

Destination Queenstown Queenstown Convention Bureau IMEX 2019

Report

10-12 September 2019

Destination Queenstown

PO Box 353, Queenstown 9300, New Zealand
+64 3 441 0700

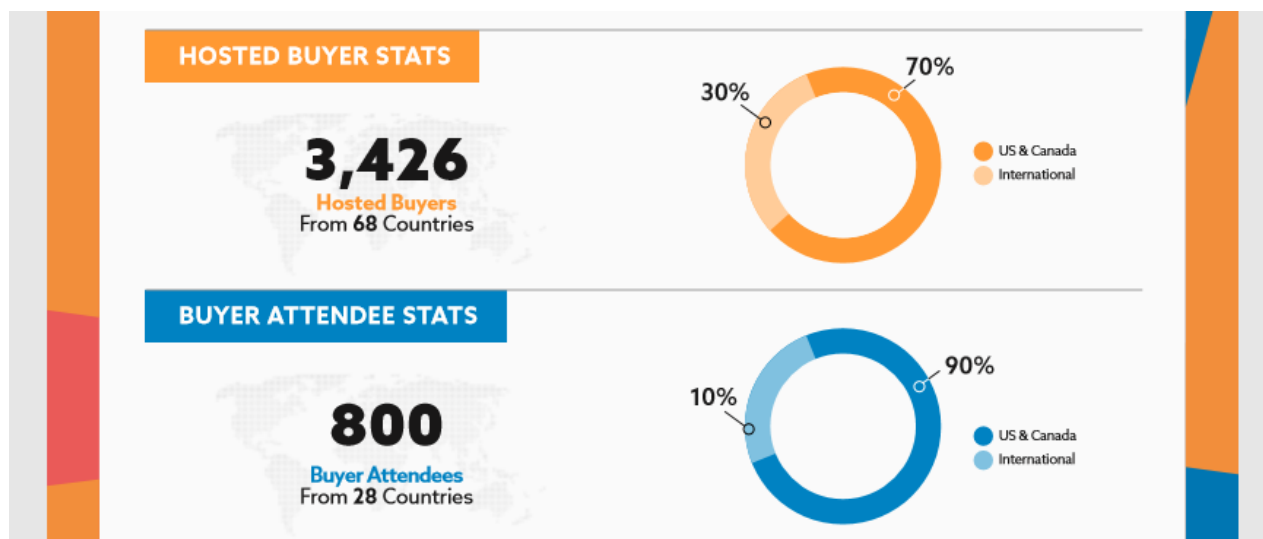
1. Introduction

Event background/ dates and locations of event

This is the 7th time Queenstown Convention Bureau has exhibited
Held at Sands Expo in Las Vegas, 10-12 September 2019

- 13500+ total participants including exhibitors, press, students etc
- 3,500 exhibiting companies representing 155 countries
- 76,000 prescheduled appointments (one-on-one, group appts and booth presentations)
- 3,426 hosted buyers from 68 countries compared to 3,327 hosted buyers from 63 countries in 2018

