 of the 49 operators indicating that they were unsure of how many visitors their operation received.

4.3 Current Dunedin Tourism Operator Awareness and Involvement with Environmental Certification

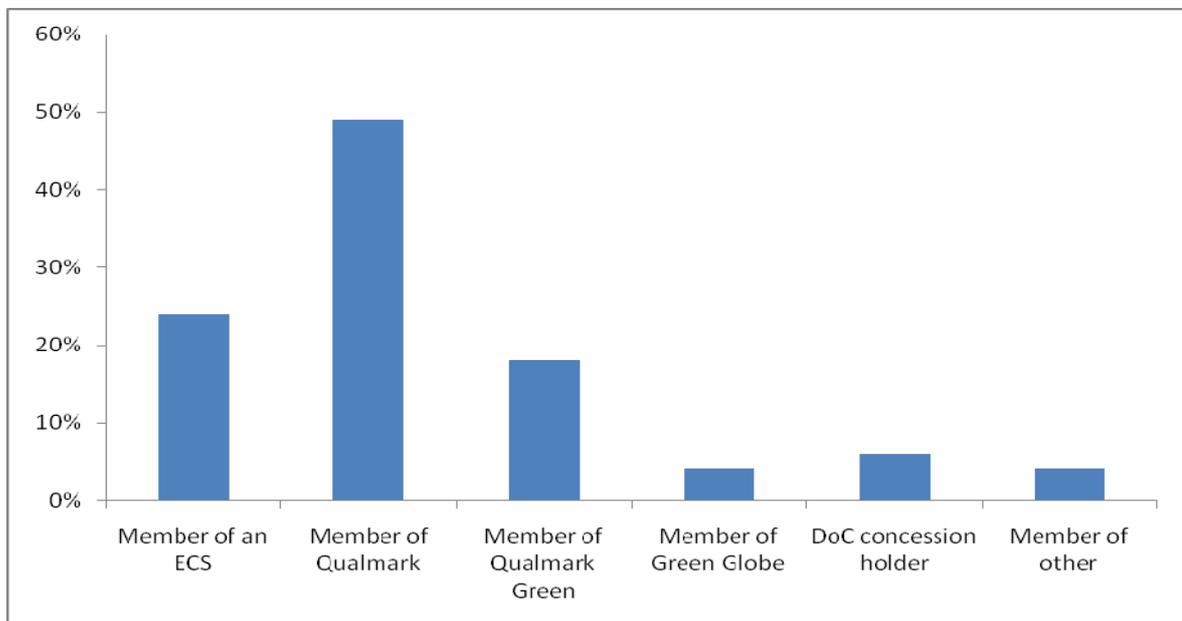
The distribution of operator awareness can be viewed in Figure 4.1. Almost all respondents (94%) indicated that they were aware of Qualmark, which is currently the most popular quality standard for tourism in New Zealand. Just under half of the total sample of operators (49%) indicated that they are currently members of Qualmark, with one respondent noting that they intend to become a member of Qualmark in the future. One respondent noted that they were formerly a member of Qualmark.

Figure 4.1 Current Operator Awareness of Environmental Certification Schemes



Most respondents indicated that they were aware of Qualmark’s venture into environmental certification, the recently established Qualmark Green. Three out of four respondents specified that they were aware of the scheme. Almost 20 percent of operators indicated that they were currently members of the new certification scheme with another 10 percent of the sample indicating that they intend to become a member of the new scheme. Awareness and participation with other environmental certification schemes is low, including the international scheme Green Globe 21. Less than half of the study’s participants were aware of the existence of Green Globe. Not one operator indicated that they intended to become a member of the program. Only two Dunedin businesses are currently members of Green Globe. There are two former Green Globe members in the city. There were no operators that were both Qualmark Green and Green Globe certified. A summary of respondent involvement is provided by Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 Current Respondent Involvement with Environmental Certification Schemes



Three respondents mentioned that they were aware of environmental certification schemes outside of Qualmark Green and Green Globe. Of these three, two businesses noted that they were members of environmental certification schemes that were not previously mentioned by

the study. Each respondent noted a different scheme from the other. The third respondent indicated that they were aware of numerous other environmental certification schemes in place in New Zealand, but failed to provide the names of any of these.

In total, 27 percent of the respondents had achieved environmental certification. Another 10 percent of the responding operators intend to gain an environmental certification. All participants who indicated that they intended to become a member of an environmental certification scheme indicated that they intended to gain a Qualmark Green certification. Every operation that is a member of Qualmark is already paying for an environmental certification, although currently more than half the businesses doing so are not environmentally certified. This suggests that they have either failed to achieve the benchmark required or are still in the process of evaluation (Section 2.5).

4.3.1 Significant Differences Based on Business Size (Employees)

Initially a significant difference was identified in the way that operators responded to the statement's; "the time involved in completing the required paperwork is a barrier to joining an environmental certification scheme," (p value = .0022) and "becoming environmentally certified will improve relationships between the local community and my business," (p value = 0.013) based on the number of people that the business employs. However, both cases have a cell count that exceeded the minimum allowance to make statistical inferences about the information. Therefore it is impossible to tell from the statistics if a significant difference exists.

