

# Stick to wine brand amid testing times: Expert

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Tourism was accelerating into a fast-changing future, and ignoring the challenges that threw up would be "to our peril", Hawke's Bay Wine Country Tourism Association chairman Sam Orton said yesterday.

Mr Orton, who welcomed about 100 delegates to the fifth annual Regional Tourism Conference, staged in Napier, said Hawke's Bay's visitor industry was facing a string of major challenges — adding it was timely that the theme for the conference was "opportunity knocks".

While he conceded the Hawke's Bay tourism sector needed to be revamped, the "Wine Country" branding had worked, and it got a big thumbs-up from innovation and change management expert George Hickton.

Mr Hickton was at the helm of Tourism New Zealand from 1999 to 2009 when the 100% Pure New Zealand branding was launched.

He likened its birth, growing pains and maturity to that of the Wine Country branding.

"You stood for something that stood out from other regions."

It was a branding that struck a chord and worked and, like the

Pure New Zealand campaign, should be maintained and nurtured, Mr Hickton said.

There had been rumblings of "what's next" as the national campaign passed into its third year but the stance was clear.

"Stick with it. Don't blink and change — say no."

The Wine Country branding had got through the growing pains and made it to maturity in terms of becoming recognised as Hawke's Bay. "It takes faith and perseverance and you are well on the way here in the Bay."

■ Rod Drury, CEO and founder of software company Xero, gave an interactive address on digital technology and how businesses in the tourism sector could embrace it. "The tourism industry is a huge benefactor of the web. It has become hyper local so take control of your listings — use Google for your business."

The number of people who now globally searched the web for holiday destinations and made their travel, accommodation, dining and adventure bookings was huge, Mr Drury said.

He displayed the power of computer and iPod set-ups like Four-square and Wi-Fi and how they reached people instantly. "These are tools you can pour some petrol

into and make things go faster."

■ Tourism New Zealand's Tim Keeling gave an address on the state of the Australian and international tourist markets: "USA is our big investment — it is a huge travel market and is a major priority," Mr Keeling said, adding China and European countries such as Germany, which had strong EU economic outlooks, were also strongly in the visitor opportunity mix. "But Australia is still our number one market into the foreseeable future."

He said numbers were growing and a lot of that had to do with the success of the 100% Pure New Zealand branding. Mr Keeling said Tourism New Zealand was presently focused on five key "pillars" — market focus, brand development, increase in digital use, partnerships and the Rugby World Cup 2011 which he predicted would greatly boost regional as well as the national economies.

■ Robyn Henderson from the Ministry of Economic Development's tourism strategy group spoke about the domestic tourism market. She said a report showed that 20 per cent of visitors to Hawke's Bay were from Auckland, followed by Wellington with 15 per cent. And, while there had been a slight reduction in domestic visitors,

