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Domestic Families at New Zealand Visitor Attractions:
A Family Visitor and Attraction Management Perspective

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Abstract
For many people, family is the most important element of their life and family time spent together is highly desirable. However, it often constitutes a challenge and requires certain aptitude to engage a family in activities together, because a family usually consists of at least two generations each holding distinct interests. Quality family time together (indicating meaningful interaction) is important in order to function well as a family and has become ever more desired as the hurried pace of life places stresses upon families. Since joint family activities have positive contributions to family cohesion, family interaction, and overall satisfaction with family life, visitor attractions become increasingly important for them as enablers of the desired family time. This thesis assesses the role of domestic family visitors to three New Zealand visitor attractions from a visitor experience and managerial perspective. Research results may help the management of the visitor attractions to improve experiences important for families and thus support healthy family functioning.

In particular, this study investigates the family characteristics and experiences in terms of motivations and anticipations before the visit and on-site experiences during the visit as well as managerial approaches of the visitor attractions. It further examines potential discrepancies between the interests of domestic family visitors and the managerial approaches of the attractions. Data to answer the research questions are collected by using a multi-case study strategy which includes three Christchurch visitor attractions: Orana Wildlife Park, Willowbank Wildlife Reserve, and the Antarctic Attraction. Questionnaires with New Zealand families at the attractions (n = 300) and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with visitor attraction managers (n = 4) are conducted in order to generate information about the visitor attractions and their family visitors.

The study confirms that domestic family visitors and the visitor attractions are important for each other. Findings reveal that the substantial knowledge of the attractions’ management about the motivations and interests of families during a visit is used to provide experiences which enable families to spend a day being a good functioning unit. Family visitors seek these ideal experiences and the attraction managers aim at providing these experiences. However, the managers’ awareness of the needs and interests of children at the visitor attractions emerges to be insufficient and might need to be improved through future research.

Key Words: New Zealand, visitor attractions, families, managerial approaches, motivations and on-site experience, idealised family time.
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Table of Contents

Abstract i
Acknowledgements ii
Table of Contents iii
List of Appendices vi
List of Tables vii
List of Figures vii
List of Abbreviations viii

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction 1

1.2 Introduction to Visitor Attractions 2
   1.2.1 Defining Visitor Attractions 2
   1.2.2 Visitor Attractions within a New Zealand Context 4

1.3 Families in Tourism 7

1.4 Family Tourism Experiences 8

1.5 Research Objectives and Questions 10

1.6 Methodology 12

1.7 Outline of Thesis 13

2.0 Three Phases of Family Tourism Experiences
   - A Review of Literature –

2.1 Introduction 14

2.2 Concepts of Tourist Experiences 15

2.3 Family Visitor Motivation 16
   2.3.1 Introduction to Family Visitor Motivation 16
   2.3.2 The Leisure Ladder Model – Family Motivations for Theme Park Visits 18

2.4 Family Decision-Making: The Influence of Children 19

2.5 Family On-Site Experiences 22
   2.5.1 Family Time 25
   2.5.2 Own Time 28
   2.5.3 Family Conflicts Resulting from Tourism Activities 29
3.0 Methods
3.1 Introduction 33
3.2 Time Horizons and Research Strategy: The Rationale behind the Selected Cases 33
3.3 Data Collection Methods
   3.3.1 Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews 35
      3.3.1.1 Interview Purpose and Design 36
      3.3.1.2 Data Collection 37
   3.3.2 Questionnaires 38
      3.3.2.1 Questionnaire Purpose and Design 39
      3.3.2.2 Data Collection 41
      3.3.2.3 Data Analysis 43
3.4 Evaluation of Applied Research Methods 43
   3.4.1 Ethical Considerations 43
   3.4.2 Limitations 44
3.5 Conclusion 46

4.0 Introduction into Study Sites and Their Management Approaches
   - Context Chapter -
4.1 Introduction 47
4.2 Orana Wildlife Park 47
4.3 Willowbank Wildlife Reserve 49
4.4 The Antarctic Attraction 50
4.5 The Market of the Three Visitor Attractions 52
4.6 The Importance of Domestic Family Visitors to the Attractions 55
4.7 Marketing Approaches 57
4.8 Operational Approaches 60
4.9 A Classification of the Visitor Attractions 64
4.10 Conclusion 66
5.0 Families and Their Experiences at Visitor Attractions

- Results Chapter -

5.1 Introduction 67

5.2 Family Group Structures and Characteristics of Respondents 67
  5.2.1 Family Group Composition 67
  5.2.2 Age of Family Members 70
  5.2.3 Level of Education 72
  5.2.4 Level of Income 72
  5.2.5 Place of Residence 73
  5.2.6 Length and Purpose of Trip for Non-Christchurch Families 74

5.3 Family Visitation Patterns to the Attractions 75

5.4 Family Motivations to Visit Attractions 77

5.5 Family Provision of Information 85

5.6 Family On-Site Experiences at Visitor Attractions 87
  5.6.1 Family Experiences with Fun Activities 87
    5.6.1.1 A Child Perspective 87
    5.6.1.2 An Adult Perspective 89
    5.6.1.3 Disparities in Fun Experiences 91
  5.6.2 Family Experiences with Learning Opportunities 94
  5.6.3 Family Experiences with Catering 98
  5.6.4 Family Experiences with the Access, Layout, and Value for Money 99
  5.6.5 Family Experiences with a Change in Routine 101
  5.6.6 Photography at Visitor Attractions 102
  5.6.7 Enjoyment of Own Interests 104

5.7 Family Outings and Holidays 106
  5.7.1 Frequencies of Family Outings and Holidays 106
  5.7.2 Influence on Changes of Family Holiday and Attraction Visitation Patterns 108

5.8 Conclusion 112
6.0 A Discussion of the Family Visitor and Management Perspective on Family Attraction Visits

6.1 Introduction

6.2 The Domestic Family Market and Its Importance to the Visitor Attractions
   6.2.1 Domestic Family Visitors
   6.2.2 The Role of the Domestic Family Market to the Attractions and Vice Versa

6.3 Anticipatory Phase
   6.3.1 Multi-Motivation of Families
   6.3.2 The Influence of Children on Family Attraction Visit Decisions
   6.3.3 Implications on the Marketing Approaches

6.4 Experiential Phase
   6.4.1 Idealised Family Time
      6.4.1.1 Quality Family Moments
      6.4.1.2 A Variety of Fun Activities
      6.4.1.3 Edutainment on Basic and Advanced Levels
      6.4.1.4 Change in Routine
   6.4.2 Own Time
   6.4.3 Family Satisfaction

6.5 Conclusion

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Research Objectives Revisited

7.3 Contributions of This Research

7.4 Future Directions

7.5 Conclusion

Reference List

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Research Information Sheet for the Management Interviews at the Attractions

Appendix B: Interview Schedule
Appendix C: Human Ethics Approval 169
Appendix D: Research Information Sheet for Visitor Research at the Attractions 170
Appendix E: Questionnaire 172

List of Tables
Table 3.1: Interview Partners and Setting 38
Table 5.1: Family Group Composition 68
Table 5.2: Level of Education of Respondents 72
Table 5.3: Family Household Income 73
Table 5.4: Respondents’ Places of Residence According to the Visitor Attractions 73
Table 5.5: Families’ Length of Stay in Christchurch 74
Table 5.6: Purpose of Trip to Christchurch 75
Table 5.7: Adult Motivations – Orana 78
Table 5.8: Adult Motivations – Willowbank 78
Table 5.9: Adult Motivation – Antarctic Attraction 79
Table 5.10: Average Value of Motive Items 84
Table 5.11: Provision of Information 85
Table 5.12: Favourite Pictures of Families 103
Table 5.13: Frequencies of Family Outings within the Last Year 107
Table 5.14: Frequencies of Domestic Family Holiday within the Last Year 107
Table 5.15: Frequencies of International Family Holidays within the Last Year 108
Table 5.16: Changes in Family Holidays and Attraction Visitation Patterns 109

List of Figures
Figure 1.1: Classification of Visitor Attractions 3
Figure 2.1: The Three Time Phases of the Vacation Experience 16
Figure 2.2: The Leisure Ladder Model for Theme Park Settings 18
Figure 2.3: Levels of the Leisure Ladder According to Different Demographic Segments 19
Figure 2.4: Family Holiday Experiences 24
Figure 4.1: Park Map Orana 48
Figure 4.2: Park Map Willowbank 50
Figure 4.3: Park Map Antarctic Attraction 51
Figure 4.4: Classification of Visitor Attractions - Orana 64
List of Abbreviations

FLC – Family Life Cycle
IAC – International Antarctic Centre
LLM – Leisure Ladder Model
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Family members from different generations have different interests which may collide when the family is involved in joint activities like a family outing, family leisure, or family holiday. Combining the distinct interests of all family members is often seen as challenging, but most family friendly visitor attractions claim to provide opportunities adequate for the whole family and to satisfy the needs of each generation or family member. In order to implement these claims, the management of visitor attractions must be aware of family needs and interests when visiting the facilities. Although individual visitor attractions may have this knowledge, academic literature has mainly ignored this topic and thus this thesis aims to enrich the literature about the role and experiences of families to New Zealand visitor attractions.

This research aspires to investigate the characteristics and experiences of family visitors to attractions from the perspective of the visitors themselves and from the perspective of the attractions’ managers. Incorporating both perspectives enables this study to extend the academic knowledge on families at visitor attractions and to examine whether the management of the visitor attractions successfully match their operational approaches with regard to family visitors. Family experiences are investigated from a chronological perspective including pre, during, and post visit experiences, with the main focus on attraction experiences. Questionnaires conducted with adult family visitors to visitor attractions include the views and insights of adults and children alike resulting in an intergenerational perspective with generational differences highlighted throughout the thesis. Interviews conducted with visitor attraction managers provide information about the role of family visitors including market characteristics, the importance of domestic family visitors, and marketing as well as operational approaches with regard to families.

This chapter introduces three key areas of the study – the nature of visitor attractions, the role of families to the tourism industry, and the role of tourism experiences to families. The chapter highlights gaps in the literature with regard to these areas and provides the rationale behind the chosen topic. It further presents the research questions and a summary of the methodology in order to describe how this thesis answers the research questions. The chapter concludes with an outline of the organisation of this thesis.
1.2 Introduction to Visitor Attractions
This section highlights the variety of attraction types and the importance of developing a working definition for visitor attractions. The section also outlines the variety of non-natural visitor attractions in New Zealand and discusses the role of these attractions to the New Zealand visitor industry.

1.2.1 Defining Visitor Attractions
The term visitor attraction is used in this thesis in preference to tourist attraction, as this term emphasises the role of the day visitor market in the successful operation of attractions, rather than simply focusing on the overnight tourist. Multiple forms of visitor attractions make it difficult to develop a universally accepted understanding of the subject so this thesis has adapted a well known classification model for visitor attractions which serves as the guideline for the working definition of visitor attractions developed at the end of this section. There have been many attempts to explain the multiple forms in which visitor attractions may manifest themselves (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill, 2006; Holloway, 1998; Smith, 1998). Several authors have sought to classify visitor attractions on the basis of the resource itself, with Sternberg (1997) categorising them as either natural, historical, popular culture or fantasy environments. Other researchers have considered aspects such as the primary purpose of a site (Kikuchi & Ryan, 2007), the permanence of an experience (Timothy & Butler, 1994), visitor motivations (Middleton & Clark, 2001), and the natural or built nature as the simplest classification by type (Millar, 1999; Wanhill, 2008). Further characteristics serving to determine a visitor attraction are the “size, the aesthetic appeal, the management regime, the popularity, the shape and the commercial emphasis of the feature of interest” (Pearce, 1998:1). As originally commented on by Lew (1987), it is still difficult to differentiate between sites classed as attractions and non-attractions (Leask, 2010). The variety and scope of visitor attractions have challenged the effort of many academics to find a universally accepted definition on the subject, but research has not yet resulted in any agreement.

Recently, Leask (2008) developed a classification of visitor attractions that identifies the principal features of attractions and the diversity of their product internationally. The classification acknowledges the nature of the resource on which the attraction is based, the type of ownership, market features and resultant products (Figure 1.1). The model attempts to
highlight the aspects that make each visitor attraction site or resource distinctive, for example the category of ownership will dictate often conflicting management objectives. According to Leask (2010) in reference to her own model, distinctions between free and paid admission sites are becoming blurred, with many ‘free’ sites now actively charging for temporary exhibitions or encouraging substantial donations at point of entry. The classification also suggests different target markets a visitor attraction can meet the need of in terms of local, day, domestic and international visitors. While this thesis also focuses on the management aspects in relation to visitor attractions, it is essential to consider these in light of visitor experience and satisfaction (McBoyle & McBoyle, 2008; Milman, 2001; Richards, 2002).

Source: Leask (2008: 23)

Figure 1.1 Classification of Visitor Attractions

Despite the variety of product scope, the identification of a relevant definition of the type of visitor attractions this study concentrates on is important in this research project due to the variety of terminology used internationally (Leask, 2010). It is important to establish the purpose and planned use for the definition and classification categories selected, because key management objectives may vary significantly and can include education, conservation, profit generation and entertainment, often determined by the ownership category of private, public or voluntary body (Benckendorff & Pearce, 2003; Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Consequently, influenced by the classification features of the model of Leask (2008) and other definitions of
visitor attractions mentioned above, the following working definition classifying a specific type of visitor attraction is proposed for the use in this research:

A visitor attraction is a purpose built facility located in a closed environment requiring visitors to pay an admission fee. It has a focus on recreation, entertainment and education undertaken by local, domestic and/or international day and overnight visitors. Whether the visitor attraction is under private or public ownership, it seeks a general audience where families constitute one important target market.

This type of visitor attraction might be described as a deliberately constructed, family-friendly visitor attraction\(^1\).

1.2.2 Visitor Attractions within a New Zealand Context

There is a variety of natural and non-natural visitor attractions in New Zealand and whether the theme of the attraction is entertainment, adventure, flora and fauna, history, or culture, visitors have the opportunity to gain an insight into the character of the New Zealand nation and its people through visitation (New Zealand’s Information Network, 2009). Researchers agree that natural as well as non-natural visitor attractions play a crucial role in the success of a destination, where they act as key motivators for visits and key products in marketing activities and are thus essential in the arsenal of tourism destinations engaged in the competitive struggle for tourist business (Richards, 2001). Besides these interrelationships and interdependencies between visitor attractions and the wider tourism industry, also the needs of the local population are important when considering the role of visitor attractions (Leask, 2008). Locals may play a significant role in the success of an attraction, because their support via repeat visits, staffing (paid and volunteered), and recommendations to friends and family may be vital. For visitor attractions that are focused on representing New Zealand there is also the issue of encouraging cultural awareness within the local population, maintaining specific cultural identities and practices, and meeting educational objectives. The maintenance of specific cultural identities and practices can often only be achieved through the involvement of

\(^1\) Unless otherwise stated, for the purpose of this thesis, deliberately constructed family-friendly visitor attractions will be referred to as visitor attractions.
those from the local population (Leask, 2008). The local market is thus important as an expert of national/regional culture and history and also as an audience to increase cultural awareness.

Non-natural visitor attractions like zoos and aquaria are traditionally well attended visitor attractions (Treloar & Hall, 2005) where the culture of New Zealand including flora, fauna, and native animals can be experienced (e.g. Rotorua’s Agrodome Park or Christchurch’s Willowbank Wildlife Reserve). Besides arguably the only theme park of New Zealand, Rainbow’s End in Manukau City, other parks also emphasise the exciting adventure theme offering fun and thrilling activities for example Rotorua’s Agrodome Park, Waimarino’s Adventure Park, Bay of Plenty’s Longridge Park and Hasting’s Fantasyland, along with the aerial gondola rides at Rotorua, Christchurch and Queenstown. Historic parks displaying early colonial buildings and pioneering memorabilia are also popular attractions with notable examples being Auckland’s MOTAT, West Coast’s Shantytown, Christchurch’s Ferrymead Park, and Coromandel’s Driving Creek Railway (New Zealand’s Leading Attractions, 2010; New Zealand Tourism Guide, 2008).

New Zealand offers a variety of non-natural visitor attractions, but the core tourism product of the nation is unequivocally the unique natural environment and landscape encapsulated in the image of the clean and green outdoors (Collier & Harraway, 2006). In the New Zealand context non-natural visitor attractions do not gain the same level of research interest compared to nature-based visitor attractions like National Parks and thus only a few researchers such as Pearce and Wilson (1995) and Ryan and Saward (2004) have investigated visitor attractions in New Zealand according to the definition established above. International scholars have commented also on the lack of theory and depth evident in research about visitor attractions (Benckendorff & Pearce, 2003; Leask & Fyall, 2006; Lennon, 2004; Richards, 2002; Swarbrooke, 2001). Pearce (1998) observed that the study of visitor attractions has not received the same prominence as other suppliers within the tourism industry. This claim is supported by Benckendorff and Pearce (2003), who identified the ‘early stage’ of visitor attraction research, and by Richards (2002) and Leask and Fyall (2006) who observed the lack of study in the visitor attraction area. The current research project enriches the literature on

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2 For the purpose of this thesis, Willowbank Wildlife Reserve will be referred to as Willowbank.
non-natural family friendly visitor attractions in New Zealand focusing on domestic family visitors.

Pearce (1993) argued that domestic tourism in New Zealand has generally been the neglected cousin of international tourism, in terms of official policy and research. The rapid growth in overseas arrivals in the 1990s and a marked diversification in demand tended to focus attention increasingly on international tourism (Pearce, 2001). The expansion of international arrivals has, however, obscured the social and economic significance of domestic tourism and the growth in travel by New Zealanders abroad (Pearce & Simmons, 1997). New Zealand is an island nation with a small population (4.38 million in October 2010), low population density, and varied natural resources (Statistics New Zealand, 2010a). It is relatively distant from other countries, which explains the importance of domestic tourism not only for the tourism industry but also for New Zealanders themselves. The importance of domestic tourism was already understood in 1987 when the then newly appointed Minister of Tourism, the Hon. Phil Goff, said: “The importance of domestic visitors cannot be underestimated, as they provide the regions with their base market, fostering regional development and maintaining much of the infrastructure also used by overseas visitors” (Collier, 2008:103). The importance placed on domestic tourism within New Zealand is further highlighted by New Zealand’ former Ministry of Tourism (2009a), because the domestic tourism expenditure is about 25 percent higher than international tourism expenditure, indicating a difference in economic contribution. In the year ended June 2010, domestic travel expenditure by New Zealand residents totalled $7.9 billion (including daytrips), of which $5.1 billion was spent on overnight trips (Ministry of Tourism, 2010). Recently, tourism forecasts to the year 2015 state that domestic visitor expenditure, domestic visitor nights and domestic day trips will increase annually (Ministry of Tourism, 2010).

With respect to the present and future importance ascribed to domestic tourism it was thought timely to investigate research into New Zealand visitor attractions and their domestic visitors. Consequently the current study focuses exclusively on the domestic family visitor market in relation to these visitor attractions. The following two sections introduce both the role of families to tourism and the role of tourism to families.
1.3 Families in Tourism

The concept of a family is changing, but families still represent an important market segment for the New Zealand tourism industry. Besides the domestic focus on families of this study, families in general have been selected as the focal point of this study for a number of reasons. Since 2004 families in New Zealand have received more attention through the establishment of the Families Commission (2008). Finding a definition of family is a complex undertaking for researchers, because the concept of the “family” is itself in question. The definition and nature of families are vigorously contested, perhaps more so in the twenty-first century than ever before. Family life in contemporary Western society is characterised by anxiety and uncertainty about what it means to ‘be family’, and indeed what the functions of families are. The concept of the nuclear family is no longer sufficient to be applied to current family forms, if it ever was. Today, fewer parents are marrying, with different family forms and household types becoming more common (Ministry of Women’s Affairs, 2009). Within New Zealand distinct forms of families are also both more evident and increasingly approved of by large sectors of society today, existing side by side with the nuclear family (Pryor, 2007). These shifts in demographics and family lifestyles lead to an increase in travel by non-nuclear family groups such as grandparent/grandchild travel, multigenerational travel, extended family member travel (such as aunts and uncles taking trips with their nieces and nephews), gay/lesbian family travel, and perhaps particularly solo parent travel (Gardyn, 2001). It is the radical social and economic changes of the past 50 years that have given rise to a more dynamic and complex understanding of families.

Researching families and their experiences at attractions must be considered within this context of changing family structures (Sterry & Beaumont, 2006). This context influences the working definition of a family established for the purpose of this research, because it needs to be broad enough to include all sorts of non-nuclear family groups. For this study, families are defined as “multigenerational social groups that include at least one child under the age of 18 years and one adult affiliated by blood-relationship or affinity”. Establishing this working definition of a family is important for the further course of this research.

Within the context of tourism, the family, including children, represents one of the largest markets for holiday service providers (Carr, 2006). For example, in 2001 446,000 two-parent families and 198,000 one-parent families comprised 45 percent of households in New
New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). Since about 26 percent of the population are under 18 years old (Statistics New Zealand, 2010b), children represent a significant proportion of the population and an important current and future market for the tourism industry. Lawson, Thyne, and Young (1997) segmented the Kiwi family holiday as making up 14 percent of all domestic travel. Thus, families bring significant business to the New Zealand tourism industry.

With their overseas marketing campaign Tourism New Zealand (2009) actively pursues either single or partnered individuals who do not have children yet and who have often just finished school or university (18-34) or empty nesters whose children have left home (50-64). Especially European young people who were considering taking a gap year during the global economic slowdown were a recent target of the 2009/2010 ‘Go all the way’ campaign. This means that less importance is placed on the family market on an international scale. Most studies on domestic family tourism in New Zealand are fairly narrow and focus on camping holidays only (Schänzel, 2010). Furthermore, New Zealand recreation and leisure studies on families often concentrate on nature outdoor activities and exclude deliberately constructed outdoor and indoor sites. No research was found that provided an insight into the role of family attraction visits to the tourism industry in New Zealand.

With the growth in outbound travel, especially to Australia, there is now considerable debate from political parties and some initiatives from non-governmental organisations about a domestic tourism campaign that centres on family tourism (Cropp, 2006). It appears that families as a valid market segment need more attention from New Zealand’s tourism industry and government institutions. The study of domestic family tourism requires more attention for both economic and non-economic reasons. Apart from the monetary value of domestic tourism it is also important to examine the social meanings families gain from their holiday experiences. Thus, the focus should not just be on tourists as consumers but also on their holiday experiences because the core product of tourism is the experience (Prentice, Witt & Hamer, 1998). An introduction to family tourism experiences, in terms of their important but neglected status in the literature, is provided in the following section.

1.4 Family Tourism Experiences
Although the concept of the family has changed, New Zealand and international studies reveal that family life continues to be important (Todd, Lawson & Jamieson, 2001) and increasingly
includes family tourism experiences that positively influence family functioning. However, this is a neglected study area. Parents value the opportunity to spend quality time (indicating meaningful interaction) with their children and this has become ever more desired as the hurried pace of life places stresses upon families (Lehto, Choi & MacDermid, 2009). Meaningful interaction within the family describes interaction that is positive and facilitates family cohesion, goes beyond a superficial level, and is sustained. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion report said meaningful interaction was when: “conversations go beyond surface friendliness; in which people exchange personal information or talk about each other’s differences and identities; people share a common goal or share an interest; and they are sustained long-term” (Communities and Local Government, 2009).

A multitude of theories indicate that for a family to function well, time spent together is key (e.g., Harrington, 2001; Hill, 1988; Major, Klein & Ehrhart, 2002; Shaw, 1992). Shared leisure experiences within the family system have consistently been shown to be valued by participants in leisure studies (e.g., Fox & Dwyer, 1999; Gram, 2005; Kelly, 1977; Orthner & Mancini, 1990). Visitor attractions become increasingly important for families as enablers of the desired quality family time. Family holidays, family leisure, and family outings are identified in the research literature to have positive contributions to families like cohesion, family interaction, and overall satisfaction with family life (Cromie, Henderson, Sexton, & Weissinger, 1997; Kyle & Chick, 2004; Lee, Graefe & Burns, 2008; McCabe, 2009; Reilly, 2002/2003; Richards, 1999; Schänzel, 2010; Siegenthaler & O'Dell, 2000).

Existing market research and academic research has been carried out including families as part of the sample (e.g., Serrell, 1980); however, in most instances, families did not form the focus of the research but only a sub-group of visitors. As stated above, families have not received the same level of attention from researchers of tourism experiences compared to tourism groups without children (Lehto et al., 2009). Attractions are often designed for families (DeVault, 2000; Hallman & Benbow, 2007; Johns & Gyimothy, 2002, 2003) and children may generate financial profits by responding to retail opportunities and being a catalyst in motivating a family visit to an attraction (Ryan, 1992), however very little is known about the experiences and benefits gained by the family visitor (Schänzel, Smith & Weaver, 2005; Sterry, 2004). Cooper and Latham’s (1988) research highlighted that children need special provisions because they have different needs, attention spans, energies and interest.
compared to other groups of visitors, but regardless, the visits of children to attractions have received little attention (Schänzel et al., 2005).

Exploring the characteristics of visitors as well as their experiences and derived meanings gained from an attraction visit can become a topic of central interest to those who market and manage visitor attractions. Understanding family visitors may help managers to seek ways to better satisfy families which in turn may benefit business. Achieving these benefits might be even more important at a time of global economic downturn, as was the situation at the start of this research project. It was assumed that more families use domestic visitor attractions instead of having extended domestic or international holidays (New Zealand Ministry of Tourism, 2009a).

Within the few existing family tourism experience studies the female gaze usually dominates the family perspective on tourism experiences (e.g. Small, 2005), while very few studies investigate the actual experience of children (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Delamere & Havitz, 2008; Poria, Atzaba-Poria & Barrett, 2005) most likely because of the ethical issues involved in conducting research with minors. However, this is surprising as tourism researchers acknowledge that the presence of children impacts on the adult holiday experience (e.g., Small, 2008; Thornton, Shaw & Williams, 1997). Therefore, this study investigates the family experience from the family perspective including the views of adults and children alike. This research moves away from the dominance of individual tourist perspectives and instead responds to the need to investigate the perspective of the family being a “unit of individuals who seek experiences together” (Gram, 2005:6). This perspective is of importance, because family attraction visits are primarily about the collective experiences of the group with all family members contributing to the construction of its meaning. The gaps identified in the literature provide the basis to the research questions outlined in the next section.

### 1.5 Research Objectives and Questions

The research objectives and questions for this study build on my personal interest to find out more about the topic of families and visitor attractions and also on the research gaps identified in this chapter. The objectives and questions concentrate on the collective experiences of families visiting attractions from the family visitor perspective, while also providing a management perspective to the research topic of this thesis. The research questions facilitate a
better understanding of the role of families to visitor attractions and the marketing approaches as well as operational approaches of the visitor attraction management. The questions also investigate family characteristics and the experiences families have before and during the attraction visit.

**Aim and Objectives**

The overall aim of this thesis is to assess the role of domestic family visitors to three New Zealand visitor attractions from a visitor experience and managerial perspective. The following objectives have been chosen in order to achieve the desired aim:

1. To identify the importance and characteristics of the domestic family market to New Zealand visitor attractions in the current context (economic, social, cultural and political).
2. To assess the managerial approaches of New Zealand visitor attractions towards domestic family visitors (e.g. marketing strategies and operational tasks)
3. To investigate the collective anticipation for a family attraction visit, in light of family decision-making and family motivations.
4. To explore the on-site experiences of domestic families attending New Zealand visitor attractions.
5. To identify potential discrepancies between the interests of domestic family visitors and the managerial approaches of the three New Zealand visitor attractions.

**Central research question:** What is the role of families visiting New Zealand attractions from the attraction management perspective and the family visitor perspective?

Supporting research questions:

1. How important is the domestic family market to the three visitor attractions?
   a. What are the characteristics of New Zealand families visiting these attractions (e.g. group size, age, socio-economic status)?
   b. What proportion of visitors are domestic families?
c. Has the importance of the domestic family market changed in the current context and why?

d. Are there any differences in the importance of this market between the three visitor attraction and why?

2. How do managers of these visitor attractions market and cater to domestic family visitors?
   a. Are there any differences in operations and approaches between the visitor attractions?

3. What motivates domestic family visitors to spend their time at the three visitor attraction what influences their decision to visit?

4. What are the experiences of domestic families at these visitor attractions
   a. What are the differences between the on-site experiences of children and adults?

5. Are there any potential discrepancies between the interests of domestic family visitors and the approaches of these three New Zealand visitor attractions
   a. What could be done to better meet the needs of family visitors?

1.6 Methodology

The research questions are addressed by applying a case study strategy including three study sites: Orana Wildlife Park, Willowbank, and the Antarctic Attraction. A multi-method approach was designed consisting of interviews and questionnaires which allowed for the linking of quantitative and qualitative data. The researcher conducted qualitative semi-structured face-to-face interviews with four visitor attraction managers and face-to-face questionnaires with 300 New Zealand family groups at the three visitor attractions. Informal observation during the research period added insights to support and extend the results from interviews and questionnaires.

3 For the purpose of this thesis, Orana Wildlife Park will be referred to as Orana.
1.7 Outline of Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Following this opening chapter, Chapter Two critically reviews current literature and discusses recent ideas and knowledge about the three phases of experiences families pass through when visiting attraction sites. Chapter Three is devoted to the methods adopted and explains the selected research strategy and data collection methods, and also evaluates the methods applied. An individual introduction into the three study sites is given in Chapter Four before discussing information gathered from the manager interviews about the attractions’ market and its importance as well as marketing and operational approaches. Chapter Five presents the results obtained from data collection using questionnaires and outlines the main themes identified for collective family experiences before and during the visit. Based on the research findings, Chapter Six discusses the results and adapts a conceptual model for family experiences visiting the three attractions and corresponding attraction management issues. The concluding chapter, Chapter Seven, revisits the research questions and investigates key findings.
Chapter 2: Three Phases of Family Tourism Experiences  
- A Review of the Literature -

2.1 Introduction
This chapter reviews current literature and discusses recent ideas and knowledge about the visiting experiences of families in the tourism environment. It is divided into three sections which reflect the three phases that every family passes through in their tourist experience: the anticipatory phase (motivation and decision-making), the experiential phase (on-site experiences), and the reflective phase (follow-up of experiences and satisfaction). The review of literature highlights the limited amount of research about family visitors to attractions which prompted the use of alternative literature for all three experience phases from studies of family tourism, family holidays, family outings, and family leisure. These study areas were chosen as alternative information resources, because a family attraction visit may also be described as part of family leisure, family recreation, family outing, family holiday, and family tourism. In a study by Schänzel (2010), family holidays were evaluated to range between one and seven days so that day trips (such as a family visit to an attraction) became as much an element of family holidays as overnight trips. From a logical understanding, the connections between family leisure, family recreation, family outing, family tourism, and family attraction visits seem obvious.

This chapter begins with a discussion of concepts of tourist/visitor experiences and introduces a model displaying the three time phases of a vacation experience. The chapter then discusses what motivates families to visit attractions, either during general leisure time or on holiday including an illustration of the Leisure Ladder Model (LLM) with its five motivation levels. The following section concentrates on family decision-making and the influence children have on family tourism decisions according to the family life cycle (FLC). The discussion then moves on to examine existing research on the on-site experiences of families focusing on “family time”, “own time” and family conflicts resulting from tourism experiences. Finally, literature and research relating to the reflective phase of the family visit experience is reviewed in terms of satisfaction and meaning derived from the family experiences.
2.2 Concepts of Tourist Experiences

From the 1970s onwards the tourist experience has become a popular academic topic in tourism studies, reflected in the constant growth of the social science literature on the tourist experience during the last three decades (Cohen, 1979, 1988; Dann & Jacobsen, 2002; Graburn, 1989; Jia, Sun & Yao, 2007; Quan & Wang, 2004; Uriely, 2005; Urry, 1990, 2002; Wang, 2002). As a result of the impressive amount of literature available about tourist experiences, an attempt to provide a complete literature review is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, the focus here is on introducing chronological concepts (pre, during, and post experience) of tourist experiences that have so far been neglected in studies researching families and visitor attractions. The concepts as a whole, inclusive of all phases, were not found in the literature in relation to family experiences visiting attractions. Individual themes of these models have however been investigated by scholars, such as family motivations to visit theme parks (Pearce, 1991) or family on-site experiences visiting museums (Sterry & Beaumont, 2006). These studies were always related to one specific kind of visitor attraction instead of investigating the more general picture as for example in this research project, including different kinds of visitor attractions.