4.4 Dunedin Tourism Operator Perceptions on Joining an Environmental Certification Scheme

Research into operators' perceptions suggests that many potential barriers to entry exist regarding joining an environmental certification scheme (Rowe 2004, Rowe and Higham 2007). This section is designed to illustrate respondents' perceptions on joining an environmental

certification scheme. The results of the study that are most relevant to this section are displayed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Dunedin Tourism Operator Perceptions on Joining an Environmental Certification Scheme (%) n = 49

Statement	Agree*	Neutral	Disagree**
Membership fees are a barrier to joining an environmental certification scheme	56	34	10
The time required to develop an environmental plan is a barrier to joining an environmental certification scheme	46	29	25
The time involved in completing the required paperwork is a barrier to joining an environmental certification scheme	54	21	25
My business lacks the knowledge to complete an environmental plan and this is a barrier to joining an environmental certification scheme	27	15	58
My business is willing to absorb extra cost to become a member of an environmental certification scheme	23	33	44
The cost of being a member of an environmental certification scheme should be absorbed by the consumer	23	44	33
The benefits of being environmentally certified outweigh the barriers to joining an environmental certification scheme	38	35	27

* Combined scores of '1' & '2' on a five point Likert where 1 equals 'strongly agree' and 5 equals 'strongly disagree'

** Combined scores of '4' & '5' on a five point Likert where 1 equals 'strongly agree' and 5 equals 'strongly disagree'

Most Dunedin tourism operators hold the perception that the cost of becoming environmentally certified is a genuine barrier to becoming certified (56%). Only one of every ten operators indicated that they did not consider the membership fees to be a barrier to joining an environmental certification scheme (10%). Dunedin tourism operator response to this perception was very similar in comparison to the perceptions of New Zealand eco-tourism operators examined by Rowe (2004). A slightly higher percentage of operators (60%) both agreed and disagreed (14%) in Rowe's study. This exact perception was highlighted by one

operator in the additional comments section of the questionnaire who expressed that, “the cost of belonging to the organisation is prohibitive. The fees charged pay for people to sit in luxury offices pushing computer keys.” Another respondent noted that they “are attempting to operate in a sustainable manner, but are unwilling to pay more” to become environmentally certified.

Many respondents (44%) indicated that their business was not willing to absorb the cost of becoming environmentally certified. One respondent indicated that their perception is that the financial cost of becoming environmentally certified outweighed the benefits that certification would have on their business “the scheme to me just costs a lot of money for shit all.” This response was reiterated by another respondent who indicated that “responsible tourism can happen without the cost of certification. Why can't responsible tourism operators get certified without the cost?” A higher percentage of respondents in Rowe’s (2004) study (44% in comparison to this studies 33%) indicated that they were neutral on this issue, suggesting that more operators may be forming stronger perceptions regarding their willingness to gain an environmental certification. Twelve percent more operators indicated that their business would not be willing to absorb the extra cost of becoming a member of a certification scheme than in Rowe’s 2004 study, in which 35 percent of respondents agreed that they would.

Respondents indicated that they were largely neutral (44%) regarding passing the cost of becoming certified on to the consumer. Less than one quarter (23%) of operators believe that the cost of becoming environmentally certified should be passed on to the consumer. Consumers have previously indicated that they would pay more for a tourism business with an environmental certification, but not much more (Section 2.5). This suggests that tourism operators have the opportunity to transfer the extra cost of being certified on to the consumer as long as their price does not rise dramatically and become uncompetitive with businesses providing similar products and services.

While they believe environmental certification has many potential uses for their business, the majority of respondents believe the administrative work that is required to become environmentally certified is a barrier to entry. 54 percent of respondents believe that paperwork required by the environmental certification process is enough to create a barrier against becoming certified. Only one in four operators (25%) disagreed with this perception. This perception was very similar to the perceptions identified by Rowe's research. A higher percentage of respondent operators from Rowe's study agreed with this perception (60%) and the segment of respondents that disagreed decreased slightly (22%).

While 52 percent of respondents identified that the time required to develop an environmental plan is a barrier to joining an environmental scheme, 60 percent of those believed that their business does not have the knowledge to complete an environmental plan, suggesting that it would be a barrier regardless of the time investment required to complete it. Many operators did not believe they could do it at all. Therefore, while the majority of respondents indicated that they considered the time required to form an environmental plan to be a barrier to becoming environmentally certified, many of these operators held the perception that they did not believe that their business could create an environmental plan. The percentage of respondents that agreed that their business did not have the knowledge to create an environmental plan (27%) increased almost twofold when compared to the results of Rowe's (2004) study of eco-tourism operators (14%). A similar percentage of operators disagreed in both Rowe's study and this study (Rowe 2004). These results suggest that eco-tourism operators in New Zealand are more likely to perceive that their business has the knowledge to complete an environmental plan than generic tourism operators. This may be attributed to the nature based focus of eco-tourism operators.

"Environmental certification sounds nice, and in some operations would be practical and sensible. My operation happens to be small and very environmentally friendly, but

to gain accreditation I'd have to jump through hoops, waste resources etc, largely to line the pockets of accrediting organisations ... I'd fight any push to make this sort of thing compulsory."

