

6. Visitor attitudes towards management options

Attitudes toward eighteen options for managing future increases in track use-levels were surveyed, with visitors indicating the degree to which they agreed or disagreed. These options included increasing the capacity of accommodation, dispersing use pressures, imposing use-limits, and providing pre-walk information (refer Appendix 1, Question 8). The complete list of responses, as summarised in Figure 9, indicates a variety of visitor attitudes. The only management approach attracting consistently high support was that associated with using pre-walk information to influence visitor choices about making track visits. More direct methods such as making the track one-way only, or reducing facilities and services in order to discourage use were highly out of favour. For many of the other options, the proportions of visitors either for or against were similar. For example, the options related to booking systems for huts and campsites were opposed by around 50% of the visitors, and supported by around 30%. This split response has important implications for management as booking systems are being considered for many of the Great Walks, and the high proportion of opposition suggests there may be considerable visitor concern.

6.1 EFFECTS OF AGE, GENDER, NATIONALITY, AND CROWDING PERCEPTION

6.1.1 Background to analyses

Additional analyses were required to assess whether these management items varied significantly among the visitors according to age group, gender, nationality, and crowding perception. Table 5 and Figure 10 show the attitudes to management scales created for these analyses (refer Section 4.1.1).

TABLE 5. ATTITUDES TO MANAGEMENT SUMMARY SCALES (REFER APPENDIX 2).

SCALE	DESCRIPTION
Rationing/use-limits	Booking systems for huts/campsites, limited track permits
Information management	Encourage use elsewhere, promote low-impact behaviour
Increase accommodation	More hut/camp capacity, guided options, alternative tracks
Manipulate use	One-way track, pricing, facility reduction, promote small groups