The chronological definition of the tourist experience can either be understood as a circular model (see e.g., Jennings, 1997; Killion, 1992) or as a linear model (see e.g., Craig-Smith & French, 1994). Killion (1992) defined the term tourist experience by adapting a circular model including the ‘planning phase’, ‘travel to phase’, ‘on-site activities phase’, ‘return travel phase’ and ‘recollection phase’. In contrast to the circular model, linear models have specific beginning and ending points but the last phase of a preceding vacation and the first phase of a future vacation may well overlap. A simplistic linear model is provided by Craig-Smith and French (1994), which sees the experience as three linear phases with previous experiences informing future experiences: anticipatory phase (pre-holiday), experiential phase (on-site experiences), and reflective phase (post-holiday: follow-up of experiences, satisfaction) (see Figure 2.1). The anticipatory phase can be described as a lead-in period devoted to planning and organising holiday arrangements and can be a major contributor to the overall holiday experience. The experiential phase indicates the actual vacation or the actual time of the trip, while the final phase is the reflective phase which may last long after the
vacation. Thus, the total vacation experience is much greater than that of the actual event (Craig-Smith & French, 1994).

Figure 2.1 The Three Time Phases of the Vacation Experience

This model influences the context in which this thesis is undertaken. The chronological nature of this model structures the layout of this research in terms of presenting and discussing the family visitor perspective according to the anticipatory phase comprising pre-visit experiences including motivation and decision-making, the experiential phase incorporating on-site experiences, and the reflective phase encompassing post-visit experiences including satisfaction and meaning gained from the visit. As a result of primary research findings, the focus of this thesis is placed on the anticipatory phase and experiential phase and less on the reflective phase. The model was chosen due to its simplistic, but still meaningful, illustrative value. The subsequent sections of the literature review are structured according to the three phases of this chronological model: motivations and decision-making, on-site experiences, and satisfaction and meaning.

2.3 Family Visitor Motivation
Family visitor motivations are an underdeveloped area of research characterised by scholars as push and pull factors that are different from individual visitor motivations.

2.3.1 Introduction to Family Visitor Motivation
It is generally agreed that motivations, and especially family motivations, as areas of study in the visitor field are underdeveloped. One reason for this is that motivations often remain inaccessible since cognitive processes are hard to access and individuals may not want, or may not be able, to divulge their real motivations for behaviour (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Holloway,
Humphreys & Davidson, 2009; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007). The motivation literature has usually adopted a very individualistic orientation and neither takes into account the social dimensions and dynamics present in groups like families (Pearce, 2005) nor differentiates motivations between family members. An exception is Anderson (2001) who found that the main motivation of mothers was to ensure the happiness and safety of their families on holiday, while fathers were more focused on their individual needs and aspirations.

A few tourism scholars have investigated family motivations and found that these are characterised by a combination of push and pull factors (e.g., McCabe, 2000), which is a generally accepted concept within the visitor motivation literature (Crompton, 1979b; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994). The concept suggests that visitors are pushed by internal forces to visit and pulled by external forces to particular destination attributes. Individual push factors can include escape from personal/social pressures, social recognition/prestige, regression, novelty, thrill, social/bonding, self-esteem, learning/discovery/curiosity, and distance from crowds (Crompton, Botha & Kim, 1999; Decrop, 2006). By incorporating both push and pull factors, family holidays, leisure, and outings can be seen as not merely an escape from the everyday life but also an escape to a social space which involves connections with, rather than an escape from, social relations (Larsen, Urry & Axhausen, 2007) and allows a focus on interpersonal interactions (Wearing & Wearing, 1996).

Family tourism research has identified some family specific motivations. For example, some studies have found that the most important reason for a family holiday was to spend time together as a family (Gram, 2005; McCabe, 2009). Gram’s (2005) research concurs with this, and found that the next highest important need motivating family holidays is for “breaks away from busy everyday lives. Holidays are supposed to be a relief from stress and chores, giving time for recovery and rest in the pleasant companionship of the family” (2005:2). McCabe (2009) similarly identified the second highest need to be “time away from daily life and circumstances” which is followed by “recover from ill-health and bereavement” and “to visit new places and enjoy new activities” (p.7). Gram’s (2005) and McCabe’s (2009) results can be argued to support Crompton (1979a) who found that families may be more concerned with push factors than destination pull factors. This notion is extended by Pearce (1991), in connection with Dermott and Associates (1991), who developed the LLM for theme park settings based on Maslow’s (1970) Hierarchy of Needs.

17
2.3.2 The Leisure Ladder Model – Family Motivations for Theme Park Visits

The LLM is said to be one of the most accepted conceptual theories within the leisure and tourism motivation literature (Chuo & Heywood, 2006; Cook, Yale & Marqua, 2002). It has been especially created to reflect the motivations of domestic visitors to theme park settings, but has been shown to have much wider applications (Chuo & Heywood, 2006). The model contains the core idea that motivations change over time and people tend to ascend levels of the ladder as they become older or more experienced visitors in the theme park setting (Pearce, 1991). Five ascending levels – relaxation/bodily needs, stimulation, relationship, self-esteem, and fulfilment – are used to illustrate varying motivations (Chuo & Heywood, 2006; Figure 2.2). Pearce (1993) argues that higher level motives include lower level motives and lower level motives have to be satisfied or experienced before higher level steps on the ladder come into play.

Source: adapted from Pearce (1993:125)

**Figure 2.2 The Leisure Ladder Model for Theme Park Settings**
Pearce (1991) and Dermott and Associates (1991) matched demographic groups (children, single adults and families) to the identified motivational levels and it is the motivations of families which are of interest in the current context. Figure 2.3 explicitly shows that the most dominant motivation of families to visit a theme park is to spend a family day out (relationship level), which equates to the need of families for interpersonal interactions and time spend together with the family discussed earlier. Second most important motivations identified for families in the LLM study are relaxation, talked about (visiting a well known and talked about attraction), and to improve knowledge, which resemble individual push factors stated by Crompton, Botha and Kim (1999) and Decrop (2006) above in section 2.2.1. This indicates that in many ways family motivation is very similar to individual motivation. Travel motivation, in any case, has been pointed out to be the stage that triggers the whole decision process (Mansfeld, 1992) which is discussed in the next section.


Figure 2.3 Levels of the Leisure Ladder According to Different Demographic Segments

2.4 Family Decision-Making: The Influence of Children
This section represents the second part of the anticipatory phase from the chronological model (Figure 2.1). It discusses the joint tourism decision-making of husband and wife as well as the
increased influence of children on family tourism decisions originating from the desire of parents to satisfy their children and thus consider their needs and wishes. The section further discusses the effect children have on family tourism decisions which varies according to the stage occupied in the FLC.

Family travel behaviour involves a complex decision process, where family members play diverse roles including the initiator, influencer, decider, buyer, and user (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 1999). Until a decade ago, there were primarily three types of decision-making modes identified which neglect children: husband-dominant, wife-dominant, and a joint decision between husband and wife (Jenkins, 1978; Filiatrault & Ritchie, 1980; Nichols & Snepenger, 1988; Fodness, 1992). Most of the early research emphasized an influence of husbands and wives on purchase outcome that varies according to the decision-making stage (Davis, 1976; Ferber & Lee, 1974; Munsinger, Weber, & Hansen, 1975), but in the last 20 years changes have taken place which have altered the tourism decision-making process in families. The family has evolved into what business research calls a decision-making unit indicating that the husband and wife share in most vacation decision stages such as problem recognition, information search, and the final destination decision (Bronner & de Hoog, 2008).

As indicated above, originally, the role of children in family decision-making was ignored and later dismissed as having little or no influence (Belch, Belch & Ceresino, 1985; Filiatrault & Ritchie, 1980; Howard & Madrigal, 1990; Lackman & Lanasa, 1993; Seaton & Tagg, 1995). However, as a result of social and demographic changes, the role of children in tourism purchase decisions became increasingly important and thus, has gradually attracted more, but still relatively little, research attention (Kang & Hsu, 2005; Nanda, Hu & Bai, 2006; Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001). Recently, children have been recognised as playing an active part in family decision making (Gram, 2007; Shoham & Dalakas, 2005), because they more and more influence the choice of holiday destinations (Connell, 2005) and holiday activities like visiting attractions (Decrop, 2006; Wang et al., 2004). Although parents are still the chief decision-makers of the family, the influence of children cannot be ignored (Wang, Hsieh, Yeh & Tsai, 2004). Howard and Madrigal (1990) stated that various studies have found that the relative influence of the husband, wife or child is likely to vary according to: (1) the type of purchase decision; (2) the stage of the decision-making process; and (3) the family characteristics.
The increasing impact of children may derive from working parents, perhaps especially working mothers, who use the vacation as a time to reconnect as a family today even more than ever before. Many parents aim at satisfying their children more than themselves (Thornton et al., 1997) which requires them to consider the desires of their children (Gram, 2007) and actively encourage their children to participate in vacation purchasing decisions (Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001). This may also originate from a change in parenting style and perception of the role of children in the family from the belief that children ‘should be seen and not heard’ to a view that children and their opinions should be nurtured and respected. Indeed, children do not need to have the ability to negotiate or actively participate in the decision process in order to influence the family decision outcome, because they simply influence it through their presence in the family.

The impact of children on family tourism decisions is demonstrated in the literature addressing the family life cycle (FLC). According to a frequently referenced model of the FLC developed by Well and Gubar (1966), the period of being a parent with dependent children is divided into three stages: (1) Full nest 1: at least one child still less than five years of age in the household, (2) Full nest 2: school-age children with the youngest child five years or over, (3) Full nest 3: older married couples with older dependent and possibly non-dependent children (Lawson, 1991; Wells & Gubar, 1966). Although the model was generally accepted at the time it was developed, more recently, it has attracted criticism that it is antiquated and no longer reflects today’s family forms. Lawson (1991) found the model left out a substantial proportion of the population and this has likely increased over the past two decades.

Most studies using the FLC model focus on travel expenditure patterns (e.g., Hong, Fan, Palmer & Bhargava, 2005; Tribe, 1999) or decision-making processes (e.g., Cosenza & Davis, 1981; Fodness, 1992; Kang, 2002), and not on the significance or type of holiday experiences at different life stages. A notable exception is Blichfeldt (2006, 2007), who found that family holiday experiences change from “smaller” to “grander” experiences as children grow older. As a result of constraints imposed by the needs of toddlers, New Zealand families with infants have been found to do little travelling. They participate in only a few tourist activities, have the lowest involvement level in entertainment and holidays are frequently closely tied in with visiting friends and relatives (Blichfeldt, 2007; Lawson, 1991). It is important to point out that the studies by Blichfeldt and Lawson were conducted in New Zealand and as such the findings...
may not be generalisable to other culture. Despite the benefits of family holidays, recreation, and leisure for family cohesion and happiness found by many researchers (see section 1.4), Blichfeldt (2006) suggests that the point in time when children are no longer infants qualifies as the starting point for tourism activities. Parents and children are then able to have joint experiences everybody remembers and the constraints imposed by the needs of small children slowly decrease. Furthermore, the financial situation of the family may recover when the household has two incomes again (Thornton et al., 1997). According to the findings of Blichfeldt’s studies, there might be differences in the tourist behaviour based on what stage of the full nest 1 phase a family is in.

While research suggests little involvement of young families in tourism and entertainment identified by Lawson (1991) and Blichfeldt (2007), recreation literature presents increasing participation in recreation activities for family groups with children (pre-school and school age children) compared to adults without children. Since family recreation has been recognized as an effective vehicle in the provision of family customs, promotion of healthy youth development, and opportunities for a family to grow together and maintain cohesiveness, the distinct activity involvement of visitors who travel with at least one child versus visitors without youth seems plausible (e.g., Lee et al., 2008). The dissonance between the two theories provokes the need for further research on the impact of children on participation in family tourism activities like visiting an attraction with reference to these three phases of the FLC. Regardless of whether children restrict or encourage family activities in the tourism and leisure sector, certainly their presence in general and their age in particular impact family tourism behaviour and experience, even without children being actively involved in the decision process. The subsequent section discusses on-site experiences of family groups.

2.5 Family On-Site Experiences

This section centres on the discussion of family on-site experiences in the tourism environment, which represents the second phase of the chronological model (Figure 2.1). It focuses on the concept of “family time” implying a difference between the time spent together with the family in contrast to “own time” encapsulating own interests pursued alone or with peers.
Some scholars have investigated research about actual on-site family experiences at visitor attractions. Each study specifically concentrated on only one kind of visitor attraction such as museum, zoo, or theme park (Hallman & Benbow, 2007; Johns & Gyimothy, 2003; Sterry & Beaumont, 2006), while this thesis researches and compares family visitors at three different types of family attractions. Findings of these existing studies centre on different aspects of on-site family experiences such as social interactions during an attraction visit and generational differences which may result in a discrepancy of experiences. Johns and Gyimothy (2002, 2003) found that there is a dichotomy between the fun experienced by children at theme parks and the perceived penance or self-sacrifice of the parent. Their research demonstrates generational differences within the family unit, arguing for more studies of how different members of family groups experience an attraction, a notion supported by Sterry and Beaumont (2006) in relation to museums. Blud (1990), Brown (1995) and Sterry and Beaumont (2006) highlighted gender and generational differences in the way families interact during a science museum visit. They all found that social interactions, rather than learning, have the most memorable effects on families in art museums. Christensen, Gram, and Jensen (2007:3) found that compared with the art museum all senses were stimulated at the shopping mall and that children preferred more sensory experiences because they are “wired differently” to adults. Visits to the zoo are regarded as providing emotional connection between family members and enjoyable educational experiences for children (Hallman & Benbow, 2007).

A model that summarises these experiences has recently been developed by Schänzel (2010) (see Figure 2.4) based on research about families’ main summer holidays. Although the model concentrates on the family holiday, it indicates several similarities to the experiences of families at family-oriented leisure sites discussed above. Her findings disclose that family experiences of a holiday centre on “family time” and “own time” and are reflective of the fundamental family life conditions of connectedness/sociality and separateness/individuality. “Family time” encapsulates the time spent together with the immediate and extended family and includes idealised notions of change of routine, social connectedness, and social identities. By contrast, “own time” encapsulates freedom from those family commitments to pursue one’s own interests alone or with peers. The relationship between “family time” and “own
time” leads to the internal family group dynamics of compromise and conflict (Schänzel, 2010).

Previous literature addressing family attraction experiences has concentrated on elements with a focus on social values like family togetherness, creating family memories and generativity as well as the desire of children for fun. Generativity is a term coined by the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson in 1950 to denote a concern for establishing and guiding the next generation (Erikson & Erikson, 1981). None of these studies considered the possibility that “own time” can also be an important component for family members during an attraction visit. Typical conflicts identified during such visits usually concentrate on the needs of families for joint experiences, where parents and children are immersed in activities together. Scholars have not yet explored if conflicts also arise due to an imbalance of “family time” and “own time” during these visits. In order to develop more detailed research questions for this study, the following sections explore the notion of “family time” representing the all-encompassing experiences families may have.

Source: adapted from Schänzel (2010:238)

Figure 2.4 Family Holiday Experiences
2.5.1 Family Time

“Family time” is used here to represent family on-site experiences in terms of social connectedness, change in routine, and social identities.

Social Connectedness

Social connectedness centres on establishing social relationships with loved ones and is a time for (re)connecting as well as providing support for each other. The importance of connectedness for families is broadly recognised throughout the literature dealing with family holidays (Gram, 2005; McCabe, 2009; Schänzel et al., 2005; Schänzel, 2010), family recreation (Hornig, 2005; Lee et al., 2008; Mactavish & Schleien, 2000; Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001) and family outings (DeVault, 2000). The focus on social values like family togetherness and social relations is generally accepted in the tourism literature as the focus of family tourists although other non-family tourist groups also have similar social interaction needs such as bonding with friends and partners (Larsen et al., 2007; Shaw, Havitz & Delemere, 2008). It is also seen as an entrenched part of Western discourse (Daly, 1996) which reflects an ideology of togetherness associated with values and beliefs about what it means to be a good family.

The idea of social connectedness is further thought to be the crucial component in any family holiday (see Gram, 2005; Larsen, 2008; Lee et al., 2008; Sibtain & Zeppel, 2008), because it is often felt to be missed out in daily life due to the unbalanced work-life situation of many adults. According to the Department of Labour (2006), 40 percent of New Zealand workers felt they have some or a lot of difficulty getting the work-life balance they want (see also Lawson, Todd & Evans, 2006; Robertson, 2006). A recent study noted an increased concern that working fathers and mothers do not spend enough time with their children (Lawson et al., 2006). International researchers agree that parents therefore value a holiday that offers them the opportunity to spend quality time with their children (Coventry, 2006; DeVault, 2000; Gram, 2005; Lehto et al., 2009).

The unbalanced work-life situation does not necessarily require a holiday of several weeks or days, instead spending some hours filled with quality family experiences, for example at a family attraction, may satisfy the longing for togetherness. Although there is little research that compares the perspectives of parents and children on the amount of time needed
together with the family (Daly, 2001), a few scholars found that children are happier with the amount of shared time with the family than their parents (Christensen, 2002; Galinsky, 1999; McCabe, 2009). This highlights the methodological necessity to include the perspective of children in any research involving families.

**Change in Routine**

A change in routine was found to include a spatial break from everyday life and a replacement of daily routine activities with fun, entertainment, and learning in terms of experiencing something new. As to a spatial break from everyday circumstances, one of the most frequently mentioned items by families is the need for a break away from the home environment (McCabe, 2009; Gram, 2005; Haldrup & Larsen; 2003). This may be ascribed to the environmental circumstances in which applicants live, because these are seen as a contributory cause of stress. Consequently, family activities and holidays away from the immediate home environment are an important consideration although it was stated differently in some family tourism studies (e.g., Blichtfeldt, 2007; Davidson, 1996; Schänzel, 2010). According to Schänzel (2010), the majority of research participants agreed that it is possible to have a holiday at home. They all share in common that home can be used as a base and that family holidays can include holidaying at home.

Families also long for replacing daily routine activities with joint activities that offer fun, entertainment, newness and learning which was found to be specifically tethered to the needs, identities, and activities of children (Schänzel, 2010). According to interviews conducted with children in the family holiday study by Schänzel (2010), fun was identified as a definitional characteristic for family holidays which is supported by other scholars (Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Johns & Gyimothy, 2002; Lehto et al., 2009). Fun, entertainment and activities are of major importance for children, but less so to parents (Gram, 2005). While it is claimed that mothers seek a break from their domestic responsibilities, fathers feel more bound to their entertainment imperative (Schänzel, 2010).

Newness usually entails the concept of learning about the unknown and inexperienced for adults and children alike and is often, but not necessarily, related to education (DeVault, 2000; Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001). Learning as a family on-site experience indicates that family leisure is often purposeful achieving particular child-development goals and also adults
may use the opportunity to improve their knowledge (Hallman & Benbow, 2007). Adults tend to direct family leisure toward particular extrinsic benefits such as teaching children about history, culture, and nature. Through role modelling or role taking within structured interactive leisure activities they also teach about healthy lifestyles, ethics, manners, and moral values (Kelly, 1997; Lehto et al., 2009; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). An observational study undertaken by DeVault (2000) analysed parental teaching practices and learning abilities of children during a zoo visit and revealed different approaches to learning according to the age of children. She discovered that the youngest visitors primarily develop skills toward appropriate viewing of the exhibits, or simply see the real animals parents have read and talked about, since animals provide material for early cultural learning (dogs go “woof woof”; ducks go “quack”). Some family groups with older children used the zoo in more sustained and focused ways, drawing on interpretive signs in ways closer to the intentions of designers. DeVault’s observational procedure did not involve any overt attempt to determine whether a group was actually a family or just family-like and thus, may contain some misleading results regarding family behaviour.

The review of literature demonstrates that fun, entertainment, newness and learning are important components of family on-site experiences as they entail the desired change in routine. Teaching children about ethics and values can also be understood as generativity or guiding the next generation, which the literature often understands as generating social identities (Kelly, 1997; Lehto et al., 2009; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). Further literature on social identity will be discussed next.

Establishing Social Identity

Besides guiding the next generation, social identities are also established through shared memories. Social constructionists argue that people make sense of themselves and their relationships through narratives (Gergen, 1994; Shotter, 1993). Tourist photography is one of the uniquely modern ways through which families produce memories and visual life-narratives that construct them as family. Hence, photography is an integral component in producing “identity, social relations and ‘familiness’” (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003:26). Yet, holiday images are never simple records of real family life, but are shot through with desires and expectations of idealised family relations and time (Bourdieu, 1990; Chambers, 2003; Sontag, 1977;
Spence & Holland, 1991). Family photos taken at visitor attractions become souvenirs of quality time together, emblematic of the time and emotional investment made in the relationship depicted in the photographs (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003; Hallman & Benbow, 2007). Generally, however, tourist scholars have produced very little knowledge of why and how tourists take photographs and most existing literature tends to be of a speculative nature (Osborne, 2000). Consequently, more interpretation of the meaning and desire that tourists ascribe to photography need to be explored, especially in terms of families and their social identities.

In sum, the review of literature disclosed that family on-site experiences include relief from normal routines and encourage family relations and identity, but are likely not to be free from commitments or unobligated time. As a resulting reaction from experiencing intensive family bonding and togetherness, researchers found that family members seek respite from the obligatory commitments of family life in the form of having their “own time”, either alone or with peers, to pursue their own interests (Harrington, 2001; Schänzel, 2010; Shaw et al., 2008; Stevens, Maclaran & Catterall, 2007).

2.5.2 Own Time

The quest for freedom from family commitments or time to pursue interests alone or with peers represents an important desire for family members on holiday and has been referred to as “own time” (Schänzel, 2010:23). In other literature this time is also referred to as “me-time” (Department of Labour, 2003; Stevens et al., 2007:4) or “time for self” (Harrington, 2001:7), but within the holiday environment it may also include time with peers of one’s generation rather than just time alone. “Own time” represents a more private component of holiday life and has remained largely hidden in the family tourism literature. Peer time for the parents signifies couple time and time with other adults, while peer time for children indicates time with siblings and time with friends. “Own time” might also mean freedom from parental obligations for the parents, whereas for the children it means freedom from parental restrictions (Gram, 2005; Shaw et al., 2008). Generally the experiences sought in “own time” are familiar, such as relaxing (Gram, 2005; Hilbrecht et al., 2008), rather than the more novel experiences (change and newness) sought in “family time”. Gram (2005) suggests that fathers are commonly more interested in physical and mental activities or challenges during “own
time”, whereas mothers centre more on restful activities such as reading and chatting. The self-interest of children is fundamentally perceived as interactive, because they hunt for fun and a high activity level. However, the opportunities for “own time” for both parents and children increase with the age of the children.

While having time away from the family on holiday could be perceived as counterintuitive to the ideology of family togetherness, it was found by researchers to provide a balance to the hegemony of “family time” (Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Schänzel, 2010; Shaw et al., 2008). “Own time”, thus, becomes an essential part of a more balanced and realistic reflection of on-site experiences, but any recognition of this is largely missing in studies on families at visitor attractions. While “own time” emerges to be an important component of the family holiday, Gram (2005) acknowledges that quest of parents for togetherness and their desire for personal space can be a source of conflict for families as also outlined in the model of Schänzel (2010; Figure 2.4).

2.5.3 Family Conflicts Resulting from Tourism Activities

According to the model of Schänzel (2010), compromise occurs in the relationship between “family time” and “own time” in that both uses of time are regularly sought. Accommodating both can lead to conflict if there is an imbalance in either for some family members (Schänzel, 2010). This risk of conflict within families on holiday is an accepted issue among scholars tackling family holidays (Davidson, 1996; Gram, 2005; Lee et al., 2008; McCabe, 2009), however, nobody has yet explored if conflicts also arise in the visitor attraction environment due to an imbalance of “family time” and “own time” during visits to family attractions.

Existing research suggest conflicts arise most commonly amongst families at attractions when there is a failure to provide suitable opportunities for joint experiences, where parents and children can be immersed in activities together. Adequate products, programmes, and activities must actively engage both the parents and children according to desired amounts and provide ample opportunities for them to interact (Johns & Gyimóthy, 2002; Lehto et al., 2009). For example, Johns and Gyimóthy (2002) analysed the experience at Legoland, Denmark and found that Legoland is meeting the needs of children quite well, but it does not achieve the ideal perception parents have of holidaying together with the family, as parents only felt like babysitters. This matter has already been noticed in other research exemplified
by Cullingford, who stated that “theme parks are set up specifically to fulfil the children’s desires” (1995:121), and Nickerson and Jurowski who argue that “theme parks have always catered to the younger generations” (2001:21). As only a few studies were found that centred on this dilemma with regard to visitor attractions, there is a need to further investigate this matter. To simply focus on negative aspects of the family holiday provides only a partial understanding of this complex type of interaction (Shaw, 1997), because positive outcomes still seem to dominate family activities as discussed earlier. This reflection on visit experiences is discussed in the next section.

2.6 Reflection of the Family Attraction Visit – Satisfaction and Meaning

After a visit is completed and on-site experiences collected, experiences are reflected on and evaluated consciously and sub-consciously which results in a satisfied or unsatisfied state of mind. This represents the last phase of the chronological model (Figure 2.1) – the reflective phase – which also includes the identification of meanings families derived from their visit.

The positive contributions of family leisure, holiday, and recreation to family cohesion, family interaction, and overall satisfaction with family life were discussed earlier, but there is increasing research evidence that family leisure activities may not always be a positive experience for all family members (Larson et al., 1997; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). There is a realisation amongst researchers that family leisure has an underlying ideological notion that reflects a hegemonic and romanticised version of family life (Harrington, 2001; Hilbrecht et al., 2008). This idealisation of family leisure can have negative consequences for parents through increased feelings of guilt and stress when the ideal of family togetherness is difficult for them to achieve (Shaw, 2001). Several studies have found that mothers reported a less positive leisure experience than fathers (Freysinger, 1994; Wearing, 1993). Acknowledgment of both the benefits and difficulties of family leisure can lead to a more realistic view of this valued aspect of family life (Shaw & Dawson, 2003/2004). This raises the need to further investigate the meanings families derive from a visit to an attraction.

Since there are a number of conceptual definitions concerning tourist satisfaction (Bowen & Clarke, 2002; Yeh, 2008), this section focuses on research that evaluates the satisfaction judgement on the basis of the tourist experience. This approach was chosen because it reflects the concept of the chronological model where previous experiences inform
future experiences. Veal (1997) and Pearce (2005) pointed out that satisfaction is simply a post-experience attitude (Bigné, Andreu & Gnoth, 2005; Petrick & Backman, 2002; Soloman, 1991) so that the actual tourist experience is an essential factor in the satisfaction judgement (Bowen & Clarke, 2002; Fuchs & Weiermair, 2003; Li & Carr, 2004). A basic definition of satisfaction is that it is the “outcome of reflecting and evaluating experiences” (Pearce, 2005:21).

The significance of experience for satisfaction evaluation becomes further apparent when considering the idea of the peak tourist experience. In social science literature most researchers (Cohen, 1972, 1979; MacCannell, 1973; Smith, 1978; Turner & Ash, 1975) focused on tourist experiences in sharp contrast to daily experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004; Uriely, 2005). Consequently, tourist experiences were often understood as “pure”, “net” or “peak” experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004:297). The notion of tourist experiences as distinct from the routine of everyday life has been challenged since the 1990s by scholars who introduced a postmodern perspective to tourism (Lash & Urry, 1994; Munt, 1994; Urry, 1990). As McCabe (2002) points out, it is misleading to exclude the daily experiences from tourism, for the tourist experience as a whole consists of both the peak experience and supporting experiences such as eating, sleeping, playing, and travelling.

Today, this idea is supported by many scholars (Collier, 2008; Jia et al., 2007; Quan & Wang, 2004; Uriely, 2005) who identified that the peak touristic experience is highly related to the main motivation of travellers, because it represents what tourists are seeking for during their travel (e.g. adventures through snowboarding on the Alps). By contrast, the supporting experience is not the goal tourists are pursuing and does not constitute major travel motivation (Jia et al., 2007), but consists of experiences that facilitate the attainment of the actual goal (e.g. transport to the ski field or lunch at a ski hut).

According to Jia et al. (2007), the peak experience is directly related to satisfaction. If the peak touristic experience is disappointing, then even high quality of supporting experiences cannot fully compensate for this deficiency and regret. Having said that, a quality peak experience in combination with disappointing supporting experiences or absence of supporting experiences can also generate dissatisfaction. Consequently, total satisfaction with tourist experiences relies on the quality of both dimensions (Jia et al., 2007). The validity of this theory could be usefully tested for families at visitor attractions.
Although some studies addressed family conflicts at visitor attractions, no study directly examined family (dis)satisfaction with their visiting experiences at leisure sites. A few studies have investigated family satisfaction with holidays (Seaton & Tagg, 1995; Cook, 1983; Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001) and found that most family holidays primarily aim at satisfying the children. Parents rate their children’s satisfaction on holiday more highly than their own (Thornton et al., 1997), and meeting the needs of the child also accounts for satisfied parents (Ryan, 1992).

2.7 Conclusion
This review of literature discussed family experiences structured according to the chronological model: anticipatory phase, experiential phase, and reflective phase. The discussion was based on multidisciplinary tourism literature from research areas like family holidays, family leisure, and family outings. The anticipatory phase includes family motivation that was defined by push and pull factors which were specifically tested by the LLM in relation to family theme park visitors. The second element of the anticipatory phase encompasses tourism related family decision-making which is actively or passively influenced by children, whereby the influence varies according to the FLC. The section addressing the experiential phase discusses the concepts of “family time” including changes in routine, social connectedness, and social identities, “own time” including the need to pursue own interests alone or with peers, and family conflicts resulting from attraction visits. The third phase – reflective phase – discusses family satisfaction evaluated on the basis of on-site experiences and meanings gained from the family visits including the idealisation of experiences. The literature review revealed the need to better understand family experiences with visitor attractions according to the chronological dimension. The discussion of literature highlighted research gaps in the study of motivation, decision-making, on-site experiences, meaning and satisfaction which facilitated to design the research questions. In order to address these research gaps, the subsequent chapter outlines and discusses the methods adopted.
Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Introduction
The intention of this chapter is to provide the rationale for, and explanation of, the selected research methods which facilitate the answering of the research questions outlined in Chapter One. The chapter presents the research strategy and time horizons, then outlines the two main data collection methods used – interviews and questionnaires – and details the research instruments, research design, sampling and data collection. The chapter concludes with an evaluative and reflective discussion of the chosen methods.

3.2 Time Horizons and Research Strategy: The Rationale behind the Selected Cases
Contemplating the issue of time, research can be carried out at a particular time or over a given period. Longitudinal studies advantageously observe change and development over time, whereas cross-sectional studies are suitable for research facing tight time constraints (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). Ideally, this thesis was time constrained to a period of one year; therefore, the time horizons only allowed the researcher to apply a cross-sectional study. This snapshot of a particular point of time, during one school holiday fortnight, was thought sufficient for this research, however it did result in limitations regarding the ability to generalise the findings (see below).

It was decided to use case studies as a research strategy, because case studies allowed the researcher to empirically investigate the characteristics and experiences of family visitors and the knowledge of managers about their family visitors within its real life context at the three different visitor attractions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007; Yin, 2003). This research project was based on multiple cases - Orana, Willowbank, and Antarctic Attraction, because they served as multiple sources of evidence. A comparison between the three visitor attractions provided valuable insights into family visitor experiences and visitor attraction management approaches. The strategy also had considerable ability to generate answers to the questions why, what and how by using a combination of data collection techniques (Jennings, 2001) as for example a combination of interviews and questionnaires was used in this study. The use of different data collection techniques within this study appeared most efficient and effective to answer the research questions.
Orana, Willowbank, and the Antarctic Attraction were chosen as the case studies for this research because of the similarities, as well as differences, between them. However, the primary reason for their selection was their willingness to participate in this research project. It was felt that it would be important to choose attractions that had some similarities as this would enable and facilitate comparison of findings in the results and discussion chapters. In this way, the three visitor attractions are all purpose built facilities, requiring visitors to pay an entrance fee. They are all located in and around Christchurch, which makes the research itself, and also the comparison, easier. Undertaking research in only one city excluded situational differences between cities (e.g. political, economic, and tourism circumstances) and differences in tourist markets which otherwise may have influenced the research results. The three facilities also have in common that they are well known as visitor attractions within Christchurch which are all heavily marketed within the tourism sector. Consequently, these three attractions have a relatively high visitor number which enabled the researcher to get a good sample size in a short research period. A further similarity between all three attractions is that they all specifically target family groups to some extent, which was an important consideration, given the focus of the research. Each of the attractions has offers and promotional strategies aimed to attract families; although the extent of the family market is different at each attraction as will be discussed later.