Respondents' perceptions varied surrounding whether the benefits of becoming environmentally certified outweighed the barriers to joining an environmental certification scheme. More Dunedin tourism operators (38%) believed that the benefits of becoming environmentally certified outweighed the barriers to joining an environmental certification than those that did not (27%), although many operators expressed neutrality.

4.5 Perceptions of Environmental Certification

The literature surrounding sustainable tourism development and quality standards suggests that environmental certification can have many potential impacts on a business (Section 2.5). This section is designed to investigate operator perceptions on these impacts to investigate whether they are in line with the predictions that have been uncovered by the theory and also previous research that has been conducted into tourism operator perception of environmental certification schemes. The results of the questionnaire have been included in Table 4.3 (p88).

Almost half of the respondents (46%) do not believe that becoming environmentally certified would help to improve the profitability of their business. Only 21 percent of respondents believed that it would assist their business in becoming more profitable. Almost half of the respondents to Rowe's 2004 study were undecided on their perception (51%), while only a few believed that it would (11%) Research suggests that businesses that become more efficient environmentally through adhering to the criteria of effective environmental certification schemes will experience savings on financial resources in the short term as well as assist in maintaining important assets over the long term. Reducing a business's energy and material use will usually reduce the costs of these resources over the short term (Section 2.4). This perception

was elaborated upon in the open ended questions section of the questionnaire by two operators (Section 4.6).

Table 4.3 Dunedin Tourism Operator Perceptions of Environmental Certification Schemes (%) n = 49

Statement	Agree*	Neutral	Disagree**
Becoming environmentally certified will increase the profitability of my operation	21	33	46
Becoming environmentally certified will increase customer satisfaction with my business	23	44	33
Becoming environmentally certified will increase employee satisfaction within my operation	10	55	35
Becoming environmentally certified will improve relationships between the local community and my business	20	47	33
Becoming environmentally certified will help my business with public relations	44	36	20
Becoming environmentally certified will increase my businesses credibility as a tourism provider	50	27	23
Becoming environmentally certified will provide a marketing advantage over competitors	50	30	20
Customer demand for environmentally certified businesses is increasing	37	40	23
Endorsements by media, publications and travel guides are more powerful marketing than most environmental certification schemes	67	27	6
Most tourists are aware of environmental certification schemes	17	27	56

* Combined scores of '1' & '2' on a five point Likert where 1 equals 'strongly agree' and 5 equals 'strongly disagree'

** Combined scores of '4' & '5' on a five point Likert where 1 equals 'strongly agree' and 5 equals 'strongly disagree'

Most respondents (40%) indicated that they were neutral regarding environmental certification's potential effects on customer satisfaction with their operation. Only one in every four respondents (23%) believed that becoming environmentally certified would increase customer satisfaction with their operation, while a third of respondents in Dunedin thought it would not (33%). Tourists to Dunedin have expressed interest in the environmental performance

of tourism businesses, suggesting that they would select an environmentally friendly alternative over a non-environmentally friendly counterpart if the price is the same or similar (Section 2.6). This suggests that becoming environmentally certified could potentially increase customer satisfaction and become a form of competitive advantage if used correctly, and this fact needs to be passed on to consumers by those marketing the benefits of environmental certification schemes if they are to be adopted by operators.

Almost half of the respondents were unsure if becoming environmentally certified would increase employee satisfaction within their business (44%). Of those respondent operators that were sure of their perception, a large majority (35%) believed that it would not improve employee satisfaction within the business while only 10 percent expressed that they perceived it would. Almost one quarter of Rowe's (2004) respondents (24%) believed that it would increase employee satisfaction while one third (33%) disagreed. 42 percent of operators were neutral in regards to this perception (Rowe 2004).

A high number of respondents were also neutral (42%) regarding whether or not they perceived that becoming environmentally certified would improve relationships between the local community and their business. More respondents believed that becoming environmentally certified wouldn't improve relationships between their business and the local community (33%) than those that did (21%). The majority of respondents to Rowe's 2004 study perceive that membership with an environmental certification scheme would increase employee satisfaction with their business (57%), while only 14% thought that it would not. Again, a large section of the sample of operators indicated that they were neutral (36%). Just under half of this study's respondents (49%) agreed that becoming environmentally certified would increase their businesses credibility as a tourism provider. The rest of the respondents were split between having no opinion (27%), indicating that they were neutral or that undecided regarding the statement, and disagreeing with the statement (23%). Almost half of the New Zealand

ecotourism operators surveyed by Rowe (2004) were neutral (47%), while 37 percent of operators perceived that it would increase their operations credibility in some way.

Half of this studies respondents believed that becoming environmentally certified will provide a marketing advantage over their competitors (50%). Only one in five operators did not believe that this would be the case (20%). One respondent highlighted this perception specifically in the open ended response questions and the additional comments section, indicating that they believe “environmental and economic sustainability and give the business a marketing edge.” Rowe’s researchers were very evenly divided regarding their perceptions. Thirty percent believed that they would receive a marketing advantage over competitors while 29 percent did not. Again, a large portion of operators were neutral or undecided (41%).

