

TARANAKI SALUTE

The Sugar Loaf Island

NOBS LINE

SPOT X

and the Kumara Patc

BIG WAVE TERRITORY

45

TRILOGY : a flip and two twister

Zombie Walk...

MAUI A

TARANAKI
KA13 (P04) h2O

The Forgotten
World Highway

MAUI B

MIKE'S MI
TARANAKI
Colin's c

WHITE

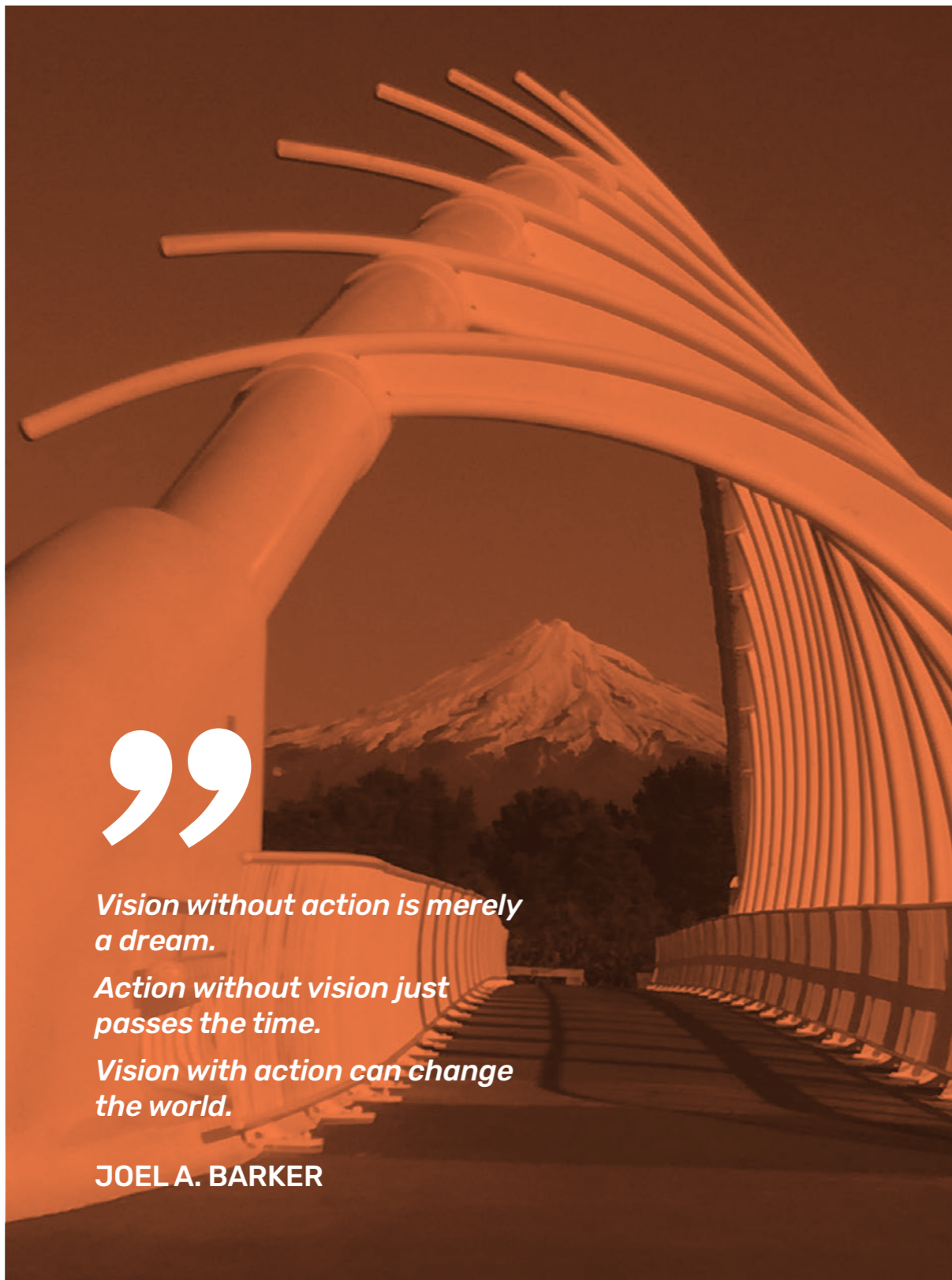
COAST

DESIGNING THE VISITOR FUTURES OF TARANAKI

*A report prepared by We Create Futures to assist
Venture Taranaki and the Taranaki region to question,
explore and create change in the tourism sector.*

JULY 2021 - ABRIDGED VERSION

DESIGNING THE VISITOR FUTURES OF TARANAKI



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*Vision without action is merely
a dream.*

*Action without vision just
passes the time.*

*Vision with action can change
the world.*

JOEL A. BARKER

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INTRODUCTION

"The future cannot be predicted because the future does not exist."

- Professor James Dator's first law of the future

Venture Taranaki (VT) commissioned We Create Futures to explore the future of tourism using a design thinking approach.

This document is the culmination of several phases of work, combining design thinking and futures thinking to explore diverse ideas about what tourism may look and feel like in the future, and what the opportunities might be for the region (see opposite).

Through this work, we have interviewed industry experts in adjacent sectors that affect tourism, local stakeholders, tourists travelling across New Zealand and visitors to the region.

On the following pages, we present a broad cross-section of work. This includes provocations that ask questions about future visitor experiences to trends that provide a perspective on where tourism may move in future. There are also models and tools that provide insight into the needs of tourists and ideas on how to meet them.

In our engagements with the local community, we have seen these artefacts inspire new thinking and concepts. We hope the contents of this document continues to be used as a catalyst to explore new opportunities for the future of the region.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The work in this document relates to four phases of work.

