



TAUPŌ REGION, PERCEPTIONS RESEARCH

USING DOMESTIC VISITOR INSIGHTS TO BUILD A
CLEAR AND COMPELLING 'WHY TAUPŌ' STORY

A ONE PICTURE DEBRIEF

FEBRUARY 2025

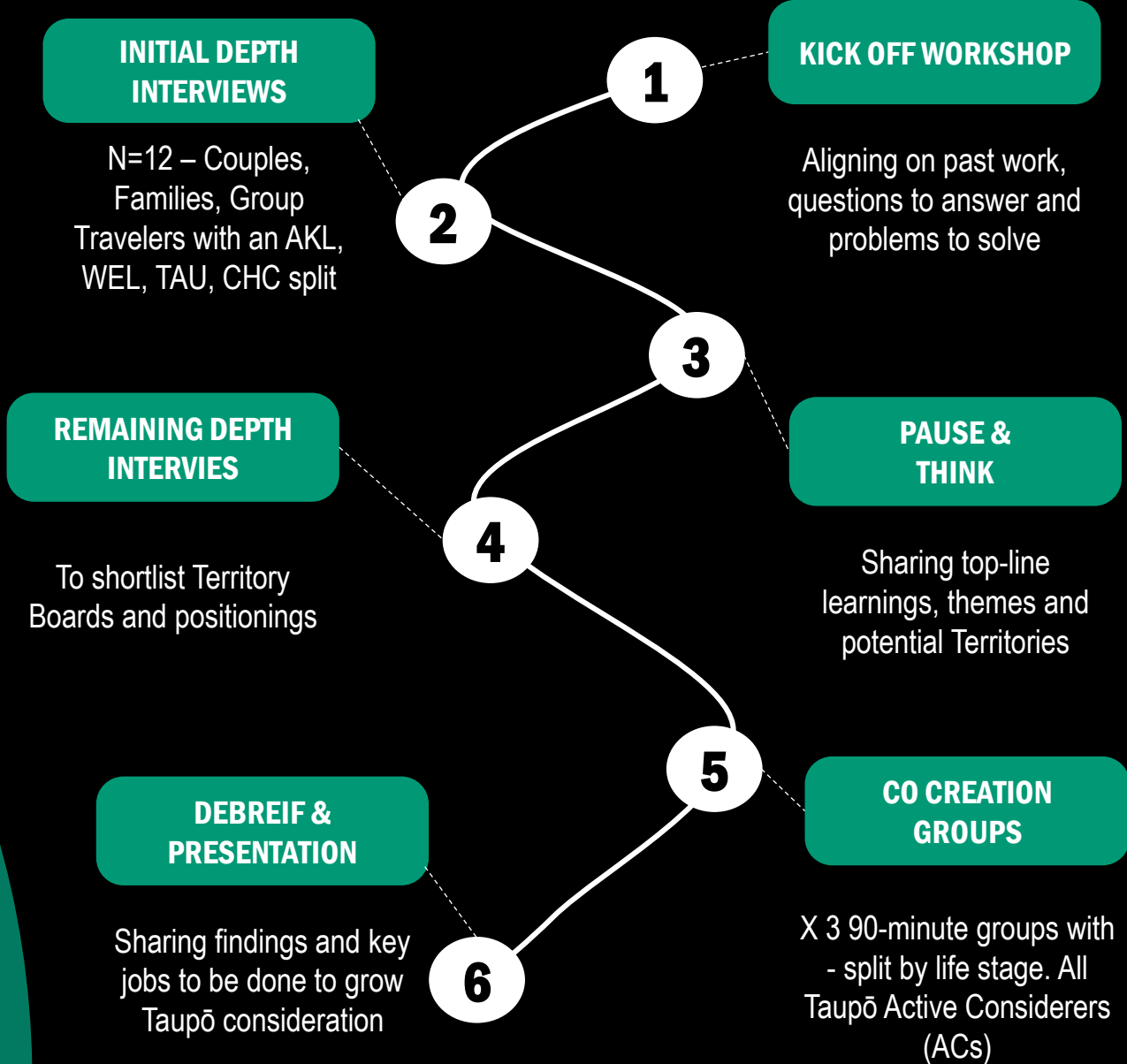




THREE OBJECTIVES FOR THIS WORK:

1. Understand how the functional and emotional 'assets' we own position us;
2. Define traveler needs and mindsets and the job to be done for each; and
3. Determine the lead hooks and messaging that will grow visitation.

OUR RESEARCH PROCESS: BOTH THOROUGH AND COLLABORATIVE





WHAT MAKES A DOMESTIC HOLIDAY HAPPEN?