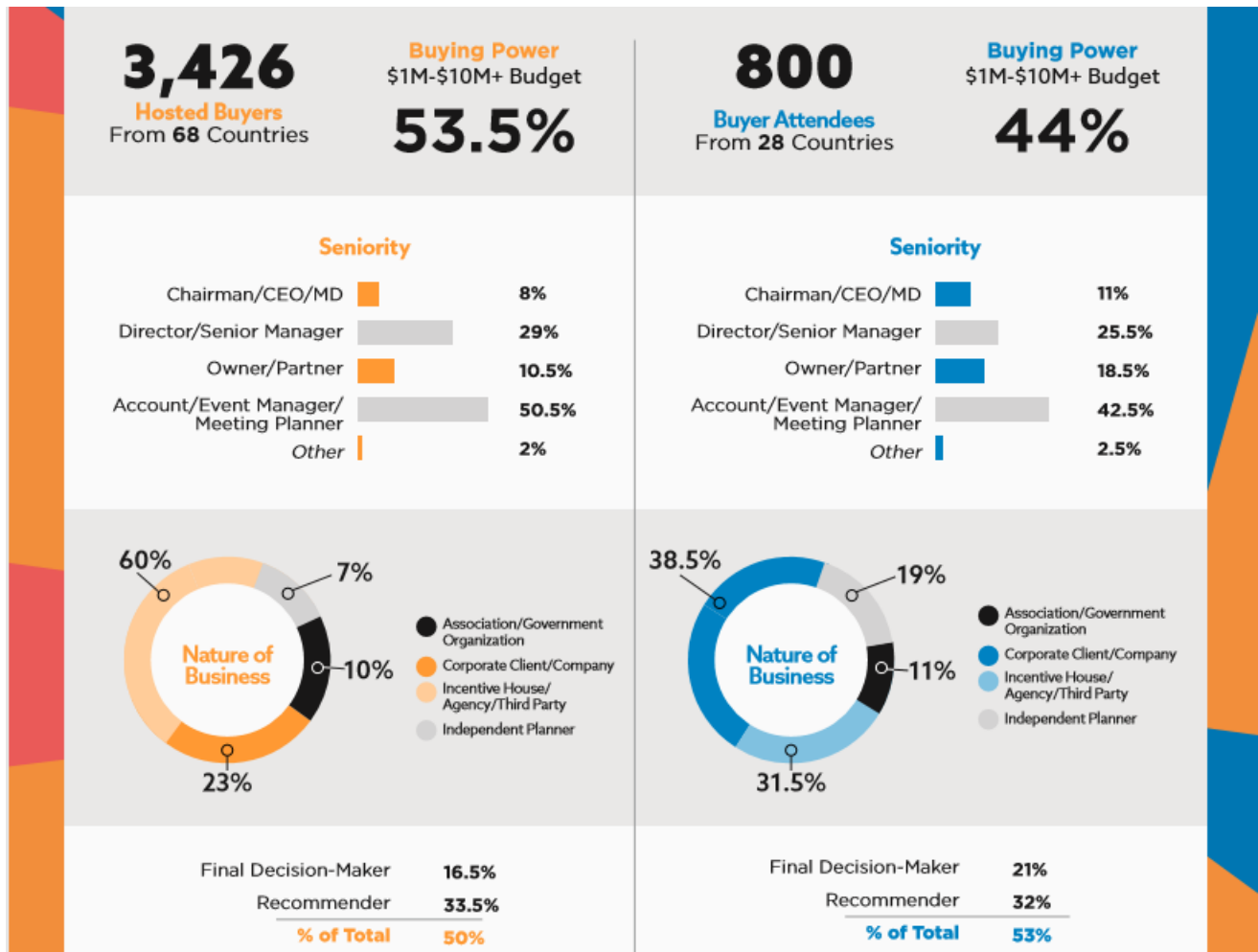
IMEX America is a unique international tradeshow attracting more than 4,000 qualified buyers from all industry sectors come to IMEX to plan and book everything from high-level incentives to huge association conventions. IMEX America is the largest meetings industry trade show in the United States, the country with the largest meetings market in the world. You meet with North American buyers handpicked for their interest in both international and domestic suppliers. As well as meetings and events industry buyers, they represent the insurance, banking, pharmaceutical and IT industries, plus many more. For more stats [click here.](#)



IMEX America does attract an exceptionally high quality business audience. Whether attendees are hosted or not, over 40% control budgets of \$1m-\$10m+ and are senior professional with significant, final decision making authority.

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2. Market Background

Market background, size, trends, air connectivity.

The below table shows numbers consistently increasing with arrivals into NZ from the US across all purposes of travel. With a steady increase of total visitor arrivals of 8.8% this year compared to 3.6% last year it shows the US as a very strong market for New Zealand. This table breaks down the travel purpose, clearly showing conference and conventions as a leading performer for purpose of travel.