- Customer Research
- Trends Research
- Ideation
- Crafting and Testing Provocations

To build a foundational understanding of the project, we interviewed experts across different sectors and industries related to tourism and local stakeholders in the Taranaki region across the visitor sector.

We used information from these interviews to direct desk research and identify local and global trends that we believe (a) are some of the most potent in the medium-to-long term and (b) have the most relevance to the local tourism industry.

The trends and insights that emerged from this process also framed our approach to visitor interviews and recruitment.

In the final stages of the project, we created four provocations in the form of scenarios that were explored by the local community in a public workshop. The combination of customer insights, consumer trends and futures scenarios were the raw materials to build new ideas for visitor experiences and interventions with the potential

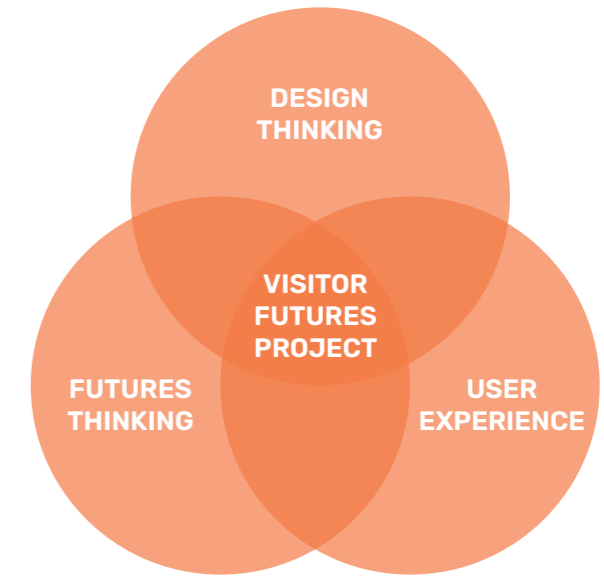
to be applied at different scales with varying degrees of funding.

DESIGN + FUTURES THINKING

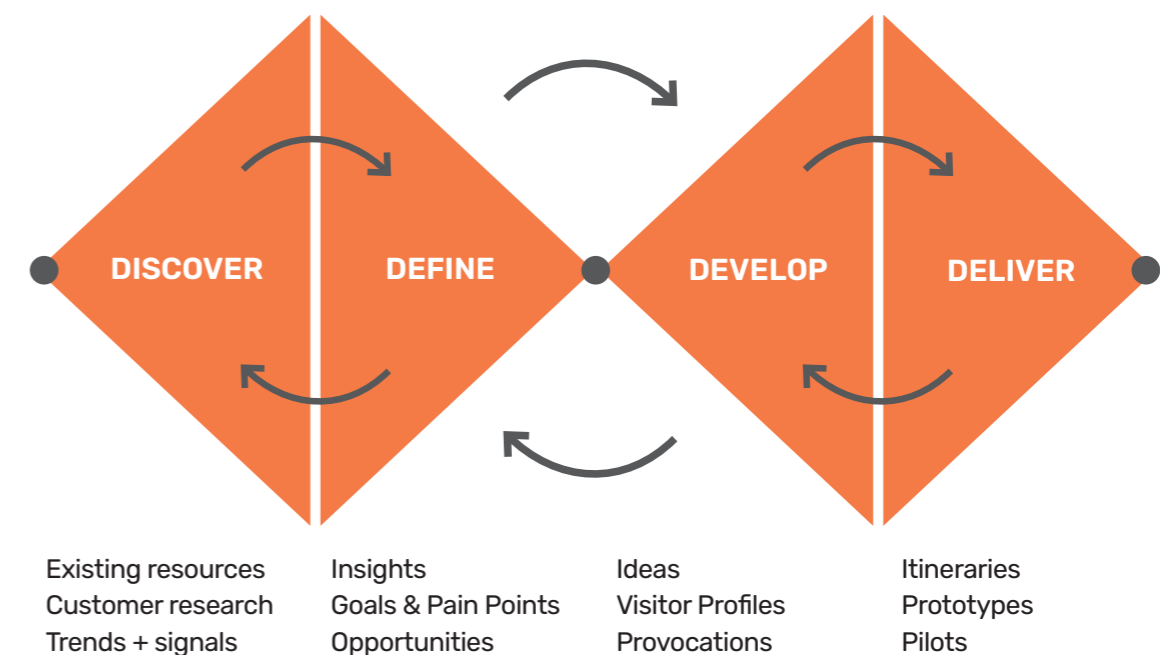
In this project, we have been operating across the 'Double Diamond' design thinking model (see below) and combining this with approaches from Futures Thinking. This enables us to stretch people's thinking when considering new ideas.

The ideas presented in this document originate from two places; personal perspectives developed through the project; community perspectives captured during the Visitor Futures workshop held in Taranaki. While some overlap is evident across these ideas, others also have the potential to exist as stand-alone projects.

In the next phase of product development, we see collaboration with key stakeholders as essential in creating and testing low-risk, low-investment prototypes to develop these ideas further.



Above: Our approach to the Visitor Futures project



Above: Mapping the project to the UK Design Council's Double Diamond

Trends Research

TRENDS OVERVIEW

In this section, we identify shifting trends, attitudes, and phenomena set to affect tourism, now and in the future.

These include four “Megatrends” - significant overarching movements driving change in the local and global environment. These act as umbrellas for the ten trends curated through the research and scanning process.

Megatrends are colour coded, and each trend receives the corresponding colour categorisation. A quote taken from interview or research data frames each trend summary.

On each page we provide global and local examples of the trend. We intend these to be practical and tangible, and hope they inspire new ideas and thinking in the community. These examples include start-up businesses, tourism products, policies and services.

BUILDING TRENDS

We began building these trends using more than 80 data points collected across previous projects, including articles, trends and weak signals of change.

In our first cut, we created a series of hypotheses for potential trends that would be both locally relevant and act as windows on global change. We tested these against responses in our expert interviews, orienting further research to collect more examples and evidence.

