



FIGURE 6. SATISFACTION RESPONSES ORDERED IN SUMMARY SCALE STRUCTURE. THIS IS SIMPLY A REORGANISATION OF MATERIAL PRESENTED IN FIGURE 5.

4.2 RELATING SATISFACTION SCALES TO OVERALL TRIP EVALUATIONS

None of the satisfaction scales were significantly associated with the overall satisfaction or use-level evaluations (e.g., crowding). No notable correlations or significant relationships (using SPSS Multiple Regressions) were found. The state of facilities and services experienced on the Abel Tasman Track did not appear to contribute at all to how the overall trip was evaluated. In particular, the lack of any notable relationships between overall satisfaction and any of the facility and service satisfaction scales indicates that these questions represent distinctly different visitor perspectives on visit satisfaction. This is an important distinction to acknowledge because simply applying a single overall evaluation of satisfaction appears unlikely to highlight any specific-issue satisfaction problems until they are of an order where visit quality may be already highly compromised, and the problems are more difficult to manage.

5. Visitor perceptions of impacts

Perceptions of 29 specific impact items were surveyed, covering social impacts, physical impacts, and impacts associated with the facilities and services (refer Appendix 1, Question 5). Visitors were asked to respond to each item using the options of not experiencing the impact, experiencing it but not being bothered, being bothered a little, and being bothered a lot. The complete list of responses, as summarised in Figure 7 (and Figure 8), shows that in the main most visitors did not experience most of these impacts. This may be because the impacts did not occur, or because they were not noticed by the visitor.

The most prominent impacts reported here are indicated through combining the responses of those who were ‘bothered’ by impacts, and those who simply ‘noticed’ them. These ‘impact aware’ responses often represented a majority of the visitors. The main examples of these more prominent impacts, which were noticed by over 60% of visitors, included: Uncertain water hygiene (87%), seeing too many in huts (75%), seeing too many on the track (73%), seeing too many at campsites (68%), insufficient bunk numbers (62%), and track trampling/shortcuts (60%). Other impacts noticed by over 50% of visitors were: motorboat disturbance at the beaches (58%), overdeveloped tracks (57%), noisy people in huts (57%), inadequate water supply (56%), track trampling/widening (55%), seeing too many big groups (52%), noisy people at campsites (52%), overdeveloped signs (51%), and inadequate toilets (51%). These were the most prominent impacts noticed on the Abel Tasman Track, although it should be remembered that there is a clear distinction between the impacts being ‘noticed and tolerated’, and being seen as ‘negative’. What contributes to the progression from noticing and tolerating an impact, to becoming bothered by it (e.g., it becomes negative) represents an important question for future research.

The most negative impact, representing that which most ‘bothered’ the visitors, was Uncertain water hygiene, which bothered over half (65%) of the visitors. It was a response to the statement “Uncertainty about the water always being safe to drink”. From consultations with managers, it can be concluded that this response most often represents general caution about water quality, rather than being a direct reaction to hygiene problems experienced on the visit. It was not clear if this caution was related to all water sources on the trip, or just those in trackside streams. Most other negative impact perceptions were at far lower levels, with only a few bothering more than a quarter of visitors. These included motorboat disturbance at the beaches (30%), seeing too many on the track (28%), inadequate water supply (28%), track trampling/shortcuts (27%), litter at campsites (25%), insufficient bunks in huts (25%), and noisy people in huts (25%). A notable proportion of these more negative impacts relate to social conditions on the track, although, they represent only a minority of visitors overall.

When visitors did notice impacts, many were not bothered by them. This response could be considered ‘tolerance’ of the impacts. For example, while 75% of visitors noticed seeing too many people in huts, only 21% were bothered by it. The remaining 54% noticed the impact, but were not bothered by it (e.g.,

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