As well as these similarities, there are a number of differences between the attractions. Although all three attractions are, to a greater or lesser extent, animal based, their core product is distinct. Orana is an open range zoo showing exotic animals, whereas Willowbank focuses on the native New Zealand environment including the wildlife and plants and it does not pretend nor wish to be a zoo (Willowbank Wildlife Reserve, 2010a). The Antarctic Attraction is designed to bring a powerful and memorable experience of Antarctica to visitors. In spite of all three facilities having families as a specific target group, their main visitor markets differ from each other. Orana and Willowbank are primarily focused on the local domestic market, although Orana also attracts the broader national market to a greater extent than Willowbank. The Antarctic Attraction principally attracts international visitors. These attractions were also chosen to achieve a selection of facilities with different ownerships. Orana is owned by a charity, whereas Willowbank and the Antarctic Attraction are privately owned. Issues mentioned in these similarities and differences are referred to in more detail in Chapter Four,
which separately introduces the three study sites. The data collection methods used in order to
gather information about the visitor attractions and their family visitors are detailed next.

3.3 Data Collection Methods
Data can be collected through qualitative or quantitative methods (or a mix of them), whereby
qualitative data are non-numerical data and quantitative data are numerical data that can be
measured or identified on a numerical scale (Hair, Money, Samouel & Page, 2007). This study
made use of a mix of qualitative and quantitative research, because it used the following two
data collection techniques in order to achieve the best results possible: qualitative semi-
structured interviews with the management of the visitor attractions and face-to-face
questionnaires with family visitors at the selected visitor attractions.

According to Bryman (2006), research that involves the integration of quantitative and
qualitative research (variously referred to as mixed methods or multi-methods) has become
common in recent years, as advocated by McIntosh (1998) for research into experiential
tourist dimensions. Mason (2006), in particular, noted the value of mixed methods approaches
in studies about social experiences and lived realities like family and interpersonal
relationships. While quantitative data were more effective in providing “breadth”, for example
statistical analysis of family characteristics, qualitative data were ideal for addressing “depth”,
for example capturing each family’s point of view and the knowledge of the attraction
managers about their family visitors. The strengths of both qualitative and quantitative data
were enhanced in this research project by linking them which provided a way to generate more
information about the breadth and depth of family visitors at these New Zealand visitor
attractions (Henderson & Bedini, 1995).

3.3.1 Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews
The first technique for data collection in this study was qualitative semi-structured interviews
with members of the management team from each participating visitor attraction. In total, four
interviews were conducted for this research: one at Orana with the marketing manager, one at
Willowbank with the marketing manager, and two at the Antarctic Attraction with the CEO
and marketing manager.
3.3.1.1 Interview Purpose and Design

After evaluating different research methods, the results indicated that the best practice to use was interviews, because they served the purpose to generate essential information about the management at the three visitor attractions and the characteristics of, and their managerial approaches to, family visitors. The interview questions investigated differences in characteristics and importance of domestic family visitors to the attractions in the current context as well as the marketing approaches and operations of the attractions, particularly as it relates to domestic family visitors. Intentions and operations of the attractions were compared to family experiences in order to assess the awareness of the management of family interests and the conformance of the visitor and management perspective on family attraction visits.

The face-to-face semi-structured interviews followed a certain schedule of questions that could be altered from interview to interview (for interview schedule please refer to Appendix A). In particular, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were chosen, because the similar schedule of questions provided the basis for later comparison of information gathered, but at the same time allowed the researcher to adapt the questions to the respective situation in order to gain the most effective answers possible from the managers. In general, semi-structured interviews are frequently used for the explanatory research phase in order to understand the relationships between variables, such as those revealed from a descriptive study (Hair et al., 2007; Veal, 2006). An explanatory research approach was useful for this research, because it studied “a situation or a problem” (Robson, 2002:59). The situation to be analysed in this research pertained to the experiences and meanings families had visiting attractions and related to the importance of families to these visitor attractions.

Five areas of interest were reflected in the interviews which opened with general questions about the role of the respondents within the organisation and the ownership situation and role of the attraction itself. The second set of questions explored the target groups of visitors for the attractions and specifically concentrated on the role of domestic family visitors as a customer group. This was followed by questions regarding the attractions’ operational approaches specifically aimed at the family segment and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each attraction in relation to families. Marketing activities in general, and in particular for the domestic family segment, were addressed in the fourth set of questions, with the final section examining the current characteristics of family visitors attending the attraction.
and how these characteristics had changed over time or were expected to change in the future. The interviews were designed to take no more than 30 minutes to complete, but the actual duration depended on the depth of the interviewees’ answers. This time frame was thought as most adequate with regard to the required information and the time available from the managers.

3.3.1.2 Data Collection
The first contact with the interviewees was established through an email sent with the purpose of familiarising the potential respondent with the researcher, introducing the research project, and requesting an interview, with an explanation of the rationale for their selection. The researcher selected the interviewees according to their positions and tasks in the company which qualified them to answer the questions outlined above (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Cooper & Schindler 2008). The interviews were scheduled to take place before the start of the Easter school holidays and the data collection with families in order to develop sound knowledge of the attractions. Emails were sent with sufficient time in advance of the scheduled interviews in order to allow the interviewees to evaluate their participation and to avoid time pressure on their decision. Follow-up phone calls with the potential respondents meant that one visitor attraction that was contacted refused to participate in the research, because the company was not able to allocate an employee with sufficient time and knowledge about the research topic.

Interview locations were determined by the interviewees and all interviews were conducted within the premises of the attractions. The last two weeks in March 2010 turned out to suit both this research schedule and the time plan of the interviewees (see Table 3.1). All interviews were tape recorded, with the permission of respondents, as the use of a digital or audio recorder is often seen as an advantage. Audio recorders provided the benefit that the interviewer could better concentrate on the interview itself and focus more on the eye contact and body language of the interviewee rather than note-taking (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2006). Table 3.1 presents a summary of the interview partners, the date and duration of the interview, and the interview location. Written informed consent was given by the interviewees signing a consent form stating the name, description and conditions of the project.

All interviews were transcribed afterwards using Olympus DSS Player to replay the interviews and the transcripts were sent to the interviewees in order to check them for
accuracy. Since the interviews represent only one of two data collection methods, the use of questionnaires with family visitors at the attractions is outlined next.

### Table 3.1 Interview Partners and Setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitor Attraction</th>
<th>Interview Partner</th>
<th>Years in Organisation</th>
<th>Date &amp; Duration</th>
<th>Interview location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orana Wildlife Park</td>
<td>Marketing, Public Relations &amp; Visitor Services Manager</td>
<td>9 ½ years</td>
<td>22.03.2010 2 ½ hours</td>
<td>Orana Wildlife Park, Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willowbank Wildlife Reserve</td>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>23.03.2010 60 minutes</td>
<td>Willowbank Wildlife Reserve, Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antarctic Attraction</td>
<td>Owner, CEO &amp; Director</td>
<td>9 ½ years</td>
<td>29.03.2010 40 minutes</td>
<td>Antarctic Attraction, Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antarctic Attraction</td>
<td>Manager Marketing &amp; Environmental</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>29.03.2010 30 minutes</td>
<td>Antarctic Attraction, Conference room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3.2 Questionnaires

The second method to collect data for this research was represented by a questionnaire. Although questionnaires may be defined in various forms, Saunders et al. (2007) identified two main types of questionnaires: self-administered questionnaires, which are completed by the respondents, and interviewer-administered questionnaires, whereby responses are recorded by the interviewer on the basis of each respondent’s answers. The latter was adopted for this research, where the interviewer physically met respondents and asked the questions face-to-face, recording the answers, and following a defined schedule of questions from which the interviewer did not deviate (Jennings, 2001). Conducting the surveys with family visitors face-to-face was chosen because many people prefer being interviewed face-to-face rather than filling in a questionnaire (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2000). This situation provided the opportunity for interviewees to receive feedback and personal assurance about the way in which information will be used (Saunders et al., 2007). For this research, a personal conversation was preferred in order to avoid the occurrence of technical or usability barriers and to assist with queries. Potentially sensitive questions about, for example, motivations, age, income and education could also be addressed more empathetically face-to-face. It was further expected that a better quality of answers would be gained if families were personally surveyed, because the interviewer had the possibility to ask further questions if necessary or record additional comments made. This method also provided the additional advantage that all questionnaires are fully and correctly completed which reduced the number of non-usable
questionnaires to zero. Further details about the questionnaire are outlined in the following subsections beginning with the questionnaire purpose and design.

### 3.3.2.1 Questionnaire Purpose and Design

Questionnaires were developed to explore the characteristics of domestic family visitors and their experiences prior to and during the attraction visit. Although the questionnaire was designed to survey only one family member (and for ethical reasons, this person had to be 18 years of age or over), during the course of administering the questionnaires it frequently emerged that other family members including children involved themselves in the research because they were all sitting in a group and listening anyway. Consequently, family members answered the questions jointly which resulted in responses that mostly contained the views and opinions of the whole family group including adults and children alike. Adults spoke on behalf of children, talking about their experiences which usually children themselves divulged prior to or during the research. Children were not always included in the discussion of answers, but were included in the vast majority of cases and therefore this research needs to be seen as a study of the whole family group as a unit, including an intergenerational perspective, instead of just a study from the parental/adult perspective.

The questionnaire was carefully planned, structured, and pilot tested in order to ensure the appropriate questions and sections were included: introduction, family travel and park visiting information, motivation, experiences at the attraction, satisfaction with the visit, changes in holiday and attraction visitation patterns, and demographics (see Appendix B). Closed questions were included in the questionnaire in order to easily group answers concerning family characteristics, motivation, and demographics, while open-ended questions were included to gather in-depth spontaneous answers based on ideas and issues raised by the participants themselves concerning family motivations, experiences, and satisfaction (McIntosh, 1998). Details about the individual sections are provided in the following paragraphs.

The purpose of the introduction was to familiarise the participant with the researcher, outline the need for this research, provide reasons for participation, and give details of the project. Furthermore, the introduction checked the suitability of respondents for the study clarifying their current New Zealand residency and attendance at the visitor attraction with a
family group. In order to familiarise the participants with the procedure and the researcher, the actual questionnaire commenced with closed questions that were easy to answer. Questions in this section (section two) explored family travel and visitation patterns for this specific attraction visit.

Sections three to five had the purpose of investigating the whole family visitor experience pre, during, and at the conclusion of the visit. Part three of the questionnaire identified families’ own conscious motivation to visit the attraction (McIntosh, 1998). It also investigated the degree to which specific motive items (generated by reviewing previous research like Chuo and Heywood (2006), Moutinho (1988), Pearce and Lee (2005)) motivated the visitation of respondents rated on a five-level Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Burns & Burns, 2008; Collis & Hussey, 2009; Jennings, 2001). This part of the questionnaire aimed to explore family motivation to visit attractions as well as similarities and differences in family motivations. Part four gained a valuable insight into family on-site experiences at the visitor attraction. Open-ended questions enabled participants to define their experiences themselves telling about family activities, enjoyment, and main interests as well as their engagement with on-site photography. Part five was developed to investigate family satisfaction with the access to the attraction, value for money, educational and entertainment opportunities, food and drinks, and their overall experience. This section also identified suggestions for improvement. Although the researcher wanted participants to express their satisfaction, the results rather provided further valuable information about family on-site experiences instead of family satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Section six included questions about current family holiday and attraction visitation patterns and any changes to those patterns within the last 18 months, prompted by the recent economic crisis. This section contained a combination of closed questions for the quantitative identification of current holiday and attraction visitation patterns and open questions to investigate the mode and reason for any change in patterns. The aim of section seven was to identify family group characteristics and demographic details to profile respondents. Questions on age, education, income, and gender were in line with standard practices. In terms of ordering, the demographic questions were placed towards the end due to their potential sensitivity.
A pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted with friends who had visited at least one of the three visitor attractions with a family group in order to refine the understanding of questions and check for problems in recording the data. Inappropriateness and grammatical errors were highlighted and refined. During this process of refinement some questions became more open-ended and the general flow of sections became more streamlined, logical and engaging.

3.3.2.2 Data Collection
A convenience sampling technique was chosen to select potential respondents on each day within the two week research period. Potential respondents needed to be current New Zealand residents visiting the attraction with a family group. The interviewer prospected for families consisting of parents and their children, grand-parents and children, three generation families or other arrangements. As a result of human ethics considerations, respondents completing the survey had to be 18 years or older, and were selected on the basis on being the person most closely related to the child or children in the group. If two or more respondents were equally as closely related (for example, a mother and a father), the person who had had the most recent birthday was selected as the respondent. In total, 300 family groups \( n =100 \) at each attraction) were surveyed. Families were surveyed on a ‘next to pass’ basis as they left the attraction in order to ensure information about their whole visitor attraction experience could be gathered. After introducing the research, the visitor was given plenty of time to read the research information sheet, decide whether to participate, and make an informed oral consent. The response rate during the whole research process was 79 percent. The questionnaires were of 10 to 20 minutes duration depending on the answers.

All surveys were completed within a two week time period on weekdays (63%) and weekends (37%). The research was undertaken at different times of the day so that 22 percent of all respondents completed the questionnaire in the morning (10.30am until 12.00pm), 38 percent during lunchtime or early afternoon (12.00pm until 2.30pm), and the remaining 40 percent in the afternoon (2.30pm until 5pm). Completing the questionnaires at different times of the day and on weekdays and weekends ensured a good cross-section of visitors. Near the end of the interviewing period visitors were approached more selectively in order to obtain a good representation of types of family visitors.
While conducting the visitor surveys at the three attractions, the researcher also informally observed family visitors during breaks between interviews. As the research questions of this thesis are also concerned with what families do, observing them seemed to be useful as a supplementary research technique. Observation enabled the researcher to add to the richness of the research data by recording, describing, and analysing people’s behaviour (Saunders et al., 2007). The aim of the observation was to assess the characteristics of domestic family visitors to New Zealand visitor attractions like the family group composition and the age of family members. Furthermore, the observation also added insight into the experience of domestic families attending New Zealand visitor attractions, in light of their activities and behaviours.

The researcher chose to adopt the role of the complete observer who did not take part in activities of the observed people and did not reveal the purpose of the activity to those who were observed. This seemed to be an important point for the research, because people may have acted differently from normal knowing they were observed which may have resulted in misleading findings and results. For ethical reasons, no one observed in this way has been identified or is identifiable.

In terms of the way observation took place, the researcher generally tried to follow a particular family group through the attraction for a certain time, standing near enough to see and hear their activities and comments. Sometimes, the researcher also stationed herself for an extended period at a specific exhibit or popular place of interest, observing groups flow past. The researcher observed the interactions within the family groups, and their interest in various exhibits (for example, how long they spent at an exhibit, whether they read the information panels, the reaction of family group members to the exhibits), as well as other activities at the attraction, including meals and play time, as well as the nature of the family interaction, both positive and negative (for example, disputes amongst family members). The researcher used a diary to note what happened or what was said at the time (Delbridge & Kirkpatrick, 1994). Recording at full length took place on the same day as the fieldwork in order not to forget valuable data. All observation notes were only available to the principal researcher and the supervisors.
3.3.2.3 Data Analysis
After finishing the data collection, the researcher entered the survey responses into a spreadsheet. The program used to analyse the quantitative data was SPSS\(^4\), which enabled the author to calculate and present frequencies and cross-tabulations throughout the results chapter. Qualitative responses from the open-ended questions were entered into Excel, where data were analysed in the search for themes and patterns using open, axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). These patterns were used to identify the main themes presented in the results chapter which provide a greater understanding of family experiences visiting attractions.

3.4 Evaluation of Applied Research Methods
Using interviews and questionnaires enabled the most efficient data collection, but both methods entailed certain limitations. These are discussed after contemplating the ethical considerations relevant for this research.

3.4.1 Ethical Considerations
During the whole research process, ethical considerations according to researchers such as Bell (2005), Jennings (2001), Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2003), and the Human Ethics Committee of Lincoln University were observed. The ethical principles for conducting research with human participants guided the process of questioning family visitors and interviewing visitor attraction managers in a moral and responsible way (The British Psychological Society, 2009). Since participants who are not competent to provide informed consent on their own behalf generally include people under the age of 16 and those with some form of intellectual or mental incapacity, selected participants in this research project had to be 18 years or older and must be suggestive of being intellectually and mentally capable. All information was treated confidentially and was not personally identifiable when published. Management interviewees were informed that they are identified by their role in the organisation, but no names have been used. The questionnaires and interviews were designed in a way that the physical and mental health of participants was not affected. Nonetheless, the

\(^4\) For the purpose of this research, the author used SPSS Statistics Version 19, which is now called PAWS Statistics.
findings of this study were inevitably subject to several limitations that could have affected the quality of data that went along with the conduct of interviews, questionnaires and observation. In being reflexive, the researcher became the *bricoleur* who understood that research is an interactive process between the participants and oneself (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson & Collins, 2005). Ultimately, research must be seen as a dynamic and unpredictable process.

### 3.4.2 Limitations

Selltiz et al. (1962 in Bell 2005:166) point out that “interviewers are human beings and not machines, and their manner may have an effect on respondents”. This means that the attitude of the interviewer may have influenced the responses of the visitor attraction managers and therefore, influenced the results of the research; this is usually referred to as interviewer bias. In order to overcome this bias there were some measures that have been adhered to. Through good preparation and readiness for the interviews, the interviewer attempted to stay objective. Furthermore, appropriate appearance in clothing and manner facilitated a professional and focused interview. In relation to the interviewer bias, the response bias holds that the visitor attraction managers are willing to participate but may be nevertheless sensitive to the in-depth exploration of certain themes which they do not wish, or are not empowered, to discuss (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008; Saunders et al., 2000). The author personally evaluated the interviewees as reliable and trustworthy; but there was commercially sensitive information that probably was not disclosed. As the questionnaires in this study were designed to be face-to-face surveys, the limitations outlined above may also apply to the questionnaires although having a fixed question format should have reduced personal bias. The questionnaires exhibited some additional limitations.

As has been acknowledged in the previous chapter, family motivation is a subject very hard to study, because motivations are covert in that they reflect the needs and wants of individuals (Gee, Choy & Makens, 1984; Holloway et al., 2009; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007). The main access to needs is through the avenue of self reports, but the ability of people to assess their cognitive processes has been questioned (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Mannell, 1989). Moreover, people may not always want to articulate their real motivations because they: (1) did not feel they will be seen by others as being acceptable, (2) may not always recognised their motivations for they may be subconscious or unconscious, and (3) may recognised that
they were apparently conflicting (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007). The researcher tried to overcome these limitations by utilising existing motivational studies when designing the motivational question in order to select the least complicated but still valuable motive items. Furthermore, using face-to-face questionnaires was supposed to enable the researcher to accurately address the sensitive topic of motivations.

Similar to the limitation with identifying motivations, visitors may not have always expressed their real on-site experiences for fear of not conforming to standards created in the society. Consequently, responses to research questions often described idealised experiences of the family visitors and potentially hid conflicts and problems experienced during the attraction visit. This situation is clearly outlined and discussed in Chapter Six and indications for future research emphasise the need to further examine realistic assessments of family experiences at visitor attractions. Observing family visitors at the attractions aimed to help overcome this limitation, but during the short periods of observation no family arguments or conflicts were apparent to the researcher. It was possible that those who had a bad visit may have actually been the ones to refuse to take part in the survey, because they did not want to report their negative experiences. Other possible reasons for refusing to answer the questions might have been either because they wanted to get tired children home, or because they were exhausted themselves.

Necessarily situating oneself at the exit of the attraction in order to survey visitors who could report on their complete visiting experiences also had drawbacks. Families entering the exit area were prepared to leave and did not always want to stay to participate in the research. Children in the group complicated the challenge to capture participants, because at the end of the visit they were often tired and impatient to leave. While the survey was conducted, children often required attention and supervision from adults or they needed entertainment which additionally challenged the research. As stated above, as a result of human ethics considerations, respondents completing the survey had to be 18 years or older which constituted a further research challenge.

The research was only conducted during one two week period in the Easter school holidays which may have limited the research results in terms of variety and quality of data compared to a study conducted over a longer time period. Due to the time constraints of this research, integrating a longer research period into this project was not possible. The two week
period in the Easter school holidays was chosen since an increased number of family visitors was expected in the parks compared to a time with no school holidays. A longer research period might have attained different family visitor characteristics in terms of families visiting the attractions outside the holiday period and might have enabled the collection of more than 300 questionnaires. Furthermore, the number of visitor attractions where questionnaires were conducted could have been more than three. All these factors mean that the research is not representative of all family groups to visitor attractions.

As already indicated earlier in the methods chapter (section 3.3.2.1), the researcher wanted respondents to express their satisfaction with the visit, but an analysis of questionnaire responses revealed that the results rather provided further valuable information about family on-site experiences instead of family satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Consequently, this thesis concentrated on assessing family anticipations and on-site experiences and only briefly investigated family satisfaction. In hindsight, if additional data collection techniques were chosen, an analysis of family satisfaction might have been possible. Conducting in depth, qualitative interviews with the individual family members separately and the family as a group might have provided information about the family’s state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction and the relating reasons. Qualitative interviews may have provided greater opportunity for mutual trust to develop. Additionally, undertaking more formal and systematic observations inorder to explore issues families might not want to discuss (such as family discord) could reveal a better understanding of family conflict and resulting satisfaction/dissatisfaction. These additional methods were beyond the scope of this study, but might be applied in future research.

3.5 Conclusion
This chapter has discussed the research methods used in this study. This research project applied a case study strategy including three study sites: Orana, Willowbank, and the Antarctic Attraction. A multi-method approach consisting of semi-structured face-to-face interviews with four visitor attraction managers and face-to-face questionnaires with family visitors to the three attractions allowed for the linking of quantitative and qualitative data. During the whole research process, ethical considerations were observed. The findings of this study were subject to several limitations that might have affected the quality of data that went along with the conduction of interviews and questionnaires. The three study sites included in the case study strategy are now introduced in the following chapter.
4.1 Introduction
This chapter introduces the three visitor attractions Orana, Willowbank, and the Antarctic Attraction which were selected to constitute the study sites for this research project. The attractions are first separately introduced with regard to their history, ownership, mission, and activities offered. The market of the attractions in general and the importance of the domestic family market specifically are discussed next. The following sections focus on the intentions and approaches of managers at the visitor attractions towards family visitors and discuss differences between the attractions in terms of marketing approaches and operational approaches. The conclusion classifies the three attractions according to the previous discussion and presents a classification model for each attraction.

4.2 Orana Wildlife Park
Orana is set on 80 hectares of park-like grounds, is located on the outskirts of Christchurch, and is New Zealand’s only open range zoo. The park opened to the public in 1976 and today the animal collection has over 400 animals from 70 different species. Animal encounters are a park speciality and get visitors up close to endangered animals (e.g. tigers, rhinoceros, cheetahs, and keas). Where possible, only streams, moats and banks are used as barriers to allow visitors the opportunity to see the animals in a natural setting. During daily animal feeds visitors can experience and learn about the individual abilities of the animals like seeing a tiger leap or climb a pole for its food or watch a race between cheetahs. Visitors can also hand feed giraffes and a range of animals in the farmyard and they can travel through the lion habitat on board of a specially modified vehicle. As denoted in the park map of Orana (Figure 4.1), a complimentary Safari Shuttle transports visitors, who do not want to walk, through the park, driven by a wildlife expert who provides a commentary (Orana Wildlife Trust, 2003a). A restaurant including inside and outside seating possibilities and a gift shop located at the exit of the attraction also cater to the visitors’ well-being.
Orana is owned and operated by Orana Wildlife Trust, a registered charitable trust and not-for-profit organisation (Orana Wildlife Trust, 2003c,d). As a charitable trust approximately 90 percent of the attraction’s financial resources are generated through the gate (e.g. admission, encounters or souvenirs) with additional financial support from sponsors, fund raising programmes (animal adoption, donations towards specific appeals) or an annual operational grant from the Christchurch City Council. (Marketing Manager, Orana). The Trust operates according to the following mission:

(1) Provide quality recreational facilities for the enjoyment of the community as well as domestic and international visitors.
(2) Undertake conservation work in support of endangered species from both New Zealand and overseas.
(3) Educate and inspire visitors to care about the environment and conservation issues, particularly young people who will be the future caretakers of biodiversity.
(4) Research captive fauna in direct support of in-situ conservation programmes.

(Marketing Manager, Orana)

Orana has managed to be internationally recognised for its involvement in zoo-based breeding programmes for endangered exotic animals, as well as New Zealand's own rare fauna (Orana Wildlife Trust, 2003c). All animal enclosures, the animal feeds and the ride on the
Shuttle are accompanied by interpretation panels and/or a presentation from a wildlife guide to educate visitors. The Zoo School is the formal education programme of Orana endorsed by the Ministry of Education. It offers interactive learning experiences for students and develops a customised programme to meet the different requirements of each school group (Orana Wildlife Trust, 2003e).

4.3 Willowbank Wildlife Reserve
Willowbank can be best described as a ‘Kiwi Wildlife Experience’ offering a tour through a wildlife reserve, an interactive Maori cultural experience, and a restaurant/cafe which offers traditional New Zealand menus. The wildlife park provides a collection of exhibits which allow visitors to interact with the farm animals and to experience a selection of New Zealand native and introduced wildlife in natural bush surroundings first hand by watching, touching, and feeding animals. During the up close and personal journey into New Zealand, visitors can also learn about the diversity of New Zealand’s natural environment and history (Willowbank Wildlife Reserve, 2010b). As indicated in the park map of Willowbank (Figure 4.2), walking through ‘Wild New Zealand’ acquaints visitors to introduced species such as deer and wallabies. Following the path through ‘Heritage New Zealand’ where the farmyard including pigs, rabbits, goats, and cattle illustrates early farming, the walk ends in ‘Natural New Zealand’ which exhibits native wildlife, flora, and culture like the Kiwi bird and a Maori village (Willowbank Wildlife Reserve, 2010c).

Willowbank was established in 1975, and is still owned and operated on a for-profit basis by the same family, the Willis family. Their effort is directed towards the achievement of several goals: conservation and breeding, education, culture and history, and entertainment (Marketing Manager, Willowbank). The privately owned business prides itself on its conservation, rehabilitation and breeding of rare and endangered New Zealand species, especially kiwis, and accepts the responsibility and guardianship that goes with preserving and promoting wildlife conservation within New Zealand (Willowbank Wildlife Reserve, 2010b). A guided tour through the Natural New Zealand section with knowledgeable staff increases the pleasure and the educational input of the visit. Education packages are offered for Kindergartens, children groups and international language schools to enhance learning during a fun experience (Willowbank Wildlife Reserve, 2010d). Willowbank is open at night time.
which allows visitors to enjoy the habits of the nocturnal inhabitants, especially when it comes to the New Zealand Kiwi living in Willowbank (Willowbank Wildlife Reserve, 2010a). The attraction also offers the Ko Tane Maori Cultural Performance that entertains and educates through experiencing the Powhiri greeting in a pre-European village followed by an interactive Maori performance (Ko Tane, 2010).

4.4 The Antarctic Attraction
Established in 1992, the Antarctic Attraction is the visitor centre at the International Antarctic Centre (IAC) located in the heart of a working Antarctic campus from where many Antarctic missions are organised (IAC, 2010a). It was opened as a division of Christchurch International
Airport, but has been under the private ownership of Richard Benton since December 2000 (IAC, 2010b). The Antarctic Attraction is designed to bring a powerful and memorable experience of Antarctica to visitors in a fun, exciting, informative, and commercially successful way (IAC, 2010a), as the following attests:

“The philosophy we achieve here is to showcase what is happening in Antarctica today giving people a better understanding about Antarctica without conveying the impression of being a school or science centre.” (CEO Antarctic Attraction Ltd.)

Opportunities to experience fun are provided to visitors via the Hagglund ride, an amphibious all-terrain tracked vehicle driving over an adventure course (IAC, 2010c). Inside the centre exhibits include New Zealand’s first combined indoor/outdoor penguin viewing area serving as a penguin life support space, which provides the opportunity to learn about how better to protect New Zealand’s and Antarctica’s natural wildlife (IAC, 2010d).
The Antarctic Storm blows at -18°C in an all-weather indoor polar room chilled to -5°C, where visitors can slide down an icy slope and shelter in an ice cave (IAC, 2010e, f). These experiences are not only fun for visitors, but they are educational, teaching about life on this continent at the same time. A gallery area contains informative displays showcasing modern day Antarctica (IAC, 2010g) and visitors can also learn from qualified teaching staff (IAC, 2010h). A strong concurrent emphasis on education and entertainment/fun found at the attraction can be summarized in the word “edutainment”. “Edutainment” describes a service provided to attraction visitors that possess the allure of entertaining games, plays, and activities while achieving educational goals (Okan, 2003; Resnick, 2004). All activities and attractions are illustrated in the park map of the Antarctic Attraction (Figure 4.3).

4.5 The Market of the Three Visitor Attractions

The interviews with the managers of the three visitor attractions disclosed additional information in terms of the characteristics and group structures of the domestic family market. Orana is a general audience facility attracting people (families as well as non-families) from New Zealand (80% - 85%) and overseas (15% - 20%), but local visitors from the Christchurch area make up the single largest demographic (50% - 55%). The family market is key to the attraction and accounts for approximately 65 percent to 70 percent of visitors. Most families visiting Orana are locals (55% - 60%), 25 percent are domestic visitors and 15 percent come from international locations. However, the Marketing Manager emphasised that families do not constitute the sole source of visitation:

“Animals attract general audiences, but they are especially of interest for younger children. That’s why families make up our main target group. During summer time family groups still comprise the main market but a wider range of visitors come through the Park.”

Visitors to Willowbank arrive from all over the world. The target market for Ko Tane mainly consists of international adult visitors in the evenings (20% of total visitor numbers), while the general customer group for the Reserve is mainly made up of domestic (15%) and local (80%) family visitors during the day:

“The market changes in the evening. During the day, the park receives predominantly local family visitors and in the evening visitors change to the international adults market.” (Marketing Manager, Willowbank)
Older couples with and without their grand-children and the international group market (e.g. language school students) are also frequent visitors to Willowbank. Willowbank considers itself to be a family attraction, because they offer many possibilities to touch and feed animals (which are small and cuddly rather than big and wild) which is especially interesting for children. (Marketing Manager, Willowbank).

Aiming to convey the global significance of the Antarctic continent to audiences of all ages (from toddlers to senior visitors) and nationalities, the Antarctic Attraction attracts 250,000 visitors a year. International tourists account for the majority of visitors (78%), while 22 percent are domestic visitors (including 5 percent locals) who mainly hail from the North Island (90%). The business draws in 30,000 families a year (12%) with the majority of these families also arriving from international locations. In spite of families representing a minor visitor segment, the attraction considers itself as a family attraction but not exclusively so. Their biggest challenge in the family market is to provide adequate and sufficient opportunities to keep young children entertained:

“While mum and dad do all the ‘boring stuff’, the kids need something to occupy them. We have the pompoms [little wooden penguins displaying information for children] and audio guides for kids that entertain them though.” (CEO, Antarctic Attraction)

The numbers of first time visitors and repeat visitors vary among the three visitor attractions. The management at Orana and Willowbank both indicated that on average 30 percent of all visitors are first time visitors and 70 percent are repeat visitors. On average 90 percent of visitors at the Antarctic Attraction are first time visitors and only ten percent are repeat visitors. Although it might be assumed that repeat visitors have a shorter visit duration than first time visitors because they have already been to the attraction before, according to the attraction managers the visit duration is solely dependent on the amount of activities supplied. Extended visit duration of about four hours was highlighted by the Orana manager as one of the major strengths of the attraction in regard to families. By contrast, shorter visit duration of two to three hours at the Antarctic Attraction was referred to as a weakness.