In crafting the final selection we analysed 75 articles, white papers and reports, supporting this with quantitative data from a further 20 sources.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alongside the interviews performed with tourists during the summer holiday period, we also spoke to local stakeholders and experts in other fields.

These interviews framed our understanding of the challenges and opportunities on the ground in Taranaki and directed our early trends research.

We would like to acknowledge the people who helped frame and inform the work in this document.

Visitor Research

RESEARCH APPROACH

The initial goal of the research was to understand the current user experience of those visiting Taranaki, which evolved as the project progressed.

We decided early in the project that it would also be helpful to engage with those who don't visit Taranaki. In doing this, we aimed to create insights into why they may not visit the region and their reasoning for visiting other places. This process resulted in fresh perspectives into the challenges and opportunities faced by Taranaki.

In our recruitment, we also endeavoured to speak to outliers of typical tourist social demographics and those whom the tourism industry may underestimate (an approach also advocated for in the Tourism Task Force's interim report - We Are Aotearoa - as 'Social Tourism').

This approach was framed by the trends research happening in parallel with the recruitment process. We particularly emphasised participation by those with disabilities, members of the LGBTQTI+ communities, solo female travellers, intergenerational groups and those identifying as Māori.

The results of these interviews, combined with information from experts and stakeholders, created a rich vein of data to draw insights and ideas.

We present this in several formats, including tables, customer profiles, and prototype itineraries, which we believe are practical, useful, and usable beyond this project's life.

RECRUITMENT

To recruit suitable participants for the research process, we performed internal recruitment using the following strategies:

SNOWBALL RECRUITMENT

This was done while visiting Taranaki, where we interviewed participants face-to-face.

SOCIAL MEDIA SCAN

Scanning relevant social media hashtags, analysing suitability and contacting directly through direct messaging.

SOCIAL MARKETING

We ran paid advertisements through Facebook and Instagram, which reached more than 6,000 people. Prospective participants were directed to an interview screening survey, which received 100 submissions.

The screening survey filtered participants for critical attributes, such as regions visited, recency of visit, and their relationship to previously identified trends.

These submissions went through three phases of analysis to create the most appropriate balance of attributes and align with their availability for interview within the required time frame.

Participants ranged in age from 23-65 years old and came from various social demographics and backgrounds.

ADDITIONAL METHODS

DESK RESEARCH

We looked at different websites, travel blogs, articles etc., from a range of sources that discussed the Taranaki travel experience.

SERVICE SAFARI

Fieldwork is also an opportunity to engage in some of those experiences. This process included researching activities and itineraries, booking flights and accommodation, hiring a car, driving on different routes and flying into New Plymouth.

OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH

We visited several attractions and places of interest across Taranaki. These included local landmarks, natural attractions, eateries and retailers, such as:

- Patea
- Hāwera
- Oakura Beach
- Opunake Beach
- Mount Egmont Visitor Centre
- Dawson Falls
- Fitzroy Beach
- Coastal Walkway
- Puke Ariki
- Pukekura Park
- Festival of Lights
- Te Rewa Rewa Bridge
- Waiwhakaiho Beach Reserve

- Nice Hotel
- King and Queen Hotel
- Ms White
- Monica's Eatery
- Social Kitchen
- Shining Peak Brewery
- Knead Artisan Doughnuts
- Chaos Cafe
- Federal Store
- Little Liberty
- Tātai

AD-HOC CONVERSATIONS

We also engaged in several conversations with friends, colleagues and members of the public in Taranaki. These included hotel staff, taxi drivers, restaurant staff, and other local businesses, who all provided further context to the project.

SENSEMAKING

Transcriptions of all the interviews were analysed, and 510 data points transferred into an online whiteboard as virtual post-it notes. We used an 'In vivo' coding process to sort the data, affinity mapping responses to form larger clusters and themes.

From this analysis, we synthesised the data into new ideas and models. These included high-level experience maps, needs, goals and pain points, impact-probability matrices, visitor profiles, provocations and a new model for engagement.

INSIGHTS

Insight is a term used in different ways across different industries. What is new and novel to one person might be 'old news' to someone else.

Although they may be perceived differently by each reader, we aim to create insights that shed new light on familiar subjects and act as a single point of reference to have meaningful conversations.

When we perform research studies, we capture vital insights not covered in other parts of our work, such as consumer trends.

As stated by *Board of Innovation, insights come in different forms and serve many purposes.

Insights can:

- Establish a commonly accepted truth
- Reinforce an established truth
- Deepen understanding of the truth
- Broaden implications of the truth
- Flip the established truth

Across the following pages are a collection of nine insights. Each example includes a summary and supporting interview quote.

*Board of Innovation is an strategy and business design firm with a global office presence.

VISITOR VALUES



AUTHENTICITY

Not a show or fabrication, but local and honest



RESPONSIBILITY

Individually for the environment and collectively for health and wellbeing during the pandemic



INFLUENCE

Through sharing stories, recommendations, reviews through digital and face-to-face channels



COMMUNITY

Camaraderie in local community & between tourist segments, such as campers



SAFETY

Both in travelling (solo female, gay couple, kids, elderly) and health related to Covid-19



LOYALTY

In exchange for good service or experience, shown in support, purchase and promotion



ACHIEVEMENT

Through challenging activities, visiting new places or engaging in a new experience



LEARNING

About the local area, history and local stories, businesses and products



SERVICE

Good service is seen table stakes in reciprocity for patronage during the pandemic

INSIGHT 01

”

One town in particular seemed to have a lot going for it like it had a cool surf club and bit of an old boating club, but the town itself felt quite abandoned and sad...it probably wouldn't be a place that we would rush back to.

SARAH, 29, COUPLE
VISITING TARANAKI/WHANGANUI

HOLIDAYS ARE ABOUT ESCAPING YOUR DAILY LIFE TO LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE

Themes of escape, discovery and learning were consistent across interview participants.