Thirty seven percent of this studies respondents believed that consumer demand for environmentally certified products is increasing, while 23 percent believed that it isn’t. Currently it appears that the majority of operators believe that there is an increase in demand among consumers of tourism products for tourism products that are certified by an environmental certification scheme “...travellers are becoming more aware of the impact companies have on the environment and from that choosing providers that are making a difference.” Although some operators believe that this is a false perception providing answers such as “Most travellers are aware of the issue, but only a minority is prepared to contribute” and “The tourist doesn’t generally care.” However, with almost two out of every five respondents indicating that they were neutral, it seems that several operators’ perception is still very much undecided regarding tourist demand for environmentally friendly products. This perception differed greatly with the perception expressed by the respondents to Rowe’s study, in which 74 percent believed that it is, and only three percent believed that it isn’t.

Sixty seven percent of respondents believe that endorsements by media, publications and travel guides are more effective and powerful marketing tools than environmental certification

schemes. Only a very small percentage (6%) thought that this was not the case. This result was dramatically different to the research of Rowe (2004) which suggested that only 28 percent of ecotourism operators in New Zealand perceived endorsements by media, publications and travel guides to be more powerful marketing than most environmental certification schemes. Most eco-tourism operators from Rowes' (2004) study were neutral, with a higher percentage of operators disagreeing with this perception (34%) than those who agreed. This perception could be fuelled by the perception held by over half of respondents (57%); which is that currently most tourists are not aware of environmental certification schemes. This perception relates to the research of Fairweather et al. (2005) who surveyed international visitors to New Zealand. Fairweather et al. (2005) observed that although the majority of their studies respondents, visitors to New Zealand, indicated that they are interested in eco-labelling. They believe that it would greatly assist them with their tourism decision making, for example in selecting the most appropriate tourism operator for their tourism experience. However only a third of their respondents had seen or heard of any eco-labels here. One respondent to this study mentioned research that had been conducted into visitor awareness of Qualmark that suggested that visitor awareness of Qualmark is still very low. However, the study's respondents indicated that they agreed with the idea of businesses operating with the environment in mind "A volunteer did a survey here on Qualmark early in 2009 and most visitors knew nothing about it. I think we do it more for the wholesalers. Visitors surveyed did like the idea of us being environmentally conscientious, though!"

4.5.1 Certified Vs Non-Certified Operators

The perceptions of environmentally certified operators differ significantly from their non-certified counterparts in a few cases (Table 4.4). Members of environmental certification schemes expressed significantly different perceptions regarding environmental certifications ability to help their business with public relations (p value = 0.02). Their perceptions also differ

significantly surrounding gaining an environmental certification and whether it would improve relationships between their businesses and the local community (p value = 0.002).

Table 4.4 Environmentally Certified Vs Non-Environmentally Certified Respondents

Statement	p value *
Customer demand for environmentally certified businesses is increasing	0.043
Becoming environmentally certified will increase employee satisfaction within my operation	0.01
Becoming environmentally certified will Improve relationships between the local community and my business	0.002
Becoming environmentally certified will help my business with public relations	0.02
Becoming environmentally certified will increase my businesses credibility as a tourism provider	0.038

* Values in bold have a cell count that exceeded the minimum allowance to make statistical inferences about the information.

A significant difference exists in the way the certified and non-certified operators responded to the statement “consumer demand for environmentally certified products is increasing.” (p value = 0.043). This may support the suggestion that businesses who acquire environmentally certifications do so because they believe there is increasing interest from green consumers and gain a certification may assist in attracting these visitors. Another is evident in respondents perceptions surrounding environmental certifications ability to increase a business’s credibility as a tourism provider (p value = 0.035).

The information suggests than certified operators have different opinions in comparison to non-certified operators regarding the benefits of environmental certification. This realises the question, what motivates businesses to become environmentally certified? Are operators aware of the benefits before becoming certified or are these benefits unexpected and learned through the process of certification? Investigating the motivations of certified operators could uncover how operators are forming their opinions surrounding environmental certification. This may assist the marketing efforts of such schemes.

4.6 Perceptions of the Potential Impacts of Environmental Certification

This section presents respondents' perceptions of how their operation would benefit *the most* from becoming environmentally certified. The respondents were not provided with any examples, it was up to their own interpretation as to how to interpret and respond to the question. Twenty nine percent of respondents perceived that the greatest benefit to their business of becoming environmentally certified would be its ability to attract environmentally friendly guests, giving the business a marketing advantage over competitors. Eco-labels ease the transition of information surrounding the environmental performance of a business to consumers (Section 2.5). This perception is closely related to a perception indicated by three other operators, who believe that travellers are becoming ever increasingly aware of the need to be environmentally friendly in their purchasing decisions to ensure the future sustainability of destinations. This is influencing them to select tourism providers who are making an effort to operate in a sustainable manner. One of these operators suggested "travellers are more conscious of the environmental impact of their travel and want to use a supplier who puts something back". All three of these operators believe that becoming environmentally certified will gain positive exposure for their business, causing it to become increasingly attractive to a growing segment of green tourists who are concerned with being environmentally sustainable and who are basing their decision making choice on this ethos. One of these respondents indicated that this was because "...travellers are becoming more aware of the impact companies have on the environment and from that choosing providers that are making a difference."