Managers at the Antarctic Attraction stated that their adult visitors mainly tend to be between 40 years and 60 years, whereas managers at Orana and Willowbank emphasised the age categories of adult visitors to be mainly between 25 years and 45 years. This peculiarity is
related to the nature of the attractions, which in turn influences the age of children visiting with their families. Children are older at the Antarctic Attraction than at Orana or Willowbank. At Willowbank pre-school children are a major target group, whereas children at the Antarctic Attraction tend to be 8-16 years or older. The market at Orana features children of all ages, but is still slightly dominant in the 1-8 year category. An explanation for this age difference between the attractions may be found in the core product offered by the attractions:

“When children are young, animals are of mass interest, whereas when they get to teenage years it is more difficult to get them back to the zoo.” (Marketing Manager, Orana)

Due to the animal theme prevailing at Orana and Willowbank, the difficulty in attracting teenagers together with their families was specifically outlined:

“To children aged older than 12 years Willowbank does not have the same appeal. Parents often leave them at home and just visit with their younger children.” (Marketing Manager, Willowbank)

“Children 15 years or older often use the possibility to visit without their parents and come in groups with their friends. Therefore, families are usually only seen with children aged 0-12 years.” (Marketing Manager, Orana)

Female visitors are more frequent visitors to the attractions than male visitors with an average division of 55 percent females and 45 percent males identified at each of the sites. It was argued that this gender difference is basically due to the personal organisation of the families: the father is working and the mother is taking care of the children. Accordingly, at Orana and Willowbank, lone parents (especially lone mothers) and their children were emphasised as frequent visitors on weekdays and during holidays:

“It [the family structure] depends very much on the time of the year and week. During holiday time, the main visiting groups are clearly families, often single parents (especially mothers) with their children when only one parent is off from work. In regards to weekdays, singles and couples (often travellers, but also locals) and single parents with pre-schoolers account for the main number of visitors.” (Marketing Manager, Orana)

The Marketing Manager at Orana further declared that whole family groups are usually seen during the weekends:

“The weekend is definitely more family time and especially on Sundays there are many pre-schoolers with their parents.” (Marketing Manager, Willowbank)
This change of visitor markets between weekdays and weekends was also mentioned by the Marketing Manager at Willowbank:

“The local pre-school market is the park’s main customer group during the week. This market mainly consists of the mother and one or two children per family. Considering the weekends, it is still the local market but families are coming as a whole.” (Marketing Manager, Willowbank)

Since at the Antarctic Attraction the international visitor market is more dominant, a change of visitor characteristics between weekdays/weekends and holidays is not as noticeable compared to Orana and Willowbank. At all three attractions the managers stated that both lone mothers and whole families most frequently visited with two children as exemplified by the Marketing Manager at Orana:

“Consistently, there are to see all sorts of families, but common is probably the combination of one or two adults (mainly parents, but sometimes grand-parents) and two children, often accompanied by grand-parents.”

Domestic family visitors constitute a market for all three visitor attractions, but the scope of the market differs. Despite the distinct sizes and characteristics of the domestic family markets, managers from all three attractions ascribed importance to domestic family visitors.

4.6 The Importance of Domestic Family Visitors to the Attractions

The family market segment in generating visitors is important for all three attractions. It was mentioned in all interviews that domestic and especially local family visitors refer the attractions to family and friends which brings new visitors. The importance of local families generating additional visitors was especially emphasised at Willowbank:

“The domestic family market is particularly important on holidays when families visit friends and relatives. Local hosts like to take their guests (when visiting with young children) to Willowbank to entertain them for the day.”

It is thus fundamental for managers to ensure that domestic families have a pleasurable experience which may afterwards result into positive word of mouth; a point highlighted by the CEO of the Antarctic Attraction:

“The domestic market is important, because especially local people who had a good visitor experience here at the attraction do refer us and bring visitors.”
Domestic visitors in general were described as important by managers of all three attractions, because they can respond quickly to new things as indicated by the Marketing Manager of Orana:

“For example if we have a new addition such as an animal baby and gain media coverage/advertise, we often notice a spike in visitation immediately, generally from the domestic market – i.e. the domestic market is very responsive.”

Since the domestic family market is not significantly big at the Antarctic Attraction, this market is of more importance for Orana and Willowbank in terms visitor numbers, turnover, and repeat visitation. It was stated by the marketing managers of Orana and Willowbank that domestic, and especially local, families are repeat visitors who, despite a membership or annual pass owned by some families according them unlimited free park entry, generate the highest turnover by for example purchasing food, drinks, and souvenirs. In the past, management identified that families regularly want to enjoy a family outing in a family friendly environment and since the two attractions offer “an experience for the whole family” (Marketing Manager, Orana and Marketing Manager, Willowbank), families are motivated to return to these attractions.

The importance of domestic family visitors to Orana and Willowbank has not changed due to the economic situation in the past two years. Attraction managers did not notice any particular changes concerning their family market in terms of visiting patterns, for example no decrease or increase of visiting frequencies, no modified spending patterns, and no change in the characteristics of families visiting. By contrast, according to the Director of the Antarctic Attraction, with the recession the local market has experienced a drop-off. He has noticed that families are oriented towards cheaper or free attractions, which constitutes a challenge for the attraction to continuously attract this market. This entails an increase in importance of the domestic family market, but since this segment only represents a minor target group of the Antarctic Attraction the change is not very significant for the attraction.

Because of the relatively unchanged situation at the three attractions the managers have not adapted their operational efforts or their marketing concepts towards this target market. However, all three attractions reported that they hoped to increase visitor numbers in this portion of the market in the future, which may lead to increasing importance. This intention may be supported by tourism forecasts to the year 2015 (section 1.2.2) which state that
domestic visitor expenditure, domestic visitor nights, and domestic day trips will increase annually (Ministry of Tourism, 2010). Summing up, domestic family visitors are an important customer group for the three attractions with the level of importance increasing as the size of the visitor segment increases. The marketing approach of the attractions is discussed next.

4.7 Marketing Approaches
All three visitor attractions claim to have a generic marketing focus which is family friendly, but their marketing approaches considerably differ. The Antarctic Attraction primarily markets in line with the main audience - international visitors with and without children - using media such as magazines and brochures in hotels, information centres, and the airport. It was emphasised by the Marketing Manager at the Antarctic Attraction that a generic focus is important, because:

“We don’t exclusively target families in any marketing activity. Since we got two groups of visitors, with and without children, we have to be careful with that, because we don’t want people to think this is all about kids.”

Although the manager described the marketing as family friendly, a comparison to marketing activities at Orana and Willowbank reveals that the scope of family oriented advertisement at the Antarctic Attraction is less than at Orana and Willowbank. Considering the visitor numbers of the family segments identified at the three attractions, the differing levels of family oriented marketing make sense.

Orana and Willowbank concentrate on channels reaching domestic and local visitors as well as the family market. The Marketing Manager at Orana reveals the attraction uses a variety of mainstream media in order to attract a generic audience: television advertising, local radio stations, local news-papers, brochures, Internet, travel guides, accompanied by a PR campaign liaising with media. Similarly, the marketing approach at Willowbank involves television and radio advertisements, newspaper articles and advertisements, billboards on the street and back of buses, and PR to get the attention of the local market and raise awareness. In regard to international and domestic marketing efforts, brochures in hotels, motels, lodges and i-sites are the main promotional outlets at Willowbank. Although Orana and Willowbank try to be as generic as they can in order to attract the most diverse visitors possible, during holiday periods they initiate advertisement focused on families. Advertisements in local papers during
holiday periods effectively promote deals for those travelling with children and Orana include coupons beneficial for families in their advertisements:

“The effectiveness of placing coupons in newspapers has been determined to be very high as some families tell us they wait for it the whole year to gain the special deal. As a community focussed organisation it is important to offer great value family focussed deals during the holidays. Our membership is another way to offer ongoing value to local people and families.” (Marketing Manager, Orana)

Promoting the attractions is an essential element of the marketing efforts of the managers, but they also engage in market research in order to design their marketing accordingly. All attractions continuously collect basic visitor information at the admissions point about nationality, place of residence, and first time or repeat visit. They further arrange opportunities for visitors at the end of the attraction visit to provide further information about their characteristics and visiting experiences mostly in terms of satisfaction and suggestions for improvement. The marketing managers at Orana and Willowbank place short paper-based self-completion questionnaires in the exit areas, whereas managers at the Antarctic Attraction use more detailed computer-based questionnaires to gather information. Detailed visitor information is collected at Orana and Willowbank once a year for a certain time during summer school holidays using face-to-face questionnaires. While this research is valuable, it is limited by its seasonal nature and does not investigate visitor characteristics and experiences in spring, autumn, or winter.

Based on results from their own research, managers suggested that costs and value for money are critical issues influencing the visiting experience of families. The scope of family friendly offers is less at the Antarctic Attraction compared to Orana and Willowbank, which offer families a membership or annual pass enabling unlimited free entry for one year. The membership at Orana is a subscription and has a fixed year from July 1 to June 30 annually and is equal to the cost of two visits to the park. Individual adults pay $50.00, children 5-14 $16 (pre-schoolers are free), and a family including two adults and up to three children $116. Willowbank annual passes are valid for one year from date of purchase and a pass costs less than the cost of two visits. The cost for an annual family pass is $99 for a family of two adults and up to three children (aged 5 to 14 years). Individual adult passes are $49, and a child pass for 5 to 14 year olds is $19 (under 5s are free). These offers constitute especially good value for money for local families:
“Our annual passes are the perfect option for locals, especially those with families. Purchasing an annual pass really pays off, because there are only $15 difference to one entry for the whole family and you can visit as many times as you like all year around.” (Marketing Manager, Willowbank)

According to the management of Orana and Willowbank, the pass/membership is especially valued by families due to the unlimited number of entries:

“Sometimes the standard visit duration in the park of three to four hours is not manageable with young children and purchasing a membership provides the families with the opportunity to visit again as often as they wish and do not miss out on anything.” (Marketing Manager, Orana)

At Willowbank, the Marketing Manager indicated a positive relationship between the frequency of visits and the annual pass:

“Out of all local families, about 80 percent purchase an annual pass and use it very regularly. Most pass holders visit Willowbank approximately once a week, but some pass holders (especially with pre-school children) visit up to three times a week.”

At all three attractions, management attempts to have family friendly pricing strategies which makes visitation affordable for customers. They offer free entry for children under the age of five and family concessions. At Orana the price for an individual adult is $25 and $8 for a child aged 5-14 years, but the family concession is valid for two adults and up to three children and costs $58. At Willowbank entrance fees are a little higher with $27 for an individual adult and $10.50 for a child, but a family concession valid for two adults and up to three children is a cheaper alternative for families costing $65 in total. The Antarctic Attraction charges much higher prices compared to Orana and Willowbank. An individual adult has to pay $55, a child 5-15 years has to pay $26, and a family group ticket is available for $145 which includes two adults and up to four children (an extra child compared to the other two attractions). However, the management of the Antarctic Attraction admits their entry fees are a weakness when trying to attract the family market:

“We are challenged, because we are not the cheapest attraction in Christchurch and that is because we are privately owned. However, we need to make money in order to reinvest in the business. We know that many local people think we are quite an expensive attraction and that is why we introduced the marketing program ‘Locals Go Free with Paying Visitor’. We also have half price weekends for families.” (CEO, Antarctic Attraction)
The Director of the Antarctic Attraction pointed out that international visitors are not as price sensitive as domestic or local visitors.

Special deals limited to specific periods of time, for example school holidays or Christmas, are also part of the pricing strategy at each attraction:

“We do a range of things in terms of price, because Orana aims to be family friendly and to make visitation for our customers affordable. The family concession pass enables families to visit for a reduced cost. During the term time school holidays we offer all sorts of special children’s deals which are designed to help families.” (Marketing Manager, Orana)

At Willowbank, managers decided not to reduce the prices during school holidays, but occasionally offer additional activities which increase the value for money such as face painting for children or Easter egg hunt. The Antarctic Attraction introduced the ‘Antarctic Ambassador’ valid to the end of the year 2010 allowing one free local with every out of town full paying visitor. This offer is not specifically designed for families, but may still support them financially if visiting with out of town friends or family. A focus on the domestic family market included in the marketing strategies of the attractions is also recognised in the operational approaches of the attractions.

4.8 Operational Approaches

The three visitor attractions have developed operational approaches tailored to the motivations of family visitors, which were identified by their own marketing research. Having a family day out that is stimulating for the family by seeing or interacting with animals was especially emphasised by the Orana and Willowbank Marketing Managers as primary motivations for family visitors:

“The main general reason for families to come to Willowbank is to have a family outing, but when it get down to why they specifically choose Willowbank: Parents come to Willowbank for their children. The park offers great opportunities for free interaction with the animals, that’s always exciting for the kids.” (Marketing Manager, Willowbank)

“The main reasons for people to come here is for a great family day out, somewhere to bring the children, family or friends. They also come to see the animals, because that is entertaining for the whole family.” (Marketing Manager, Orana)
Another interesting comment was made by the Marketing Manager of Willowbank in relation to “own time” as a motivation for adult family members to visit the attraction:

“The benefits for the parents are having a break and relax a little while the children partly entertain themselves by looking around and interacting with the animals. That’s one of the reasons why families visit us.” (Willowbank)

Personal development and education was highlighted as a major visiting motivation for families by the management of the Antarctic Attraction. Additionally, the reputation of the park as a tourist attraction was also thought by the management to motivate families to visit:

“Families for sure come to this attraction because they want to learn about and experience the Antarctic. We also have a reputation of being one of the best tourist attractions in Christchurch, this makes many people curious.” (CEO, Antarctic Attraction)

Although the major motivations for families to visit the three attractions vary according to the declarations of the managers, family time, seeing animals, and learning/education were felt to be important issues of family visiting motivations by the managers of all three attractions. These motivations influence the attractions’ operational approaches in terms of providing appropriate catering, education, entertainment, and unique experiences. The provision of food and drinks at the attractions was aimed at offering a good selection appropriate for children as well as adults, which included special children meals or lunchboxes. Orana and Willowbank further serve the needs of families to keep expenditure as low as possible by providing the self-catering facilities in terms of picnic tables and barbecues:

“We also have two picnic areas with free gas operated barbeques so people can bring and cook their own barbeque if they like. Many families appreciate this opportunity, because they can’t afford to buy food from the restaurant.” (Marketing Manager, Orana)

As discussed earlier, the Antarctic Attraction is not as prepared for family visitors as Orana and Willowbank are and thus only provides the relatively pricy opportunity to eat and drink in the restaurant.

With regard to education/learning it was emphasised that the management at each attraction aims at achieving a balanced combination of learning opportunities for children and adults in order to educate all family members. Especially the presentations held by keepers at
Orana and Willowbank are thought to be family friendly, because they appeal to young and old:

“Education possibilities probably more appealing for families are the animal feeds where keepers hold presentations about the animals themselves as well as the conservation and breeding work done at the park. That’s really something for the whole family, because children can watch and adults can listen.” (Marketing Manager, Willowbank)

The learning opportunities were identified to be oriented towards different age categories of children at each of the three attractions. Willowbank orientates its learning opportunities for primarily pre-school children. The park is constructed for children to learn respectful interaction with animals and perhaps basic informational facts about them like their typical behaviour in nature. Orana arranges learning opportunities for pre-school children, who are interested in only basic information, and school age children, who are able to understand more advanced information about the animals. The Antarctic Attraction is well equipped with educational opportunities for school age children, but management identified the learning opportunities for pre-school children as a weakness.

Similar to the management approach towards learning opportunities, from managerial responses it became clear that each attraction tries to provide entertainment for children as well as adults. This entails the need to offer a variety of activities and opportunities appropriate for families, which was recognised by the management of the attractions:

“Orana offers entertainment for the whole family by providing a huge variety of activities. Most activities in the park can be enjoyed by the whole family together; however, there are some parts specifically designed for children or adults. Cultural aspects such as national animals generate more interest amongst adults. Although many adults enjoy it just as much as the young visitors giraffe feeds and the farm yard are especially created for young children. Different ages can do different activities.” (Marketing Manager, Orana)

“Entertainment is specifically designed for the children as Willowbank offers birthday parties for children, donkey rides, face painting, etc., but the Lemur encounter for example is made for adults and children likewise.” (Marketing Manager, Willowbank)

“I think it is a pretty good mix of activities we got. We have the snow room and the dress-up characters which the kids love, everybody seems to like penguins, the Antarctic storm, and the Haggland, and the ‘Behind the Scene Tour’ is probably a bit more adult focused. There is something for everybody, we are very conscious about mix.” (CEO, Antarctic Attraction)
Offering a variety of activities facilitates the time together as a family in terms of joint family experiences thought of as one of the primary family visiting motivations. Besides supplying a variety of activities, the interviews further revealed the importance of providing visitors different/unique experiences during their attraction visit as prompted by the Marketing Manager of Orana:

“Orana strives to provide points of difference. We recognise we must compete in the entertainment industry and so provide an entertaining visitor experience. Within the animal feeds there are some genuine unique experiences such as hand feeding giraffes, meeting rhinos in a ‘face-to-face’ encounter, and seeing the cheetah sprint down a paddock.”

Since weather can affect all three attractions in a positive and negative way, it was indicated by the four managers in the interviews as an unpredictable risk that is difficult to influence. Good weather generates high visitor numbers at the outdoor attractions Orana and Willowbank, while it decreases visitor numbers at the indoor Antarctic Attraction; bad weather has the opposite effect. The Antarctic Attractions is less affected by the weather conditions than Orana and Willowbank though, because international visitors (the main market of the Antarctic Attraction) are usually not very flexible in their time of visitation which makes them more likely to visit the attraction independent of weather conditions. By contrast, local and domestic customers generally visit Orana and Willowbank on days where the weather is good, because they have the possibility to choose which days most suit them. A bad weather period may thus generate low visitor numbers for the outdoor attractions. It was emphasised by the manager at Orana that in order to minimise bad weather impacts, the park has established new indoor viewing areas at the latest exhibits in order to improve the visitor experience in these conditions:

“A weakness Orana has to cope with is the New Zealand weather, unpredictable and not influenceable. Local and domestic families generally visit on days where the weather is good, because they have the possibility to choose which days most suit them. To minimise bad weather impacts, the park established new indoor viewing areas at the latest exhibits.” (Marketing Manager, Orana)

In sum, the three visitor attractions try to specifically cater to family visitors by offering a variety of food and drinks as well as educational and entertainment opportunities customised to the interests of children and adults facilitating time together in terms of joint family experiences. After the marketing and operational approaches of the three visitor attractions
have been discussed, the following section classifies the attractions according to the classification model of Leask (2008) presented earlier (section 1.2.1).

### 4.9 A Classification of the Visitor Attractions

As discussed in the opening chapter, classifying visitor attractions is important for the understanding of this research project. Based on the subsequent summaries of the attractions’ characteristics and market the researcher adapted three models which indicate the classification of the visitor attractions. Orana is operated by a registered charitable trust in a commercially astute manner to achieve its fourfold mission including recreation, conservation, education and research. Although the business attracts general audiences from mainly local and domestic demographics, the family market is of key importance in terms of visitor numbers, repeat visits, and yield. The categorisation and classification of the park according to the model of Leask (2008) is summarised in Figure 4.4.

Source: Adapted from Leask (2008:23)

**Figure 4.4 Classification of Visitor Attractions – Orana**

Willowbank is a private family owned for-profit visitor attraction offering the opportunity to study the natural environment of the country and to interact with animals with the aim to be successful in conservation and breeding, education, culture and history, and
entertainment. Local families account for the major visitor group of the wildlife reserve and consequently play an important role for the business also in terms of marketing. Figure 4.5 indicates the resulting categorisation and classification of Willowbank as a visitor attraction by means of Leask’s (2008) model.

The Antarctic Attraction is privately owned and commercially operated for profit aiming at high quality “edutainment” for the collective good of animals and people. Although the domestic family market is of certain importance for the attraction, their main market consists of international visitors without children what is reflected in the marketing targets. The classification of this attraction is again illustrated in the model adapted from Leask (2008) (Figure 4.6).
4.10 Conclusion

Results indicate that domestic family visitors are an important customer group for the three attractions with the level of importance increasing as the size of the visitor segment increases. This explains the focus on the domestic family market in the marketing strategies of the attractions, which is either activity based or monetary based. The three visitor attractions try to specifically cater to family visitors by offering a variety of food and drinks as well as educational and entertainment opportunities customised to the interests of children and adults. Since the management interviews were only one of two data collection methods in order to gather information about the three attractions and their family visitors, results from the questionnaires conducted with family visitors on-site are presented next.
Chapter 5: Families and Their Experiences at Visitor Attractions  
- Results Chapter -

5.1 Introduction
This chapter presents research findings gathered from New Zealand families visiting Orana, Willowbank, and the Antarctic Attraction. The aim is to generate results that facilitate a better understanding of families and their experiences visiting these attractions. The chapter first presents findings on the main themes of family group structures, characteristics, and family visitation patterns of the sample. It then presents family experiences before and during visiting the attraction. Experiences prior to the attraction visit focus on family motivation and source of information about the attractions. The presentation of on-site experiences centres on fun family activities and disparities in these experiences as well as experiences with learning opportunities, photography, own interests, and a change in routine. The section further reveals information about family experiences with the catering, access, and value for money including evaluations of family satisfaction with these experiences.

5.2 Family Group Structures and Characteristics of Respondents
The following section presents a description of the make-up of the family groups, including the composition of adults in the group and the number and age of children. A profile of the respondents, including socio-demographic characteristics and information about the non-Christchurch families travelling to and staying in the city are also presented.

5.2.1 Family Group Composition
As outlined in the methods chapter (see section 3.3.2.1), this research needs to be seen as a study of family groups in units rather than just a study of the parental/adult perspective. However, the person who was originally selected as a respondent for the family group was in 53 percent of all cases the mother, followed by the father (35%) and a grandparent (13%).

Family structures found at the visitor attractions can be divided into five categories: (1) parents (mother and father) with child or children, (2) parents with child or children and extended family, (3) one parent with child or children, (4) one parent with child or children and extended family, and (5) grandparent(s) with grand children. Extended family signifies
family members such as grandparents, uncle, aunt, niece, or nephew. The family group composition is presented in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1 Family Group Composition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Structure</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two parents with child or children</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two parents with child or children and extended family</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One parent with child or children</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One parent with child or children and extended family</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparent(s) with grand children</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis shows that 48 percent of all participating families were visiting as groups including both mother and father, while extended family members accompanied approximately one third of parents and their children during the attraction visit. As indicated in Table 5.1, 47 percent were lone parents visiting with their children and, sometimes, extended family, with the vast majority of these being ‘lone mothers’ (44%). By contrast, only eight ‘lone fathers’ (3%) were interviewed in this research. Approximately half of all lone parents were accompanied by extended family members irrespective of the number of children. It must be pointed out that the family structures identified here only refer to the attraction visit and not to the actual structure of the family so that ‘lone mothers’ or ‘lone fathers’ at the attraction were not necessarily single mothers or single fathers in their everyday family life. The analysis yields that grandparents also took their grandchildren to the attractions (5%).

The four main categories of family structure – one parent (with or without extended family) and two parents (with or without extended family) - found at the three visitor attractions are illustrated in two Figures which are structured according to the individual attractions. Figure 5.1 illustrates lone parents and lone parents visiting with extended family and Figure 5.2 presents two parents and two parents visiting with extended family. Figure 5.1 demonstrates that lone parents were most frequently recorded at Willowbank, followed by Orana and the Antarctic Attraction. Figure 5.2 presents that family groups with both parents were least frequently interviewed at Willowbank followed by Orana and the Antarctic Attraction.
Comparing these Figures, it is interesting to find that Willowbank attracted much more lone parents than Orana or the Antarctic Attraction, which in turn rather attracted two-parent families. It is also recognised that about half of lone parents were accompanied by extended family, but only about one third of two-parent families were accompanied by extended family. According to cross-tabulations, lone parents most frequently visited on weekdays, whereas two-parent families mostly visited on weekends. It was observed during the research that both
lone parents and two-parent families most frequently visited with two children, which is supported by statistical results of this research.

Given that already 44 percent of all surveyed families were lone mothers with their children (and extended family), it was not surprising to find that on average 61 percent of respondents (that is, the one member of each family group who originally agreed to participate in the survey) were female and only 39 percent were male. The least difference between male and female respondents existed at Orana (53% female and 47% male); whereas Willowbank visitors exhibited the biggest difference (70% female and 30% male).

5.2.2 Age of Family Members
The research also investigates the age of respondents and of all children belonging to surveyed families. Given that 87 percent of the respondents were either the mother or father of the family group and 13 percent were grandparents, the age categories of respondents (not all adult family members) presented in Figure 5.3 may be regarded as the age categories of the parents and grandparents.

![Figure 5.3 Age Categories of Parents and Grandparents](image)

According to answers, parents were not older, and grandparents not younger, than 50-59 years. The majority of respondents were between 30-49 years (Orana 71%; Willowbank 87%; Antarctic Attraction 64%). It is noticeable that adults in family groups at the Antarctic Attraction were older than those at Orana and Willowbank. Figure 5.3 clearly indicates that
visitors to Orana and Willowbank dominated the younger age categories (18 years – 39 years), whereas visitors to the Antarctic Attraction dominated the older age categories (40 years - 70 years or older). This difference might be related to the nature of the attractions, which in turn influenced the age of children visiting with their families.

Similar to age differences of adults between the attractions identified above, children visiting with family groups were older at the Antarctic Attraction (with a mean age of 8.75 years) than at Orana (mean age of 6.2 years) or Willowbank (mean age of 5.3 years). This was generated for each attraction individually by adding the age of all children from surveyed families and dividing it by the total number of children present. There were fewer children visiting with the families surveyed at the Antarctic Attraction than at Orana or Willowbank: there were 144 children in the family groups at the Antarctic Attraction, 170 children at Orana, 201 children at Willowbank. The majority of children at Orana and Willowbank were aged from 1-7 years, whereas children at the Antarctic Attraction tended to be 8-16 years or older (Figure 5.4). Interestingly, there was no difference between any of the attractions in the proportion of 0-1 year old children.

![Figure 5.4 An Overview of the Age of Children in Family Groups Interviewed](image-url)
These findings are supported by observations made at the attractions, which reveal that preschool aged children were particularly represented at Willowbank. The graph in Figure 5.4 indicates a perceptibly low number of children up to 12 months and 15 years or older at each of the attractions. Possible reasons for the small number of children under one are investigated later in section 5.7.

5.2.3 Level of Education

Differences between the attractions are also identifiable regarding the level of education of respondents (Table 5.2). The table displays the percentage of valid responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orana n = 96</th>
<th>Willowbank n = 96</th>
<th>Antarctic Attraction n = 95</th>
<th>Average n = 287</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Formal Qualification</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Qualification</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Qualification</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Degree</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Tertiary</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All three groups of visitors displayed relatively similar levels of education, with the majority of visitors at each attraction having post-school qualifications. Visitors to the Antarctic Attraction were the most highly qualified, with over a quarter (29%) stating that they had a postgraduate degree, compared to 20 percent of the sample at each of the other two attractions. Overall, however, over half of the sample at each attraction had either a degree or postgraduate degree. Due to its sensitivity, five percent refused to answer this question. In comparison to the New Zealand population, the interviewed visitors were considerably more educated because in 2006 eleven percent of New Zealanders had a university degree and five percent had a postgraduate degree (Statistics New Zealand, 2006b).

5.2.4 Level of Income

Statistics New Zealand (2006a) published that the median income of New Zealand families (here defined as a couple or one parent with a child or children) in 2006 was NZ$59,000. By comparison, this research reveals that most families visiting the attractions (65%) had a yearly
household income of NZ$60,000 or more including 29 percent having NZ$100,000 or more. This result was maybe influenced by 15 percent of all participants not indicating their income. It is noticeable that families visiting Orana and Willowbank had on average NZ$13,500 less yearly household income than families at the Antarctic Attraction. Statistical analysis shows that this discrepancy may be related to higher qualifications found amongst respondents at the Antarctic Attraction, or the older age of the respondents and their children (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Family Household Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orana, n = 88</th>
<th>Willowbank, n = 87</th>
<th>Antarctic Attraction, n = 81</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under NZ$20,000</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ$20,000 – NZ$39,999</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ$40,000 – NZ$59,999</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ$60,000 – NZ$79,999</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ$80,000 – NZ$99,999</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ$100,000 or more</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.5 Place of Residence

The vast majority of families (68% Orana, 85% Willowbank, 54% Antarctic Attraction) interviewed at all three attractions hailed from Christchurch City. Identifying Christchurch as dominant place of residence was not a surprising outcome, because all three visitor attractions were located in Christchurch. A summary of respondents’ places of residence segmented by the attractions at which they were interviewed is presented in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Respondents’ Places of Residence According to the Visitor Attractions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitor Attraction</th>
<th>Place of Residence</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orana</td>
<td>Christchurch City</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Canterbury locations</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other South Island</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Island</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willowbank</td>
<td>Christchurch City</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Canterbury locations</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other South Island</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Island</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antarctic Attraction</td>
<td>Christchurch City</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Canterbury locations</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other South Island</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Island</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although respondents at all three attractions tended to live in Christchurch City, places of residence still differ according to the individual attraction. The results in Table 5.4 indicate that Willowbank visitors arrived from locations closer to Christchurch City than visitors interviewed at Orana and the Antarctic Attraction. The more dispersed structure of families’ places of residence at the Antarctic Attraction is especially conspicuous, because families visiting Willowbank rarely came from the North Island (1%), whereas one fifth of surveyed families at the Antarctic Attraction did.

5.2.6 Length and Purpose of Trip for Non-Christchurch Families
The length of stay in Christchurch for families from outside the city differed between a few hours, one night, and up to one to two weeks (Table 5.5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orana (n=32)</th>
<th>Willowbank (n=15)</th>
<th>Antarctic Attraction (n=46)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Few Hours</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Night</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to One Week</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One to Two Weeks</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting that the majority of families visiting Willowbank from outside the city stayed in Christchurch for a few hours, but the majority of families visiting Orana and the Antarctic Attraction from outside the city stayed in Christchurch up to one week. Cross-tabulations again show that this difference may be related to the distinct structure of families’ places of residence and to the travel purpose.

The purpose of the trip to Christchurch for families from outside the city surveyed at Orana and the Antarctic Attraction (who usually stayed in the city up to one week) was usually not to visit the attraction, but a general holiday or visiting friends and relatives. The main travel purpose of non-Christchurch families researched at Willowbank (who usually stayed a few hours) was to undertake a day trip followed by a general holiday (Table 5.6).

Overall, section 5.2 assessed family group structures and the characteristics of respondents which enabled the researcher to compile a respondent and family profile. Most respondents were either the mother or father of children in the group, aged between 30 - 49
years holding at least a university degree and having a yearly household income of NZ$60,000 or more. The profile further showed that respondents mainly resided in Christchurch City and were visiting as either lone parents or parent couples with two children aged between five and nine years and possibly extended family. Since the travel purpose for non-Christchurch families was usually not to visit the attraction, but a general holiday or a day trip, the length of stay mainly varied between a few hours and up to one week. Visitation patterns of families to the visitor attractions are presented next.

### 5.3 Family Visitation Patterns to the Attractions

This section analyses attraction visitation patterns of families in terms of time spent at the attraction and the frequency of visits to the attractions. Time spent at the attractions mostly varied between one to four hours, but visiting durations differed between the attractions (Figure 5.5).

![Figure 5.5 Duration of Attraction Visit](image-url)
Families at Willowbank reported the shortest visit duration, with 59 percent staying between one and two hours. Families at the Antarctic Attraction visited on average between two and three hours, while Orana exhibited the longest visit duration by attracting the majority of its visitors (65%) for three or more hours. These differences may be caused by the distinct nature of the attraction and its opportunities for family visitors. If entrance fees are high, short visit duration was perceived as bad value for money. Given that 30 percent of all participating families stayed at the attractions between one and two hours, 39 percent between two and three hours, 25 percent between three and four hours, and six percent between four and six hours, the attractions did not represent a whole day out as often advertised (see sections 4.2 - 4.4) but rather a half day entertainment.