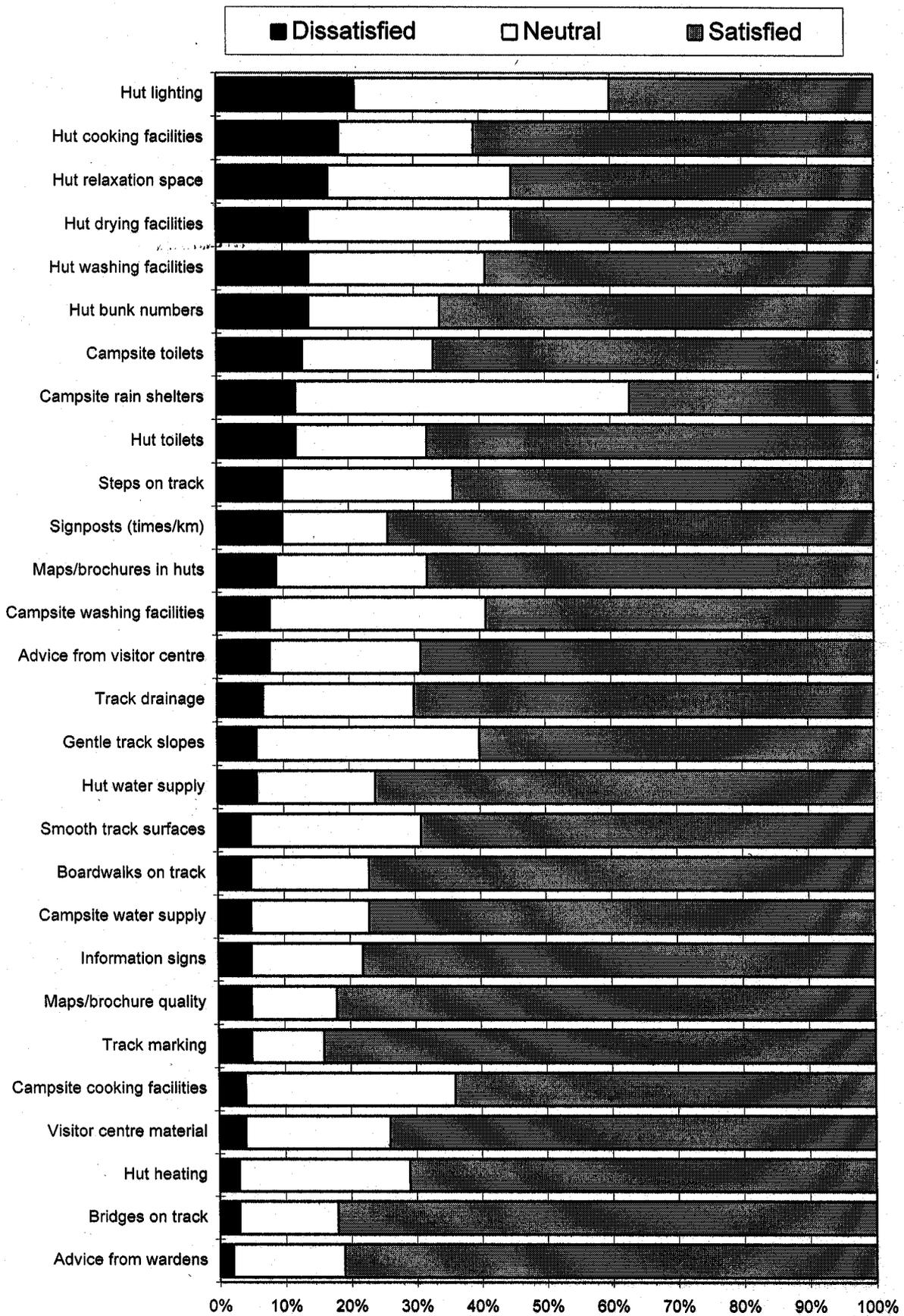


Figure 9. Management preference responses (n=1044).

