



FIGURE 7. IMPACT PERCEPTION RESPONSES.

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 50% of visitors, included 'uncertain water hygiene' (76%), 'disturbance by motorboats on the water' (75%), 'inadequate water supply' (60%), 'motorboat disturbance at huts/campsite' (58%), 'seeing people on guided river trips (56%), and 'inadequate toilet facilities' (55%). Other impacts which were noticed by more than 40% of visitors included track trampling and widening, over-developed signs, over-developed campsites, seeing too many at campsites, seeing too many big groups, noise from aircraft, seeing too many on the river, noise at campsites, and seeing litter on the water/beaches. Together these were the most prominent impacts noticed on the Whanganui journey, 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 impacts, representing those which most 'bothered' the visitors, appear to be physical impact perceptions associated with water hygiene, litter and track damage. By far the most prominent of these was 'uncertain water hygiene', which bothered over half (56%) 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 at huts and campsites. Other prominent negative impacts were related to 'disturbance by motorboats on the water' (44%), 'inadequate water supply' (31%), 'inadequate toilet facilities' (26%), 'litter at campsites' (26%), 'litter on the water/beaches' (25%), 'litter on riverside tracks' (22%) and 'seeing toilet paper/waste' (20%). Apart from experiencing motorboat impacts on the water, social impact issues were not prominent among those most specifically bothering visitors.

When visitors did notice impacts, many were not bothered by them. This response could be considered 'tolerance' of the impacts. For example, while

66% of visitors noticed groups on guided trips down the river, only 12% were bothered by it. The remaining 44% noticed the impact but were not bothered by it (e.g., indicating tolerance). It is clear from Figure 7 that many other impacts were noticed but were highly tolerated, particularly including many social impacts such as motorboat disturbance at huts/camps, seeing too many on the river, seeing too many at campsites, and seeing too many big groups. Perceptions of facility over-developments were also high, but were also highly tolerated.

However, when most of those noticing an impact were bothered by it, it could be considered to show high 'intolerance' and unacceptability of the impact source. From Figure 8, impacts indicative of inappropriate behaviour by others appeared least acceptable to visitors (also see Figure 8). The main example is seeing litter around campsites, where 48% noticed the impact, but only 13% were not bothered by it. Other examples include littering along riverside tracks, litter at huts, litter on the river/beaches, seeing toilet paper and waste, and woodcutting damage. These appear to represent the least acceptable types of impacts, and do appear to be present at notable levels.

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

5.1.1 Background to analyses

Additional analyses were required to assess whether these impact perceptions varied significantly according to age group, gender, nationality and crowding perception. Figure 8 and Table 2 show the impact perception scales which were created for these analyses (refer Section 4.1.1).

TABLE 2. SUMMARY SCALES FOR SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL IMPACT PERCEPTIONS (REFER APPENDIX 2).

SCALES	DESCRIPTIONS
Physical damage	Waste/toilet paper, vegetation damage, track trampling/damage, signs of informal campsite
Seeing litter	Litter at huts, campsites, track and on the river/beaches
Hut congestion	Insufficient bunks, too many in huts, but noise, rush for bunks
Over-development	Excessive level of huts, signs, campsites and riverside tracks
Overall congestion	Too many at camps, too many on the river, campsite noise, rush for camp space, seeing guided groups
Water/toilet/hygiene	Inadequate water supply/toilet facilities, water hygiene doubts
Boat disturbance	Disturbance by boats at huts/camps and on beaches

(extra individual items - plane noise)

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