Visiting frequency to the specific attraction within the past 12 months varied amongst families and between visitor attractions (Figure 5.6). The vast majority of family visitors to Orana (85%) and Willowbank (87%) were repeat visitors, which in both cases was above the average denoted in the management interviews (70% repeat visitors including international audience). At the Antarctic Attraction 71 percent were visiting for the first time, which again contrasts the management interviews conducted at the Antarctic Attraction where it was stated that on average 90 percent of visitors are first time visitors. Repeat visitors to the Antarctic Attraction stated that they already visited once (90%) or two to three times (10%) within the last year, but mostly with different family members. A considerably higher frequency of visits within the last 12 months was found among families at Orana, who once (64%), two to three times (15%), four to six times (12%) or seven times and more (9%) came to visit with their family. Willowbank yielded the highest number of repeat visits from families; 15 percent repeated their visit once, 44 percent came two to three times, 24 percent visited four to six times, and 17 percent visited seven times or more, within the past year (Figure 5.6).

Several families at Willowbank mentioned that they visited the facility multiple times a week and a few families at Orana reported that they came almost once every weekend. According to cross tabulations, these high frequencies may be related to the membership available at Orana and the annual pass available at Willowbank. An Orana membership was held by 24 percent of surveyed families and the Willowbank annual pass was held by 64 percent of respondents. Of all repeat visitors, the vast majority of respondents (79%, n= 87) have never visited the attractions as adults without children. This was the case particularly at
Willowbank and less so at the Antarctic Attraction which, presumably, was linked to the nature of the attractions. At Willowbank, only 13 percent \((n=87)\) have ever visited the park as adults without children, whereas 24 percent \((n=85)\) at Orana and 41 percent \((n=29)\) at the Antarctic Attraction had visited the attractions without children.

![Figure 5.6 Numbers of Repeat Visits](image)

In summary, analysing family attraction visitation patterns showed that the time spend at the attractions mainly varied between one to four hours with most families staying between two and three hours. At Orana and Willowbank the vast majority of families were repeat visitors, whereas most families at the Antarctic Attraction visited for the first time.

### 5.4 Family Motivations to Visit Attractions

This section reports on the motivations for families to visit the attractions. Findings from an open-ended question on the topic identified the unprompted conscious motivations of respondents to visit the attractions. The results to this question primarily represent the views of adult family members only, because it emerged during the research that most children did not contribute their opinion here. The children often gave the impression of being unsure what to say resulting in adults answering this question. The Likert scale question investigated the degree to which various specific motivations stimulated the visitation of respondents and their families. This part includes the views of adults and children alike so that a family perspective on motivations is identified. A comparison between both perspectives results in four key family motivations.
By including an open-ended question, data could be generated that potentially broadened theoretical understanding around motivational issues for family attraction visits. From the responses common themes were coded and analysed, which resulted in ten motivations for family visits to attractions. The five most frequently named motivations in the open-ended question by adults surveyed at Orana referred to children’s needs, animals, family outing, environment, and annual pass (Table 5.7). Although Orana prides itself in educational offerings (section 4.2), education was rather unimportant for adults as an unprompted motive to visit the attraction. The wildlife park is often itemised in tourist guide books or other tourist information magazines as one of the best tourist attractions in Christchurch, but families were rarely motivated to visit the attraction because it is a well known visitor attraction.

Table 5.7 Adult Motivations – Orana*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s Needs</th>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>Family Outing</th>
<th>Tourist Attraction</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Socialisation</th>
<th>Annual Pass/Membership</th>
<th>Weather</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Change in Routine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total responses do not equal 100 percent as multiple motivations could be reported.

Quite similarly to results from Orana, the five main motivations of adults to visit Willowbank included the needs and wants of children, family outing, socialisation, animals, and annual pass (Table 5.8). According to observations made at Willowbank during the primary research period, identifying socialisation to be one of the five main motivations for families was not surprising. It was frequently observed that two or more families visited the park together as a group, in particular groups consisting of young mothers and their children. It is perhaps surprising though that only eleven percent were motivated to visit by the animals held in the park, because native and introduced wildlife is the core product of the Willowbank Reserve. Furthermore, it is interesting that nobody mentioned education as a reason for visiting, although education is, next to conservation, breeding and entertainment, the management’s goal in operating the attraction.

Table 5.8 Adult Motivations – Willowbank*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s Needs</th>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>Family Outing</th>
<th>Tourist Attraction</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Socialisation</th>
<th>Annual Pass/Membership</th>
<th>Weather</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Change in Routine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total responses do not equal 100 percent as multiple motivations could be reported.
Motivated by different items compared to adults at Orana and Willowbank, respondents at the Antarctic Attraction reported that the reason they were visiting were by the needs and wants of children, the attraction’s reputation as a tourist attraction, education opportunities, family outing, and change of routine (Table 5.9). Although children were the main motivation for adults to visit the Antarctic Attraction, half as many people mentioned children’s needs as a motive for visiting compared to findings at Orana and Willowbank.

**Table 5.9 Adult Motivations – Antarctic Attraction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s Needs</th>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>Family Outing</th>
<th>Tourist Attraction</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Socialisation</th>
<th>Annual Pass/Membership</th>
<th>Weather</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Change in Routine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total responses do not equal 100 percent as multiple motivations could be reported.

The main motivations of adults seem to be slightly dominated by push factors rather than destination pull factors if investigating those that have been selected as important by ten percent or more. In order to better compare the motivations identified from families at the different attractions, Figure 5.7 illustrates the different level of importance for the motivations.

*Total responses do not equal 100 percent as multiple motivations could be reported.

**Figure 5.7 Adult Motivations**
The quantification of findings as presented above allowed identifying their importance for each visitor attraction, while comments of respondents were used in the following paragraphs to present why and how these motivations encouraged respondents to visit. The key motivation for families at all three attractions included children whose request, entertainment, and safety constituted the main reasons for families to visit the attraction, as these quotations demonstrate:

“It is lovely to bring children here, because they have a gate so children can’t run away and the environment is reasonably safe.” (Christchurch mother of two boys (2&5), Willowbank)

“I’m just here for the kids. This is a fun outdoor child focused activity for the day during the school holiday to occupy and entertain them.” (Christchurch grandmother of one girl (4) and one boy (7), Willowbank)

“The kids have been here before and really enjoyed it so they wanted to come back.” (Christchurch father of two girls (6&9), Orana)

Adults who stated that their visit was motivated by animals commonly referred to them in association with children, which again showed a focus on the needs of children instead of their own as prompted by a Christchurch aunt of two girls (1&4):

“We came here for the animals. It is the kids’ first zoo visit and we want to show them real animals, because they only know them from books and TV. We all like animals though” (Orana)

Visiting the attraction in order to spend the day with the family and extended family was another important motive. Respondents reported that they were seeking to build and extend their personal relationships to other family members as disclosed by Christchurch father of two boys (3&6):

“I have to work a lot during the week and don’t get to see my kids very often. I use outings like this to reconnect to them.” (Willowbank)

A Kawakawa father of one girl (5) and one boy (7) also emphasised tenderness and affection, joint fun, and joint activities as motivation:

“We tended to do activities together today instead of everybody doing something different than usually at home. That’s why we came here. I think the children enjoyed spending a whole day together with mum and dad and of course, we did too.” (Orana)
Furthermore, the tourist reputation of the attractions, especially of the Antarctic Attraction, was motivation enough for some adults to visit. This was mentioned by an Auckland father of one girl (9):

“We heard a lot about it especially that it is one of the best attractions in Christchurch, and so we always wanted to visit. It is also itemised in tourist guides as a good attraction for kids.” (Antarctic Attraction)

As indicated by a Tauranga grandfather of one girl (12) and a Christchurch mother of one girl (7) education as a motivation combined the demand to educate adults and children alike:

“We heard about its educational and hands on benefits and thought it is good education for the kids. We all wanted to experience snow, see the penguins and learn about life in the Antarctica. It is the closest way you can come to this place.” (Antarctic Attraction)

“My child learns a bit every time we come here and by now she knows quite a lot about the animals. For me it is good, too. I didn’t know a lot about them before, but now I do. I like that.” (Orana)

The level of education adults wanted for their children varied with the age of the children. A Christchurch father of two pre-school girls (2&4) and a 9 year old girl emphasised the basic learning experiences of his younger children and the advanced knowledge-based learning experiences of his older daughter and him:

“I guess you can’t really call it education for the young ones, it is rather a development of skills. I want them to learn how to behave around animals. While they learn these basic things, my older daughter and I are more interested in the facts about the animals.” (Orana)

Adults also alluded to meeting friends (of parents and children) or other families as a motivation, because to spend some time with them catching up – to socialize – was thought important. Acquired annual passes (Willowbank) or memberships (Orana) (not available at the Antarctic Attraction) for either the whole family or just parents also motivated adults to visit, because it is perceived as offering good value for money:

“With the annual pass we can bring pre-schoolers whenever we feel like coming. It’s great, because you don’t need to pay every time.” (Christchurch mother of two preschool children (1&3), Willowbank)

“It feels good to visit with a membership, because you kind of go for free.” (Christchurch mother of one girl (5), Orana).
Weather, good and bad, was also referred to by families in analysing their visit motivations. Statements of respondents varied between the visitor attractions given that Orana and Willowbank are outdoor attractions and the Antarctic Attraction an indoor facility. Although not representing the main motivation, weather was clearly important in the decision to visit the attractions. Pleasant temperatures and a nice sunny day were found among answers for Orana and Willowbank motivations:

“The weather is beautiful for this time of the year so I wanted to use that chance and get my family out of the house.” (Christchurch mother of one boy (6), Orana)

“We chose Willowbank for our outing, because it’s a lovely outdoor attraction and the weather today is too good to be somewhere inside.” (Christchurch father of one boy (4), Willowbank)

By contrast, a rainy and cold day was mentioned as a driving force for families to visit the Antarctic Attraction:

“This is a great activity for our family at a rainy weekend during the school holidays. You don’t want to be outside at the moment, but we also didn’t want to stay at home all day so we decided to come here.” (Ashburton mother of two boys (9&10), Antarctic Attraction)

It must be emphasised that these results may be biased by the organisation of the research, because surveying at Orana and Willowbank mainly took place on good weather days and at the Antarctic Attraction on bad weather days during the school holidays. Opposite weather conditions at the attractions may had not revealed weather as a motivation.

An environment that offers “exercise, relaxation and fresh air in an open range natural surrounding outside the city centre” (Christchurch father of one girl (5), Orana) also motivated adults to visit Orana and Willowbank. While environment was no motivation for families to come to the Antarctic Attraction, the desire to experience a change in routine was. Respondents visited because they wanted to experience something different that contrasts with everyday life and is new for them.

While findings from the open-ended question mainly represent an adult perspective on motivations, results from the Likert scale question provide a family perspective on motivations including the views of adults and children. The motive items were evaluated very similarly by families at Orana, Willowbank, and the Antarctic Attraction as illustrated in Figure 5.8. This Figure displays the average value for each motive according to the individual attractions and
the average value for each motive of all responses. Since the items were rated on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), the lower the value for a motive the more did it motivate families to come to the attractions. The line graphs clearly show that family (mean → 1.3), fun (mean → 1.4), and education (mean → 1.9) were the things that motivated families most to visit the attractions, because these motives have the lowest means. By contrast, have others know (mean → 3.6), new perspective on life (mean → 3.2), and escape (mean → 3.1) were motives that encouraged families least to visit the attractions. The need to experience an escape seems to be especially unimportant for families at the Antarctic Attraction, while families surveyed at Orana and Willowbank were a little more motivated by the idea to escape their usual surrounding.

Figure 5.8 Family Motivations

The average value of each motive for Orana, Willowbank, and the Antarctic Attraction are presented in detail in Table 5.10 below.
Table 5.10 Average Value of Motive Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orana</th>
<th>Willowbank</th>
<th>Antarctic Attraction</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Escape</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excitement</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Interest</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Perspective on Life</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Others Know</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to find that education was an important motive item for families according to answers in this question, while education was identified as a rather unimportant motivation for adults at Orana and Willowbank in the open-ended motivation question. Statistically analysing the influence of children’s age on family motivation reveals for all three attractions that having fun and spending time with the family were the main motivations independent from the age of the children. Families with primary and secondary age children could be identified to be stronger motivated by education than families with pre-school children. This may relate to the increasing learning abilities when children are getting older. Families with pre-school children could be identified to be stronger motivated by relaxation and maintenance of friendship compared to families with older children. It was actually expected that especially young children required extensive supervision and did not leave parents many breaks to rest and relax, but the attractions, specifically Willowbank, seemed to entertain young children enough in order to give parents some time for themselves.

Comparing the three motivations family, fun, and education identified from a family point of view with motivations identified from the adult point of view, family and education were motivations included in both perspectives. Fun as motivation was only included in the family perspective, which signifies the value of including the views of children in the research. By including the opinion of children, fun became another important motivation. In order to determine the key motivations for adults to visit attractions, the average percentage of each motive was considered. Consequently, needs and wishes of children (45%), the core product of the visitor attraction (animals for Orana and Willowbank, education about the Antarctica for
the Antarctic Attraction) (21%), and a family outing (16%) were the main motivations for adults, because all other motivations were on average mentioned by less than ten percent of all respondents. Adding fun as a motivation, which was contributed by the children, leads to four key motivations representing the view of adults and children alike: needs and wishes of children, core product of the attraction (animals & education), family, and fun.

In summary, families were motivated to visit the attractions by a variety of things and the importance of them differed between the attractions and the age of children. Overall, needs and wishes of children, core product of the attraction (animals & education), family time, and fun were identified as most important motivations for families to visit the three attractions. Having been motivated to visit an attraction, the provision of information is next.

5.5 Family Provision of Information

Given that all three visitor attractions were very active in marketing their facility (see section 4.7), questions in the survey also investigated how families heard about the attractions prior to their visit. Ten information sources were listed in the initial questionnaire, with three additional information sources generated from the research responses (see Table 5.11).

Table 5.11 Provision of Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orana</th>
<th>Willowbank</th>
<th>Antarctic Attraction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous Visits</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor Information Centre</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport Signs</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branded Vehicle</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total responses do not equal 100 percent as multiple motivations could be reported.
From Table 5.11 it is clear that there were some differences in the information sources used to find out about the attractions, particularly regarding the information sources used for the Antarctic Attraction compared with the other two attractions. At both Orana and Willowbank, the main source of information was previous visits (Orana, 64%; Willowbank, 71%), with the second most important source for these visitors being hearing about the attraction from friends or families (Orana 41%; Willowbank 43%), however with regards to the less frequently mentioned sources of information there were differences between these two sites.

While a relatively small proportion of families visiting Orana used the Internet in general (15%) or the attractions website (11%) for information, all other sources were used by less than 10 percent of respondents. Amongst Willowbank families, 13 percent of respondents saw an advertisement about the park on television prior to their visit and an additional eleven percent used the newspaper as an information source. All other sources of information prompted in the survey were used by less than ten percent of participants. Advertisements in television and in newspapers were two of the main marketing activities of Willowbank for the local market as stated in the interview with the marketing manager (see section 4.7).

By comparison, the most important source of information for families surveyed at the Antarctic Attraction was word of mouth (46%), while only a quarter of respondents (25%) reported knowledge from previous visits. Information provided by the visitor information centre (24%), the internet (20%), brochures (15%), and website of the attraction (11%) were also relatively frequently used as sources. Resulting from the location of the attraction (next to the airport), 13 percent were informed about the Antarctic Attraction by signs at the airport. Again, all other information sources displayed in Table 5.11 were used by less than ten percent of respondents.

When comparing the findings between the three visitor attractions, it was not surprising to find that more families knew about the attraction from previous visits at Orana and Willowbank than at the Antarctic Attraction, given the higher proportion of repeat visitors at these attractions (section 5.3). A higher number of first time visitors at the Antarctic Attraction may also explain the higher number of information sources used by more than ten percent of respondents. First time visitors did not have any previous knowledge about the attraction and thus used other sources to gather information while there was no need for that for repeat
visitors. In sum, while families at the Antarctic Attraction more frequently used information sources provided by the attraction, most families surveyed at Orana and Willowbank knew about the facilities from previous visits. Families from all three attractions also repeatedly received information by word of mouth.

5.6 Family On-Site Experiences at Visitor Attractions
This section reports on the results from open-ended questions in the survey aimed at examining family on-site experiences at the attractions.

5.6.1 Family Experiences with Fun Activities
This section presents the perspective of children in the family groups and the perspective of adults separately, because the experiences with fun activities at the three attractions made by adults and children often differ.

5.6.1.1 A Child Perspective
Children’s experience with fun activities was expressed through adults who reflected the views of their children. Adults reported that the enjoyment of children at the attractions came down to one subject: to watch or to participate in fun activities. While fun is considered a hedonistic concept it was central to the understanding of family attraction visits as a collective pursuit. For the children, an entertaining attraction visit was all about having active fun and being physically involved:

“The kids said they had the greatest fun riding the donkey.” (Christchurch grandmother of two boys (4&5), Willowbank)

“The boys had a lot of fun playing in the snow. They don’t get to see snow very often so they went crazy.” (Tauranga father of three boys (6,7&10), Antarctic Attraction)

The nature of these activities differed between the attractions so that examples given by adults about the enjoyment of their children are assessed according to each attraction individually.

At Orana the fun activities children enjoyed to watch or to participate in were always related to animals. They liked to watch small animals like meerkats and otters as well as wild animals like lions and tigers as long as they were active in a fun and entertaining way:
“My son enjoyed the tiger feed, because he could watch the tiger eat and jump on the trunk. He got pretty excited about that.” (Picton father of one boy (8), Orana)

“My daughter loved watching the meerkats and otters. She thought they were funny in the way they moved and that they all slept on top of each other.” (Christchurch mother of one girl (7), Orana)

Participating in fun activities was related to both minor and major attractions at the facility such as chasing ducks or feeding giraffes:

“The kids are still little, but I’m sure they had a lot of fun chasing the ducks.” (Akaroa grandmother of one boy (1) and two girls (3&5), Orana)

“My daughter enjoyed the giraffes, because she could actually feed them herself. That was great entertainment for her.” (Timaru mother of one girl (13), Orana)

Fun for children at Willowbank was also expressed in relation to children interacting with and watching animals as mentioned by the following two Christchurch mothers of pre-school children:

“The girls loved riding the donkey. It was really exciting for them and they had a lot of fun. Afterwards, they were still petting and feeding him for half an hour. That was definitely their favourite thing today.” (Girls 3&4, Willowbank)

“My kid was fascinated by the animals. It was great to watch them doing funny things like the wallabies were bouncing and the ducklings appearing out of nowhere.” (Boy 2, Willowbank)

Since children seemed to enjoy watching little ducklings or chasing ducks, it may be said that they did not necessarily need major attractions to be entertained, but that they were also happy with simple activities. These statements were not only made by families with pre-school children, but responses showed that with an increasing age of children the expectation for more major attractions also increased.

At the Antarctic Attraction the fun activities children liked to watch were again related to animals. The penguins held at the attraction fascinated the children, because they were very active coming in and out of the water, eating fish, or ‘talking’ to each other. Other activities the children enjoyed to participate in dealt with fun and thrilling Antarctic experiences:

“The kids enjoyed riding the Hagglund. They said it was a bit scary first, but then they had fun and went a second time. They like wild and active stuff.” (Napier father of two boys (10&11), Antarctic Attraction)
“I think he liked everything, it just had to be fun. He really enjoyed playing in the snow room and riding the Hagglund and also watching the penguins.” (Christchurch mother of one boy (6), Antarctic Attraction)

Results from respondents revealed some general differences between fun activities enjoyed by pre-school children versus older children. Participating in exciting and thrilling activities was mentioned as enjoyment of children of all ages, but the meaning of these activities differed between the age groups. Parents of pre-school children thought it was thrilling for their kids to ride the donkey, slide down the ice slide, and ride in the Orana Park Shuttle. By contrast, parents of older children described thrilling activities for their kids as riding the Hagglund, playing on the flying fox, and facing the Antarctic storm. This comparison indicates that children of all ages enjoyed participating in wild and thrilling activities, but the level of thrill increased with the age of the children. Fun activities were central to children during an attraction visit, but also adults were interested in experiencing active fun.

5.6.1.2 An Adult Perspective

Many respondents stated that they enjoyed participating in fun activities together with their children as prompted by a Clive mother of one girl (4) at Orana:

“Having fun with my daughter is great. We both enjoyed doing some fun stuff together.”

Fun activities shared by children and adults in a groups were mostly related to animals. It may be inferred that animals appealed to all ages, which was also stated by the managers from Orana and Willowbank. Similar to the favourite activities of children described above, animals were enjoyed by adults in two different forms: seeing them and interacting with them.

At Orana, seeing animals was again distinguished between wild animals and small animals. In the majority of cases watching wild animals was preferred, because respondents liked the excitement and thrill connected to it. Watching animals at Orana and Willowbank was often mentioned in relation to the variety and distinctiveness of the animals as a Christchurch father of one girl (3) stated:

“Orana offers a great chance to see a huge variety of exotic animals up close, ones you don’t usually see like tigers and lions.” (Orana)
A Christchurch grandmother of two boys (2&5) explained that animals were also enjoyed, because they seemed to be in good healthy condition:

“All animals appear well looked after and very healthy so that you can enjoy the good view at them.” (Willowbank)

To interact with the animals was mentioned as an enjoyable fun factor at Orana and Willowbank in terms of feeding and petting the animals. A Dunedin mother of one girl (6) disclosed that these activities were fun, because it related to experiencing something new and different:

“I really enjoyed feeding the giraffes. That was something I’ve never done before and probably will not do again soon. It was different to everything else.” (Orana)

With respect to the Antarctic Attraction adults enjoyed observing the little penguins, which were described as cute, exciting and interesting especially when it came time to watching them eat.

From the comments of respondents it became obvious that adults, who participated in fun activities together with their children, actually had fun, because they were doing things they would not usually do at their age. While for some adults these activities were legitimated by the presence of their children, fun activities for other adults had to be appropriate for their ages:

“I was able to do a lot of fun things together with my children without feeling embarrassed doing it.” (Christchurch mother of four pre-school children (2,2,3&5), Orana)

“Most activities were great fun for kids and at the same time not too stupid for me.” (Christchurch mother of one boy (9), Antarctic Attraction)

In order to provide adequate fun activities in which adults and children both felt comfortable to participate, these visitor attractions had to offer a variety of options. A good selection of activities enabled family members to choose according to their preferences and featured a higher likelihood of pleasing their individual needs:

“This attraction offered something for all of us.” (Rolleston father of one boy (13), Orana)

“They have a huge variety of activities, there was something for everybody.” (Auckland uncle of two boys (7&10), Antarctic Attraction)
“The visit was very entertaining for young children and also entertaining for adults, because there were lots of activities and a variety of things to look at.” (Christchurch mother of two girls (4&5) and one boy (7), Willowbank)

Some adult respondents at Orana and Willowbank also felt that they had a fun time at the attraction, because their greatest enjoyment of the day came from the good weather. As a New Plymouth father of one boy (4) and one girl (8) explained:

“It may sound funny, but I most enjoyed the good weather and the sun. I wasn’t much outside lately. It was the good weather that actually made this a fun visit.”

While good weather at the attractions was a factor accounting for a positive visiting experience for families, bad weather meant that it could have eventually constrained the family mood and left a negative memory of the visit:

“Weather is important for such an outing, because bad weather wouldn’t have made this a pleasant stay. It’s an outdoor attraction, so rain would have had negative impacts on our visit. Especially children, they get all niggling when it starts raining and that ruins the whole atmosphere” (Christchurch mother of two pre-school girls (1&4), Willowbank)

“Bad weather would have probably made it a negative experience, because being outdoors in the rain always puts people in a bad mood and the atmosphere becomes a bit tense. That’s different with good weather though.” (Christchurch father of three boys (4,8&11), Orana)

Given that the Antarctic Attraction is an indoor attraction, weather did not affect the visiting experience of families there.

5.6.1.3 Disparities in Fun Experiences

Sometimes, specific fun activities enjoyed by children did not necessarily reflect the interest of adult family members. In these situations, fun for adults was more connected to ensuring children had fun which entailed a rather passive role for adults and may have involved compromises for them in terms of reducing their own fun activities:

“We stayed at the playground for over an hour, because the kids had so much fun and didn’t want to leave. I rather wanted to spend more time with the animals, but well... you do it for the kids.” (Bluff mother of one girl (5) and one boy (8), Orana)

“We spent quite some time in the ice and snow room, because they [children] really enjoyed playing on the ice slide. It got pretty cold for us after a time, but it was a unique experience for them so we didn’t want to spoil it.” (Christchurch mother of two boys (10&11), Antarctic Attraction)
A few respondents also reported that in general the level of enjoyment at the visitor attractions differed between children and adults:

“"It wasn’t so much entertaining for me, but it was great for my kid. Although I think animals themselves appeal to all ages, as a grown up you don’t get that excited about them anymore.” (Christchurch father of one boy (5), Willowbank)

“The children loved it; they thought it was great and already asked to visit again. For me... Well, it wasn’t that exciting. It was good for me to be outdoors and interact with the animals a little, but it was not comparable to the joy this place brought to the children.” (Christchurch mother of two girls (3&6), Willowbank)

Generational differences among family members caused discrepancies during the attraction visit, but no family conflicts could be identified from the responses that might have resulted from these discrepancies. In order to establish a pleasurable family time at the attractions, adults made efforts to avoid conflict situations. This required them to primarily focus on children and their needs and wishes instead of the own desires of adults. Responses and family observations revealed that children were not particularly willing to compromise during the visit and became niggling and crotchety if not given what they wanted. Agreeing to this compromise and neglecting their own fun activities was acceptable for adults for two reasons: spending time together with their family and especially children was very important for them during the attraction visit and adults very much enjoyed to see their children happy and enjoying themselves.

Some responses exposed that spending time together with the family was more important for adults than being equally entertained and excited or performing on the same activity level as their children:

“"As long as I can be with my family, I don’t mind my kids getting more out of this visit than myself. I just want to spend time with them.” (Ashburton father of one boy (4) and one girl (6), Willowbank)

Enjoying family time encompassed the notion of togetherness with the (wider) family surrounded by a happy atmosphere that brought pleasure to all family members. For those adults who felt that they work a lot, it was a time away from work and extended time with the family that they enjoyed:

“"It’s just good not to think about work and enjoy the time with my family. I only see them on the weekends, so family time like this is really important for us.” (Auckland father of one girl (8) and two boys (9&12), Antarctic Attraction)
Family time was not only about the quantity of time, but also about experiencing something special together as a family, as a Queenstown mother of two girls (6&11) explained:

“This is like a unique place to go to here in New Zealand. I think it is good for us to experience something special together as a family.” (Orana)

As exemplified by a Christchurch father of three pre-school children (1, 4&5), respondents also emphasised happiness as an important component of family time:

“I think we all enjoyed having a very happy time here today which is important for a good family outing” (Orana)

Some adults did not just accept the compromise at the attractions, but they even seemed pleased with the unequal situation:

“The best thing for me today was to watch the children enjoying themselves and having fun. Although the attraction itself wasn’t that exciting for me, seeing my children happy makes me happy. That’s all I need!” (Auckland mother of two girls (10&11), Orana)

It was found that the happiness and enjoyment of children was important to adults’ enjoyment. Adults at all three attractions stated that watching their kids having fun and enjoying themselves made them happy too. The way in which children’s enjoyment became their parents’ enjoyment was summarised by two Christchurch mothers both accompanying pre-school children:

“The thing I enjoyed most today was seeing the smile animals bring to kids’ faces. If they are happy, I’m happy too” (Boy (2) and girl (3), Willowbank)

“I most enjoyed watching the boys having fun and getting excited over the animals. There is nothing better than seeing your kids happy.” (Two boys (1&3), Willowbank)

It is apparent in a response from an aunt of two girls (4&7) from Lincoln that the satisfaction of children emerged to have a higher priority than the satisfaction of adults:

“I think an outing should provide value to all family members, but most important are still the kids. I wanted them to have a good time, that’s why we came.” (Willowbank)

It was recognised that such comments were mainly made by mothers and especially at Willowbank. For some adults, especially for mothers, it was important watching and knowing children were having fun rather than being actively involved. Entertainment and fun for these families was different for kids and parents though. Kids were entertained by the fun activities
and parents by being with their family and watching the enjoyment of children. Although family members were not equally engaged in activities and could not evenly fulfil their desires, conflicts did not arise due to the willingness of adults to compromise and the importance placed on family time and happiness of children.

5.6.2 Family Experiences with Learning Opportunities

Analysing family experiences with the learning opportunities provided at the three attractions, it was found that families referred to these offers as either development opportunities for their children or knowledge based education. On average, 74 percent of respondents were satisfied with the learning opportunities at the attraction visited and thought that they were adequate for their families by encouraging basic and/or advanced learning. By contrast, 26 percent indicated that they did not recognise any learning opportunities or were not satisfied, because learning opportunities were perceived as unsuitable for young children. It was also examined that the outcome of learning was dependent on the age of children on the one hand and the commitment of adults on the other hand.

Some families, especially those with pre-school children, referred to the learning opportunities offered at the attractions as personal development for children rather than education. Comments were made about generating common understanding and improving their children’s abilities:

“We brought our kids here so that they can see wild animals for the first time. We wanted them to understand what these animals are like.” (Oamaru father of two pre-school girls (2&3), Orana)

“It is good for the kids to learn how to be around animals, walk to them and be respectful and not to be afraid of them.” (Christchurch grandmother of two boys (1&2) and one girl (4), Willowbank)

“This is better than in any classroom or watching something on TV about the Antarctic, because kids can actually feel and touch all the stuff like the storm and the snow.” (Waipara father of two boys (3&7), Antarctic Attraction)

Statements relating to the personal development of young children at the attractions were most frequently made by Willowbank families. This is not surprising since children at pre-school age were most often found at Willowbank compared to Orana and the Antarctic Attraction (see section 5.2.2). From watching families at the visitor attractions, these comments can be
verified. Especially at Willowbank, small children were often observed wandering around experimenting with how to touch and feed the animals and actually making quick progress in the right interaction with animals.

Learning at visitor attractions also encompassed the opportunity used by adults to guide the children by instilling values, traditions, and skills (generativity). They taught their children (through role modelling or role taking) about healthy lifestyles, ethics, deportment, and moral values:

“I take the boys here so they get out of the house and get some fresh air and exercise. I want them to get used to being in nature, because that’s good for them.” (Christchurch mother of three boys (1, 2&4), Willowbank)

“I used to come here with my parents when I was a kid and I always enjoyed it as far as I remember. So I wanted to bring my kids too and allow them to have a good time.” (Hanmer Springs father of two twin girls (5), Orana)

Generativity must be understood as a two-way process: an exchange between the generations. Visits also provided opportunities for parents to learn about their children:

“It was great watching my youngest one feed the giraffe. Interesting to see her match her understanding of giraffes with being close to one in real life. I could see her adjusting her concepts of giraffes.” (Christchurch father of one girl (6) and one boy (8), Orana)

Experiences with knowledge-based education opportunities at the attractions were usually commented on by families with school children approximately six years or older, who were more patient and able to understand information about exhibits at the visitor attraction. Knowledge-based education refers to listening, reading, and understanding movies, talks, and information boards supplied by the attractions. Although mentioned by several respondents at all three attractions, especially adult family members at the Antarctic Attraction enjoyed the educational opportunities provided by the attraction:

“This attraction offers an excellent educational insight into Antarctica. It shows you stuff that you normally don’t learn and it opens eyes to an environment completely different from ours.” (Christchurch uncle of one girl (13), Antarctic Attraction)

In analysis of the data it emerged that adults showed different levels of involvement in the learning opportunities for their children, which may be related to the importance ascribed to education as a motive for the visit. A Coromandel mother of two girls (4&8) at Orana explained that the amount of information her children received was dependent on the
involvement of adult family members who talked to them about the exhibits and conveyed information adequate for their ages:

“Information signs contain the main facts and not too much information so that also children may read them or you can read the information to kids in which case it is up to you how much information the children receive.”

Several adults were observed at the attractions reading information about the animals posted on signs to children trying to make it sound as interesting as possible.