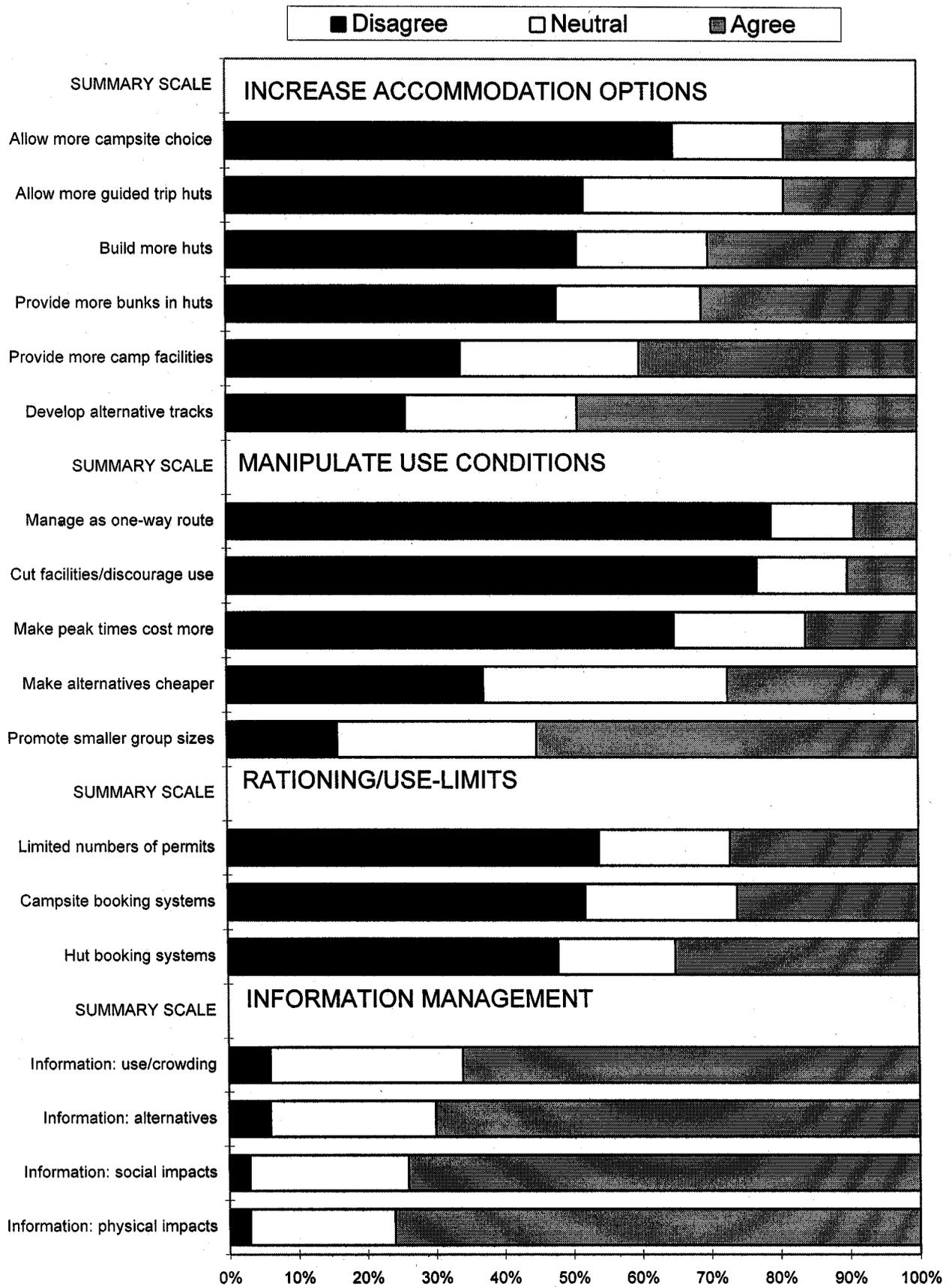


Figure 10. Attitude to management responses in summary scale structure.

6.1.2 Significant findings

Differences in attitude toward management options according to age-group (over and under 40 yrs), gender (male/female), nationality (New Zealand and overseas), and crowding perceptions (Uncrowded/Crowded) were analysed (refer Section 4.1 for method). The significant effects and interactions associated with the analysis using these independent variables are summarised in Table 6. These results indicate that attitudes differed between New Zealand and overseas visitors, and between male and female visitors.

TABLE 6. SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS ON ATTITUDE TO MANAGEMENT SCALES.

SOURCE OF SIGNIFICANT EFFECT	SIGNIFICANT MANAGEMENT SCALES	MEAN VALUES (ADJUSTED)*	
		New Zealand	Overseas
Nationality effect ($F(4,909)=6.46, p=.000$)	Manipulate use conditions $F(1,912)=16.02, p=.000$	3.58	3.45
	Increase accommodation $F(1,912)=9.14, p=.018$	3.06	3.33
	Rationing/use-limits $F(1,912)=4.54, p=.033$	3.45	3.23
Gender effect ($F(4,909)=4.79, p=.001$)	Increase accommodation $F(1,912)=6.83, p=.009$	3.21	3.31
	Manipulate use conditions $F(1,912)=5.06, p=.025$	3.45	3.58
	Rationing/use-limits $F(1,912)=3.86, p=.050$	3.43	3.23

* Mean values for the summary scales are divided by the number of constituent items to allow interpretation using the original question categories (e.g., 1 = Strongly agree 3 = Neutral 5 = Strongly disagree).

Nationality effect

Attitudes toward management options differed significantly between New Zealand and overseas visitors. The main differences were based upon the options of manipulating use levels, increasing accommodation capacity, and rationing use. New Zealand visitors disagreed significantly more with the ‘visit-control’ options of manipulating and rationing use, while overseas visitors disagreed more with the ‘development’ option of increasing accommodation capacity.

Additional exploration of the ‘manipulate use conditions’ scale indicated that encouraging smaller group sizes was the individual item that appeared to contribute most to the greater disagreement by New Zealand visitors. This is a difficult result to explain, although it may represent a greater resistance among New Zealand visitors to having such a fundamental element of their visit freedom apparently being controlled in this way. Making the track one-way only and making alternative tracks cheaper also contributed to the difference, but were of only secondary importance.