We started with a homework task of what Taupō Active Considerers 'ideal domestic holiday' looks like, this helped us understand what they look for, and what it takes to make a holiday happen...

In summary, there are five drivers that make Domestic Travel happen...

MENTAL AVAILABILITY: GETS ME DREAMING

Aspirational



Will it feel worth it?

Beautiful setting, that feels different and elevated from their everyday

Activities



Will it be fulfilling?

Has things to do and see. THINK visiting unique nature spots, pay to play, or local 'to-dos'

PHYSICAL AVAILABILITY: HELPS ME PLAN

Accommodation



Is it available and on budget?

Range of comfortable and safe accommodation they can base their getaway from

Accessible



Is it easy to get to?

Look to drive rather than fly. Want to be able to get there Friday night after work, ideally < 4 hours

Affordable



Is there fun without paying?

Activities to do for free these are often nature site seeing ones e.g. picnic spots or walks

SO: The stronger our performance against each driver, the more likely we are to win their domestic getaway



Competitor snapshot – six destinations consistently came through as part of our Active Considerers broad consideration set

KEY:
GREAT 
OK 
BAD 

WELLINGTON:
INTERESTING

Aspirational Does it feel worth it?	Activities Will it be fulfilling?	Accom Is it available and on budget?	Accessible Is it easy to get to/around?	Affordable Fun without paying?
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AUCKLAND:
FANCY

Aspirational Does it feel worth it?	Activities Will it be fulfilling?	Accom Is it available and on budget?	Accessible Is it easy to get to/around?	Affordable Fun without paying?
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ROTORUA -
ACTION

Aspirational Does it feel worth it?	Activities Will it be fulfilling?	Accom Is it available and on budget?	Accessible Is it easy to get to/around?	Affordable Fun without paying?
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CHRISTCHURCH
- A NEW CITY

Aspirational Does it feel worth it?	Activities Will it be fulfilling?	Accom Is it available and on budget?	Accessible Is it easy to get to/around?	Affordable Fun without paying?
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COROMANDEL -
CHILL

Aspirational Does it feel worth it?	Activities Will it be fulfilling?	Accom Is it available and on budget?	Accessible Is it easy to get to/around?	Affordable Fun without paying?
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Q-TOWN -
LOVE!

Aspirational Does it feel worth it?	Activities Will it be fulfilling?	Accom Is it available and on budget?	Accessible Is it easy to get to/around?	Affordable Fun without paying?
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SO, the bar is high.

What is our competitive edge?

A scenic view of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, there's a large, dark rock formation with a prominent circular carving or petroglyph. The background shows a lush green hillside with some buildings visible on the left. The sky is blue with some clouds. The text is overlaid on a dark circular area in the center of the image.

Taupō perceptions:
what comes to mind?