One respondent who perceived that they would receive industry networking benefits from becoming environmentally certified "by keeping onside with key industry players (for example, travel agents, Tourism NZ, RTOs etc)", also indicated that they did not think that a certification would be considered important by the average FIT (Free Independent Traveller) in New Zealand. This sentiment was expressed by another respondent who perceived that becoming

environmentally certified would increase their recognition within the industry, but would not result in increased bookings for their business. Research into consumer perceptions of environmental certification schemes and environmentally sustainable products suggest tourism consumers see many useful benefits related to environmental certification and most Dunedin tourist's would select an environmentally friendly product over another if the financial cost of selecting this operator is the same or similar (Section 2.6).

Three operators perceived that becoming environmentally certified will help their business become more efficient economically by assisting with "long term cost cutting". This suggestion is interesting as research suggests that becoming more efficient will provide economic benefits but they will be most recognisable over the short term. A business that previously operated without concern for their environmental impact that reduces its resource use in areas such as energy and water are likely to see substantial reductions in business costs over the short term. While the immediate benefit will be very noticeable eventually the reduced cost will be accepted as the new standard. As the business becomes more efficient it often becomes difficult to find further reductions without altering their environmental strategies to introduce new more environmentally efficient technologies (Section 2.4).

Two respondents expressed the perception that the effectiveness of environmental certification schemes depends on the criteria set out by the accreditation and whether it is appropriate for the current industry situation and the goals that the industry is attempting to achieve. One respondent indicated that the required criteria the business must achieve in order to gain certification is a very important factor in the potential success of environmental certification schemes, pointing out that environmental certification can be a valuable tool for providing a marketing advantage over consumers, but not if everyone has the same certification and there is no room for differentiation between consumers. They mentioned the Qualmark Green standard specifically, indicating that they believed that the standard is too easy and will result in a green

washing of the industry. In direct contrast to this opinion the Qualmark Green enviro-award was referred to specifically by another operator who indicated that they were currently in the review process of this system and that if they achieve the award they believe it will be great for advertising their business. This respondent also specified that they believed that the Qualmark Green environmental certification “is very important for the sustainability of New Zealand tourism”, although they provided no explanation as to why they thought it was important.

Only two operators mentioned that becoming environmentally certified will help to improve the sustainability of their business or reduce their “ecological footprint.” One out of every five operators perceived that becoming environmentally certified would not have any positive benefits on their businesses. This suggests that the majority of businesses do not believe that becoming environmentally certified will improve the sustainable performance of their business. Several operators indicated they believe that they currently operate their business with suitable consideration for the environment without the cost of certification. “We don’t believe at this time that certification would do anything for our business apart from waste money and cut down more trees. Having said that, we are doing our best to achieve environmental sustainability and do believe in the ethos.”

4.7 Impacts of the Current Economic Environment on Perceptions

In total, 42 respondents answered this open ended question. Over half of these respondents (62%) indicated that they did not believe that the current economic environment has had an effect on their attitude towards environmental certification. One respondent believed that there was little change in their attitude due to their previous investments into sustainable management, “We have seen only a small impact as we were very proactive before the economic environment changed so we are seeing the cost benefits now. Some larger projects are being put on hold but overall we are continuing to make minor improvements.”

Respondents that believed that their attitude had been impacted by the financial crisis expressed that it had forced them to become more cost driven in their business focus. This has caused them to rethink the viability of environmental certification financially. This perception was summed up by one respondent who noted that the financial crisis has “made us make decisions based around ability to save some money.” Many operators indicated that they had become less interested in environmental certification due to the current economic crisis. One operator indicated they had previously been part of an environmental certification scheme, Qualmark, but that the on-going costs of being a member were too high to continue their membership. They attributed this to the small size of their business. This perception was shared by another operator who noted that small businesses are very conscious of their costs and similar to several operators who believed that the environmental certification was too expensive, causing them to be “more cynical” or “less interested” in becoming a member of a scheme.

Two operators saw advantages in becoming environmentally certified during the current financial conditions, indicating that environmental certification has assisted them in help them becoming more efficient with their resources, providing responses such as “we see it as an advantage. There are savings that can be made” and “...it has helped a little.” Often, short term financial savings can be realised when a business becomes more efficient in its use of resources. These short term financial savings can be even more beneficial during periods of financial crisis when economic resources are low (Section 2.4).

4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter began by providing demographic information about respondent operators from Dunedin before illustrating and explaining their current awareness of and involvement with environmental certification schemes currently in place in New Zealand. The study then investigated their perceptions surrounding joining an environmental certification scheme and

the potential impact of the scheme on their business, presenting and discussing the results while comparing the results of the research with the findings of previous research.

The results of this study indicate that respondents have stronger perceptions surrounding joining an environmental scheme than their perceptions of environmental certifications impacts on their business. Most respondents have some opinion of how environmental certification can benefit their business and it would appear that while many of their responses are consistent with the finding of literature on the subject, some are not. The following chapter summarises the results of this study, discussing its theoretical and practical implications, before the concluding statements are presented.