For some adults at Orana and the Antarctic Attraction who expected children to learn, learning was a purposive element of the visit:

“We brought our children here today in order to show them the little penguins. They live close to our home, but we never see them. We wanted the kids to learn a little bit about these animals, they’re our neighbours.” (Timaru father of two girls (5&13) and one boy (8), Antarctic Attraction)

Such comments were only made by respondents who were also motivated to educate their children at the attractions. The intentions largely remained unrecognised by the children, because they were preoccupied with having fun. Basic learning as well as knowledge-based education often happened in tandem with fun and entertainment, which made it a pleasurable experience for children and adults:

“After the girls had the donkey ride, they were quite amazed what a donkey is actually like and that you can ride on it. They didn’t know before, because they have never seen one in real life. The kids actually learnt something, but didn’t even recognise it because it was fun for them.” (Wellington father of two girls (4&5), Willowbank)

“I most enjoyed learning about life in the Antarctic. It wasn’t boring at all, because we were doing something all the time: clicking through pictures on the computer, ‘riding’ the snow mobile, watching the movie, and a lot of other stuff.” (Taupo father of three boys (6,7&10) and one girl (12), Antarctic Attraction)

“I enjoyed the feedings very much, because it was informative and entertaining at the same time.” (Christchurch mother of two girls (3&7), Orana)

Presentations held by keepers at Orana, Willowbank, and the Antarctic Attraction were thought of as especially family friendly, because they provided the opportunity for young and old family members likewise to develop their knowledge in an interesting and entertaining way:
“The keeper presentations were wonderful. We learned a lot about the animals and how to protect their species, but the information was also conveyed in an interesting and exciting way like seeing the tigers jump to get their meat.” (Greymouth father of one girl (9), Orana)

It can be deduced that children as well as adults enjoyed entertaining education, which may be summarised as “edutainment”.

Apart from families who experienced learning and education at the attractions, families, especially at the Antarctic Attraction, found that some of the learning opportunities were unsuitable for some children. Adults pointed out that children preferred interactive learning, which they felt was not sufficiently provided:

“They need more age appropriate signage and interactive stuff for little ones.” (Christchurch father of two pre-schoolers (3&5), Antarctic Attraction)

“There could be better interpretative information for the kids. The learning opportunities are not really appropriate for young kids.” (Christchurch mother of one girl (6) and one boy (7), Antarctic Attraction)

A few families from all three attractions also stated that the visit did not have any educational values either for adults or children. According to comments made by respondents, experiencing no learning or education was due to impatient children or a focus on entertainment and fun during the visit:

“Our grandson is too eager to do attraction things, so he didn’t want to read and listen to information and I had to run after him so I couldn’t read them either.” (Christchurch grandmother of one boy (6), Antarctic Attraction)

“We actually haven’t thought about any learning opportunities so I would say no, we didn’t learn something. We just had great fun and enjoyed the day.” (Christchurch mother of two girls (6&7), Orana)

It can be concluded that most families experienced the learning opportunities provided by the attractions as procurement of knowledge and/or as personal development of the children by generating general understanding, improving the abilities of children and guiding them. The amount of information that children received was often dependent on the involvement of adults to educate the children.
5.6.3 Family Experiences with Catering

Many families purchased food and beverage supplies offered on-site, but the proportion of families considerably varied between the attractions. All families at Orana and Willowbank had at least one break during their visit to consume breakfast, lunch or snacks, but 28 percent at Orana and 51 percent at Willowbank brought their own meals and drinks to the attractions with the explanation that it saved money. At the Antarctic Attraction, twelve percent of surveyed families did not consume any food or drinks during their visit, but families who did almost all purchased it from the restaurant at the attraction (97%, n = 88). Eating was often mentioned by participants from all three attractions to be different from normal, because they allowed themselves to eat more unhealthy food like chips, cake, and ice cream than they would usually do. This confirms observations undertaken at the attractions, which reveal that families, especially the children in the group, often ate fries for lunch and had ice cream for dessert or later in the afternoon.

Evaluating the opinions of families who either purchased food or drinks during this or previous visits about the catering provided at the attractions yielded three core attributes each referred to with positive and negative statements: price, quality, and selection. Price was mentioned most by families at all three attractions, whereby approximately half thought that prices were reasonable and the other half perceived prices to be too expensive. Although respondents considered being at a visitor attraction where prices are usually higher than in a supermarket, their perception about appropriate prices for food and drinks at a visitor attraction differed. A grandmother of one boy (14) from Akaroa interviewed at the Antarctic Attraction thought prices were adequate:

“Well, I think for a tourist attraction the prices are absolutely ok.”

By contrast, a mother of two girls (8&10) from Christchurch interviewed at Orana perceived prices to be too expensive, especially for local visitors:

“I think prices are way too expensive. I know this is a tourist attraction, but what about the local visitors? It might be ok for tourists to pay these prices, but if you come here frequently it’s not affordable.”

Price was often related to the quality of food, which was satisfying for the vast majority of respondents. Observation revealed that families, especially the children, mostly ate fast food like fries or chicken nuggets so that freshness was no major issue of quality. The quality
was mainly referred to in terms of taste and temperature of the food, which was only mentioned negatively if too salty or cold. Respondents also related the selection of food and drinks available at the attractions to the price they had to pay for their meals. In most cases, the selection of food and drinks was mentioned positively, but at the Antarctic Attraction some problems were experienced by families who had a late lunch:

“The quality and everything was good, but there was no selection to choose from. Well, we were probably a bit late for lunch so that all the good stuff was gone.” (Christchurch father of one girl (6) and one boy (9), Antarctic Attraction)

Additional one-off opinions reflected issues like healthy/unhealthy options, extended waiting time, and the availability of children’s menus which provide a good choice of food and drinks for a lunch break. Considering that the vast majority of families had at least one break during their visit, it may be reasoned that breaks are an important component of the family visit to an attraction. Despite its importance, families were identified to be price sensitive in terms of purchasing food and drinks and thus, tended to organise self-catering visits to save money. The following section looks at family experiences with the access, layout, and value for money at the visitor attractions.

5.6.4 Family Experiences with the Access, Layout, and Value for Money

Researching family on-site experiences at the three visitor attractions identified specific family needs and wants dominated by the requirements of their accompanying children and influencing family satisfaction. These needs and wants relating to an attraction’s access, layout, and value for money are outlined next.

Analysing the appropriateness of the access to the attractions revealed two major themes that seemed to be important for families visiting the attractions: the access itself and the layout of the attraction. Both were mentioned positively and negatively by respondents, but positive comments clearly dominated. Responses relating to the access of the attraction indicated that families valued short travel distances and easy arrivals:

“The access is good; it’s [the attraction] close to where we live. I don’t like long journeys with the children.” (Christchurch mother of two pre-school girls (3&4), Willowbank)

“It took us a while to find this place, it’s not well signposted. I mean that’s not a major problem, but it’s easier with the kids to have a short journey and get to the park as fast as possible.” (Kaikoura grandmother of two boys (3&9) and one girl (5), Orana)
In reference to the layout of the attraction, families also appreciated places that have suitable pram access and that were not overcrowded inhibiting good viewing of, and interaction with, exhibits especially for small children:

“They have good walkways for prams which are important, but they need ramps when required.” (Rolleston mother of one boy (1), Orana)

“Shortly after we arrived it got really busy so that it was hard to see things with so many people especially for the little ones.” (Plimmerton father of two boys (6&10), Antarctic Attraction)

Further needs and corresponding satisfaction were examined through family evaluation of the perceived “value for money” at the attractions. On average, 82 percent of all families thought that the attraction they visited represented good value for money, although visitors to Orana and Willowbank were much more satisfied than at the Antarctic Attraction, where only two-thirds were satisfied (Orana 86%, Willowbank 94%, Antarctic Attraction 68%). Families who were not satisfied with the value for money mentioned high costs requested by the operations (e.g. entry fees and food and drinks) often thought to be unjustified for the opportunities available. Compared to the low discretionary budget some families were dealing with (see section 5.7.2), costs of an attraction visit were perceived as high especially by families visiting the Antarctic Attraction:

“We don’t have that much money to spend on leisure activities; with kids life is more expensive. Today was an exception, because this was my son’s birthday present, but we normally don’t spend that much money on one day.” (Christchurch father of one boy (10), Antarctic Attraction)

Not surprisingly, children were not concerned about money matters, because this was an adult duty. A Picton father of one girl (9) and one boy (11) interviewed at the Antarctic Attraction explained that financial dissatisfaction at visitor attractions caused fretfulness among adults:

“Although it was quite a nice day, we spent a lot of money which definitely did affect my overall satisfaction. However, I didn’t want this to affect the kids; they were supposed to enjoy this visit.”

The membership available at Orana and the annual pass offered at Willowbank were named as the most frequent reasons for the perception of good value for money. The pass was of especially high value for those families who visited regularly, because they were able to provide their children quality outings without worrying about money:
“I think this is a good environment for the kids to be in and to learn to respect nature and animals. I prefer these kinds of quality outings and with the pass I don’t even need to feel guilty, because it’s free after the second visit.” (Christchurch mother of one pre-school girl (2), Willowbank)

Other frequently stated reasons for the perception of good value for money were the variety of on-site opportunities suitable for all ages and the free entry for pre-school children in all three attractions, concessions available for family groups, and the satisfaction of children. It can be concluded that families at the visitor attractions looked for low(er) costs, short travel distances, easy arrivals and good pram access.

5.6.5 Family Experiences with a Change in Routine
A change in routine was already identified as a motivation of families to visit the attractions (see section 5.4), but it was only mentioned by five percent of all respondents. A change in routine includes a difference from normality and a change in daily life and usual family activities. Responses suggested that a change in routine was appreciated by adults and children alike, because normality and daily life did not allow for the experiences available at the visitor attractions. The fun activities, learning opportunities, photography, catering, and pursuit of own interests experienced by families at the visitor attractions all encompassed a point of difference which is one reason why these activities were enjoyed by families.

A change in scenery in terms of being physically away from the home environment and being able to immerse oneself and one’s family in a natural surrounding was also important. Given that some families with young children only seldom participated in tourism activities and preferred staying at or close to home (see section 5.7.2), their longing for a special break from the area or home environment was mentioned in responses:

“It is nice to be out of the house and go somewhere far enough (not just to the playground across the street) so that it doesn’t remind you of work at home all the time.” (Akaroa mother of one girl (2), Orana)

“I thought it really entertaining being here, because it was different from being at home all the time. I don’t work at the moment and with the kids we usually stay at home too, because it’s so much easier. It was just different today.” (Christchurch mother of two boys (1&5), Willowbank)
A change in scenery was welcome by men and women and boys and girls alike. Their daily standard environment (work place, school, and home) did not comprise the natural surrounding provided at Orana and Willowbank:

“I come here with my family, because I love the open and natural space. It’s so relaxing and you don’t feel rushed. A lovely place to take a walk and enjoy nature.” (Greymouth grandmother of two boys (7&9) and one girl (10), Orana)

“It’s all so natural here, you feel really close to nature. That’s a great thing, because we live in the city and don’t get out that often.” (Christchurch mother of one girl (2), Willowbank)

The environment of the attractions was referred to by a Rolleston father of two girls (2&3) and one boy (8), as providing a sense of holiday:

“It sometimes feels like being in Africa with the natural environment and all the wild animals so close.” (Orana)

Concluding, families enjoyed a change in routine and scenery during their attraction visit, because the experiences constituted a difference to everyday life.

5.6.6 Photography at Visitor Attractions

This section presents information about whether photographs were taken by family visitors, and if so, what pictures were taken and why, and which objects or images were the favourites for the families. These questions added information to the subject of family on-site experiences as photographic activity sheds further light on the highlights of a family’s visit.

Pictures were taken by the majority of families (71%) visiting the three attractions and the photographs were primarily taken by adult family members. The lowest proportion of families taking photos was at Willowbank (60%) and the highest proportion was at the Antarctic Attraction (78%). This can be associated with the high number of first time visitors at the Antarctic Attraction and the high number of repeat visitors at Willowbank identified earlier. Repeat family visitors to Willowbank who did not take any pictures explained that they had previously taken photos at the attraction. Thus, implications are the more repeat visits to the same attraction the fewer pictures were taken, unless something was specifically different about a particular visit, such as being accompanied by extended family or friends.

When examining the motivations of families to take pictures at the attractions, similar patterns emerged at all three operations. The predominant reason to take pictures was to
establish and support memories about this visit in the future (72%). People, and especially children, often require assistance in remembering past events and this motivation for taking photos became apparent, as in the following quotation:

“We took pictures so the children will be able to look at them later and recall the experience. It will be hard to remember after a while” (Christchurch aunt of one girl (4) and one boy (5), Willowbank)

Respondents also took photographs at the attractions to show to family and friends:

“My daughter takes the pictures to school after the holidays for some projects.” (Wellington mother of one girl (12), Antarctic Attraction)

“We took the pictures to show them to dad and to share them with family as they all live in the UK and need some updated photos.” (Christchurch mother of two girls (7&10), Orana)

“We want to prove that we were here and show family and friends the fun we had. I put them on Facebook, too.” (Christchurch father of two boys (3&7), Orana)

Another reason less frequently mentioned was the speciality and distinctiveness of the attraction that encouraged people to take photos:

“There are not many attractions like this in New Zealand, so you don’t see lions, tigers, and all the other animals very often.” (Lincoln father of one boy (2), Orana)

“The background is very unusual, because photographing animals without cages feels like we are in Africa. Very special!” (Rolleston father of two girls (2&3) and one boy (8), Orana)

An analysis of the favourite pictures of families taken at the attractions showed children in combination with any attraction exhibits as the major target followed by exhibits alone, children alone, and the whole family (Table 5.12). In terms of the attraction exhibits photographed, at Orana and Willowbank children were photographed with animals in the background or interacting with them, while children at the Antarctic Attraction had their pictures taken in front of stuffed Antarctic animals or playing on the ice slide and snowmobile.

Table 5.12 Favourite Pictures of Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orana</th>
<th>Willowbank</th>
<th>Antarctic Attraction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children &amp; attraction exhibit</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits alone</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children alone</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After further analyses, two main reasons emerged why these pictures were the favourite shots of the families. Pictures were favoured because they showed happy and satisfied children and the photographed situation was very special and unique:

“The kids have a huge smile on their faces and you can see they are having fun. This picture shows what a great day we had.” (Christchurch mother of two girls (3&4), Willowbank)

“The children playing in the ice and snow room is very special and unique.” (Auckland mother of one boy (7) and one girl (11), Antarctic Attraction)

In summary, the majority of families decided to take pictures during their attraction visit, because pictures facilitated the remembering of the day in the future, enabled visitors to share the experience or to prove/show off, and allowed capturing special/unique events. The favourite pictures of families commonly featured happy children in combination with special exhibits.

5.6.7 Enjoyment of Own Interests

The focus of families surveyed at these visitor attractions was mainly placed on time together and joint family activities even if it required compromising by adults. However, some respondents (24%) stated that they and their children got pleasure from pursuing their own interests alone or together with peers from the same generation. It is assumed that adults were aware of this interest of children, because many families at Orana and Willowbank were accompanied by friends of the children or met with other families at the visitor attraction so that children had peers to play with. At the Antarctic Attraction families mainly visited as individual groups so that children could only play with any siblings present. Being with peers kept the children occupied for some time, but some adults also repeatedly referred to their children entertaining themselves at the attractions which gave adults some time to rest:

“We invited a friend of <child> to come with us today. For her it is great to have somebody to play with and for me it’s a little more relaxing, because I don’t have to run with her all the time.” (Kaikoura mother of one girl (5) & friend (5), Orana)

“The activities here are great for children, the kids basically entertain themselves. I mean, sure, I still have to watch them, but I don’t have to be the entertainer.” (Christchurch father of one boy (2) and one girl (4), Willowbank)
The fun children had playing with their friends at the attractions was pointed out by a Christchurch father of one boy (7) surveyed at Orana and an Otago mother of two boys (8&11) surveyed at the Antarctic Attraction:

“<friend> and <son> loved being at the playground, that was their best thing today. We just sat there and had a coffee”

“The boys were in the snow room for ages and enjoyed playing with each other in this unusual environment.”

These examples support the earlier discussion in that the own interest of children were primarily related to fun activities, especially playing, together with siblings or friends.

A rest relieved adult family members from being the entertainer of children and may allowed them to explore their own interests. Own interests of adults at Orana and Willowbank mainly reflected some form of socialising with other adults either from their own family group or from other family groups. Socialising was described as great enjoyment during the attraction visit:

“We were here today with a big family group so the kids could play with each other and we had time to talk a bit. Just chatting and catching up; I think that’s what I enjoyed most today.” (Christchurch mother of three boys (4,6&8), Willowbank)

“It was nice to catch up with my friend again, because we didn’t see each other for a while. Our boys were busy feeding all the animals which gave us a good possibility to chat.” (Christchurch mother of one boy (8), Willowbank)

The importance of socialising was especially emphasised by a Christchurch mother of one boy (4) visiting the attraction together with a group of other mothers with young children:

“We meet here once every week to have a coffee and chat. The children pretty much occupy themselves which gives us an hour to rest and talk.” (Willowbank)

It was recognised that socialising with other adults mainly reflected the interests of female respondents, especially mothers, and it was of no interest for adults who visited the Antarctic Attraction. At the Antarctic Attraction, an Amberley father of two girls (7&9) explained that own interests of adults rather mirrored reading the information provided about the Antarctic and studying the exhibits:

“Our two kids had so much fun riding the Hagglund they wanted to go twice. This gave us [parents] at least half an hour to go back in and read some of the interesting information that we couldn’t read being with the kids.”
The extent of adults’ own time during the attraction visit was dependent on the own time of children, because children being with their family all the time did not allow parents much time to pursue their own interests. The amount of own time differed between a couple of minutes:

“We [mother and friend] had at least the time to finish our coffee and chat a little in the meantime before they [children] required our full attention again.” (Christchurch mother of one boy (6), Willowbank)

and a couple of hours:

“The kids were occupied playing with each other and with the animals all the day, so I had a great amount of time to relax and enjoy the beautiful environment.” (Christchurch mother of two boys (4&13) and two girls (6&10), Orana).

From the above discussion, it follows that family members also liked to pursue own interests and to spend time with peers in the visitor attraction environment. The self-interest of children was fundamentally perceived as interactive, because they seek out fun, while adults favoured to chat, relax, or study. Thus, own interests differed across the age spectrum.

Summarising family on-site experiences, it can be deduced that they include a happy time eternalised in photos, a variety of fun activities, edutainment on basic and advanced levels, a change in routine, and the pursuit for own interests and peer time all influenced by current weather conditions. The following section presents more general results on these families’ experiences of family outings and holidays.

5.7 Family Outings and Holidays

The questionnaire collected data about how often families went together on outings, domestic holidays and international holidays within the last year. It assessed also changes and reasons for these changes in family holidays and attraction visits within the last 18 months.

5.7.1 Frequencies of Family Outings and Holidays

The results show that more than one third of families surveyed at the three visitor attractions went on outings once a week or more often and another third of interviewed families went once a fortnight. The remaining third indicated that they went on family outings once a month or less (Table 5.13).
Table 5.13 Frequencies of Family Outings within the Last Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orana</th>
<th>Willowbank</th>
<th>Antarctic Attraction</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once a Week or More</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Fortnight</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Month</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once Every 3 Months</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once Every 6 Months</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis shows that families interviewed at Willowbank go on outings most often, with 42 percent reporting outings once a week or more often and a further 36 percent reporting outings once a fortnight. The high number of repeat visits to Willowbank (see section 5.3) may be related to the high frequency of family outings recorded among families at this attraction. More than 60 percent of families interviewed at Orana took outings at least once a fortnight, while only half of the respondents at the Antarctic Attraction took outings at least fortnightly and 21 percent stated they had family outings less than once every three months.

Domestic family holidays were frequently taken by most respondents, but on average nine percent of surveyed families had not taken a domestic holiday within the last year. Almost 60 percent took a holiday within New Zealand once, twice, or three times, while over 30 percent had a domestic holiday four times or more within the last year (Table 5.14).

Table 5.14 Frequencies of Domestic Family Holiday within the Last Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orana</th>
<th>Willowbank</th>
<th>Antarctic Attraction</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 times</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 times or more</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing the results of domestic holidays with the frequency of family outings, families surveyed at Willowbank also went on domestic holidays most frequently, followed by families interviewed at the Antarctic Attraction and Orana.

In terms of international family holidays within the last year, most New Zealand families questioned at the three visitor attractions had not taken an international holiday. Results show that less than 40 percent took an international holiday once within the last year and few
families went abroad for their holidays up to three times (Table 5.15). With regard to the individual attractions, most families surveyed at the Antarctic Attraction took at least one holiday abroad within the last year, whereas the majority of respondents from Orana and Willowbank did not take an international holiday at all.

**Table 5.15 Frequencies of International Family Holidays within the Last Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orana</th>
<th>Willowbank</th>
<th>Antarctic Attraction</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Based on these findings and additionally conducted cross-tabulation, it may be concluded that families not taking an international holiday went on outings more frequently and vice versa. Cross-tabulations show that with increasing income the number of family outings and domestic and international family holidays increased. This finding is supported by results from other cross-tabulations which show that with an increasing level of education the number of family outings and domestic and international family holidays also increased. During further analysis, it was found that the older the children in a family were, the more frequently a family took international holidays. With regard to domestic holidays and family outings, the age of children had little impact on the frequency of these activities. Reasons for taking more or less holidays and outings are discussed in the following section.

**5.7.2 Influence on Changes of Family Holiday and Attraction Visitation Patterns**

Assessing changes in family holidays and attraction visits within the last 18 months aimed to identify the influence of the financial crisis on family holidays and attraction visitation patterns in terms of frequency and places visited. The financial crisis was presumed at the outset of this research to have an impact on leisure and tourism decisions of families. However the results of this research did not indicate this event had much impact, and other aspects more specific to the stage of family life and the interests of the children were important.

The majority of families (62%) stated that their holidays have not changed within the last 18 months and even more (74%) indicated no change in family visits to visitor attractions within the last 18 months. Families who did not experience a change stated that this was
because family and work conditions, in terms of finances, children, and place of residence, had not changed, as was explained by a Christchurch father of a 9 year old girl at the Antarctic Attraction:

“We have the same financial crisis as always. We didn’t experience any major changes, because we work the same jobs and our kids are still expensive (smiled).”

Families noticing a change in holidays (38%) reported that holidays either increased (18%) or decreased in frequency (46%) or were different to previous holidays in terms of destination, activities, and/or duration (35%). The results indicate that more families surveyed at the three attractions have decreased their frequency of holidays than increased them within the last 18 months. Most of the families interviewed at Orana and Willowbank took fewer holidays within the last 18 months, but families at the Antarctic Attraction predominantly had different holidays instead of travelling more or less often. Families noticing a change in visits to visitor attractions (26%) mentioned that their visits either increased in frequency (51%) or changed to different attractions (38%), but did not so much decrease in frequency (11%). Main reasons found for holiday and attraction visitation changes were similar at all three attractions. Table 5.16 presents a summary of the main themes identified.

Table 5.16 Changes in Family Holidays and Attraction Visitation Patterns*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Reason for change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in frequency</td>
<td>• Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Less discretionary income, children are expensive (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Difficult to take children on holiday (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Less time when caring for children (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Other (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in frequency</td>
<td>• Children are older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Easier to travel with them (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- More education (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Children remember more (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Children need entertainment (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Other (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different holidays/</td>
<td>• Immigrated to New Zealand (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visitor attractions</td>
<td>• Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Children friendly environment (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Children are older (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Free entry (for children) (7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total responses do not equal 100 percent as multiple reasons could be reported and only main themes were included in the table.
As summarised in Table 5.16, the needs and abilities of children and limitations involved were the dominant reason for families to change their holiday and attraction visitation patterns, but work, relocation, immigration, and the recession (indicated as ‘other’ in Table 5.16) also caused change. The original idea behind this question – the financial recession – was only referred to incidentally. Some families mentioned the recession as a negative influence to their holidays and attraction visits:

“Due to the financial crisis everything is getting more expensive so we can’t afford to go on holiday or to visitor attractions so much”. (Oamaru mother of one boy (5), Orana)

However, the financial crisis did not turn out to considerably influence family holidays or attraction visits even when directly addressed.

Immigration to New Zealand or moving to Christchurch from another place within New Zealand also triggered change:

“We are new to the country so we prefer to do more outings rather than a big family holiday once a year. There is a lot to see in New Zealand”. (Christchurch mother of two pre-school children (2&4), Orana)

“We just moved to Christchurch and started to discover this place. We definitely went on more outings than we did in Dunedin.” (Christchurch father of one boy (11), Antarctic Attraction)

Given that children mainly prompted the change for families to decrease, increase, or choose different types of holidays and visitor attractions, the remaining part of this section presents reasons for these changes. In some situations, children caused a decrease in holidays and attraction visits, because they lowered the discretionary income of the family. However, these families would most likely not visit the attractions at all if it was not for the children:

“As I take care of the kids at the moment, we only have one income. With two children now we need to be even more careful where we spend our money. Although outings like today are brilliant, we just can’t afford to go more often anymore” (Christchurch mother of one pre-schooler (2), Willowbank)

The difficulties travelling with children were frequently mentioned by families with infants in respect of their special needs and the high effort involved so that a holiday or outing may be more exhausting than staying at home. Other respondents, especially mothers, stated that they decreased their leisure and holiday activities, because intensive care for the children did not allow time for that:
“I’m so busy all day doing things with and for my kids, especially with the new baby now, I don’t really have the time to go on holiday or long outings. Today was an exception.”
(Ashburton mother of three children (4 months, 3&4 years), Orana)

In sum, a decrease in frequencies of holidays and attraction visits was mainly ascribed to the needs of children limiting the discretionary income and leisure time and producing a higher travel effort.

An increase in frequencies of family holidays and attraction visits was primarily linked to older age of children. Here are some examples of explanations prompted by respondents why older children enhanced the number of family holidays and attraction visits:

“We are taking our child to experience places and cultures, because he is getting older and more open to learn and experience new things.” (Wellington father of one boy (10), Antarctic Attraction)

“Our children are getting older so they can absorb more. That makes travelling more worthwhile.” (Matamata mother of one boy (8) and one girl (12), Antarctic Attraction)

“It is easier to travel with the children now that they are older, because they need less care. It makes the holiday more enjoyable for all of us.” (Dunedin Grandfather of two girls (7&10), Orana)

These examples have in common the benefits arising from the older age of children such as advanced abilities to travel, remember, experience, and learn. Such developments were often described as an appropriate starting point for joint holidays and attraction visits. Families who referred to the older age of their children primarily included school children aged six years or older. At times, these families also encompassed younger siblings, but a Christchurch father of two girls (7&8) and one boy (3) stated that the age of older children was decisive for increasing holidays and attraction visits:

“We started to increasingly visit family attractions this year again to entertain our girls a bit on the weekend. It’s a bit stressful with our little one, but the girls want to go so he has to come with us.” (Orana)

Although an increase in holidays and attraction visits was mainly related to the older age of children, families with pre-school children also increased the frequency of attraction visits. These respondents stated that their children required entertainment, and a family friendly visitor attraction (especially emphasised at Orana and Willowbank) appeared to be a good environment for children to play, learn, and enjoy themselves.
Statements revealed that the older age of children did not only increase the frequency of family holidays and attraction visits, but also caused a change in type of family holiday and visitor attraction:

“*We do more adventure and educational stuff for the kid now as he gets older*”  
(Invercargill father of one boy (11), Antarctic Attraction)

“*We are going less often to attractions that cost and more often to ones that are free, because the kids are getting older and cost are going up*” (Christchurch mother of one boy (8) and one girl (10), Orana)

Changing from paid visitor attractions to ones that were free of charge was especially emphasised by families with toddlers, because as a couple without children they had more income to spend on leisure activities. Young families indicated that they have changed their patterns in need for more family friendly holidays and attractions:

“*Our daughter is twelve months old now. Over the last year the holidays we take and attraction we go to have of course drastically changed. Activities you do and places you visit must be family friendly, you can’t go anywhere else.*” (Christchurch mother of one girl (1), Willowbank)

In summary, changes to family holidays and family visitation patterns to attractions were often triggered by needs and abilities of children instead of external economic, political or social occurrences. Reasons for changes can be primarily linked to the age of children so that families with infants showed a tendency to decrease the frequency, while families with older children were recognised to increase it again. In contrast to family holidays, families visiting attractions also increased the visiting frequency with young children due to the entertainment possibilities for children offered at family friendly attractions.

5.8 Conclusion

In order to establish a better understanding of the family attraction experience, this chapter presented the results generated by surveying New Zealand families visiting Orana, Willowbank, and the Antarctic Attraction. Most respondents were either mothers or fathers between 30-49 years with good education and above-average household income. Respondents mainly hailed from Christchurch City visiting as either lone mothers or parent couples with children usually aged between one and ten years possibly accompanied by extended family. Families spent up to half a day at the attractions with an average of two to three hours. The
vast majority at Orana and Willowbank were repeat visitors, whereas most family groups at the Antarctic Attraction visited for the first time.

According to the number of outings and holidays taken by families, it was assumed that families not taking an international holiday went on outings more frequently and vice versa. Recent changes to holidays and attraction visits were not triggered by external economic, political or social occurrences, but by the needs and abilities of children. Families were motivated to visit the attractions by the core products (animals and education), but also by extending family relationships, satisfying the needs of children, and experiencing fun. Their on-site experiences include a happy and quality time eternalised in photos, a variety of fun activities, edutainment, a change in routine, and the pursuit for own interests all influenced by weather and costs. In order to satisfy family visitors, the attractions must enable these on-site experiences. Given that motivations were reflected in on-site experiences which in turn constitute the basis for family satisfaction, it may be said that the attraction visit consists of interconnected phases (pre, during, and after the visit) where one phase informs the next. The three phases together constitute the family experience visiting an attraction, but since family satisfaction was not investigated in detail in this research the subsequent chapter focuses on the discussion of the anticipatory phase and experiential phase.
Chapter 6: A Discussion of the Family Visitor and Management Perspective on Family Attraction Visits

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of this research from the management perspective and family visitor perspective. It examines the domestic family visitor market and highlights differences between the attractions in terms of its importance as well as the importance of the visitor attractions to families. A chronological model (Figure 6.1) structures the discussion of family visitor experiences at the three attractions and relating management issues. The managerial approaches of the attractions are then compared to family experiences in order to assess potential discrepancies between the interests of domestic family visitors and the operations of the three visitor attractions. The discussion helps to answer the research questions about the domestic family market, marketing and operational approaches of the three visitor attractions, the anticipations and on-site experiences of family visitors, and discrepancies between the interests of families and managerial approaches of the attractions.

Figure 6.1 Chronological Model of Family Experiences and Managerial Issues
The chronological model was adapted from the three phase vacation experience model (Figure 2.1), which usually consists of three interconnected phases where one phase informs the next: the anticipatory phase, the experiential phase, and the reflective phase. As a result of the findings, the chronological model focuses on the anticipatory and experiential phases. The reflective phase and the feedback loop are beyond the scope of this thesis. The anticipatory phase encapsulates pre-visit family experiences in terms of motivations and decisions-making as well as the marketing approaches of the visitor attractions before the actual attraction visit. The experiential phase summarises the on-site experiences of families in terms of own time and idealised time as well as the operational approaches of the attractions. According to societal pressures prevailing in Western societies requesting families to be a good functioning unit, adults might have hid negative occurrences during the visit when they reported their on-site experiences in order to conform to these expectations. Consequently, their idealised reports were perhaps not an entirely realistic reflection of their experiences, but the discussion still highlights the experiences important for families at the three attractions. A comparison between family experiences and the goals and operational approaches of the three attractions revealed conformity as well as discrepancies. Conformity was observable, because the management aimed at generating idealised family time and families aimed at experiencing idealised family time. Discrepancies were located in the managers’ awareness of children’s motivation and interests at the attractions. The following discussion assesses the role of domestic family visitors to three New Zealand visitor attractions from a visitor experience and managerial perspective.

6.2 The Domestic Family Market and Its Importance to the Visitor Attractions
This section discusses the domestic family market at the three visitor attractions, its role to the attractions, and the role of the visitor attractions to the family visitors.

6.2.1 Domestic Family Visitors
From this research it was clear that the managers of Orana, Willowbank, and the Antarctic Attraction have a good understanding of the characteristics of the family market visiting their attractions. The younger age of children at Willowbank usually translated to younger parents who accompanied their children, while the older age of children at the Antarctic Attraction
usually meant parents were older. This breakdown of the domestic family market identified for the three visitor attractions was also indicated by the managers.