Additional exploration of the 'rationing/use-limits' scale highlighted the item of requiring permits for visits as contributing most to the greater New Zealand disagreement with this scale. There was much less difference between New Zealand and overseas visitors in their levels of agreement with booking systems for huts and campsites. While the rationing methods included in this scale were not substantially different, New Zealand visitors appear to view the concept of 'permit' controls more negatively than they do 'booking' controls.

By contrast, New Zealand visitors disagreed less than overseas visitors with increasing accommodation options to cater for higher use pressures. Additional exploration of the 'increase accommodation' scale highlighted increasing bunk numbers in huts as the most prominent item in this difference, with the options of building more huts and allowing more guided walks/huts as important secondary items. Overseas visitors were less positive toward these 'development' options than were the New Zealand visitors. This represents a preference situation in reverse of what many may expect.

Gender effect

Attitudes toward management options differed significantly between male and female visitors. The main differences were based upon the options of increasing accommodation capacity, manipulating use conditions, and rationing use-levels. Female visitors disagreed more with the options of increasing accommodation capacity and manipulating use-conditions, while male visitors disagreed significantly more with the option of rationing use.

Additional exploration of the 'increase accommodation' scale highlighted providing new tracks as alternatives, and allowing more freedom to camp by tracks as the most prominent items that female visitors disagreed more with. It is difficult to provide any explanation of this result, although to some degree these management options do represent a dispersal of use effects into new areas. Why females might disagree more with this type of change, and conversely males agree relatively more, can not be determined from these results.

Additional exploration of the 'manipulate use conditions' scale highlighted making peak times more expensive as the most prominent item that females disagreed with in this scale. Of secondary importance was their greater disagreement with making alternative areas cheaper and encouraging smaller groups. Again, why females might disagree more with this type of change, and conversely males agree relatively more, can not be determined from these results.

By contrast, male visitors disagreed more than females with options in the 'rationing/use-limits' scale. Additional exploration of this scale highlighted booking of campsites as the most prominent item, with booking for huts and requiring permits being of secondary importance. Why males might disagree more with this type of change, and conversely females agree relatively more, can not be determined from these results.

Extreme responses

Because visitors attitudes were often evenly split either for or against the management options (refer Figure 10, additional exploration of these data also included examination of the extreme responses. The top and bottom 25% of

scores for each of the management option scales were selected, representing the more extreme attitudes of those who most strongly agreed or disagreed with the options. The main differences indicated from these explorations¹⁰ were in visitor attitudes toward the 'increase accommodation options' scale. In particular, 60% of New Zealand visitors with these 'extreme' attitudes agreed strongly with increasing accommodation options, compared with only 37% of overseas visitors.¹¹ Such a difference suggests that assumptions about what overseas visitors want in comparison to the New Zealanders, who are usually assumed to be less 'development-oriented', are open to question and need to be investigated further.

In other results which appear to relate to use pressures, 69% of Easter visitors with these extreme attitudes agreed with increasing accommodation options, compared with 40% of Summer visitors. And 42% of 'crowded' visitors with extreme attitudes agreed with management by 'manipulating use conditions', compared with 31% of 'uncrowded' visitors. One explanation could be that use pressures may prompt increasing numbers of visitors to favour more direct and regulatory management options. Another could be that visitors disagreeing with such options are being displaced as use pressures increase. Clearly these data do not resolve this issue, but highlight an important area for further investigation.

6.2 RELATING MANAGEMENT PREFERENCE SCALES TO OVERALL TRIP EVALUATIONS

There were no significant links between the overall visit evaluations (e.g., satisfaction and crowding), and attitudes towards management options. These results suggest that preferences for different management options were unaffected by any experiences on the track visit.

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¹⁰ The test statistic used to identify significant differences was Chi2.

¹¹ Germans were least supportive, with only 8% agreeing with increasing accommodation options.