Chapter 5 : Conclusion

5.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter identifies the key findings which have arisen out of this study, relating them to what is happening within academic theory and within the wider tourism industry. It begins with a summary of the research findings in Section 5.2. Section 5.3 presents the practical and theoretical implications of the research, which is followed by a section suggesting future research avenues (Section 5.4). The final section of the Thesis, 5.5, contains the concluding statements.

5.2 Summary of Findings

Given the importance of the tourism industry to the economy, the New Zealand Government and members of the New Zealand tourism industry have created the New Zealand Tourism Strategy to 2015, in which introducing environmental certification for all tourism businesses has been identified as a key strategy in successfully directing the industries sustainable management. Operators' perceptions of environmental certification schemes have been identified as a crucial factor in their success and currently only a handful of studies have focused on these perceptions. This study was designed to add to the body of knowledge on tourism operators in New Zealand's perceptions surrounding environmental certification and sustainable tourism development. This section provides a summary of the results of this study which focused specifically on tourism operators in Dunedin, New Zealand.

5.2.1 Awareness of Environmental Certification Schemes

The majority of this study's respondents indicated that they are aware of environmental certification schemes currently in place in New Zealand and have proven that they can identify

at least one. Qualmark Green is the most recognized environmental certification and currently the majority of Dunedin tourism operators who have gained an environmental certification have done so under that scheme.

5.2.2 Involvement with Ecolables

Almost half of the study's respondents (49%) are currently certified under the Qualmark quality standard. A Qualmark Green environmental performance audit is now included in every Qualmark business assessment. Therefore, each business that continues to be part of Qualmark will receive an environmental audit, and this will indicate how well the business is performing. If they perform to at least baseline environmental standards, they will be given an enviro-rating. 41 percent of the operators that are Qualmark certified have received a Qualmark Green enviro-rating which attributes to 20 percent of all respondents.

Green Globe continues to serve those businesses with a predominantly international visitor base. Interest in Green Globe is lacking among Dunedin operators, with a far higher level of awareness and involvement expressed by the respondents to Rowe's (2004) study. As New Zealand has integrated Qualmark Green it seems the focus of operator interest has shifted away from Green Globe. Green Globe may be considered to be more relevant to businesses with an international visitor base as it is currently the most recognised environmental certification scheme with an international focus among respondents to this study. Its popularity among businesses with a predominantly international visitor source indicates that it is still considered a useful tool by operators of these businesses.

In total, 26 percent of tourism operators have achieved environmental certification under Qualmark Green, Green Globe, or another scheme. Another 10 percent of respondent operators intend to become members of Qualmark Green. None of the respondent operators indicated

that they intended to become a member of any other environmental certification scheme, including Green Globe.

While awareness of and involvement with environmental certification schemes is increasing, an uncertainty seemingly still exists among operators about the potential impacts of these schemes and perceive many barriers to becoming certified. Currently, operators are very articulate in their ability to illustrate the barriers to becoming environmentally certified, while they are widely unsure about the potential benefits. Many respondents perceive that the barriers to becoming certified are too great to pursue certification.

5.2.3 Perceptions of Environmental Certification Schemes

The majority of operators believe that the cost of becoming certified outweighs the potential benefits. Many operators in the city perceive that the barriers to becoming certified are too great to pursue certification. They criticise the fee structures of environmental certification schemes, much like the operators in earlier studies, with most perceiving that membership fees are a major barrier to achieving environmental certification. Also noted to be major barriers to entry were the time and staff requirements involved with becoming certified. Respondents are widely undecided over who should assimilate the cost of certification, whether it should be absorbed by the business itself, or whether it should be passed on to the consumer.

Tourism operators were often neutral or undecided on the potential impacts of environmental certification on their business. This suggests that in many cases operators are unsure about the impacts that environmental certification may have on their business. This too may be considered a barrier to entry, as businesses may be unwilling to make a decision because their awareness of these impacts is low. The positive impacts of environmental certification must be transmitted more clearly to operators if the New Zealand tourism industry is to achieve its goal of a fully integrated certification system that will assist the sustainable development of tourism in New

Zealand. Several respondents indicated that they currently operate in an environmentally sustainable manner without the cost of environmental certification, and that becoming environmentally certified will not help them with their environmental management practices. It seems that certified operators have a better understanding of the benefits of being certified than non-certified operators. Assessing certified operators' motivations behind becoming certified may provide insight into which benefits are being well portrayed and how they are being portrayed, and which are not.

Many operators identified benefits stemming from becoming environmentally certified, although very few indicated they believed that it would assist their business in operating in a more sustainable fashion. Most operators indicated that becoming environmentally certified would improve their businesses marketing effort by attracting more environmentally minded customers, or by providing network opportunities for their business among members of the industry. They indicated that a "clean green image" is very important to travellers when they are making their purchasing decisions, and that advertising this clean green image to tourists will provide a competitive advantage for their operation.

Several operators believe that the current economic environment has had an effect on their attitude towards being environmentally certified. While most operators say that the economic climate has discouraged them because of the expense involved, others indicate that environmental certification had helped them to become more efficient economically through incorporating sustainable technologies.