A holiday is about getting away from everyday life. Anything that interferes with this is detrimental to the experience, from poor customer service and outdated interiors to disappointment created by an unmet service promise.

Although tourists don't expect Disneyland - love, care and attention in every detail can go a long way in lifting the perception of the region in the eyes of the visitor.

INSIGHT 02

”

My sister couldn't leave her studio apartment in Harlem for six months.

So, I feel like, if no one else can do it, and we're able to do it. Then we have to do it.

PIPPA, 30, COUPLE
VISITING TARANAKI

MANY TOURISTS CURRENTLY VIEW TRAVEL IN NEW ZEALAND AS A SOCIAL DUTY

New Zealanders are a well-travelled bunch, and there are many citizens and visa holders here from overseas.

This diversity results in connections to friends and family worldwide, who are currently enduring intensified levels of lockdown.

This knowledge, combined with the concept of "The team of five million", has resulted in travellers feeling obligated to see the country.

Two central themes that run through this thinking are a desire to see undiscovered parts of New Zealand alongside supporting local businesses and producers.

INSIGHT 03

”

Usually I'm quite a planner and like to get things mapped out for the week or however long it might be.

This summer is quite free flow. I was even like that the night before. I'd be like; 'Okay, what could we do tomorrow?'

KIRI, 42, FAMILY
VISITING TAURANGA

THE CURRENT TRAVEL SITUATION IS DRIVING SPONTANEITY AND NOSTALGIA

The Covid-19 pandemic has created a globally acknowledged nostalgia for a world that ceased to exist in 2019.

The kiwi road trip has been the holiday experience that travellers have turned to visit friends and family to renew connections and share experiences with loved ones.

There is a desire for travellers to relive childhood experiences while making new memories for their children. These activities range from eating ice cream to turning a childhood dream into a reality.

This attitude runs contrary to more in-depth holiday planning (identified as a trend before the pandemic) and may correlate directly to the current domestic travel situation.

INSIGHT 04

”

Seeing people sharing the Festival of Lights and other things on Instagram - I wanted to get in on the action as well. It's why again, I shared it to, hoping people would do the same.

ROBERT, 32, COUPLE
VISITING TARANAKI

SOCIAL AND DIGITAL TOOLS ARE CRITICAL IN PLANNING AND SHARING SPONTANEOUS TRIPS

What once required focused planning can now be done with digital tools while on the road at a moment's notice.

Social media is a tool to share holidays with friends and family. It also acts as a form of advertising and can trigger tourists to visit a destination.

As travellers share their holidays, they receive feedback from friends and family that can shape decision-making in real-time, e.g. "I see you're in Y; make sure you visit X; it's 10 minutes away."

This process meets a broader need for flexible, real-time itineraries that can be adjusted as situations change, contrasting to many static tourism itineraries offered by different regions.

INSIGHT 05

”

I'll usually do my own Instagram posts. I've got two sites.

And due to my fatigue it's how I rediscovered traveling this time, because I hadn't travelled since before Covid.

JEAN, 60, MULTIGENERATIONAL GROUP
VISITING NELSON-TASMAN

DIGITAL TOOLS AREN'T JUST FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The use of digital tools to drive customer decisions, create itineraries or provide feedback on tourism providers is ever-increasing, yet this is not limited to younger generations.

Companies providing substandard digital experiences or lacking a social media profile are at a disadvantage.

A simple step to addressing this would be encouraging providers to engage in programmes that increase digital literacy and skills.

Such programmes can often be accessed through local and national government and can improve the tourism customer experience and increase the likelihood of success for tourism providers.

INSIGHT 06

”

I think it's quite fashion forward. It's a trendy place.

For New Zealanders, people are actually really well put-together.

ELLIE, 36, FAMILY
VISITING TARANAKI

TARANAKI IS NOT JUST ATTRACTIVE TO OLDER PEOPLE

Although there is a perception that Taranaki is more attractive to older people, both the local community and visitors to the region feel this is not the case. Alongside this, perhaps what makes Taranaki like no other is that it's like the best of some of the leading tourist destinations in New Zealand, in one region;

- Auckland in the sophistication of food, drink and fashion
- Wellington through creative arts, events and cafe culture
- South Island's West Coast in the ruggedness of the environment and coastline
- Rotorua through cultural histories and the importance of local iwi across the region

All wrapped up in the camaraderie, companionship and community of rural New Zealand.

INSIGHT 07

”

I feel like now businesses, more than ever, should be doing everything they can to give good customer service.

I feel like I probably expect it more!

NIEVE, 25, COUPLE
VISITING NELSON REGION

THERE IS AN ACUTE FOCUS ON SERVICE, WHICH CAN MAKE OR BREAK A HOLIDAY

Although customer service is a constant theme when people talk about holiday experiences, it appears more acute during pandemic-travel.

It was a recurring answer when considering events that could make or break a holiday experience.

Travellers regard excellent customer service as reciprocation for their patronage when there are fewer tourists in the country.

Authentic, warm and friendly service appears more crucial than ever, and those who don't deliver are likely to receive negative reviews in digital and social channels.

INSIGHT 08

”

I needed to go to the Coromandel on Auckland anniversary weekend last year, and I was just miserable, because everything was so dry, and I just felt like I'm driving for a weekend - Why am I contributing to this problem?

LARA, 25, SOLO TRAVELLER
VISITING ABEL TASMAN

TOURISTS WHO CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT FEEL THE GUILT OF TRAVELS IMPACT

Many travellers recognise the environmental sacrifices they make when they travel and feel the hypocrisy of their decisions.

They also see the relationship between travel, environmental degradation and climate change as complex. Eco-conscious travellers often try to minimise their ecological impact to balance it with the personal benefits they receive. In some instances, these benefits are deemed essential for physical and mental wellbeing.