Quiet

Reserved

Rivers

Crystal clear water

Breath taking

Expensive

Cafes

Shopping

AirBnB

Top10 Holiday Park

fresh

peaceful

Picnics

Stop over

escape

Over-night

Golf

Beautiful

Mountains

Clean

Cold

Calm

Waterfront

Lake

Picturesque

Township

Drive

Accessible

Family-Friendly

Tongariro Crossing

Fresh air

Hydro slides

walks

Fishing

Ironman

Resorts

Arts 'n' Crafts

Rotorua

Hot Springs

Clean

Prawn farm

Markets

Huka falls

Hole In One

Brunch

Water

Events

Māori carvings

Central

Mini Golf

Easy

Skiing

Massage

The Hilton

Relaxing

Round Taupō

Accessible

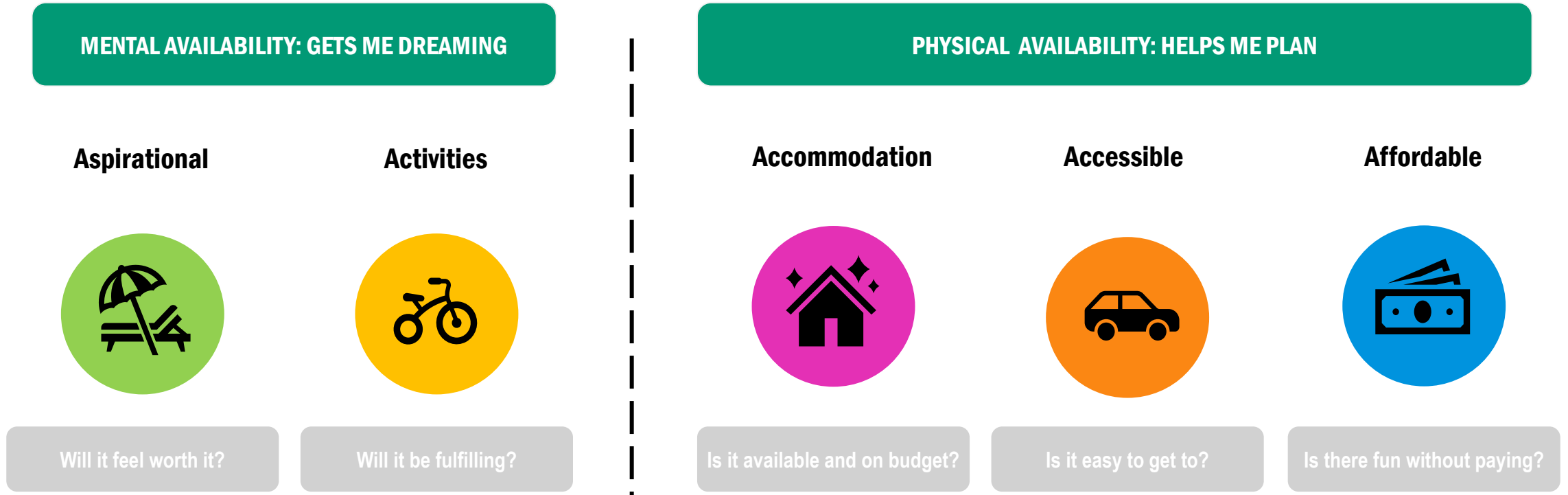
Barren

Acacia Bay



In visitors' eyes our associations are shaped and defined by 'the Lake'... This is a strength but also a challenge.

A deep dive into our strengths and challenges against our Domestic Holiday Drivers...



... Starting with how Aspirational our Active Considererss perceive us to be...

KEY:
GREAT
OK
BAD



Will it feel worth it?

ASPIRATIONAL:

The Lake backdrop and Taupō town's upkeep make us feel elevated

- ✓ **Picturesque Lake** - Expansive landscapes and its glassy stillness make for a scenic holiday background

"It's beautiful, with restaurants and bars that all look out to the lake"

- ✓ **Lakeside town** – The setting makes the town! But also seen as well-maintained and clean

"Feels well-kept and polished - has everything you need really"

- × **Cold** - Lake and colder temp means for those north of Taupō, we're not a 'Summer Destination'

"The lake could never trump the beach"

- × **Town** – Perceived as lacking high-end restaurants, retail, and a unique atmosphere that makes us seen as 'just another town'

"Even when you walk the streets of Cambridge it's like it's maintained and cared for – there are hanging baskets and festoon lights to encourage people to walk around"



SO: The Lake is an important backdrop for creating a feeling of aspiration...

KEY:
GREAT
OK
BAD



Will it be fulfilling?

ACTIVITIES:

BUT! Most struggle to name things to do and see whilst here

- × **Not many activities** – Past the ‘Huka Falls’ most draw a blank, on figuring out what they should do & see next
“We were ready to leave by the end, ran out of things to do”
- × **Lack of liveliness** – Our town can feel quiet, and therefore options of getting involved beyond sitting in a café are limited
“Feels like there isn’t much of a community atmosphere... Unlike Greytown where you really get a sense for the local lifestyle”

Whilst rare those who do love and know us see us as having...

- ✓ **Family friendly ‘to dos’** – Activities like walking Craters of the Moon walk, visiting Honey Store, or soaking in Debrett’s
“Great place for a ‘bit of everything”



SO: We are a town that you STOP & LOOK AT rather than STAY & DO

ACCOMODATION:

We have an 'ok' range of options, except for those seeking international hotels

- ✓ **Variety** – Most see us as a great place for AirBnBs, yet also options for 'Top 10' Summer stay, or The Hilton
"We have friends who love the top 10 swim up bar"
- ✓ **Close to town** – Our compact town makes it easy to get accommodation that's walkable distance in/out (if preferred)
"My parents stayed with us so knew we wanted an Airbnb close"
- ✓ **Safe** – Compared to the likes of Rotorua, nobody is concerned about staying due to crime/bad characters hanging around
"Trust Taupō accommodation will be nice, not like Rotorua"
- × **Lack of hotels** – Lacks the big chains, and hard to find good hotels that aren't expensive
"Can't use my hotel membership points unlike other places"

KEY:
GREAT
OK
BAD



Is it available and on budget?