It was not surprising to find Christchurch as the dominant place of residence of survey respondents, because the visitor attractions were located in Christchurch where the research took place. However, at the outset of the research more families were expected to arrive from locations other than Christchurch due to the surveying being conducted during the school holiday period. This expectation was built on findings from Hallman and Benbow (2007), who discovered that visitors to attractions arrive from increasingly different destinations during the holidays compared to non-holiday periods. While the pre-eminence of the local market at Orana and Willowbank across the year was confirmed by the managers prior to the start of the visitor research, managers at the Antarctic Attraction rather put the emphasis on the international and wider domestic visitor market. The attractions’ market and possible variations during holiday periods influence the marketing strategies of the attractions and the channels used to reach local, national, or international visitors.

Since the managers did not have detailed information about repeat visits from domestic families, all managers slightly underestimated the number of repeat visitors. The focus of this study on domestic visitors exclusively may have influenced a higher number of repeat visits compared to the average purported by the managers. The average was calculated including both domestic and international visitors, but international travellers only infrequently repeated their visit to the attractions as confirmed by the managers. James and Petrick (2004) demonstrated a correlation between repeat visits and loyalty programmes in the tourism industry. Thus, it might be assumed that the loyalty programmes (annual passes and memberships) may act as a good motivation for family visitors to repeatedly visit the attractions. However, annual passes and memberships only motivated less than 10% of surveyed families to visit the attractions. Other loyalty issues will be discussed later. Visitor loyalty might be most prevalent at Orana and Willowbank, because visitors to the Antarctic Attraction are often internationals with a low return rate. The awareness of the actual number of domestic family repeat visitors might encourage the development of additional and even more effective loyalty programmes at Orana and Willowbank and at the same time intensify the acquisition of new family visitors which possible could be turned into repeat visitors.
These adapted marketing strategies may have the potential to result in higher visitor numbers and higher turnover.

Given that the research was conducted during the Easter school holidays, this may have influenced the high number of lone parents, especially lone mothers, interviewed at the visitor attractions. In the interviews, this difference was explained by the family organisation. Managers suggest that usually mothers take time off to look after their children in general or when they are on holiday. This is supported by the Department of Labour and Statistics New Zealand which found that it is still relatively common for women with young children to withdraw from the labour market for some time compared to their male counterparts (Crichton, 2008). The greater number of mothers answering the survey corresponds to the literature about family experiences which is mostly dominated by the individual tourist perspectives of mothers (Small, 2005). Although mothers were the main respondents to the questionnaire, other family members also contributed to the completion of the survey. Recent literature indicates the importance of analysing experiences of the whole family group due to the neglected perspectives of fathers and children (Gram, 2005; Schänzel, 2010). Lone mothers were more frequently accompanied by extended family than two-parent families. This was perhaps because they desired company and support in looking after their child or children. Communicating the benefits in marketing messages for lone parents visiting the attractions to bring extended family or friends may increasingly motivate them to do so, which in turn can increase the attractions’ revenues.

6.2.2 The Role of the Domestic Family Market to the Attractions and Vice Versa

From results presented in Chapter Five it can be argued that these visitor attractions had an important role for the family visitors. In turn, the domestic family market was an important segment for all three visitor attractions (section 4.6) in terms of recommending the attraction to friends and family and, only applicable for Orana and Willowbank, repeat visits of the local market which account for high visitor numbers and high turnover. Ascribing importance to the domestic family market may support the domestic tourism industry, which is an essential element of the New Zealand economy (Ministry of Tourism, 2010). After all, within the context of tourism, the family represents one of the largest markets for holiday and attraction service providers (Carr, 2006). Since about 26 percent of the population are under 18 years old
(Statistics New Zealand, 2010b), children in the family groups represent an important current and future market for the visitor attraction industry.

High turnover gained by domestic family visitors must not only be achieved by entrance fees, but may be also achieved by sales from the restaurant, souvenir shop, or animal encounters. Supplying these purchasing opportunities adds to the product and activity range of the attractions enjoyed by families. While offering an annual pass or membership means giving up immediate revenue, these incentives met the needs of the local and domestic family market who regarded them as representing good value for money. Families’ perception of good value for money caused satisfaction and may positively impact their long-term loyalty and frequency of repeat visits. The price sensitivity of the local and domestic family market highlighted by the managers in the interviews requires the managers, especially of Orana and Willowbank, to develop adequate pricing strategies for these market segments.

Offering other less lucrative on-site self-catering opportunities including picnic table and barbeques at Orana and Willowbank may again increase satisfaction and long-term loyalty of family visitors. These self-catering opportunities matched the needs of family visitors, who wanted to keep the costs for the visit as low as possible. The Antarctic Attraction only permitted visitors to eat at the restaurant, which was thought overly expensive by several families, and led to some dissatisfaction with the experience. The management approaches of the Antarctic Attraction do not seem as well adjusted to the needs and interests of the local and domestic family market as at Orana and Willowbank, perhaps because the level of importance of this market segment is lower at this attraction.

While the importance of the domestic family market to the three visitor attractions was based on financial and management issues, the importance of visitor attractions to families was found in the meaning gained from family visits to the attractions which centred on the notion of idealised family time. The concept of idealised family time emerged as a way to help explain how families experienced their time at the attractions. While no conflicts within family units at visitor attractions were identified in this study, there is a possibility that the ideal of togetherness in family time concealed the realities of family conflicts that may have occurred during visits. It is assumed that these family attraction visits must be understood as being influenced by the ideological hegemonies in Western society. In Western societies, parents feel the increasing pressure to provide large amounts of quality time to their children at leisure.
(Shaw, 2008). Therefore, respondents may have hidden negative incidents in their responses in order to “save their face” and maintain their ideal established according to social expectations about being a good family. From the generational perspective, adults created happy family moments at the visitor attractions tethered to the needs and activities of children. Supporting Thorpe and Daly (1999), this was primarily seen as an investment in future family functioning.

Family disparities were described in Chapter Five (section 5.6.1.3), because the interest of children did not necessarily reflect the interest of adults. This disparity was also reflected in studies by Johns and Gyimóthy (2002) and Lehto et al. (2009) who found that spending time together as a family in a leisure environment is a common cause of conflict, because creating joint experiences where parents and children are immersed in activities together can be challenging. In order to sustain a good time together, adult family members willingly compromised their needs and therefore sacrificed their interests, whereas children were generally not prepared to compromise (section 5.6.1.3). Compromises made by adults presume that parents primarily put the needs of their children first to ensure that children had fun experiences. According to Gram (2007), this selflessness is expected from parents. Although adults were restricted in pursuing all their interests, a conceivable reason for no family conflicts might be that at least major needs from both adults in terms of family togetherness and children in terms of fun activities were satisfied. Deem (1996) further stated that the social constraints imposed by society today on expressing dissatisfaction with family time may also have minimised family conflicts.

The discussion of the role of visitor attractions to families and the role of the domestic family market to the attractions reveals that domestic families and visitor attractions were important for each other. The level of mutual importance was higher at Orana and Willowbank than at the Antarctic Attraction, because domestic family visitors only accounted for a small market at this attraction and the focus of the visit for families was not as much on family time that could be idealised, but on education. This difference between the attractions was also reflected in the family motivations discussed as part of the anticipatory phase next.

6.3 Anticipatory Phase
The anticipatory phase is the first phase of the chronological model (Figure 6.1) and encompasses pre-visit experiences in terms of family motivation and the influences on their
pre-visit decisions. This section discusses family motivations from the visitor and management perspective, the passive and active influence children have on family attraction visit decisions, and marketing approaches of the three attractions in light of children as decision influencers.

### 6.3.1 Multi-Motivation of Families

Despite a number of exceptions, motivational research has usually adopted an individualistic orientation (section 2.3.1) and does not take into account the social dimensions and dynamics present in groups like families (Pearce, 2005). Results from this study were compiled on the basis of adult responses reflecting the views of adults and children alike and thus, did take into account the social dimensions and dynamics present in family groups. The identified family motivations in Chapter Five (section 5.4) can be characterised by a combination of push and pull factors, whereby respondents were more concerned with push factors than destination pull factors supporting finding from Crompton (1979a), Gram (2005), and McCabe (2009). The desire to spend time with the family, experience fun, and educate the family as well as the needs expressed by children reflect the concept of push factors, whereby the core products of the attractions – animals and education possibilities – reflect the concept of pull factors. Education might be seen as both a push and pull factor, because it can be related to the personal need for more knowledge pushing families to the attraction or it may also be related to the learning opportunities offered at the attractions which attracted families to visit the site.

Responses from the open-ended motivation question barely indicated education as a motivation, especially responses from families surveyed at Orana and Willowbank, whereas an analysis of the Likert scale question identified education as the third most important motivation. This difference may be a result of the first two highest motivations dominating the responses of the open-ended questions and respondents perhaps did not mention their number three motivation. Moreover, in contrast to the open-ended question, the Likert scale question directly asked about education as a motive and adults might have felt guilty not to indicate education as an important motivation. According to finding from Shaw (2008), it is supposed that social pressures might have influenced respondents. They possibly have feared to be seen as bad parents if they had no intentions to use an attraction visit to improve their own knowledge and to achieve particular child-development goals. Schänzel (2010) found that learning for children is not expected by parents in a tourism environment, which supports the
assumption that the importance of education as a motivation indicated by respondents was perhaps impacted by values and beliefs about what it means to be a good role model.

Families were motivated by similar motives at each attraction, although there were some slight variations. Families surveyed at Orana and Willowbank wanted to satisfy their needs for family togetherness and social bonding more than families interviewed at the Antarctic Attraction. According to study results from Pearce (1991), they were seeking to build and extend their personal relationships and emphasised tenderness and affection, joint fun, and joint activities. This may also be described as an escape to a social space involving connections with, rather than an escape from, social relations (Larsen et al., 2007) and a focus on interpersonal interactions (Wearing & Wearing, 1996). Interestingly, escape as a motive was rated rather low (section 5.4), maybe because most respondents might have not been aware that their need relates to an emotional escape. Families at the Antarctic Attraction were more interested in educational opportunities compared to families at Orana and Willowbank. According to findings from Pearce (1991), they were concerned with developing their own and their children’s skills, knowledge, abilities, and personal interests.

These family motivations, mainly relating to adults’ interests, were also identified by the attraction managers indicating that management was aware of adults’ reasons for family visits. In contrast to a good awareness of motivations of adults to visit the attractions, familiarity with the motivation of children was not detected in the managerial interviews. Fun, which was presented in Chapter Five as the main stimulus for children to visit an attraction, was never referred to as a motive in interviews at any of the attractions.

An interesting comment was made by the Marketing Manager at Willowbank in relation to own time as motivation for adult family members to visit the attraction. She stated that one of the reasons why families visited the attraction was parents can have a break and relax a little while the children entertain themselves for some time by looking around and interacting with the animals. Own time was never mentioned as a motivation by participants in this study, although according to a detailed questionnaire analysis, it was appreciated by some families during their attraction visit. Own time not being mentioned as a motivation in this study may be a result of it being less significant compared to family time and other motivations, or high social pressure felt by adult family members that they should spend the time at the attraction together with the children instead of apart (Shaw, 2008).
The Leisure Ladder Model introduced in section 2.3.2 includes the possibility that people can relate to several levels at the same time indicating the possibility of being motivated by multiple stimuli (Pearce, 1991). The key stimuli for families to visit the three attractions identified in Chapter Five can be allocated to three of the five levels of the model (Figure 2.2). The desire of families to experience the things related to the stimulation, relationship, and development level suggests that families were multi motivated as observed by Pearce (1991). Motivations associated with the stimulation and relationship levels emerged to be stronger for female respondents (mainly mothers) than for male respondents (mainly fathers), while motivational needs linked to the development level more strongly motivated male respondents to visit an attraction than female respondents. This supports Anderson (2001), who found that the main motivation of mothers was to ensure the happiness and safety of their families, while fathers were more focused on their individual needs and aspirations.

A visual representation of the comparison between motivations found in this research for families at visitor attractions and the LLM motivations of families at theme parks found by Pearce (1991) pictures similarities identifiable by means of a comparable development of the two graphs (Figure 6.2).

![Figure 6.2 Comparisons between Theme Park and Visitor Attraction Motivations](image-url)
Although the percentage of participants who were motivated by the stimuli in the two studies differed, the graphs indicate similar importance or otherwise of each motivation except for fun/excitement. Fun and excitement was the second most common motive for families at visitor attractions, but the second most insignificant motive for families at theme parks. Fun was identified in this research as a motivation of major importance for children, but this motive did not seem to receive a lot of awareness among managers or in other family motivation research like Pearce (1991). Motivations are the first element of the chronological approach to attraction visitation experiences followed by family decision-making and adjusted marketing approaches of the visitor attractions discussed in the subsequent sections.

6.3.2 The Influence of Children on Family Attraction Visit Decisions

In early studies of family decision-making for leisure, children were excluded from family tourism decisions (Howard & Madrigal, 1990; Lackman & Lanasa, 1993; Seaton & Tagg, 1995), but today their important role in tourism purchase decisions is increasingly recognised (Kang & Hsu, 2005; Nanda et al., 2006; Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001). Since changes in family visitation patterns to attractions were discovered in Chapter Five to be predominantly triggered by the needs and demands of children, their importance influencing family decisions is supported by this research.

Results presented in Chapter Five confirm that children exerted active, as well as passive influence on the frequency of family attraction visits, and on the actual visit decision (section 5.7.2). One of the main reasons for a decrease in frequency of attraction visits was less discretionary income due to expenses for the children, although most families surveyed at the attractions had a yearly household income above the median income of New Zealand families (Statistics New Zealand, 2006a). Other reasons were less time when caring for children and the difficulty and complexity to travel with children. New Zealand families with infants and toddlers have been found in a study by Blichfeldt (2007) and Lawson (1991) to do little travelling as a result of constraints imposed by the needs of small children.

Blichfeldt (2006, 2007) also found that these families participate in relatively few commercial tourist activities and have the lowest involvement level in entertainment, which was contradicted by findings from this study. Research results indicated that families with pre-school children increased their visiting frequency, because children required entertainment and
a family friendly visitor attraction appeared to be a good environment for them to play, learn, and enjoy themselves. Willowbank was thus particularly appealing to families with young children, because the park constituted ‘smaller’ family experiences as described in section 4.3. The study results support findings from the recreation literature which outline increasing participation in recreation activities for family groups with children (especially young children) compared to adults without children (Lee et al., 2008). It is assumed that annual passes or memberships offered at Orana and Willowbank supported an increase in attraction visits, because it was mentioned by some respondents that these passes made visitors feel like their trip was ‘free’.

The increasing abilities of older children and the decreasing constraints imposed by the needs of small children were characteristics expressed by respondents to classify their children as old enough for more frequent family attractions visits. These findings are consistent with conclusions made by Blichfeldt (2006, 2007) and Thornton et al. (1997) who ascertained that the point in time when children are no longer infants/toddlers qualifies as the starting point for more frequent joint family tourism experiences everybody remembers. According to this research data, these families primarily included school children aged six years or older. Consequently, these reasons were primarily referred to by families interviewed at the Antarctic Attraction and at Orana who often included school age children.

Besides the passive influence children had on decisions concerning attraction visits, they also actively impacted the decision whether to visit an attraction or not. This supports Ryan (1992) who noticed that children act as a catalyst in inducing a family visit to an attraction and that children are therefore important in generating economic effects. According to research results from Gram (2007), Nickerson and Jurowski (2001), and Thornton et al. (1997), it might be assumed that the active participation of children was encouraged by adults, because they might have wanted to consider the needs of their children in order to satisfy them with the attraction visit. Results reveal that satisfaction of children at the visitor attraction had a higher priority than their own (Gram, 2007) so that, as indicated in the questionnaires, many parents aimed at satisfying their children more than themselves (Thornton et al., 1997). From the responses it becomes obvious that meeting the needs of the child also resulted in satisfied parents (Ryan, 1992).
6.3.3 Implications on the Marketing Approaches

Understanding the passive and active influence children had on family decisions to visit attractions is important information for visitor attraction marketing managers. On the one hand, they have to consider the passive impact of children and therefore target parents and communicate that they provide offers suitable for the budget of families and that they are able to provide opportunities appropriate for the needs, abilities, and interests of children. On the other hand, the visitor attractions have to market directly to the children and make a visit desirable, because their personal wishes influence the family decision to visit the attraction. This section discusses whether the marketing approaches of the attractions were in line with the family decision-making process.

In the previous section it was discussed that children often seemed to be the cause for limited discretionary income and thus, it was high costs and poor value for money which impaired family satisfaction. This sentiment was most often expressed among visitors at the most expensive attraction - Antarctic Attraction - and less among families at Orana and Willowbank. This was probably related to the membership or annual pass purchased by many families at these two attractions. At all three attractions, management attempted to have and market family friendly pricing strategies such as family group prices, special deals, coupons, and annual passes/memberships. This marketing effort was relatively low at the Antarctic Attraction compared to Orana or Willowbank, but according to the Director of the Antarctic Attraction international visitors were not as price sensitive as domestic visitors.

The promotion of each attraction indicated that the opportunities offered were suitable for different ages of children, which required parents to evaluate on the basis of the marketing if the attraction was appropriate for the age of their children. The managers provided sufficient information about the attraction, whereby the distinct age categories of parents at the three attractions may require the use of different marketing channels appealing to each family visitor market (Commuri & Gentry, 2000). For example, managers may use local and domestic tourism and non-tourism magazines either for families with pre-school children or primary and secondary age children, or managers may even address Kindergartens and schools in order to gain attention. The passive impact of children was sufficiently considered in the marketing approaches of the attractions.
Generally, the communication channels used by the managers (see section 4.7) were accessible to, and frequently used by, adults, but only some of them were used by children. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, due to the active influence children had on the visit decision they must be directly addressed by the marketing. Big colourful advertisement on the screen or street is often hard to ignore even for small children and today the internet is frequently used by children under the age of ten (Bundesprüfstelle für Jugendgefährdende Medien, 2010). By contrast, other messages only reached older children if at all, because newspapers, radio, and travel guides only become interesting for children entering adolescence (Zeitungs Marketing Gesellschaft, 2010). Since only some marketing approaches of the three visitor attractions were appropriate for children, their active influence on the visit decision might have been a little underestimated by the attraction managers. More marketing targeted directly at children might result in more family decisions to visit the attractions.

Summing up, the anticipatory phase encompassed experiences prior to the attraction visit from the visitor and the management perspective. Families to the three visitor attractions were similarly multi-motivated and the management appeared well aware of the motivations of adults to visit the attractions, but not of the motivation of children. Children influenced family attraction visit decisions either through their active participation in the decision process or passively through their presence and needs. These influences were largely considered in the marketing approaches of the attractions by either targeting children or parents in terms of need satisfaction for the children, but more marketing could be targeted at children directly. As indicated earlier, family motivations were reflected in family on-site experiences which are discussed in the following section.

6.4 Experiential Phase
The focus of this section is on the experiential phase illustrated in the chronological model (Figure 6.1) incorporating the main on-site experiences of families identified in Chapter Five in relation to operational approaches of the visitor attractions. The on-site experiences do not necessarily reflect a realistic understanding of family experiences at visitor attractions, because responses reflected no sense of family conflicts experienced during the visit and thus might have been idealised. Idealised descriptions of family time at the attractions were solely intermitted by the desire of family members to pursue own interests. It is assumed that
families idealised the report of their experiences in accordance with the ideology of the family they possibly tried to (re)constructed at the visitor attractions.

6.4.1 Idealised Family Time
The concept of idealised family time emerged from the analysis of the surveys as the overarching theme of how families experienced the three visitor attractions. Idealised family time is used to represent joint family on-site experiences at a visitor attraction including a happy and quality time that was different from normal and was orientated towards fun activities and edutainment. Family time for adults included the more purposive elements beneficial to family functioning and parent-child relationships, whereas children were more hedonistic and focused on the self, emphasising some generational differences.

6.4.1.1 Quality Family Moments
Experiencing happy family moments of high quality encompasses the notion of togetherness with the (extended) family surrounded by a joyful atmosphere that brings pleasure to all family members and at the same time indicates meaningful interaction. The idea of family togetherness and social connectedness emerged from this research as the crucial component of the family attraction visit, because it was often felt to be missed out in daily life due to an unbalanced work-life situation (Lawson et al., 2006; Robertson, 2006). Similar to findings from Coventry (2006), DeVault (2000), and Gram (2005), results indicated that parents valued an attraction visit which offered them the opportunity to spend quality time with their children. This supports Lehto et al. (2009), who found that quality family moments have become ever more desired as the hurried pace of life places stresses upon families. The experience of social connectedness at visitor attractions centred on establishing or strengthening social relationships with loved ones and was a time for (re)connecting to each other. The importance of connectedness for families is broadly recognised throughout the literature dealing with family holidays (Gram, 2005; McCabe, 2009; Schänzel, 2010), family recreation (Hornig, 2005; Lee et al., 2008; Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001) and family outings (DeVault, 2000). Spending time together with the family was strongly emphasised by families interviewed at all three attractions, but slightly less so at the Antarctic Attraction.
Since the three visitor attractions claimed to be family attractions (not exclusively though), the management aimed at providing experiences families can enjoy together. Especially for families with pre-school children, many of the activities offered on-site must be done jointly by adults and children, because children required adult support feeding the farmyard animals at Orana and Willowbank or facing the polar storm at the Antarctic Attraction. The picnic areas supplied at Orana and Willowbank offered further opportunities for families to benefit from pleasurable time together. It becomes apparent that the attraction managers were familiar with the interest of family visitors to spend quality time together. They provided sufficient opportunities for a family to experience togetherness, but experiencing the happiness and quality surrounding these family moments was yet a responsibility of the families themselves.

According to this research, family connectedness reflected an ideology of togetherness associated with values and beliefs about what it means to be a good family (Daly, 1996). Family togetherness has become part of a cultural discourse defining a good parent (Snyder, 2007). The ideology also became obvious in this research through the photographs taken at the attractions (section 5.6.3) which were not simple records of real family life, but shot through with desires and expectations of idealised happy family relations. This means that photos as a matter of principle only displayed positive moments of a visit linked to good parenting and positive family memories and did not show negative incidents and any compromises or sacrifices made to ensure the family was happy. Due to social pressures, parents may have feared being seen as having bad parental skills and being a bad family if they cannot prove idealised family situations but had to admit problems that occurred during the visit instead. This reflects the studies by Chambers (2003), Haldrup and Larsen (2003), and Hallman and Benbow (2007), who found that family photos taken at visitor attractions become souvenirs of happy family time emblematic of the time and emotional investment made in the relationship. Photographic images made at the three attractions capturing intimate family relations helped in the creation of family identities which produced rather than reflected family life (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003; Larsen, 2005).

Since it was not explicitly stated in the management interviews, it can only be assumed that the ideal of joint family experiences was familiar to the management of the visitor attractions. It seems logical that the management tried to provide ideal family experiences
eliminating possible problem sources in order to generate positive memories and motivate the families to visit again. The management of visitor attractions aimed at generating idealised family time and families aimed at experiencing idealised family time.

### 6.4.1.2 A Variety of Fun Activities

The research results presented in Chapter Five demonstrate that experiencing a variety of fun activities at the visitor attraction was an important component of idealised family time. As described by Schänzel (2010), results of this research indicate that fun activities were specifically tied to the needs and identities of children. For children attraction visits were about physical activity, being involved and having fun which supports previous research (Carr, 2006; Gram, 2005; Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001; Small, 2008). Podilchak (1991) argued that fun emphasises a social emotional interaction process which means it is impossible to have fun by oneself. Findings from this research concur, because descriptions of ‘having fun’ in survey responses mainly featured friends and family members. However, children and adults also reported having fun by themselves engaging in activities offered at the attractions like feeding and petting animals or riding the Hagglund.

Sometimes, fun activities interesting for adults had to be appropriate for their ages. In order to provide these appropriate fun activities which both adults and children enjoyed participating in, visitor attractions had to offer a variety of opportunities. A good selection of activities at the attraction allowed visitors to choose according to their preferences. While fun, and fun activities, are considered a hedonistic concept, both were central to the understanding of family attraction visits as a collective pursuit. This supports the theory established by Hilbrecht et al. (2008), Johns and Gyimothy (2002), and Lehto et al. (2009) that fun was a definitional characteristic for family tourism activities.

While active fun was central to children on attraction visits, for adults fun was sometimes more connected with ensuring children had fun which brought contentment rather than fun for themselves. These findings support Gram (2005) who found that fun, entertainment and activities are of major importance for children, but less so to parents. It was recognised that comments including the enjoyment of the joy of children were mainly made by mothers and especially at Willowbank, which could be related to the high number of mothers surveyed at Willowbank. It may also be related to the young age of children at Willowbank,
because pre-school children are often unhappy even at places where they should be enjoying themselves. Consequently, seeing their children happy at the attraction was a great enjoyment of parents.

From responses of managers it becomes clear that each attraction tried to provide a variety of entertainment suitable for children as well as adults. Some on-site activities could be enjoyed by the whole family together, but there were also some parts specifically designed for children or adults. According to observations during the research and statements made by the interviewees (see section 4.8), Orana and the Antarctic Attraction achieved a good mix of activities for children and adults. Offering activities for young and old might satisfy the different preferences prevailing in a family, which could possibly facilitate managers to increase the number of return visitors. By contrast, Willowbank designed most of its entertainment for children requiring adults to compromise their needs. According to the possibilities provided for family visitors at the three attractions, the intentions of the facilities might be summarised as creating increasing opportunities from “small” experiences at Willowbank to “medium” experiences at Orana through to “grand” experiences at the Antarctic Attraction related to the age and abilities of children.

Although the entertainment opportunities for families provided at the attractions were oriented towards the high activity level of children, the notion of specifically fun activities was mostly missing in the interviews. An exception was the interview with the Director of the Antarctic Attraction, who stated that the Antarctic Attraction was designed to bring an experience of Antarctica to visitors in a fun, exciting, informative, and commercially successful way. Since research with children is ethically challenging, the attractions may have only concentrated on research with adults what would explain their lack of knowledge about fun as a motivation for and interest of children. The attraction managers understood that for the children an idealised family time at the visitor attraction was about physical involvement while adults primarily wanted to see their children having fun and perhaps participate in that fun if the right variety of activities was offered. Fun was also a decisive element of education and learning during the attraction visit, which is discussed in the following section.
6.4.1.3 Edutainment on Basic and Advanced Levels

Although a family attraction visit primarily served a recreational purpose, the idealised family time at attractions also includes the development of skills and knowledge for children and adults. Similar to Hallman and Benbow (2007), education and learning was analysed in Chapter Five (section 5.6.2) as a purposive element of an attraction visit reflecting the intentions of adults to improve their knowledge and to achieve particular child-development goals. As discussed earlier (section 6.3.1), the importance ascribed to experiencing learning and education might be influenced by social pressures which perhaps made parents feel guilty if they would have disregarded the learning opportunities provided by the attractions (Shaw, 2008). Learning and education was experienced at a basic level which was oriented to children, especially pre-school children, and at an advanced level which was oriented to school age children and adults. These different approaches to learning according to the age of children were also identified by DeVault (2000) in literature addressing family outings.

The experience of learning at the basic level was mainly stated by families surveyed at Willowbank, because of the younger age of the children. Basic learning was not only about generating fundamental understanding and improving children’s abilities to approach and treat animals, it also encompassed the opportunity for adults to teach children about history and culture and guide their children (generativity) by instilling healthy lifestyles, traditions, values, and ethics as outlined in studies by Kelly (1997), Lehto et al. (2009), and Mannell and Kleiber (1997). Learning at the advanced level was oriented towards visitors who were able to understand and appreciate information about exhibits. This result supports DeVault (2000) who found that families containing older children (school age) seemed to use the zoo in more sustained and focused ways, drawing on interpretive signs in ways closer to their designers’ intentions.

Research results show that fun and entertainment were crucial components of learning at both levels, because it made learning a pleasurable experience for adults and children. Edutainment, the combination of fun and learning, is a well-known concept adopted by the family entertainment industry which has long used the educational aspects as the draw, while adding entertainment or amusement (White, 1996). Although also adults were grateful to develop their understanding in an interesting and entertaining way, particularly at the Antarctic Attraction, children were fascinated by the edutainment at the attractions. According
to White (1996), children have always understood edutainment, because their genes have programmed them to almost exclusively use edutainment to learn about themselves, the world they live in and how to become part of society. While biological imperatives remain the same, researchers found that changes in the physical and social environment in which children live have altered the culture of childhood (Hertzman, Anderson & Rowley, 2008; Williams, 2010). A lack of opportunity for free-form interaction with nature and other children has become a serious concern for child development specialists like Mark Francis, of the University of California-Davis (White, 1996). Thus, it might be assumed that the importance placed on experiencing the edutainment opportunities by adult family members was also influenced by expectations of the society how to provide a good childhood for children.

The interviews conducted at the three visitor attractions revealed information about the aims and mission of the attractions. As outlined in Chapter Four, all three attractions were designed to provide visitors with informative experiences that were aimed at educating them about endangered exotic animals and conservation issues at Orana, New Zealand’s natural environment and history at Willowbank, and life at the Antarctic at the Antarctic Attraction. All managers stated that efforts were being made to achieve a balanced combination of learning and education opportunities for children and adults of all ages. While Willowbank focused on pre-school children and the Antarctic Attraction on school children, Orana tried to consider both categories of children equally.

An analysis of the interviews also showed that management tried to combine the educational offers with fun and entertaining activities for visitors, which served families’ enjoyment of edutainment at the attractions. The educational and edutainment opportunities provided at the attractions suggest that the management was aware of the ideal learning experiences of families. They understood the needs of the family market they have created in terms of the age of children, which required adults to carefully choose the right attraction adequate for the abilities and needs of their children. In order to avoid mismatches of the attraction’s activities and the interests of families, it is important for the managers to correctly convey the entertainment and education opportunities of their attraction to potential visitors prior to the visit. A mismatch might result in dissatisfaction and other harmful consequences like negative word-of mouth as stated by Yeh (2008).
6.4.1.4 Change in Routine

The experience of a change in routine from whatever was considered normal life (home, work, or school) is another element of family on-site experiences at these visitor attractions which was identified in Chapter Five as being important. The notion of change usually meant a difference from normality in terms of fun, entertainment, and family togetherness which was not as possible in everyday life. Change was also described as a spatial change in terms of being physically away from the home environment and enjoying different natural surroundings. This notion is according to McCabe (2009), Gram (2005), and Haldrup and Larsen (2003) one of the most frequently mentioned reasons for families going on holidays or engaging in tourist activities. A need for a spatial change may be ascribed to the circumstances in which applicants lived at home, because these are seen as a contributory cause of stress (McCabe, 2009). Interestingly, changes in routine and emotional or physical escape were quite unimportant motivations for families to visit the attractions. A possible reason might be that some families were not consciously aware of their behaviour and activities being different to everyday life. In contrast to families at the outdoor attractions Orana and Willowbank, respondents from the Antarctic Attraction did not mention to enjoy a change in scenery from city to nature. The indoor attraction did not provide a difference to everyday city life in terms of the environment.

According to managers the attractions aimed at providing visitors a point of difference during their stay by offering different and even unique experiences in terms of on-site activities and entertainment. Managers conveyed that they have recognised they must compete in the entertainment industry and so provide an entertaining visitor experience. This situation was decisive for the variety of learning and entertainment opportunities provided on-site and the permanent effort to improve the visitor experience like opening a new 4D extreme theatre in November 2010 at the Antarctic Attraction (IAC, 2010i). From the information gathered in the interviews it can be said that the three visitor attractions were keen to meet the needs of their family visitors in terms of providing experiences that were different from normal everyday activities. Although entertainment was important, the spatial change afforded by visits to the attractions should not be underestimated by the managers especially at Orana and Willowbank. Managers did not mention that they aim at supplying a point of difference by
offering a nice natural surrounding. It is essential to present neat scenery, because this was enjoyed by visitors just as much as the on-site entertainment and specific attractions.