As we experience the increasing effects of climate change, the desire for people to understand and minimise their environmental impact will grow, as identified in the carbon-conscious trend.

INSIGHT 09

”

I would just feel that there's other places that we would pick instead.

Because to me, like the only thing that New Plymouth has is like Egmont National Park.

PIPPA, 30, COUPLE
VISITING TARANAKI

THE BOTTOM OF THE BUCKET LIST MIGHT BE AN ADVANTAGE

It appears that Taranaki can be a place that people often come to when they have visited everywhere else.

What appears at first to be a disadvantage may be the opposite, as when tourists visit Taranaki they are looking for something different to other destinations they have visited.

A critical tension is that travellers can appear reluctant to make arduous journeys to reach less-trodden paths, and the perception of Taranaki as remote and challenging to access.

This situation provides opportunities for deep learning and creating the transformational experiences that align with some of the trends found earlier in this document.

GOALS AND PAIN POINTS

Visitors have different goals they are trying to achieve when travelling. Sometimes these are common across many travellers, while sometimes, they can be particular to a group or segment.

In the present experience, tourists also encounter pain points that make it more difficult or prevent them from achieving their goals.

The matrix below illustrates the goals and pain points of a range of research participants and therefore represents a more overarching view of the visitor experience.

The ideas created in the Visitor Ideas Matrix and ideas from the Visitor Futures workshop address many of these goals and pain points.

Alongside the visitor profiles on the following page, this table can be used to understand visitor goals and pain points, and create ideas for products and experiences to address them.

GOALS	1. Visit places in New Zealand that are off the beaten track	2. Create a holiday experience that is an escape from my daily life	3. Create the best holiday experience for members of a diverse group	4. Feel like the domestic experiences I have are as good as those overseas	5. Minimise environmental impact when travelling	6. Connect with and support the local community throughout my journey	7. Learn more about Māori culture and New Zealand's history	8. Be safe and secure and retain my independence at the same time	9. Be flexible to deal with changing circumstances - lock-downs, weather, etc.	10. A holiday where my disability doesn't affect my experience	11. Travel to Taranaki in the safest and most enjoyable way possible
PAIN POINTS	Don't have the time to travel too far for a short break	Have a limited budget and need to get the most out of it	Don't know what places and experiences are good for different generations	The quality of accommodation can vary wildly	All the routes into Taranaki rely on carbon-intensive transport options	It's difficult to engage with the community before I visit the region	I don't associate Taranaki with Māori culture like I do somewhere like Rotorua	As a woman, camp sites and accommodation don't always feel safe	Itineraries are static and not curated in ways that make sense to me	I am overwhelmed by information in different places	It's a long drive to Taranaki and the roads are busy, which makes me anxious
	Don't want the inconvenience of leaving easy commuter routes	Don't know what the best activities are to make the most from my budget	The people in the group have diverse interests and desires that can be hard to cater for	Visitor experiences lack the quality and care I've experienced overseas	There isn't a way I can keep track of my carbon footprint as I travel	Don't know where to get local products after I return home	I don't see or know about the cultural stories of Taranaki	I want to be on my own, but also interact with groups, which is hard	Using itineraries, I still have to do work to figure out routes, times, etc.	I don't know what information is from official sources and what to trust	I don't know the best places to stop on the way
	Don't know about Taranaki and what it has to offer	It's hard to find accommodation that feels aspirational	It's hard to find pet friendly accommodation	Sometimes I miss out on experiences because I don't have the right gear	I see constant reminders of environmental impact when I travel	I want to support the community, but don't like leaving online reviews	I'm anxious about making a mistake or cultural faux pas and offending people	It can be scary to do activities on my own that many take for granted	I miss experiences because I don't know what's near to my location	Poorly designed accommodation design can cause problems for my physical disability	I miss experiences because I don't know what's near to my location
	Don't see stories and content about Taranaki that inspires a visit		Dogs aren't allowed in New Plymouth CBD		There are limited eco-friendly options in every part of my journey	It's challenging to stay connected to communities when I leave	I'm not confident I will get an experience that I can't get anywhere else		I want to use technology, but sometimes don't have good data coverage	My visitor and activity needs are often not considered	
			It can be hard to find ways relax when we have children or a large group								

VISITOR PROFILES

These high-level visitor profiles can be used alongside the 'Goals and Pain Points' table on p.22 to understand key visitor segments better and create ideas for new products and services. A version of these profiles were used in the Visitor Futures workshop.

FAMILY

Desires a holiday that champions the child experience and minimises the stress of parenting small children with erratic schedules and rapidly changing needs.

NEEDS

- Opportunities for parents to relax and enjoy down-time
- Experiences in close proximity to minimise travel
- A mixture of experiences that maybe free or low cost, alongside "memory-making" moments for all the family

PAINS

- Create a memorable holiday experience on a limited budget
- Finding reasonably priced and spacious accommodation that works for children
- Creating itineraries that accommodate challenging schedule of young children, e.g. early mornings
- Finding healthy food options for kids

SOLO TRAVELLER

Desires a transformational travel experience that connects them to the local culture, people and environment.

NEEDS

- To feel safe and secure when travelling
- The opportunity to connect with a group, when desired
- To minimise their environmental impact and reduce the guilt of travel

PAINS

- Finding accommodation that feels safe and secure (especially for a solo female traveller)
- There are minimal options to make carbon or environmentally positive choices and when available, they are often expensive
- It can be difficult to meet people with similar interests or perspectives when travelling alone

INTERGENERATIONAL GROUP

Desires a flexible travel experience that caters for a wide-range of interests and abilities.