SO: Safe and desirable accommodation (especially our Airbnb's) is a strength in encouraging an overnight stay, and for now is an advantage over Rotorua

KEY:
GREAT
OK
BAD

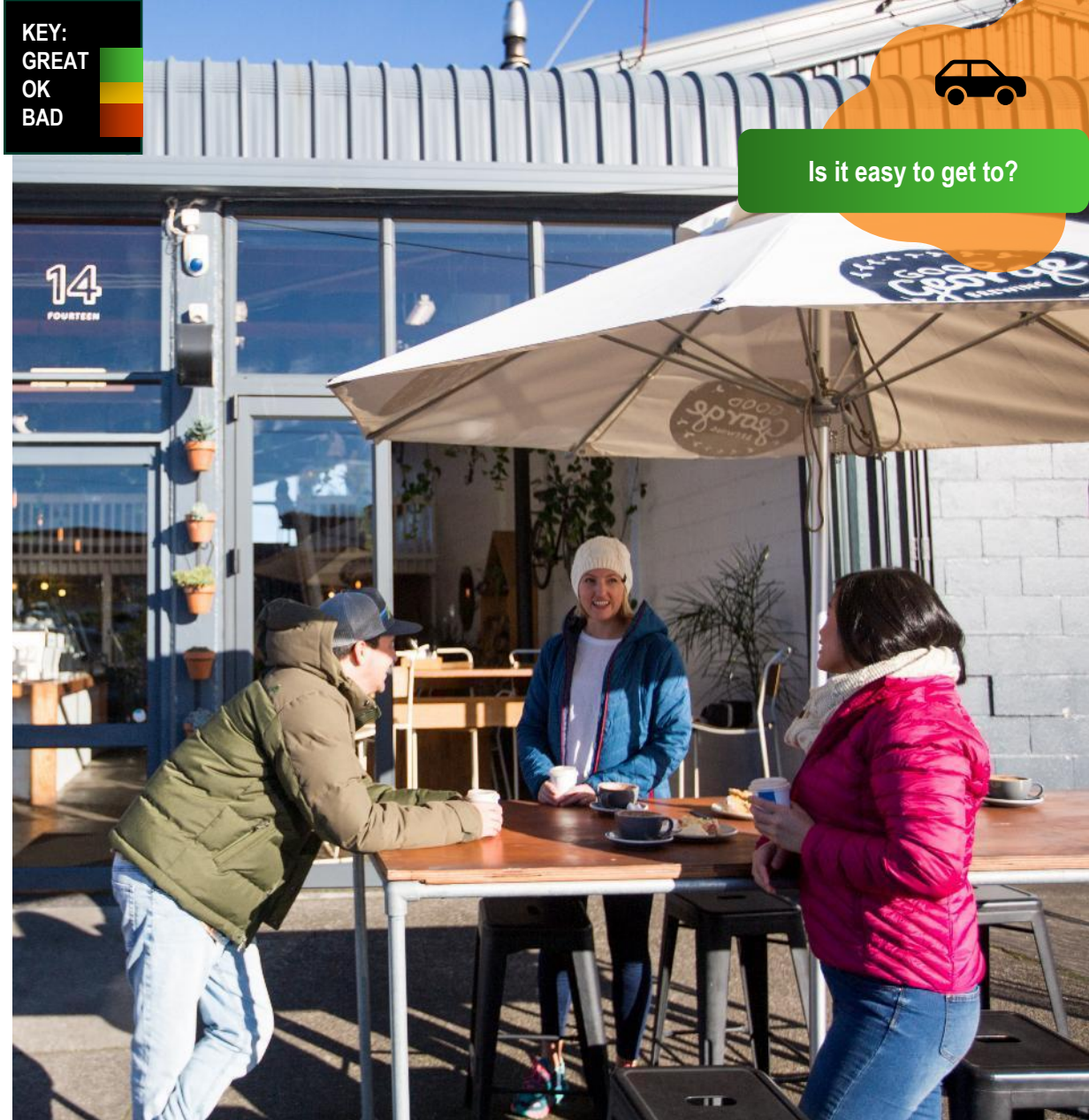


Is it easy to get to?

ACCESSIBLE:

We win on being an EASY holiday, easy to get to and low-admin once here

- ✓ **Drivable for most** - Being in the centre of the North Island makes us a (just) within reach for Aucklanders and Wellingtonians
"Easy to pile kids and gear in the car"
- ✓ **Summer and winter** – A choice between the mountain and lake. Yet those North struggle more with a summer trip due to weather and cold
"I see as both! Winter have the snow, and Summer can swim"
- ✓ **Can add on to another trip** - Easy to pull off the new motorway, stop for a coffee/lunch, or add a couple nights stay off another trip
"We always do it on the way up to seeing the relies in Auckland"
- ✓ **Compact town** – Easy to get around, with surrounding natural activities all close to town
"All really compact; everything is so close. Easy to pack it all in"



SO: We might just be the easiest domestic holiday destination for people from the North Island. We need to understand our visitors to grow our share of occasions

KEY:
GREAT
OK
BAD



Is there fun without paying?