5.3 Future Implications

This research has uncovered many practical and theoretical implications that should be considered by both researchers and the tourism industry. This section details these implications,

beginning with a discussion of the practical implications and them moving on to the theoretical implications.

5.3.1 Practical Implications

New Zealand's tourism industry is looking for a solution to ensure its sustainable future so that its natural resources may be maintained and with them the credibility of the 100% Pure marketing campaign. The New Zealand Tourism Strategy highlights the need for a whole nation approach towards creating a sustainable tourism industry in order to protect the natural environment, which is identified as New Zealand's most important asset. While the New Zealand Tourism Strategy promotes environmental certifications role in creating a sustainable future for the industry, it seems that the barriers for entry perceived by respondents are still a significant factor preventing operators from achieving certification.

Qualmark Green is pioneering the concept of a nation-wide fully integrated environmental certification scheme for tourism. It must continue to be evaluated to measure its success and identify any potential flaws in the scheme. While the potential benefits of certification are many, these benefits must be communicated to tourism operators and consumers, as the success of the scheme relies on the perceptions of these industry stakeholders. As members of the New Zealand tourism industry look to integrate an industry wide approach toward measuring environmental performance to encourage sustainable development, it is important that all operators understand their role in this process and its importance to the future of the New Zealand tourism industry.

If operators do not recognize or respect the standard then it is likely that the standard will not interest them or stimulate them to operate more efficiently to achieve this standard. If tourism eco-labels fail to effectively communicate the benefits and advantages of becoming certified under their scheme to the public then tourism operators and consumers will not be aware of

them. Therefore, the potential benefits and competitive advantage which could be gained by the company if they became certified are most likely disregarded and lost.

Dunedin's environmental performance is rated less favourably than other regions in New Zealand. As Dunedin relies on its natural environment and attractions to generate visitors, it is essential that the city must improve its environmental management to ensure that it continues to attract environmentally sensitive travellers and does not fall any further behind other regions in New Zealand.

5.3.2 Academic Implications

As sustainable development was brought into public focus the amount of research conducted surrounding the topic increased dramatically with new research on the subject being produced frequently and consistently. With discussion of the creation of an international benchmark gaining interest from a number of sources (Font et al. 2001, Weaver 2006) it is up to theorists to discuss and formulate how this vision may be achieved most effectively. The variability of tourism destinations and the public and private sectors in place make creating these standards an extremely difficult task. Theorists need to collaborate to assist the other industry stakeholders in creating these standards as it will require in depth technical implementation and evaluation.

Instead of investigating and evaluating a range of schemes in general it would be useful to evaluate schemes such as Qualmark Green or Green Globe individually. This study focused on environmental certification schemes in general and discovered only two certification schemes that are well recognised and subscribed to by respondents, Qualmark Green and, to a much lesser extent, Green Globe. As Qualmark Green is the most recognised and subscribed to environmental certification scheme in New Zealand and looks to be growing in terms of recognition and participation, (two crucial factors identified to be required by a successful

environmental certification scheme), it would be useful to see the perceptions of stakeholders on this scheme, or another scheme that is situated in a similar scenario.

5.4 Future research

Future research into environmental certification schemes in New Zealand is essential to assess their ability to stimulate the sustainable development of the tourism industry. This research has provided insight into the perceptions of tourism operator in one region in New Zealand. Repeating this research in other key regions in New Zealand would give a good indication of how tourism operators in these areas respond in comparison to Dunedin operators. This would further indicate how successful the industry has been in integrating quality standards nationally and give some indication of Dunedin's performance in comparison. A follow up study of Dunedin operators would be useful to judge awareness and involvement in the future to provide comparison for this research.

Conducting further research into the perceptions of certified operators surrounding their satisfaction with environmental certification schemes would be useful to identify the actual impacts of certification on a business over time. Currently research has focused on the perceptions of operators surrounding environmental certification schemes in general rather than focusing specifically on the members of one scheme. For example, investigating the perceptions of current Qualmark Green or Green Globe members specifically on the impacts that the scheme that they subscribe to has had on their business would be useful to assess the actual felt impacts of environmental certification. Historically, research has focused on the perceived and potential impacts of systems in general. This could reveal the exact areas in which a specific environmental performance system is succeeding, and the areas in which they may be improved.

Additional research could include a review of the criteria of international environmental certification schemes in order to evaluate common assessment criteria. This would gain insight into which areas are being considered, and could determine if there are any areas that are being neglected. This could potentially create an international benchmark for environmental certification systems so that each may be compared against one another. This would allow operators to select the certification that best suits their operation and would give tourism consumers a better understanding of the exact environmental performance of an operator.

An updated version of Fairweather et al.'s (2005) study of tourists' perceptions of eco-labels would be a useful tool to judge the current perceptions of both international and domestic tourists regarding environmental certification, allowing for results from both years to be compared and contrasted to identify trends and disparities. Studying both domestic and international tourists' perceptions would be useful to identify the actual scope of schemes such as Qualmark Green or Green Globe.