NEEDS

- The ability to congregate and socialise in large groups
- Diverse itineraries to cater for different personalities, ages and experiences
- Opportunities for individuals to play different roles and showcase their skills and knowledge

PAINS

- Finding reasonably priced and spacious accommodation that enables a diverse range of people to interact in different ways
- A lack of activities that acknowledge limited mobility or other forms of disability
- A lack of accessible information for older group members

ELDER COUPLE

Desires a holiday experience that can be both salubrious and nostalgic.

NEEDS

- Shareable moments that create emotional connection
- Indulgent experiences - "an escape from the norm"
- An opportunity for each to play a role in shaping their holiday

PAINS

- Difficulty finding experiences that cater for shared interests
- Can be hard to get around to different venues or locations easily due to mobility issues
- Desires to engage in local cultural experiences but don't always know the best way to do this and can lack confidence

VISITOR FUTURES WORKSHOP

On Friday 7th of May, We Create Futures facilitated a workshop in association with Venture Taranaki - Designing Visitor Futures of Taranaki.

Originally a public visitor event, "Designing the Visitor Futures of Taranaki", was scheduled for March 2nd, 2021. Unfortunately, due to the localised Auckland lock-down that occurred during the same period, the event was cancelled and a new event scheduled in May.

The original event format was a one-day conference with several speakers representing the tourism and visitor sector, locally and nationally. Due to a diverse set of speaker schedules, May's event focused more on this project's work than a broader conference schedule.

The event involved a cross-section of more than 35 attendees across the visitor and tourism sector and the local community.

There were representatives from organisations including the Department of Conservation, South Taranaki District Council, Taranaki Regional Council, The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and New Plymouth District Council alongside local tourism and visitor experience operators.

We Create Futures presented an overview of the work to date. Then, using the provocations seen earlier in the document, alongside insights and tourist profiles created in the research phase, we facilitated groups

of participants through several exercises to gather their feedback and perspectives.

We used a co-design process to empower them to create new ideas and visitor itineraries. In the main exercise, groups created a collection of implementation timelines for each provocation.

The following pages contain a set of refined workshop outputs, which include:

- Community feedback on what they want to see more and less of in the sector
- New visitor experience ideas, complemented by a matrix of ideas created by We Create Futures during the project
- A set of potential tourist itineraries related to the visitor profiles



Above: Images taken during Visitor Futures workshop, courtesy of Venture Taranaki.

COMMUNITY DESIRES

In the workshop, we also asked participants to submit what they wanted to see "more of" and "less of" in terms of behaviours, actions and attitudes. These relate to the region, as well as the local tourism sector.

MORE OF

- Intergenerational and accessible experiences
- Regional experiences that create genuine connection to community
- More storyboards of tech delivery available easily
- Provision that visits must be carbon positive, socially giving and include volunteering
- Consider: Technology, Regenerative, Mobility, Tailored options, not just selling operator offerings as a one-size-fits all
- Focusing on a collaborative package for visitor experiences, not pushed by operators
- A willingness to compromise for the good of the region, and not just say "collaborate"
- Be more open-minded about not sharing NZ's commonly owned assets
- Regional inclusiveness and enhancing local synergies within the region
- Low-carbon footprint travel options
- A clearer, simpler visitor proposition
- Grow what we have got - look at what we already have and how we can improve it
- More coordinated, regional funding
- More local kōrero
- Local food producers connecting to restaurants
- Local history and knowledge coming forward
- Video enhance story-telling
- Focus on regenerative food and activities
- Make the mindset of tourism in Taranaki "cool" "great"
- More excitement for our regions instead of regarding them for "old people" (boring!)
- Targeted workshops like this to help Food + Fibre Sector reinvent themselves
- Take action on these ideas!
- Time to dive into these ideas and formulate more
- Defining our cultural experience Connection to existing tour operators and accommodation
- Working across sectors to promote activities in Taranaki
- Small, niche events supported and delivered consistently well
- More focus on local stories and heroes pitched to outer markets

LESS OF

- Siloed thinking and thinking limited to districts
- Horse-racing tracks in key locations
- Less talking, more doing
- Independent approach to tourism marketing
- Discounting the meat-eating, petrol head local and visitor
- Trying to fit non-tourism business into a tourism mindset

Conclusion

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Here we identify broader findings and themes that have emerged through the process of the project.

REGIONAL CONNECTION

There appears to be a strong desire for more regional connection through feedback from the Visitor Futures workshop. This desire was evident in the tourism sector and related industries and sectors, such as hospitality.

There is a recognition that closer collaboration by different parties can achieve success, and compromise across the region is required to make progress.

It would appear there is a critical role for Venture Taranaki to act as a catalyst for innovation and facilitator of collaboration at ground-level. It seems that the role of 'trusted broker' between local and regional bodies, community groups and businesses, is critical to future success in the sector.

This role should emphasise and prioritise cross-regional funding and support, and transdisciplinary partnerships and multi-sector collaborations.

OFFICIAL VS UNOFFICIAL SOURCES

When researching the Taranaki tourism experience, visitors come across official and unofficial sources. These range from websites and articles to social media accounts that provide tourism information.

Sometimes, their branding or titles can make them appear like official tourism entities. Where they advocate or promote experiences that may not align to the desired plan for the region or align to private interests (that may be perceived as a public agenda at first glance) friction or confusion can increase.

Although it's not possible or desirable to police all content about Taranaki, new marketing collaborations and content alignment across popular web and social sites could be worth exploring. The goal here is to maintain coherence across the visitor experience while also advancing new messaging about the region.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE FREEDOM CAMPER?

Freedom camping has been a topical subject for tourism for several years. Many of the stories about freedom camping told in the news are negative and talk about the associated cost of freedom camping. There have also been historical problems with freedom campers locally at places like Waiwhakaiho Beach Reserve.

There is divided opinion when talking to stakeholders about the subject - from those wanting to welcome everyone to others believing that freedom campers create little value for the region.

More broadly, during the pandemic, there has been an increase in New Zealanders buying and renting camper vans to explore the country.