AFFORDABLE:

Our ability to offer ‘holidaying like a local’ gives options to save

- ✓ **Self sufficient holiday** – Most have arrived with their own car and catering, which makes us a destination you can do on a budget
“Like the ability to eat in, as go get local produce pretty cheaply”
- ✓ **AirBnB’s cue affordability** – We are associated more strongly with an ‘AirBnB trip, which helps the flexibility of making meals at home to save cost
- ✓ **Good ‘hang out’ spots for kids** – Most know the playground across from town, and can spend the day by the lake in Summer
“Great playground right across from town, kids love that”
- × **Weak awareness of the range of ‘free activities’** – e.g. bush walks, or other small not too strenuous adventures
“Things like lakeside parks, or day hikes would be cool to get kids out”



SO: Price isn’t a barrier to visiting Taupō

At an overall level, against our Domestic Holiday Drivers, we can see our relative strengths and weaknesses as a destination

MENTAL AVAILABILITY: GETS ME DREAMING

PHYSICAL AVAILABILITY: HELPS ME PLAN

Aspirational

Activities

Accommodation

Accessible

Affordable



Will it feel worth it?

Will it be fulfilling?

Is it available and on budget?

Is it easy to get to?

Is there fun without paying?

The lake's beautiful backdrop and town upkeep make us feel elevated

BUT most people struggle to name things to do and see whilst here

Ok range of options, except those seeking hotels

We win on being an EASY holiday, easy to get to & low-admin once here

Largely our ability to offer 'holidaying like a local' gives options to save

In short: We are a destination that is easy to plan and do, but harder to dream and imagine – due to our weakness in activities



Who then are the Taupō visitors, and how do we win them?

Where you come from sets what you look for, what you expect and who you compete with



**AKL WANT:
CLOSE & EASY**

Seek the opposite of their everyday – quiet, no traffic, nature. But don't want to compromise weather, restaurants and activities.

SO: This is a hard audience to win, especially in winter!



**TAURANGA WANT : BETTER THAN
THEIR DOORSTEP**

High expectations from what's on their doorstep. Rotorua, Coromandel, etc. Rotorua is seen as a day trip; Taupō is not always seen as 'worth it'.

SO: Play to our strengths over Rotorua as a place to stay



**WELLY WANT : WARMER NORTH
BOUND ESCAPE**

Comfortable with public transport. See north destinations as having weather better than their own. New express way travelling north by car easier.

SO: There is a 'just up the road' message for this group in summer



**CHC WANT : AN 'OVERSEAS' TRIP
THAT IS WARM AND DIFFERENT**

Spoilt with surrounding areas but seek new and different. NI flights however quickly compete International Short Haul.

SO: It's going to take a deal to win against the pull of international.

Who you are affects what you look for, how you travel and what you want to do

FAMILIES:

Trying to keep everyone happy



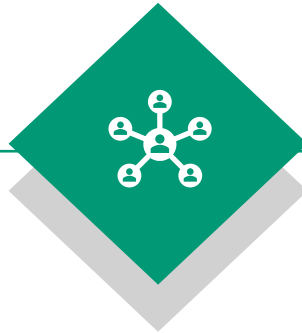
A day of two halves – a focus on the kids first to then find time for each other

SEEK: Fun (touristy) things to do – still want to experience the NZ must dos in the area

SO, Show: a day made up of quality time as a family and a couple

GROUPS:

A place that's easy for everyone



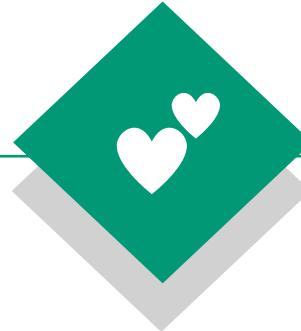
Relax and refresh together, easy holiday to go with the flow. Activities that they can pick and choose from

SEEK: Having a nice accommodation as a base, doing chill activities as a half day trip.

SO, Show: What you can do together from a base

COUPLES:

Connection is at the heart



A need that spans young couples, couples with kids escaping without the kids, and empty nesters

SEEK: Soft adventure (AKA being in nature but not dying) where 'the challenge' is shared equally

SO, Show: Learning and experiencing something unique together

NEW NEW ZEALANDERS:

Ticking off key attractions



Multi-generational travel as well as hosting friends and relatives from home.

