



# TOURIST SAFETY IN NEW ZEALAND AND SCOTLAND

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**Abstract:** This paper develops a comparative research methodology to examine the safety experiences of adventure operators in two destinations: New Zealand and Scotland. The paper argues that a comparative methodology assists in understanding the process of development and change in tourism at different geographical scales. The probability of adventure tourists in each destination experiencing injuries can be deduced from this survey data based on a postal questionnaire used in New Zealand and Scotland. The similarities and differences in the experiences establish the basis for further research in other countries to highlight common injury experiences and mechanisms to reduce such events, and to enhance tourist well-being. **Keywords:** injuries, adventure tourism, comparative research, New Zealand, Scotland. © 2005 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

**Résumé:** La sécurité touristique en Nouvelle-Zélande et en Écosse. Cet article développe une méthodologie de recherche comparative pour examiner les expériences de la sécurité des voyageurs d'aventures à deux destinations: la Nouvelle-Zélande et l'Écosse. L'article soutient qu'une méthodologie comparative aide à comprendre le processus de développement et de changement dans le tourisme à différentes échelles géographiques. Le risque des touristes d'aventures à chaque destination de subir un accident peut être déduit des données de cette enquête, qui a été basée sur un sondage par la poste en Nouvelle-Zélande et en Écosse. Les ressemblances et les différences entre les expériences établissent la base de recherches complémentaires dans d'autres pays pour attirer l'attention sur des expériences de blessures communes et de mécanismes pour réduire de tels événements et améliorer le bien-être des touristes. **Mots-clés:** blessures, tourisme d'aventure, recherche comparative, Nouvelle-Zélande, Écosse. © 2005 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## INTRODUCTION

As tourism continues to mature as an area of study, its development and progress can be gauged in relation to researchers' degree of understanding and sophistication. Although it is widely acknowledged that tourism is not a discipline, it exhibits many characteristics of other

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subject areas that developed from both a social science and business and management area, such as marketing. One criticism of marketing research in the 60s and 70s, its being devoid of sophisticated methodologies, has also been levelled at tourism research in numerous monographs (Pearce and Butler 1993) and in reviews of research performance. One recurrent theme embodied in these criticisms is the inability within the area of study to derive generalizations, models of the tourism phenomenon, and studies which provide greater understanding of the processes of development, growth, change, operation, and management of tourism at different spatial scales. Indeed, the globalization of this activity with local and regional resonances and nuances has attracted attention from researchers as one of the overarching elements of growth and development (Hall and Page 2002).

However, despite such conceptualizations, primary research efforts which can yield insights into the global operation and effects of tourism are still largely informed by destination-based studies and case studies. While this is not intended as a severe criticism, due to the resource constraints facing researchers in most countries, it does belie a real lack of comparative analysis using primary research to frame research questions which begin to understand how far certain elements of tourism operate on a global basis, and the specific similarities and differences that exist within and between countries. As Pearce lamented, there is a lack of comparative research capable of widening the research agenda to move the subject to a more critical and methodologically sound basis.

The comparative approach has yet to emerge as a distinctive, readily recognizable methodology in...research...[W]hen a comparative approach has been adopted by researchers there has generally been little elaboration on its use, with at best only passing mention of methodological issues or fleeting reference to other work. Studies have not built upon each other (1993:20).

Despite the global nature of tourism, such studies still remain the exception rather than the norm. Therefore, this paper builds upon the recognized need for a greater degree of comparative research by examining the extent of injuries and safety management practices of adventure operators in New Zealand and Scotland. This research builds upon previous studies of this sector to illustrate the extent to which similarities and differences can be discerned and explanations of these observed patterns. What does need to be stressed in any comparative study such as this is that the research is being undertaken from a Western, developed destination perspective and those potential differences may in fact be due to cultural differences in the way the adventure sector is managed and operates, something which previous studies by the authors have observed. This sector of the industry was selected because existing critiques (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie and Pomfret 2003) illustrate that this is a growth area globally, a feature reiterated in numerous destination-based studies of adventure tourism.

The importance of safety and well-being among adventure activity participants has also become a global issue (see the various contributions

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