We spoke to campers, who looked for good local restaurants and experiences and were willing to spend money in the local region. It was also pointed out by one participant that New Zealand's overseas tourism campaigns frequently sell the freedom to engage with the environment, often enabled by using a versatile vehicle.

It is worth noting that any visitor segment sits on a spectrum. Within freedom camping, this may stretch from people sleeping in their cars to living in luxury mobile homes.

Considering the above points alongside the "Work from Anywhere" trend, it seems worthwhile to explore approaches to identify and engage responsible campers, as they can challenge the negative stereotype publicised more frequently.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ROADSIDE STALL

When travelling to Taranaki, and when travelling in other regions, we have seen many different variations of roadside stalls. These have ranged from modest single-produce tables at the end of a driveway to contact-less self-service kiosks with specialist produce and local product favourites.

These stalls create a local micro-economy and serve as places of interest for tourists.

As we see more people engaging in the "Creator Economy" and easier access to modern payment methods, there is an opportunity to create micro-experiences that encourage engagement with the local community - a driver and growing desire for many tourists.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCAL EVENTS

There is no doubt that local events are a significant tourist attraction. Local stakeholders and many of the tourists we spoke to who had visited Taranaki, echoed this observation.

At the same time, as pointed out by some of our participants, these events attract visitors with matching interests. It seems fair to assume that many potential visitors with contrasting interests are not present in the marketing channels where these events focus.

The events community's knowledge and expertise, alongside their marketing and advertising experience, could prove invaluable when exploring ways to reach people beyond the events they already curate. This knowledge would also be an asset when creating and promoting new visitor experiences.

THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY

Whether Taranaki born and bred, an industry stakeholder or visiting tourist, the importance of community was a recurring theme through the research.

This regard for community and the unique relationships within it appears critical to the future success of the tourism industry in Taranaki.

It can also increase regional tourism's resilience as the long-term impacts of the pandemic continue to play out.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MĀORI TOURISM

The foundations of many regenerative trends, whether tourism, agriculture or economics, are based on indigenous ideas and wisdom. This creates a robust platform for Māori perspectives to lead these initiatives.

We have identified the importance of Māori and indigenous tourism for the region, and have suggested some high-level ideas, which are often inspired by those we interviewed.

At the same time, we do not presume we know what's best for Māori interests or feel it's our place to provide solutions.

From the Waitara land wars sites to the return of the Parihaka Peace Festival, many of the ideas that emerged in the Visitor Futures workshop connected to stories of local iwi. There was much also interest and respect for these histories and knowledge across many participants who were present.

There are already local Māori companies and individuals leading tourism initiatives based on tikanga and mātauranga Māori who are well-versed in creating successful outcomes in their communities.

Venture Taranaki already enjoys good relationships with many of these organisations, which creates a strong foundation for future success.

RICH LOCAL STORIES

Within this project and others happening in parallel, a consistent theme has been the importance of local stories. These are of interest to visitors, but also precious to local communities, who desire to communicate and preserve important regional narratives.

From local histories to iconic individuals and the successes of thriving businesses, there are various archetypal stories that are important to the identity of the region.

There is also the potential to engage a broad cross-section of the community to communicate these stories, from historians and Kaumātua to artists and businesses. Where appropriate, some of these stories have the potential to be used as content for media campaigns and emphasise local identity as hooks to pull visitors into the region.

A project that brought people together to capture these stories could create value across the region, within and beyond the visitor sector.

NEXT STEPS

Through our engagement and feedback in the Visitor Futures, there appears to be a positive, can-do attitude toward creating further prototypes and experiments related to the work done to date.

CREATING A BIAS TO ACTION

When engaging in projects, it can be tempting to try to mitigate as much risk as possible and answer every question before exploring solutions.

We often desire and search for certainty, which, although comforting, is likely to cause more friction and failure in complex problem spaces.

This type of approach is ill-fitted for a fast-moving VUCA world - one that is Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous. This certainly describes the situation the tourism industry has found itself during the previous 18-months.

Rather than trying to account for every possible outcome for the initiatives that may receive investment, we suggest creating multiple, low-cost prototypes of initiatives that promote and accelerate learning. This allows ideas to be tested and different business models to be validated.

This approach also encourages new collaborations and relationships to form and new ideas begin to emerge, that could only happen in this way.

Ideas are developed from the ground-up and iterated with lower costs and low barriers to entry, e.g. a food market could be a series of table-top stalls or vending machines in a donated space.

By approaching things in this way, it's also easier to engage potential customers and attain feedback that enables ideas to be validated and refined more quickly.

It also empowers individuals, organisations and communities to take control of their futures.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

After the analysis of the Visitor Futures workshop was completed, we engaged the VT team in the process of assessment and prioritisation of the provocation timelines.

We set several different assessment criteria, including regional impact, ease of implementation, technical viability and business feasibility.

Consequently, VT will be further engaging the local community in the process of product development.

The goals of this next phased will be to:

- Create further progress in prototyping and piloting viable versions of the Visitor Provocations and exploring MVPs, and:
- Create prototypes for individual, stand-alone ideas that have evolved through the project and as a direct output from the Visitor Futures workshop.

A FUTURE ENGAGEMENT MODEL

In analysing the timelines created in the workshop to realise the projects in the provocations (see appendix), we identified commonalities shared across these approaches.

We present this as a model for future engagements, which VT may use when attempting to realise similar projects in future.



ENGAGE

Diverse voices and ensure processes and activities are inclusive

Activate communities through hands-on workshops (including tools, such as a Gap Analysis)

Work in collaboration with local communities to gather stories, knowledge and information

Use local expertise and experience to probe relevant topics, such as financial viability, at an early stage

Collaborate across districts, through approaches that enable and encourage new behaviours and mitigate red-tape



EXPLORE

New collaborations and relationships, working closely with local iwi

Incubate diverse and emergent ideas that build from desired themes and create excitement

Emphasise and prioritise carbon-positive activities and those that engage in social, cultural and environmental regeneration

Consider metrics and assessment at an early stage and build this into project considerations



INVESTIGATE

Exploratory relationships with new commercial partners

Facilitate opportunities to create new commercial and business models

Consider systems challenges and more significant infrastructure changes in the longer term, e.g. connectivity, accessible planning, etc.