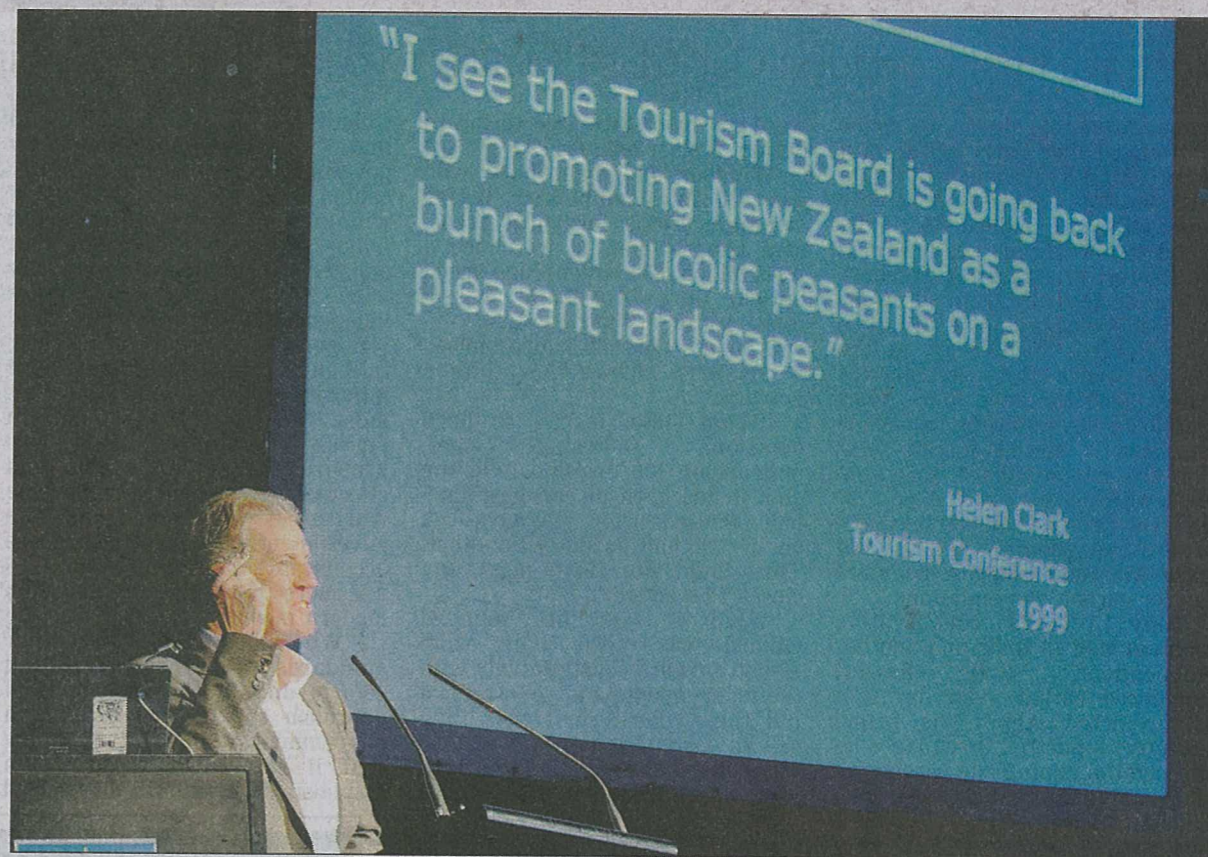
Hawke's Bay had attracted growth in international numbers — led by Australians.

■ Dr Ian Yeoman, a "futurist", gave an insightful address into what the world was likely to be like in 2050. He focused on the human angle as well as the economic angle, but did not paint a gloomy picture when it came to what he called "the next generations — who know only the internet".

It will be a fast-paced world driven by technology, and driven by people who will have grown up with a greater awareness of their environment.

"The new generations will live longer. They want freedom to express themselves. They want choice. They can see through clutter and they can deal with complexity. They are very individualistic... they are big scrutinisers." Dr Yeoman ran a short and thoughtful clip of a young woman who declared it would be foolish to "presume my generation is apathetic and lethargic".

■ The day-long conference also featured addresses on subjects from sustainable tourism through to the growth of digital opportunities, and hosted a series of workshops which included the possible impact of the GST rise.



WINNER: George Hickton said Wine Country, like 100% Pure New Zealand, should be maintained and nurtured. PICTURE / PAUL TAYLOR



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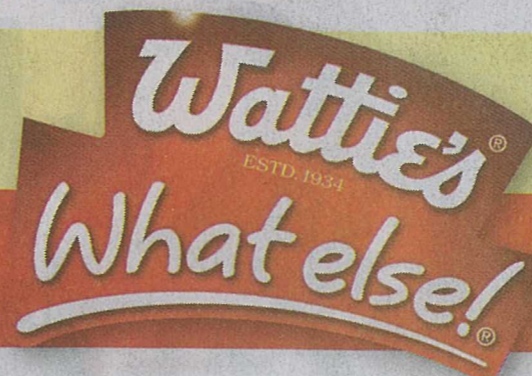


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## Quake will put rate rise on hold till 2011

Christchurch's massive earthquake and the collapse of South Canterbury Finance have added to economic uncertainties, boosting the risk that the central bank will keep interest rates on hold for the rest of 2010.

The events kill off any chance that the Reserve Bank of New Zealand (RBNZ) will raise rates on September 16, although market expectations of an increase had been diminishing anyhow following a string of weak economic data.

Longer term, economic growth could take a hit this year following the 7.1 magnitude quake but then pick up more quickly next year as rebuilding works moves into full momentum, prompting a similar shift in rate expectations.

"The RBNZ will seek to shore up

emerged from the global economic downturn. Analysts said further rate rises had been expected as the central bank moved policy back to more normal levels following the global crisis.

But Saturday's earthquake raised doubts about those expectations.

Canterbury accounts for about 15 per cent of GDP and population.

Initial estimates for the cost of earthquake damage have been put at about \$2 billion, about 1 per cent of New Zealand's GDP. But some put it as high as \$4 billion.

Business confidence, already on the slide for the past five months, had been shaken by the collapse of South Canterbury Finance earlier in the week due to failed loans.

All 19 analysts polled now