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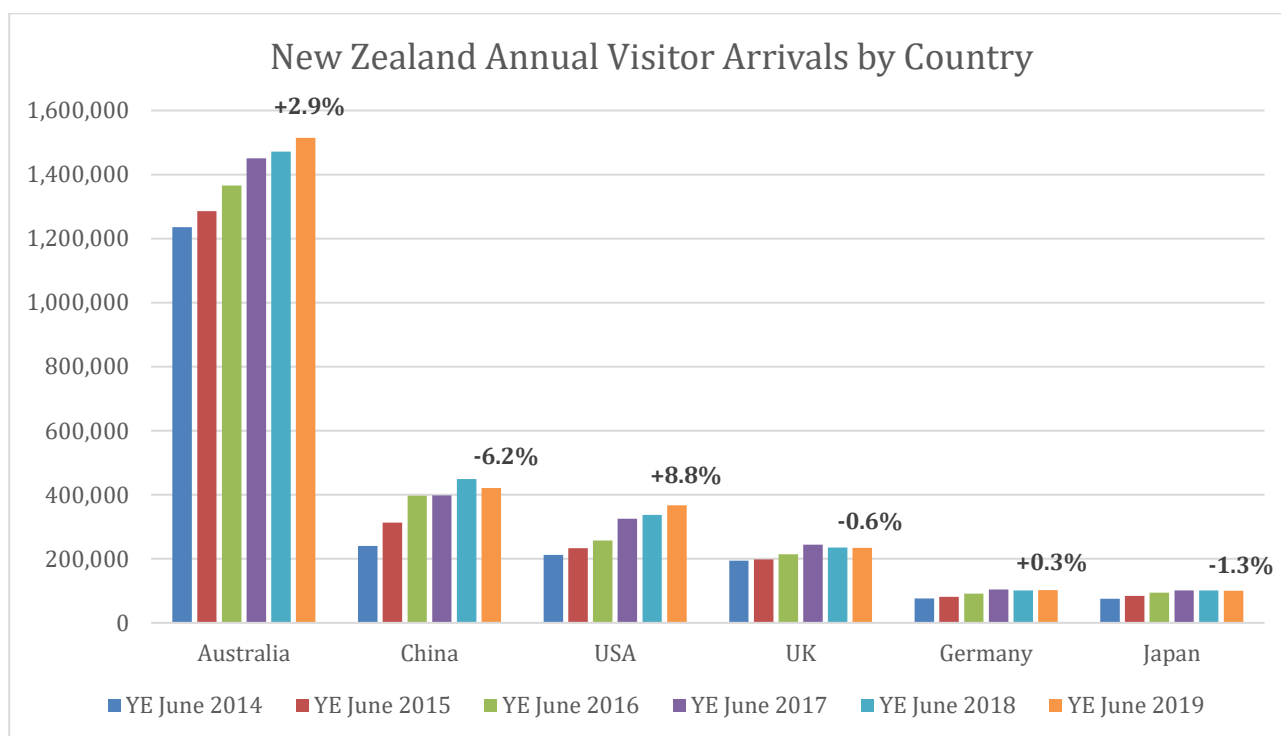
Key characteristics of visitors from the United States of America

Year ended July 2015–19

| Key characteristic | Year ended July | | | | | Change Number | 2018– 19 Percent |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------------|
| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | | |
| Total visitor arrivals | 235,232 | 262,000 | 323,600 | 338,192 | 367,961 | 29,769 | 8.8 |
| Travel purpose | | | | | | | |
| Holiday | 144,128 | 164,208 | 210,704 | 224,656 | 244,065 | 19,409 | 8.6 |
| Visiting friends & relatives | 46,192 | 50,864 | 59,968 | 58,944 | 62,940 | 3,996 | 6.8 |
| Business | 20,256 | 20,960 | 21,488 | 22,448 | 23,535 | 1,087 | 4.8 |
| Education | 7,520 | 7,552 | 8,544 | 8,784 | 9,150 | 366 | 4.2 |
| Conferences & conventions | 4,128 | 4,784 | 5,616 | 5,888 | 6,901 | 1,013 | 17.2 |

Source: Stats NZ, IVA

If we compare the US to other markets across all visitor arrivals as per below we can see that the US market is consistently strong and definitely contributing to improving arrivals stats for NZ.



Source: Stats NZ, IVA (release date 9 Aug)

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These figures can also be a reflection on the ease and choice of air connectivity. In the past year the Chicago route has been introduced and feedback from Air New Zealand is that this is proving to be a popular route. There are also discussions within AirNZ about the feasibility of a New York route being introduced in the future, which would be a significant boost in connectivity, opening up many new opportunities for business events.

Tourism New Zealand are also working really hard on their relationship with American Airlines (AA) and see a huge potential with building relationships through alternative airlines. There is the potential for a business events TNZ/AA famlil next year as well as AA starting to attend TNZ led events in market, for example, the Prevue Incentive Summit in Chicago this October.

Cost and time perception on distance of NZ from America is a constant conversation and a message that needs to be clear and communicated well at all times.

3. Objectives

Why are we attending? What are we planning to achieve?