Experiencing a change in scenery was also related by family respondents at Orana and Willowbank to the enjoyment of fresh air and sunshine. Many adults stated that they perceived being outside in the sun as a relief to their daily indoor activities (Lise & Tol, 2002). The effect of weather on family experiences differed for outdoor and indoor attractions implying that good weather was beneficial for outdoor attractions and bad weather for indoor attractions in terms of motivation and experiences. Similar to Lise and Tol (2002), all managers, but especially the managers at Orana and Willowbank, suggested that weather constituted an unpredictable risk for visitor numbers that is difficult to influence. The management at Orana tried to minimise the risk by establishing new indoor viewing areas, but in the interview with the manager at Willowbank no improvement was indicated that might minimise the risk of bad weather. The Antarctic Attractions was less affected by the weather conditions than Orana and Willowbank, because international visitors (main market of the Antarctic Attraction) are usually not flexible in their time of visitation which made them more likely to visit the attraction independent from weather conditions. The previous discussion about on-site experiences dealt with aspects included in the idealised family time, but some family members also enjoyed time free from family commitments in order to pursue own interests alone or with peers. The notion of own time will be discussed in the following section.

6.4.2 Own Time

Own time represents the more individual experiences reported by almost one quarter of families at the visitor attractions. For these families own time provided a balance to the hegemony of family time, which supports findings by Hilbrecht et al. (2008), Schänzel (2010), and Shaw et al. (2008). The families that did not mention this may have omitted to report own time, because they may have genuinely not sought, or experienced, own time at the attraction or it could have been perceived as counterintuitive to idealised family time. In the literature it is also referred to as ‘me-time’ (Department of Labour, 2003; Stevens et al., 2007) or ‘time for self’ (Harrington, 2001), but according to study results within the visitor attraction environment own time included time with friends as well as time alone.
According to the activities pursued by children and adults, it may be understood that own time meant freedom from parental obligations for the parents, whereas for the children it meant freedom from parental restrictions (Gram, 2005; Shaw et al., 2008). The activities and interests pursued in own time emerged to be generally more about familiar experiences compared with the more novel experiences sought in family time as also found by Gram (2005) and Hilbrecht et al. (2008). According to Gram (2005) and Shaw et al. (2008), this private component of family attraction visits has remained largely hidden in the family tourism literature with an exception being Schänzel (2010). The pursuit of own interests perhaps did not facilitate the establishment of the ideal families tried to create at visitor attractions, which may be a possible reason why own time within a family setting has received little research attention to date.

Except for the Marketing Manager of Willowbank who mentioned an interest in own time as motivation for adults to visit the wildlife reserve, the pursuit of own interests by family visitors was not referred to in the other interviews. According to the on-site activities and opportunities offered at the three attractions, the Antarctic Attraction appeared to generate more situations where family visitors might like to pursue their own interests in terms of educational opportunities than at Orana and Willowbank. In fact, the experience of own time was mentioned slightly more frequently by families at the Antarctic Attraction than by families at Orana and Willowbank. This difference might be related to the nature of the attractions, inasmuch as studying the exhibits was a significant component of the on-site experience at the Antarctic Attraction. The Antarctic Attraction had a considerably smaller family market than the other two attractions where it might be more important for most visitors to spend the time together than apart. All on-site experiences made by family visitors influenced family satisfaction or dissatisfaction as discussed in the following section.

6.4.3 Family Satisfaction
According to the three phase experience model (Figure 2.1), family satisfaction with the attraction visit belongs to the last phase of the chronological graphic - the reflection phase - which includes post-visit recollection and evaluation of experiences. As explained in the methods chapter (section 3.4.2), I concentrated on assessing family anticipation, motivation, and on-site experiences and decided that it was beyond the scope of this thesis to examine
family satisfaction in more detail. This section only briefly discusses existing information on family satisfaction at visitor attractions not as part of the reflection phase, but included in on-site experiences instead.

Given that recollections generally become more positive than the actual experiences (Mitchell, Thompson, Peterson & Cronk 1997; Schänzel, 2010), which is called the ‘rosy view’, family reflections of the attraction visits were investigated immediately after the visit. Usually, this ensures a realistic reproduction of occurrences, impressions, satisfaction, and meaning. Since respondents most likely decided to hide negative incidents and to report primarily idealised experiences, reflections may not represent reality. From findings presented in Chapter Five it can be identified that families were satisfied with the visit if the attraction facilitated the on-site experiences discussed above. Families must have experienced an idealised family time and (if thought as important) own time as well as a positive influence of weather in order to be satisfied. This suggests that the actual visitor experience is an essential factor in the satisfaction judgement which concurs with literature (Bowen & Clarke, 2002; Fuchs & Weiermair, 2003; Li & Carr, 2004; Jia et al., 2007).

6.5 Conclusion
This chapter discussed the visitor and the management perspective on family attraction visits and resulted in a chronological model displaying the family market, anticipations and on-site experiences of families, and relating management issues. It is assumed that families idealised the report of their experiences according to societal values and beliefs about what it means to be a good family. Idealised family time consisted of joint family experiences at the visitor attraction including quality time that is different from normal everyday activities and orientated towards fun and edutainment as well as the pursuit of own interests. Family time was primarily seen as an investment in the future family functioning. The role taken on by adults of establishing social bonding was not recognised by the children at the time, because children concentrated on physical activity, being involved and having fun. This clearly highlights generational differences in intentions. Family experiences were generally dependent on the age of children.

Examining the management perspective resulted in the understanding that the importance of domestic family visitors to the three attractions depended on the size of the
visitor segment. The managers seemed to have a good knowledge of motivations and interests of families, but they lacked awareness about children’s main motive and interest as well as the active influence of children on family decision-making. They used their knowledge to orient their operations in terms of providing appropriate family experiences, whereby the extent of efforts differed between the attractions. The management of visitor attractions aimed at generating idealised family time and families aimed at experiencing idealised family time. Consequently, the operational approaches of the three visitor attractions matched the interests of family visitors to the attractions.
Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Introduction
The final chapter of this thesis revisits the research questions, investigates key findings, and outlines directions for future research. The key issues discussed in this research were illustrated in a model (Figure 6.1) which consisted of interconnected phases including the main experiences of families at visitor attractions and corresponding management approaches. Most experiences were well known to the management of the visitor attractions. Managers used the knowledge about the family market to provide adequate opportunities for families at the attractions that benefit family functioning. A better understanding of this subject may facilitate attraction managers to provide improved experiences for visiting families.

7.2 Research Objectives Revisited
The impetus for this study was the recognition that family members from different generations have different interests which may conflict when the family is involved in shared activities like a family outing, family leisure, or family holiday. Orana, Willowbank, and the Antarctic Attraction provided the medium through which the domestic family market, marketing and operational approaches of the attractions, and family experiences were explored. The specific research objectives are reiterated below, after which an appraisal is presented.

The overall aim of this thesis is to assess the role of domestic family visitors to three New Zealand visitor attractions from a visitor experience and managerial perspective. The following objectives have been chosen in order to achieve the desired aim:

1. To identify the characteristics and importance of the domestic family market to New Zealand visitor attractions in the current context (economic, social, cultural and political).
2. To assess the managerial approaches of New Zealand visitor attractions towards domestic family visitors (e.g. marketing strategies and operational tasks)
3. To investigate the collective anticipation for a family attraction visit, in light of family decision-making and family motivations.
4. To explore the on-site experiences of domestic families attending New Zealand visitor attractions.
5. To identify potential discrepancies between the interests of domestic family visitors and the managerial approaches of the three New Zealand visitor attractions.

Domestic family visitors were an important customer group for the three attractions with the level of importance increasing as the size of the visitor segment increases. For Orana and Willowbank, the local and domestic family market was key to the attraction and accounted for the majority of visitors, whereas the vast majority of family visitors to the Antarctic Attraction hailed from international locations. The importance placed on the domestic family market could be traced back to its role in generating new customers through word of mouth and their repeat visits accounting for high visitor numbers and high turnover. Since economic, social, or political occurrences in the past had not significantly affected family visitation, the importance of this market was unchanged but may increase given that management of all three attractions strives to increase domestic family visitor numbers in the future.

Domestic family visitors to the three attractions mainly visited as one parent (with extended family) and two parents (with extended family), whereby lone parents were most frequently recorded at Willowbank. Although the research took place during the Easter school holidays of 2010, the majority of families at each attraction came from Christchurch City. Willowbank visitors predominantly came from locations close to Christchurch, whereas families at the Antarctic Attraction showed a more dispersed place of residence. Parents were usually aged between 30 and 49 years, whereby adults as well as children in family groups at the Antarctic Attraction were older than those at Orana and Willowbank. Most families were well educated and had a yearly household income above the New Zealand average.

All three visitor attractions had a generic marketing focus that was family friendly and initiated advertisement centred on families especially during holiday periods. While the Antarctic Attraction marketed to domestic families visiting Christchurch using channels like hotels, information centres, and the airport, Orana and Willowbank concentrated on channels reaching local families. Since the size of the family market was smallest at the Antarctic Attraction, their operations were not as centred on the family market as at Orana and
Willowbank. The visitor attractions specifically catered to families by offering a variety of food and drinks as well as educational and entertainment opportunities, which facilitated time together in terms of joint family experiences. Willowbank provided rather “small” experiences in terms of learning and entertainment for its younger visitors, whereas the Antarctic Attraction created rather “grand” experiences for older children. The attractions further attempted to control the negative impacts costs and weather might have had on family visits. The Antarctic Attraction itself saw the high costs incurred for family visitors to the attraction as a weakness, while Orana and Willowbank made visitation more affordable for visitors.

For families the attraction visit was a journey of experiences from motivations and decisions through to idealised notions of family time and own time. Family visits were multi-motivated, because families expressed a desire for the core product offered at the attraction (animals at Willowbank and Orana and education at the Antarctic Attraction), but they also wanted to extend family relationships, satisfy the needs of children, and experience fun. Instead of external economic, political or social occurrences a family decision to visit an attraction was predominantly influenced by children either actively (negotiations) or passively (presence and needs). These influences were considered in the marketing approaches of the attractions which either targeted children or parents, but more child-friendly communication channels are needed.

The on-site experiences reflected a collective family perspective that probably represents idealised family experiences, because adults might have hidden negative occurrences during the visit in their reports in order to conform to societal pressures to be a good functioning unit. While own interests during an attraction visit were important for only some families, idealised family time was the overarching theme of how families experienced time at the attractions. It included a happy and quality family time filled with fun activities and edutainment different from daily life. For adult family members an attraction visit was purposive forasmuch that they took on the role of social bonding and bridging. This was often regarded as investment in future family functioning. These intentions were not recognised by children, because they concentrated on physical activity, being involved and having fun. Families evaluated their satisfaction with the visit on the basis of their experiences, whereby differences highlighted that children were satisfied if their individual needs and wishes were fulfilled and adults aimed at satisfying their children more than themselves.
The management of the three visitor attractions had a good understanding of the domestic family market and its motivations and interests, which was used to arrange activities and opportunities at the attractions accordingly in terms of providing idealised family experiences. However, a discrepancy emerged as managers did not seem to be sufficiently aware of the direct influence children have on family decisions as well as their main motivation and interest ‘fun’. Since only some marketing approaches were adequate for children, more marketing targeted directly at them might result in more family decisions to visit the attractions. More explicitly considering fun in the operational approaches of the attractions may increase the satisfaction of children which in turn increases the satisfaction of parents. In sum, while families at visitor attractions sought ideal of family togetherness, the management of the attractions tried to provide these experiences by orienting their approaches and operations according to family interests.

7.3 Contributions of This Research

Contributions of this research focus on the understanding of the experiences of New Zealand families visiting domestic attractions and the perspective of the attractions’ management towards family visits. The study examined characteristics of family visitors, their motivations and decisions prior to the visit as well as their on-site experiences at the attraction. A chronological model (Figure 6.1) was used as a framework and tested in a new context (New Zealand families at visitor attractions) to illustrate the findings according to the main themes of family experiences visiting attractions and corresponding managerial issues. The model illustrates an arrow consisting of three interconnected phases and a feedback loop, but this research only focused on the anticipatory phase and experiential phase and neglected the reflective phase and the feedback arrow. Each phase highlights the main experiences of families in relation to an attraction visit and the managerial approaches of the visitor attractions. Overall, application of this model to a new context provides a structured overview of the key research findings from the family visitor perspective and management perspective investigated in this thesis.

The practical contributions of this research relate to the value of what was found in this research for the attraction managers and other tourism managers regarding understanding the domestic family market. The domestic family market played an important role to the three
visitor attractions, because domestic family visitors contributed to word-of-mouth advertising, high visitor number, and turnover. In turn, the visitor attractions also played an important role for successful family functioning, because family attraction visits enabled social identity formation and social fun along with more individual pursuits. The substantial knowledge of the attractions’ management about the motivations and interests of families during a visit was used to provide experiences adjusted to the ideal conception of families. Yet, the managers’ awareness of needs and interests of children was thought to be insufficient and could be improved. Refinement of this discrepancy might be achieved by integrating the opinion of children in the research undertaken by the attractions themselves to a greater extent. Stronger justifying the marketing and operational approaches of the attractions to the motivations, interest, and influences of children may results in more satisfied children which also increases the satisfaction of parents and may trigger a higher frequency of repeat visits and financial profit for the attractions. However, the awareness the attraction managers can gain from this research regarding family preferences of animals, fun activities, food and drinks, learning availabilities and a relaxed time together might also be helpful for other tourism managers.

In addition to practical contributions, conceptual contributions relate to more theoretical findings drawn from this research relating to issues of own time, idealised family time and the value of children as research objects. Since a tenet of critical tourism research is giving voices to under-acknowledged people such as children and family groups (Schänzel, 2010), this study was undertaken from a family group perspective including the views of adults and children alike. This approach enabled the uncovering of similarities between children’s and adult family members’ joy when visiting attractions like participating in fun activities together or learning about animals, their behaviours and living environment, but it also allowed understanding differences between young and old family members like the level of activity engagement or the willingness/ability to compromise and thus avoid conflict. This conceptual contribution highlights the importance of a family perspective rather than an individual perspective, especially incorporating children.

Especially the illustration of the value of own time as well as the discussion of the importance of idealised family time both included in the experiential phase of a family visit to an attraction are two important conceptual contributions this research makes. It is assumed that families idealised the report of their experiences according to societal values and beliefs about
what it means to be a good family. Idealised family time consisted of joint family experiences at the visitor attraction including quality time that is different from normal everyday activities and orientated towards fun and edutainment as well as the pursuit of own interests. Own time represents the more individual experiences reported by only almost one quarter of families at the visitor attractions. For these families own time provided a balance to the hegemony of family time. Both topics represent an insufficiently researched area, which now adds valuable information to the literature. However, these topics still require further investigation in order to better understand families’ relationship to idealised family time and own time as detailed in the subsequent section.

7.4 Future Directions

It is acknowledged that the experiential dimension of family attraction visits is not static and can change over time according to family composition, life cycle stage, family values and their importance, and financial accessibility. Therefore, future research could address the following lines of inquiry:

- Future research could assess the views of attraction managers working at visitor attractions overseas in order to compare their marketing and operational approaches with the ones found in New Zealand. Future research may also investigate international families at New Zealand visitor attractions and visitor attractions worldwide in order to discover differences in family motivations, on-site experiences, and satisfaction. Adding an international perspective to the research of families at visitor attractions extends the academic knowledge beyond understanding the New Zealand situation.

- The analysis of the management interviews revealed that managers are less aware of the direct influence children can exert on the family decision and the importance of fun as motivation and on-site interest especially vital for children. A better understanding of managers may increase family satisfaction and the frequency of repeat visits. Thus, it might be important that future research further investigates the issue of fun at visitor attractions in more detail including reasons for the lack of understanding and suggestions for improvement.

- Although ethically challenging, it might be useful if future research directly targeted children and assessed their motivations and interests first hand since their understanding...
of a satisfactory attraction visit mostly varies from the parental perspective. Such a research would discover rare and very valuable information that can considerably add the current literature. Researching children less than 16 years of age can generally only be done with great care and several ethical considerations as well as the adoption of the research design to the age, abilities and interest of the children.

➢ Since families presumably reported idealised descriptions of family experiences at the visitor attractions, future research investigating an entirely realistic understanding of family visits is required. Family conflicts must be assessed and a largely observational study may enable a more realistic comprehension of this topic. The challenges a study of family conflict at visitor attractions might implicate are diverse, but most significant might be the discomfort of families expressing family conflicts to external people. With reference to other studies (Schänzel, 2010), it is important that the researcher develops a trustworthy relationship with the interviewed family; this might be achieved through undertaking in-depth interviews with respondents, which might increase understanding about the idealised perspective of family visits. The importance of allowing own time and family time to be part of a family attraction visit could be further investigated in future research. Studying the subject of own time in families might again implicate some challenges, because interviewees might feel uncomfortable to admit the longing for time without children.

➢ Future research is needed that assesses the reflective phase of the family experience at visitor attractions and the feedback loop investigating possible repeat visits, which was neglected in this study. Gaining an understanding about these issues might be important, because the reflective phase and the feedback loop are still part of family experiences at visitor attractions. Future research could thus complete the investigation of the family experience and acquire new insights about family satisfaction and repeat visit behaviours. As a result, the chronological model of family attraction visits and corresponding managerial approaches could be expanded across other visitor attraction types, geographical contexts, family forms, family life cycle stages, and research perspectives.
7.5 Conclusion
This thesis aimed at providing a better understanding of the role of domestic family visitors to New Zealand attractions from a family visitor and management perspective. This understanding was generated by research among the management of three visitor attractions and New Zealand families at these attractions. The analysis of information from both sources revealed that the management of visitor attractions was mostly aware of the issues important for families prior to and during the attraction visit except for the influence and interest of children at attraction visits. This thesis contributed to the literature of this underdeveloped research area and adapted a chronological model of family attraction visit experiences and managerial issues of the attractions. The model illustrated three interconnected chronological phases which include pre, during, and after family visit experiences with a focus on idealised family time sought by family visitors and provided by the management. The collective family experiences at visitor attractions were important for future family functioning by establishing social bonding, social fun, and family identities. The managers of visitor attractions should aim to balance the importance of visitor attractions for healthy family functioning and the importance of family visitors to the attractions. This may be the mutual benefit that visitor attractions and family visitors seek, an attraction visit that supports both roles.
Reference List


Appendices

Appendix A: Research Information Sheet for the Management Interviews at the Attractions
Appendix B: Interview Schedule
Appendix C: Human Ethics Approval
Appendix D: Research Information Sheet for Visitor Research at the Attractions
Appendix E: Questionnaire
Appendix A

Research Information Sheet for the Management Interviews at the Attractions

Division: Department of Social Sciences, Park, Recreation, Tourism and Sport. Environment, Society and Design Faculty.

You are invited to participate as a subject in a project entitled ‘The Role of Domestic Family Visitors to New Zealand Visitor Attractions’.

The aim of this project is to identify the role and experiences of domestic family visitors to New Zealand visitor attractions today. The interview will investigate the role and importance of domestic family visitors to New Zealand family attractions in the current context as well as the marketing approaches and day to day running of New Zealand family attractions, particularly as it relates to family domestic visitors. It aims to get a better understanding of domestic families attending New Zealand family attractions.

Your participation in this project will involve completion of an interview, after having been fully informed about the project and given time to consider if you would like to participate. You will be asked questions about the role and importance of domestic family visitors to this attraction in the current context as well as the marketing approaches and day to day running of New Zealand family attractions, particularly as it relates to family domestic visitors. The interview will be designed to take not more than 30 minutes and will be tape recorded, with your permission. You will be free to refuse to answer any question. The results of the project may be published and you also may be identified by your role in the organisation (no names will be used). If you complete this interview it will be understood that you have consented to participate in the project and consent to publication of the results of the project. Of course you will have the possibility to see the interview schedule prior to any research if you wish. As a follow-up to this activity, you will be able to see the transcript of the interview and check it for correctness if you wish. Until the 31st July 2010 you may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information you have provided. The results will be made accessible for you and your organization.

There will be no risks in the completion of the interview; it is not envisaged that any questions in the interview cause stress or emotional distress. However, you will be generally free to refuse to answer any question you feel uncomfortable with so that no stress or emotional distress will be caused.

The results of the project may be published and you also may be identified by your role in the organisation (no names will be used). The interview will be available only to the principal researcher and the supervisors. The researcher makes every effort to protect the data so that nobody else but the supervisors will ever see them.

The project is being carried out by:

Name of principal researcher: Nora Sophie Koerner
Contact details: nora.koerner@lincolnuni.ac.nz

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Joanna Fountain
Contact Details: Joanna.Fountain@lincoln.ac.nz     Phone: 3252 811 ext 8767
Appendix B

Interview Schedule

(1) What is your role in this organisation?
(2) How long have you already been working for this organisation?

(3) Could you please briefly verify the ownership situation of this visitor attraction? 
(Interviewer: Refer to ownership and public/private characteristics identified in literature review.)

(4) How would you describe the role of this attraction? What is its purpose?
(5) Who would you say are this visitor attraction’s main customer target group(s)?
   a) Nationality? (Domestic/international)
   b) Visiting groups/individuals?
   c) Age?
   d) Gender?

   Where possible, please give an approximate percentage weighting for the segments.
   Why do you think these customers make up your main target group?

(6) Would you consider this attraction to be a family attraction? Why do you think so?
(7) How important is the domestic family market to this attraction?
   a) Size of this market segment?
   b) Yield?

   Why do domestic families represent an (un)important market segment for this attraction?

(8) Why do you think domestic families visit this attraction? What are their intentions/motivations?
(9) What do you specifically do for families visiting this attraction in terms of
   a) entertainment?
   b) education?
   c) food & drink?
   d) prices?

(10) What do you think are this attraction’s major strengths in regard to families and why?
(11) Do you think there is any area where this attraction has weaknesses in regard to families and why?
(12) Are you planning to make any improvement on this? How do you want to improve this?
(13) What are your marketing activities?
(14) Do you specifically target families as a visitor group? Is their any reason you have not mentioned yet why you target domestic families?
(15) *If they target families:* How do you target families as a visitor group? What are your marketing activities in terms of families? What channels do you use in order to market this attraction to families?
   How would you evaluate the effectiveness of these channels in terms of the family market?
(16) How would you explain typical characteristics of a visiting family to this attraction?
   a. Place of origin? Why?
   b. Family members?
   c. Size?
   d. Age of children? Why?
   e. First-time or frequent visitors? Why?
(17) Have the visitation patterns of the family market changed within the last 18 months? If so, in what ways?
   a. Frequency of visits?
   b. Duration of visit?
   c. Means of transport?
   d. Size of family?
   Why do you think did the visitation patterns of families change within the last 18 months?
(18) What do you think are the future trends in the family market for this attraction?
(19) Have you previously completed research among family visitors to this attraction about their characteristics, motivations, activities, experiences or satisfaction? If so, when was the most recent research? Are able and willing to share these results with me for the benefit of this research?
Thank you very much for all your responses, I have no more questions. However, is there anything else that we have not covered that you would like to add or think may be helpful for this research on family visitors’ experiences to this attraction?
Appendix C
Human Ethics Approval

Application No: 2010-07
Date: 31 March 2010

Title: The Role and Experience of domestic family visitors to New Zealand Visitor Attractions

Applicants: Nora Sophie Koerner

The Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee has reviewed the above noted application.

Dear Nora,

Thank you for your detailed response to the questions which were forwarded to you on the Committee’s behalf.

I am satisfied on the Committee’s behalf that the remaining issue of concern has been satisfactorily addressed.

I am pleased to give final approval to your project and may I, on behalf of the Committee, wish you success in your research.

Yours sincerely

Professor Grant Cushman
Chair, Human Ethics Committee

CC:

PLEASE NOTE: The Human Ethics Committee has an audit process in place for applications. Please see 7.3 of the Human Ethics Committee Operating Procedures (ACHE) in the Lincoln University Policies and Procedures Manual for more information.
18th March 2020

Research Information Sheet

You are invited to participate as a subject in a project entitled 'The Role of Domestic Family Visitors to New Zealand Visitor Attractions.'

The aim of this project is to identify the role and experiences of domestic family visitors to New Zealand visitor attractions today. The interview will investigate the role and importance of domestic family visitors to New Zealand family attractions in the current context as well as the marketing approaches and day to day running of New Zealand family attractions, particularly as it relates to family domestic visitors. It aims to get a better understanding of domestic families attending New Zealand family attractions.

Your participation in this project will involve completion of an interview, after having been fully informed about the project and given time to consider if you would like to participate. You will be asked questions about the role and importance of domestic family visitors to this attraction in the current context as well as the marketing approaches and day to day running of New Zealand family attractions, particularly as it relates to family domestic visitors. The interview will be designed to take not more than 30 minutes and will be tape recorded, with your permission. You will be free to refuse to answer any question. The results of the project may be published and you also may be identified by your role in the organisation (no names will be used). If you complete this interview, it will be understood that you have consented to participate in the project, and consent to publication of the results of the project. Of course you will have the possibility to see the interview schedule prior to any research if you wish. As a follow-up to this activity, you will be able to see the transcript of the interview and check it for correctness if you wish. Until the 31 July 2010, you may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information you have provided. The results will be made accessible for you and your organization.

There will be no risks in the completion of the interview; it is not envisaged that any questions in the interview cause stress or emotional distress. However, you will be generally free to refuse to answer any question you feel uncomfortable with so that no stress or emotional distress will be caused.

The results of the project may be published and you also may be identified by your role in the organisation (no names will be used). The interview will be available only to the principal researcher and the supervisor. The researcher makes every effort to protect the data so that nobody else but the researcher will ever see them.

The project is being carried out by:

Name of principal researcher: Nora Sophie Koemer
Contact details: nora.koemer@lincolnuni.ac.nz

Name of supervisor: Dr. Joanna Fountain
Contact details: joanna.fountain@lincoln.ac.nz
Hi, my name is Nora Koerner and I am currently conducting research as part of my Master Research at Lincoln University into the role and experiences of domestic family visitors to New Zealand visitor attractions.

Check: Do you currently live in New Zealand? Did you visit this attraction with a family group today? [If yes, continue]

Working definition of family: Family is a group of people affiliated by blood-relationship or affinity with at least one child under the age of 18 years.

After person read the research information sheet: Would you be willing to participate? [If no: thank them; if yes: thank them and continue].

1. What is your relationship to the child/children in this group?

2. Where do you usually live?
   1 Christchurch (Skip to Q5)
   2 Other Canterbury, specify:
   3 Other domestic, specify:

3. What is the main purpose of this trip to Christchurch?
   1 This visitor attraction
   2 Visiting friends and relatives
   3 General holiday
   4 Day trip (leisure/tourism)
   5 Other, specify:
4. How long are you staying in Christchurch?

1. A few hours
2. One night
3. Up to one week
4. One to two weeks
5. More than two weeks

5. Is this your first visit to this attraction?

1. Yes 2. No

6. How did you get to this attraction today?

1. Car
2. Public bus
3. Park shuttle
4. Coach Tour
5. Bicycle
6. By foot
7. Other, specify:

7. How much time have you spent here today?

1. less than 30 minutes
2. between 30 minutes and 1 hour
3. between 1 and 2 hours
4. between 2 and 3 hours
5. between 3 and 4 hours
6. between 4 and 6 hours
7. more than 6 hours

8. Why did you come to this attraction today?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
9. I am going to read out a list of reasons people might visit an attraction like this. I would like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements as a reason for you visiting here today, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree. (Use showcard 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I went to this attraction to:</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Escape from daily life/routine/pressure</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest and relax</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience thrills/excitement</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have fun</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain friendship</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend time with the family</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new things</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop my personal interests</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain a new perspective on life</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have others know that I have been there</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. What things have you and your family done at this attraction today?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

11. If you were to report to a friend, what would you tell that person about
a) this attraction?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

b) your visit today?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
12. What did the children in your group most enjoy today? Why did they enjoy that?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

13. What did you most enjoy today? Why did you enjoy that?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

14. Did you take any pictures today while at this attraction?

   1 Yes  2 No (skip to Q15)

   If yes, what did you take pictures of? (Interviewer: tick boxes and note examples).

   1 Aspects of the attraction: ________________________________

   2 People alone: ________________________________

   3 People and (aspects of) the attraction: ________________________________

   4 Other: ________________________________

   Why did you take the pictures you did? ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

   Which picture is your favourite one and why? ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________
15. Was the access to this attraction appropriate for your family group? Why do you say that?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

16. Do you think this family visit represented value for money?

1 Yes 2 No

Why do you say that?

____________________________________________________________________________________

If not mentioned yet: Do you have an annual pass?

1 Yes 2 No

Why do you (not) have an annual family pass?

____________________________________________________________________________________

17. What do you think about the learning opportunities this attraction offers your family?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

18. Do you think this visit was entertaining for your whole family? Why do you say that?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
19. What do you think about the food and drinks that were available here today for your family group?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________  

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________  

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________  

20. Overall, how satisfied have you been with this visit today? Why do you say that?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________  

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________  

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________  

21. What, if anything, do you think could be improved about this attraction for family groups like yours?

Improvement 1: ___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________  

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________  

Improvement 2: ___________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________  

22a. Where did you hear about this attraction prior to this visit? (multiple response)

22b. If more than one answer is given: What was your main source of information about this attraction?

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>21a.</th>
<th>21b.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Word of mouth (friends, relatives, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Newspaper advertising</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Television advertising</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Radio advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Branded vehicle</td>
<td></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Visitor Information Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Attraction’s website</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Attractions newsletter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>From previous visits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Other, specify:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23. What did you think of the information sources you used?  
(e.g. good reflection of the park, understandable, comprehensive, helpful)

24. Approximately how often did you go on a family outing within the last year?  
(Definition of family outing: Time spend together with the family doing things different from normal routines that are fun.

1. Everyday  
2. Once a week or more  
3. Once a fortnight  
4. Once a month  
5. Once every 3 months  
6. Once every 6 months  
7. Once  
8. None

25. How many domestic holidays did you take as a family group within the last year?  
(Definition of family holiday: Time spend together with the family including a minimum of one overnight stay away from home while doing things different from normal routines that are fun.

1. None  
2. Once  
3. 2-3 times  
4. 4-6 times  
5. 7-10 times  
6. more than 10 times

26. How many international holidays did you take as a family group within the last year?

1. None  
2. Once  
3. 2-3 times  
4. 4-6 times  
5. 7-10 times  
6. more than 10 times

27. Have your holidays changed within the last 18 months in terms of their frequency or the places you visited?

1. Yes  
2. No (skip to Q28)

How have your holidays changed (e.g. frequency and places visited)?
What are reasons for this change? *(Financial crisis - how and why?)*

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

28. Have your visits to visitor attractions changed within the last 18 months in terms of their frequency or the places you visited?

   [ ] Yes  [ ] No (skip to Q29)

How have your visits to visitor attractions changed *(frequency and places visited)*?
*(If less visits: What instead, if more visits: What are they replacing?)*

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

What are reasons for this change?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

*Interviewer: Is the interviewee a first-time visitor or not? If yes, skip to Q31.

29. Have you ever visited this attraction as an adult without children?*

   [ ] Yes  [ ] No (continue with Q30)

*If yes: How many times have you visited this attraction last year without children?*

   [ ] None  [ ] Once  [ ] 2-3 times  [ ] 4-6 times  [ ] 7-10 times  [ ] more than 10 times

30. How often have you visited this attraction as a family group in the last year?

   [ ] Once  [ ] 2-3 times  [ ] 4-6 times  [ ] 7-10 times  [ ] more than 10 times
31. Which age group do you belong to? (Use showcard 2)  
1 18-29  2 30-39  3 40-49  4 50-59  5 60-69  6 over 70  

32. Please indicate all family members that have visited this attraction today and specify their ages and relationships. (For adults’ age groups use showcard 2 again)  

33. If you do not mind, could you please tell me which of the following categories best describes your education? (Use showcard 3)  
1 No formal qualification  2 High school qualification  3 Trade qualification  4 Degree  5 Higher degree (postgraduate)  6 Other tertiary qualification, specify  7 Answer refused  

34. If you do not mind, could you please tell me which of the following categories best describes your total yearly household income before tax? (Use showcard 4)  
1 Under NZ$20,000  2 NZ$20,000 – NZ$39,999  3 NZ$40,000 – NZ$59,999  4 NZ$60,000 – NZ$79,999  5 NZ$80,000 – NZ$99,999  6 NZ$100,000 or more  7 Answer refused  

35. Record gender of respondent.  
1 Female  2 Male  

This is the end of the survey. Thank you very much for your participation, it is very much appreciated!