SEEK: The things NZ is famous for. Willing to drive further to 'tick off' must dos

SO, Show: Accessible must dos worth the drive

And when our visitors arrive, they can be dropped into one of three buckets...

PASSING THRU

They Want: A well-kept town with creature comforts of coffee & lunch stops by the lake

Barrier staying longer: Perception that once they seen the Lake, there is little else to do

Great for a couple of hours, but I cant think of any cute cafes that make you want to stay for longer than that.

SO NEED: A FEELING OF REFRESHMENT

GETAWAYS

They want: A weekend where they can balance exploring with activities, and there will be something new to do

Barrier for repeat: Is that they aren't leaving feeling like there is more to do next time

Like with Rotorua I always know there is so much I never got to, or that there will be new things to do next time.

SO NEED: TO BE ABLE TO RESET

TRIPPERS

They want: An affordable destination to stay for a week or more, and know there is a variety of activities for everyone

Barrier for consideration: That they don't know how to put an itinerary of activities together to fill the trip

Taupō is strategically placed, but I wouldn't have the confidence to book as I don't know enough

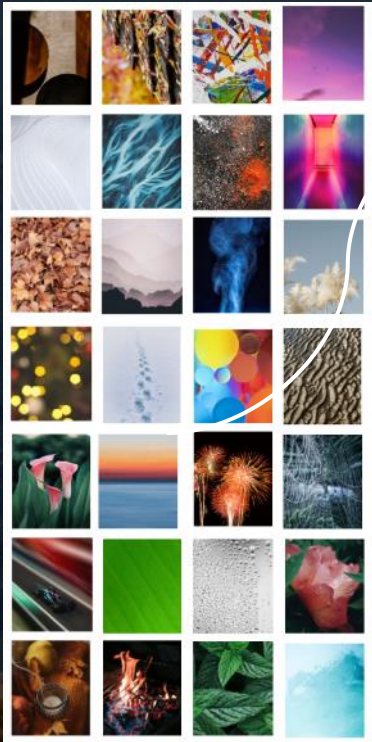
SO NEED: SEEK REJUVENATION

A scenic view of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, there is a body of clear, turquoise water. The middle ground features a large, dark rock formation with a prominent, ancient-looking carving of a face. The background shows a lush, green hillside under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The text "But what is the EMOTION of a Taupō holiday?" is overlaid in white on a dark horizontal band across the center of the image.

But what is the EMOTION of a Taupō holiday?

We asked our Active Considerers to describe the FEELINGS they associate with a Taupō holiday...

Sensorial 'emotion' cards we shared:



Two consistently picked cards:



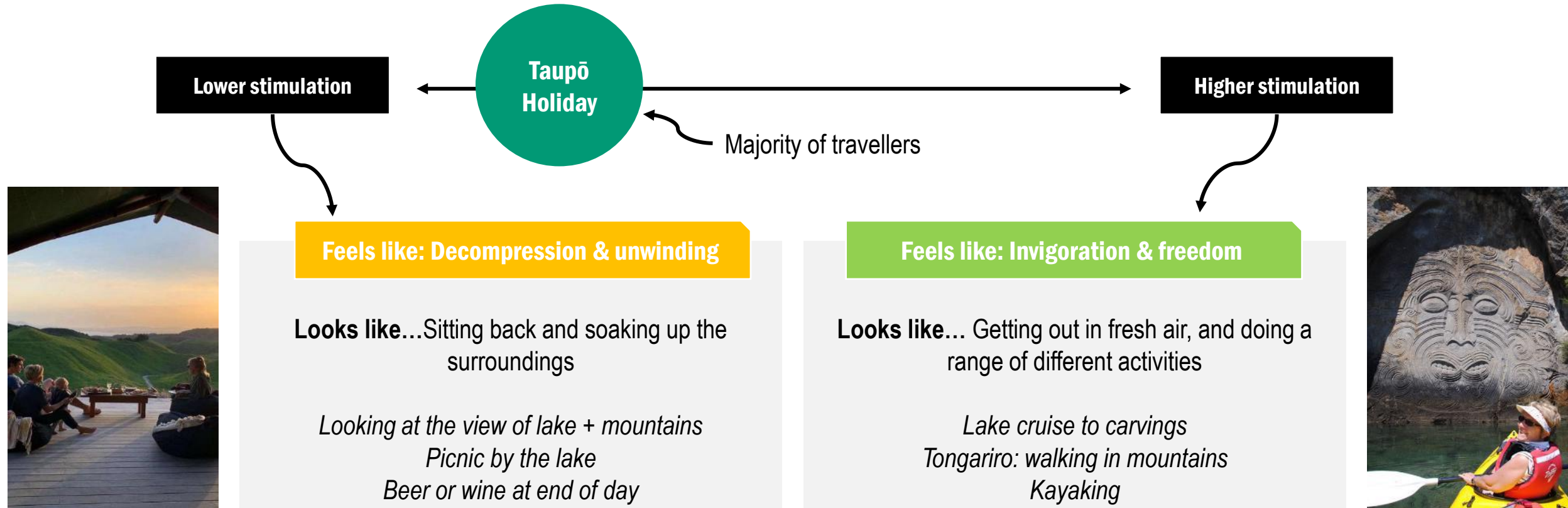
How they described the FEELING they get from this:

- Chill...
- Pure...
- Clear..
- Still..
- Calm ...
- Serene...
- Clean..
- Quiet...
- Tranquil...
- Beautiful...
- Fresh...

Which adds up to a core and shared need for:

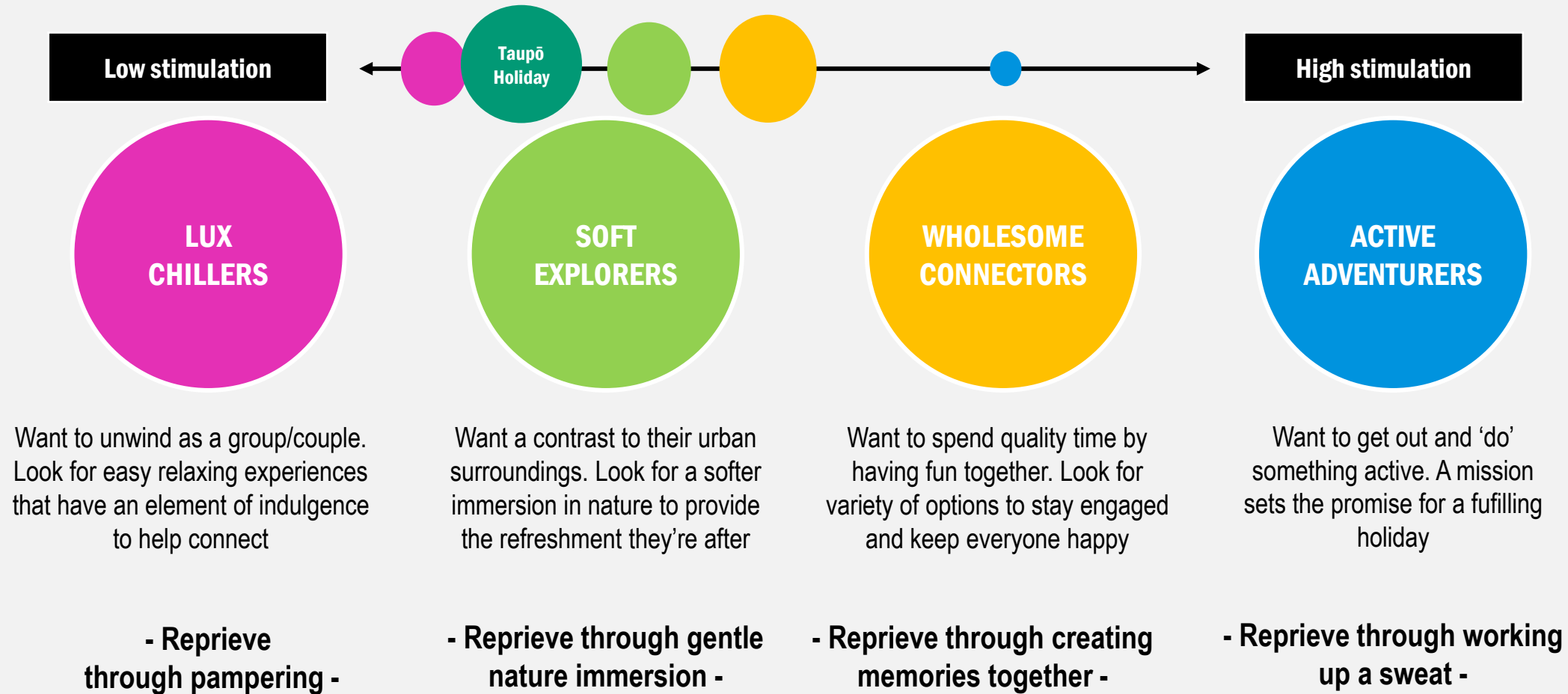
REPRIEVE
A deep sense of relief, release & renewal
"Taupō is peaceful"