- Build the Bureaus database of US buyers
- Facilitate new business relationships and thereby expand network of engaged buyers for the region
- Increase general destination & product knowledge of buyers
- Increase the number of RFPs
- Provide assistance to those who already have business confirmed for New Zealand and Queenstown
- Brand exposure
- Maintain existing relationships

4. Key messages

- Ease of access, direct flight to AKL, overnight flight
- Genuine hospitality, welcoming visitors from around the world
- Quality accommodation, meeting facilities and venue options set against a stunning natural backdrop
- Beautiful, clean and safe environment
- Unparalleled range of activities make it the perfect place to create unique and memorable experiences.

5. Appointments

Tradeshow format, number of days, number of appointments, breakdown of buyers?

3 day tradeshow with PSA, 13 fixed appointments, each 30 minutes in duration plus additional walk up business. TNZ held 15 x Korero and Kai group presentations as well as running 2 appointment streams, recording 162 contacts.

The table below summarises the business discussed during my appointments indicating there is a lot of interest in New Zealand and Queenstown. The 'researching' status relates to people considering NZ for future incentive groups but also looking into other destinations. What is clear is the majority of business is incentive and the range in numbers is considerable with a strong desire to travel in the shoulder periods.

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| Time | Conference/Incentive | Pax# | Status | Location |
|-------------------|----------------------|------|--------------|---------------------|
| May 2021 | Incentive | 150 | Researching | Queenstown |
| Oct 2019 | Incentive | 60 | Confirmed | Queenstown |
| May 2022 | Incentive | 215 | Researching | Auckland/Queenstown |
| Sept 2022 | Incentive | 60 | Pitching | Auckland/Queenstown |
| May 2020 | Incentive | 600 | Pitching | Auckland/Queenstown |
| Nov-Feb 2019/2020 | Leisure | 50 | NZ Confirmed | NZ Wide |
| April 2020 | Conference | 100 | Pitching | Queenstown |
| TBC | Incentive | 50 | Researching | Queenstown |
| June 2020 | Incentive | 450 | Pitching | Auckland/Queenstown |

Below shows a breakdown of the country of origin of the clients I met over the 3 days. You can see there is a good mix of countries but the stand out is of course North America (US and Canada combined). The big change from last year is that I didn't have any appointments from the Canadian or Indian markets, so this could be a reflection of a shift in destination focus.



| Physical Country | Contact Tag(s) | Grand Total |
|------------------|----------------|-------------|
| | IMEX 2019 | |
| AUSTRALIA | 1 | 1 |
| CANADA | 4 | 4 |
| CHINA | 3 | 3 |
| FRANCE | 1 | 1 |
| GERMANY | 1 | 1 |
| INDIA | 3 | 3 |
| UNITED STATES | 8 | 8 |
| Grand Total | 21 | 21 |

Below is a breakdown of the appointments by account category (PCO/Corporate etc). This year there is a much bigger mix of the type of businesses I met with. It is great to see a more even split between corporate and third party

channels. The IBOs are a reflection of the Asian meetings and the Association had a great mix of big and small meetings so fitted nicely for NZ and Queenstown.



| Category | Contact Tag(s) | Grand Total |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------|
| | IMEX 2019 | |
| Association/Society | 1 | 1 |
| Corporate | 7 | 7 |
| IBO/ Wholesaler | 2 | 2 |
| PCO/Incentive House | 11 | 11 |
| Grand Total | 21 | 21 |

Prior to IMEX, sales calls were held in San Francisco and Minneapolis to 5 PCO/Incentive Houses. Mandy from TNZ joined me in San Francisco for 2 appointments:

Appointment 1:

- On the 2018 CMI 25: Top Meeting and Incentive Companies list
- Organised 50 incentive travel programs and 265 corporate meetings of which 25% held outside of the US
- 150+ staff

Here we presented to 7 people. This is an extremely large company with their HQ in San Rafael, but remote offices around the country. Finds most people want a beach destination, but could definitely see NZ working for the younger demographic and up and coming executives/ companies.

Appointment 2:

- 650 annual events
- 450+ staff

We met with 2 staff who work remotely from the main office which is located in Oregon. Both had been to NZ in the past and were huge advocates. They are keen to get groups to NZ but just need to find the right group to pitch it to. A good relationship to have as they are already familiar with the destination so NZ will be top of mind for them.