Build innovative and creative approaches to advertising and marketing



PROTOTYPE

Low-cost, low-risk physical versions of ideas over feasibility studies and reports

Constantly assess and iterate projects across time to maintain momentum and improvement



LAUNCH

Frequently in small increments

Normalise regular beta-testing, low-impact pilots and Minimal Viable Products (MVPs) of physical and digital products and platforms

Support launches through marketing and PR activities in relevant channels



LEARN

Through continual learning loops across all parties and projects

Ensure that knowledge is accessible, captured and acted upon through iteration and improvement

Prioritise clear and consistent communication across stakeholders, the tourism sector and the wider community

Be open, learn from mistakes and celebrate success as it happens!

About

We Create Futures

WE CREATE FUTURES

In 2018, After working for leading New Zealand design agency DNA, Chris Jackson left to start We Create Futures.

After working for clients including Z Energy, Kiwibank and Immigration New Zealand, he observed something missing from traditional design studios and business strategy consultants. He became increasingly frustrated at the banality of management consultants and the inability to distinguish one design agency from another.

His response was to create a contemporary strategic design and innovation practice that brought together cutting-edge tools and techniques with tried and trusted methods in design thinking, futures thinking, customer insight and strategy.

In 2020, after a year-long collaboration, Chris Clay became a partner, increasing our depth of expertise in strategic foresight, collective intelligence and anticipatory thinking.

We have a small, core team in Aotearoa New Zealand, with bases in Wellington and Auckland. We amplify this with a network of global practitioners curated for each project. We have collaborators across the globe, all highly experienced with deep expertise that brings an extra depth and quality to our projects.

Most recently, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have made the most of emergent digital technologies and remote working.

We have facilitated many remote workshops for clients and have bring this expertise to any project.

Across the research process, we can advise on the best approach and tools to create a successful experience for participants with a broad spectrum of technology needs and know best the approaches for recruiting participants for face-to-face workshops and interviews.

We constantly refine our approach with new tools and technologies to accommodate the increasing global demands for our work.

We believe in a more equitable, kind, just and inclusive world, endeavouring to manifest this aspiration through our project approach and teams.

We help ambitious organisations join the dots between envisioning a desirable future and delivering on strategy.

THE TEAM



CHRIS JACKSON

Partner - Design Thinking & UX Lead

For the last 18 years Chris has worked across design thinking, service and user experience design projects in the UK and Aotearoa, New Zealand. Chris is a design thinking expert. He was "Design Thinker in residence" at Wellington co-working space, Biz Dojo. He also co-leads the Design Thinking elective on the Executive MBA at Massey University.

Across his career, Chris has worked on futures thinking, design thinking and user experience projects for clients including Z Energy, Kiwibank, Callaghan Innovation, Red Cross New Zealand, TSB Community Trust, Queenstown Airport and Te Atiawa Iwi Charitable Trust.

Chris has also trained in Co-Design methods with Liz Sanders, Customer Research with Jan Chipchase and as a Strategic Foresight Practitioner with Institute of the Future (IFTF) in Palo Alto, California.

Chris has won 23 individual and team awards across a variety of design, UX and research projects. He keynoted and spoken for audiences in New Zealand, Australia, UK, USA, Ireland, Singapore, Peru and Iran.



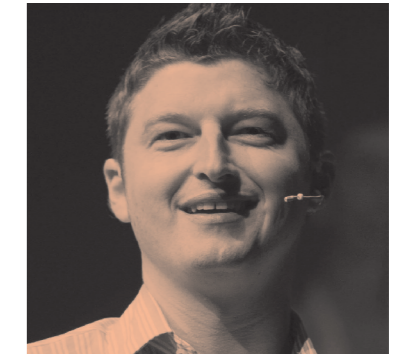
KATHARINE PULFORD

Associate - Trends Research Lead

For the last 20 years, Katharine has worked in design thinking and product design for global brands across the US, Europe and Asia. She is skilled in tracking socio-cultural, environmental, economic and technological trends that provide insight into consumer culture shifts. She is a keen advocate for the circular economy and helping brands to build better models of consumption and production.

With a background in product design, Katharine has extensive experience translating trends and insights into tangible design strategies, helping brands, manufacturers and supply chain partners to build innovative and compelling products. She has consulted for leading UK design strategy and consumer trends agencies WGSN and Stylus and has worked in-house with Nike, Logitech, Habitat and the Eden Project.

Working within multidisciplinary teams, Katharine has delivered products in smart-home, work, education, music and sports sectors, winning several Red Dot, Good Design, IF and IDA awards along the way.



CHRIS CLAY

Partner - Futures & Foresight Lead

Contributing a deep knowledge of futures thinking and the discipline of anticipation, Chris is also an expert in the use of collective intelligence to create and evaluate knowledge and to catalyse breakthrough ideas and innovations.

With a respected background in education, including being named "Microsoft International Innovative Educator of the Year 2013", Chris was the founding Education Director of educational start-up, The Mind Lab by Unitec. He was also part of Singularity U-NZ, working with the iconic Silicon Valley organisation to popularise futures thinking in New Zealand. As well as being the Futures Thinking lead for this project, he is also our lead for complex adaptive systems thinking, another layer of expertise he contributes to the project team.

Chris is an engaging facilitator, workshop designer and regular conference speaker. He has mentored teams in multiple start up's, using his expertise to help them think more critically and creatively about the future and increase the resilience of their ideas.



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