The feeling of Reprieve can be better understood against a continuum of stimulation (that Taupō currently provides)



SO: To win the masses we need to fulfill the promise of a gentle holiday

And there are four personas where we can tailor the version of stimulation we promise to better meet their needs



SO: These personas allow us to hone-in on the type of holiday to show to win a greater share of their domestic travel

Personas have different **motivators** for what makes a Taupō holiday happen, and **barriers** stopping them staying longer



**LUX
CHILLERS**



**SOFT
EXPLORERS**



**WHOLESOME
CONNECTORS**



**ACTIVE
ADVENTURERS**

Motivators

We're beautiful, with a picturesque lake backdrop, and F&B options for a weekend trip

Good 'hub' to refresh at on way down the country. Walk waterfront + get a coffee

Easy to tag it onto a bigger trip. Accommodation options to self-cater and save

The wider region draws them in e.g. skiing Reuapehu, walking Tongariro

Barriers

BUT: Can be a bit quiet and lacking the elevated edge

BUT: Risk feeling like they've 'seen everything' in a stop-over

BUT: Rotorua makes us seem boring

BUT: Easy to pass-thru and not stay

Jobs to be done

JTBD: Make Taupō seem more fulfilling through community events and local to-dos that add character

JTBD: Highlight nearby activities just out of 'town' that shows our unique natural assets

JTBD: Show a variety of activities, to suit everyone, plus Hub and Spoke itineraries outside of Taupō

JTBD: Speak to adventurous 'to-dos' to create a reason to visit, and motivate a stay with talking to 'relax'



**Summary and recommendations:
What is limiting our Personas from Dreaming, Planning and
Visiting, and HOW do we fix it?**

Taupō is *perceived* as lacking...

1. Vibe & atmosphere

“More of a holiday place than a local's place...Unlike Greytown where you really FEEL the presence of the community”

2. Things to explore rather than look at

“We didn't end up jumping in the Lake, way too cold for us....”

4. Surrounding region

“You mentioned other names of other places in Taupō, I have never heard of any of those places”

5. Māori culture

“You see the carving, but Rotorua is really the home of Māori culture”

6. Food & Beverage offerings that are a ‘must do’

“The cafés just don't have much character, unlike Raglan”



In short... we lack EMOTIONAL DEPTH AND RICHNESS!!!!

We are seen as a bit generic and risk not standing apart from any other provincial towns in NZ

“I see Taupō as a place to come and relax... same as every town in NZ – nothing unique”

We are the Toyota Rav 4 of domestic destinations



Visitors see us as...

Good but not great

Liked but not loved

Nice rather than a must

SO: Our enemy is BORING

Behind 'BORING', there are three headwinds that slowing us down and limit our consideration as a destination

#1 Headwind:

Struggle to think of activities that can fill day



SO: Show a Taupō holiday that has a range of activities that you *do* rather than just see.

#2 Headwind:

Seen as the town rather than the wider region



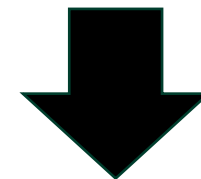
SO: Create Hub & Spoke itineraries that inspire visitors to explore nearby areas from a base.

#3 Headwind:

A bit generic and 'like any other NZ town'



SO: Build an emotional story that is unique compelling...
Here's how...



How might we tell a story that is both compelling and unique? What we co-created with Taupō Active Considerers...



Four co-created positionings and what they meant to our travelers



SO: We have two good options. Let's have a deeper look at what each mean for our Taupō story

How FORCE OF NATURE could work across the nuanced needs of our personas

Force of Nature: Brand Role
A place to connect through a doing a breadth of awe-inspiring experiences together



LUX CHILLERS

Appreciating The Force of Nature

Looks like:

Having a drink, doing mini-golf or browsing markets all with a beautiful lake and mountain backdrop



SOFT EXPLORERS

Discovering in The Force of Nature

Looks like:

Mix of appreciation and partaking in new experiences that are more immersive in nature e.g. float trip



WHOLSOME CONNECTORS

Sharing in The Force of Nature

Looks like:

Teaching the kids about the region, or bonding over something fun e.g. Honey Story, hot water beach



ACTIVE ADVENTURERS

Active in The Force of Nature

Looks like:

Walking the Tongariro crossing, Skiing Ruapehu, or completing a physical sporting event e.g. Ironman

SO: Share more stories about the 'doing' based activities that have an element of our aw-striking nature (even if a backdrop!) BUT don't lose the sense of reprieve travelers seek from Taupō



THIS HAS BEEN A ONE PICTURE DEBRIEF

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