5.5 Concluding Statements

The success of tourism related environmental certification schemes in New Zealand needs to be assessed against the environmental, social and economic performance of the New Zealand tourism industry and the effect they have on the international destination image that New Zealand projects. The standards that have been established must be continuously assessed to ensure that they are balanced, operational, professional and relevant in today's complex and challenging international tourism industry. The New Zealand tourism strategy has outlined its goals and objectives for the industry and now it is important to transmit these to operators so that they can understand their role in sustaining the industry and respond accordingly. Initiatives to improve operator knowledge and understanding of the benefits of environmental certification schemes are necessary to accomplish the sustainability goals of the NZTS. Some operators in this study and others have demonstrated that they are concerned about the environment and

operate their businesses with a focus on positive environmental performance. Still, many operators continue to remain unconcerned.

It is important that the strategies employed the tourism industry to stimulate its sustainable development are created using accurate information and sound knowledge on sustainable development commitments and requirements. While some stakeholders identify environmental certification to be a potentially valuable tool to strengthen the reputation and sustainable performance of their operation, its value remains a highly contested topic among operators in the tourism industry. It is evident that particular attention needs to be paid to the smaller operations that lack resources as they need to be convinced that allotting resources to sustainable development is a worthwhile investment. If not it is unlikely that they will undertake it voluntarily. More effective marketing promoting environmental certification could improve operator understanding of its potential impact on their business. Specific focus must be placed on the way businesses can benefit from environmental certification if they are to reach their goal of creating a certification scheme that is adopted by all operators in the industry. Operators' perceptions of environmental certification schemes and the eco-labels they promote in New Zealand need to continue to be investigated and assessed to gain further insight into how to successfully implement a successful, industry wide environmental quality standard.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Final Questionnaire

Dunedin tourism operator perceptions of environmental certification schemes (ECS) in New Zealand

To whom it may concern,

I would like to invite you to participate in my Masters research by completing the attached questionnaire. The aim of this project is to investigate Dunedin's tourism operators regarding their perceptions of environmental certification schemes currently in place in New Zealand. Your participation, while voluntary, will nonetheless be an extremely valuable component of this study.

Any information that you provide me with will be treated as strictly confidential and your participation in this research will remain anonymous. Results will only be reported in aggregate and will only be used for the purposes of this specific study. The aggregated findings of this research may be published.

This project has been approved by the Department of Tourism Ethics committee. It is being supervised by Dr Richard Mitchell (Tel: +64 3 479 8428 or Email: rdmitchell@business.otago.ac.nz) and he may be contacted if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

James Darling

Masters Candidate

1. How many staff members are employed by your business? Full time _____ Part time _____

2. Does the business operate throughout the year? Yes No

3. How many years old is your operation? _____ Years

4. How would you describe the service your business provides?

Accommodation Tour Operator Transport

Restaurant/Bar Nature Based Attraction

Other (please specify) _____

5. Are the majority of your guests international or domestic? International Domestic Unknown

6. What is your visitors/guests main reason for travel? Leisure Business Other

7. How many visitors/guests does your business receive per year? _____ /Unknown

8. How familiar are you with environmental certification schemes currently in place in New Zealand? Please tick as many of the boxes below as appropriate:

Environmental Certification Scheme	I am aware of:	I am a current member of:	I intend to become a member of:	I was formerly a member of:
Qualmark	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Qualmark Green	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Green Globe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (note) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Does your business have a DOC concession? Yes No

10. How do you believe your business would benefit the most from becoming environmentally certified?

11. How has the current economic environment impacted on your attitude to Environmental Certification Schemes?

Using the space provided, please rate the following statements about environmental certification on a scale of 1 and 5, where 1 means that you **strongly agree** and 5 means that you **strongly disagree**. In some cases, some of the statements may not apply to you, in this case give them a rating of N/A for **does not apply**.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Does not apply</i>
12. Membership fees are a barrier to joining an environmental certification scheme	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13. The time required to develop an environmental plan is a barrier to joining an environmental certification scheme	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
14. The time involved in completing the required paperwork is a barrier to joining an environmental certification scheme	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
15. My business lacks the knowledge to complete an environmental plan and this is a barrier to joining an environmental certification scheme	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
16. My business is willing to absorb extra cost to become a member of an environmental certification scheme	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
17. The cost of being a member of an environmental certification scheme should be absorbed by the consumer	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
18. The benefits of being environmentally certified outweigh the barriers to joining an environmental certification scheme	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
19. Customer demand for environmentally certified businesses is increasing	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
20. Endorsements by media, publications and travel guides are more powerful marketing than most environmental certification schemes	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
21. Most tourists are aware of environmental certification schemes	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
22. Becoming environmentally certified will increase the profitability of my operation	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
23. Becoming environmentally certified will increase customer satisfaction with my business	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
24. Becoming environmentally certified will increase employee satisfaction within my operation	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
25. Becoming environmentally certified will improve relationships between the local community and my business	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
27. Becoming environmentally certified will help my business with public relations	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
28. Becoming environmentally certified will increase my businesses credibility as a tourism provider	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
29. Becoming environmentally certified will provide a marketing advantage over competitors	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Thankyou for you participation in this survey.

Your contribution is a very valuable component of this research and is greatly appreciated.