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Alexa from TNZ joined me in Minneapolis for 3 appointments:

Appointment 3:

- On the 2018 CMI 25: Top Meeting and Incentive Companies list
- Organised 101 incentive programs and 130 corporate meetings of which 32% held outside the US
- 120+ staff

Presented to 4 staff, flight time and cost seems to be a barrier, they seemed to think it was a long way to go for a 6 day programme. We explained that once in NZ everything is close. No travel times between activities as all central to the cities/towns.

Appointment 4:

- On the 2018 CMI 25: Top Meeting and Incentive Companies list
- Organised 353 incentive programs and 430 corporate meetings of which 31% held outside the US
- 1500+ staff

Product training with 14 staff members. The room was very engaged with lots of questions, a very good session and a great team to have on board with NZ knowledge.

Appointment 5:

- On the 2018 CMI 25: Top Meeting and Incentive Companies list
- Organised 32 incentive programs and 500 corporate meetings of which 5% held outside the US
- 1600+ staff

We just met with the director of program design and supplier relations, but she was very short on time and so the appointment was not very long. We gave a quick NZ overview, introductions and showed our website capability for all Queenstown information.

6. Outcomes/ Feedback

Were objectives met? What have we learnt about the market?

General observations and feedback from the event and appointments:

- Most people liked the idea of dual destination (e.g Auckland/Queenstown) due to the distance travelled and wanting to experience more of the country.
- Auckland and Queenstown are the 2 most recognised regions.
- 2 nights Auckland and 4 nights Queenstown seemed to appeal the most.
- International programmes are typically 6/7 nights.
- I noticed there were a lot more programmes 4/5 nights this year in which the dual destination proposition didn't work so well. In these cases Queenstown was pitched as the sole destination.
- Groups generally want to travel in April/May or Sept/Oct which fits nicely with promoting the shoulder season.
- Clients all wanted to see sample itineraries to get a true understanding of how a programme could work.
- All buyers understand the benefits of the Bureau and use them very actively. They appreciate this service and also appreciate the anonymity of them, however most RFPs will come through Cvent portal.
- Most buyers preferred centrally located accommodation regardless of other hotels only being 20min drive/10min water taxi.
- Groups wanting to stay in one hotel, 5*, downtown location. A slight challenge for Queenstown depending on the size of the group.

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- The larger groups were definitely open to working on a wave scenario. Willing to try this to make it work.
- Third party planners had the assumption most people like to experience beach resort and tropical locations for incentive programmes. This seemed to be the biggest barrier this year. The NZ pitch and proposition really had to be changed in their mind-set as a destination for people to bond over true experiences and activities/adventures, not just sitting on a beach!
- It was mentioned several times that NZ would appeal more to the younger demographics – so definitely something we need to be aware of as we want NZ and Queenstown to be appealing to all demographics.

8. Summary

Recommendations, what follow up was completed, additional activity carried out?

On a whole I feel IMEX was not as good this year compared to last year in terms of confirmed business or genuine future leads. There were a lot of enquiries but buyers were in the researching phase rather than the implementing and securing phase. The show itself can be difficult to target exactly who you want to see as all the appointments are made by the buyers. As this is the case when I had a couple of 'no-shows' this is very frustrating as they were the ones who requested to see the convention bureau.

Arrival figures are increasing and flight connectivity is at an all-time high for this market so we need to remain ahead of the curve and seek as many opportunities as possible. It is also proving well in our favour that Auckland and Queenstown are the only 2 bureaus represented at these shows, which means we are getting the greatest exposure and greatest chance of securing business. This is also reinforced by the messages from TNZ and DMCs who promote and sell Auckland/Queenstown programmes.

Taking everything into consideration I still believe this is a very beneficial tradeshow to attend. Because the Auckland/Queenstown proposition works so well in this market we need to be there to help represent our region and ensure the correct messages and education is taking place. There were a number of times I was busy and other exhibitors were 'trying' to sell Queenstown. If the Bureau was not there then we would not have the opportunity to interject, get those contacts and push our region.

This time round, we also added sales calls prior to the event. This obviously added value to the trip with a great success in securing appointment. Traditionally this has been very hard to do prior to a big tradeshow and I was very pleased with the outcomes. I think it definitely helped to have TNZ join the sales calls as it adds a lot of value to the clients and is a much better use of time.

Going forwards this would be the best thing to do, however it has to be expected to travel to a city for just 1 or 2 appointments as the companies are so far and widely dispersed across America.

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