

Responsible Research

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Arguably there is a moral imperative to practice what one preaches. So, when one is conducting research in a field where environmental responsibility is a key component one should conduct the research in an environmentally responsible manner. With this in mind I sought to reduce the environmental impact of my Masters as much as practicable. Thus, while researching the Responsible Tourism Qualmark (RTQ) scheme, which is part of the New Zealand Ministry of Tourism's effort to improve the sustainability of tourism industry practices, I included the following initiatives:

Reducing the ink and page usage

Rather than unnecessary printing or photocopying of articles and sheets of analysis I conducted an online literature review (using PDF files), and an online digital analysis (using the NVivo 8 and the SPSS software). These practices have saved hundreds if not thousands of printed pages. Careful consideration has also been given to how best to lower the environmental impact of any printing required (i.e. survey forms and the thesis itself). I have found that printing using one and a half line spacing with Times New Roman 12 point font is one of the most environmentally friendly options (and is permitted within the Lincoln University, 2010 House Rules for Masters Theses). This choice reduces the ink and page numbers used when compared to the other options (Agarwal, 2010).

Commuting and fieldwork travel

I have endeavoured to use my bicycle as often as possible and during the year long research I have commuted over 4,000km by bicycle. I cycled to Lincoln University from my Christchurch home about three times a week and I cycled when surveying tourists or conducting interviews in Christchurch. I also cycled around Auckland in the week I stayed there for fieldwork.

For my research, 17 businesses were randomly selected to be interviewed from outside of Christchurch. To help reduce my carbon footprint I was able to schedule two of the interviews to be held in Christchurch while the business owners were visiting the city. The other 15 interviews were scheduled to be carried out during three road trips. On two of the road trips, interviews were conducted as I was driving through the interviewee's region while on my annual vacations (these included a journey to Fiordland and one to North-East Nelson). The third trip covered the North Island, from Wellington to Auckland via Napier and Taupo. I chose to relocate a rental car back to Auckland with the knowledge that this car would have completed the trip anyway by the rental company. I later completed my return Auckland – Christchurch journey by train. By choosing to travel by train rather than aeroplane there was a reduction of 240kg of CO₂. An additional 100kg of CO₂ was also saved by choosing the rental car option instead of flying (Landcare

Research, 2010). Unfortunately, to conduct this trip solely by public transport an extra three nights' accommodation would have been required. Although this option would have been more environmentally friendly it would have cost an extra NZ\$300 which my budget would not allow.

For my time outside Christchurch, I compared different environmental outcomes when choosing the accommodation style for the 10 night stay. Staying in backpacker style accommodation was not only a cheap option from a budget point of view, but it was also the most environmentally sustainable one (Becken, 2002).

Finally, to offset my carbon emissions I was involved in two restoration projects where I have planted over 400 native trees. I have also set \$200 of my budget for carbon offsetting. This money was donated to the Maurice White Native Forest Trust who supports the Hinewai Reserve on the Banks Peninsula that has 1230 ha of regenerating native bush.

Conclusion

I acknowledge that many people choose environmentally friendly commuting options, but I encourage other researchers to think about environmental impacts when planning and conducting their fieldwork, analysis and research write up. Plan ahead and make sure you are using your study time not only to develop your academic life, but also to develop environmental habits and demonstrate environmental sustainability through the way in which you conduct your research.

** Raviv's experience in the tourism industry stretches over twenty years. He has worked for over a decade guiding domestic tourists in Israel before becoming a chef. As a chef he worked for catering companies, restaurants and distinctive hotels such as the King David Jerusalem. Raviv immigrated to New Zealand six years ago and worked for the Christchurch Heritage Hotel for two and half years before starting his studies at Lincoln University. In late 2010, Raviv submitted his Tourism Management Master under Associate Professor Susanne Becken and Professor Ken Hughey. His research seeks to understand why businesses incorporate sustainable practices through RTQ, and how tourists respond to the concept of responsible tourism.*

References

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