

Māori and Tourism – A review of the research and research potential

David Fisher
Lincoln University

Abstract

In recent years there has been an increasing level of interest in indigenous tourism. This has developed in an attempt to improve the returns to indigenous people. Too often indigenous people have become an object to view with little control over what is presented to tourists. The consequence of this has been the development of various paradigms for indigenously controlled tourism, including Maori. One of the aims of this paper is to review the research that has been conducted on Maori tourism.

It is necessary, however, to step back from this process, which has developed from a succession of reactions to earlier problems rather than from a pro-active stance. This paper will not say what Maori should do with regard to tourism. That certainly is not my place. Instead, what will be offered are a number of questions that I believe should be answered or answered more completely.

The presentation will take, as its basis, a very simple supply and demand approach. Whether tourism should be defined from a supply or demand perspective has been a topic of debate for some years in tourism research, particularly when considering the 'tourism industry'. Nearly all the research conducted so far on Maori tourism has been from the perspective of the supply of Maori cultural tourism. The demand for tourism by Maori has not been considered. Do Maori have the same motivation to be tourists as other groups in New Zealand? In terms of domestic tourism are Maori more likely to engage in 'reciprocated' tourism, that is visiting other Maori with the expectation that, at some time in the future, they will play host to Maori visitors? Are the places that Maori visit different to those places that attract other tourists?

On the supply side questions need to be asked about what defines Maori Tourism. Can a tourism product offered by Maori businesses be considered Maori tourism if the products are not about Maori? Alternatively, does 'Maori Tourism' only refer to tourism products for which offer Maori culture to overseas visitors?

Introduction

It is usual to start papers such as this with a comment on how tourism has grown in New Zealand and, in this case, how Māori have been involved in tourism since its inception. Māori acted as hosts and guides to the Pink Terraces in the 19th century and images of Māori were used in the first promotional materials for New Zealand (McLure 2004), for example. By starting a paper in this manner, however, misses one of the crucial points about Māori and tourism. That is the lack of research on what tourism, in all its forms, means to Māori.

The literature on Māori and tourism has concentrated on Māori tourism. These are not the same thing. Māori tourism has been defined in a number of ways usually based on the idea that it is about the sale of Māori culture to tourists. Māori, however, are involved in tourism in many ways other than as a cultural product. This paper reviews the work that has been conducted on Māori tourism but goes beyond that to suggest that there are a range of areas where Māori and tourism could be studied. The problem with the current

work, though valuable, is that it has the potential to consolidate the tradition of using Māori as a cultural draw card for New Zealand while ignoring the broader picture. In the context of another culture being used for tourist purposes Greenwood, in 1977, entitled his seminal article “Culture by the pound”, a situation that has not changed in the intervening 30 years.

Tourism is more than just a product to which the consumer travels rather than the product travelling to the consumer. The range and variety of tourism is best illustrated with Leiper’s (2003) model of the whole tourism system (see fig 1). Leiper (2003) argued that there are three elements to tourism: the human element (there can be no tourism without a tourist); the geographical element, and the business element. The geographical element is made up of the generating region, the transit region and the destination region. All these are affected by and affect various environments within which tourism takes place. Tourists start in the generating region, where the business element mixes with the human element, move through a transit region and reach the destination region, where most tourism activity takes place. The vast majority of studies on Māori and tourism have concerned themselves with one aspect of the destination region. This paper will show that there are huge gaps in our knowledge of Māori and tourism, most notably Māori as tourists and the interaction of Māori culture with both tourism and tourists.

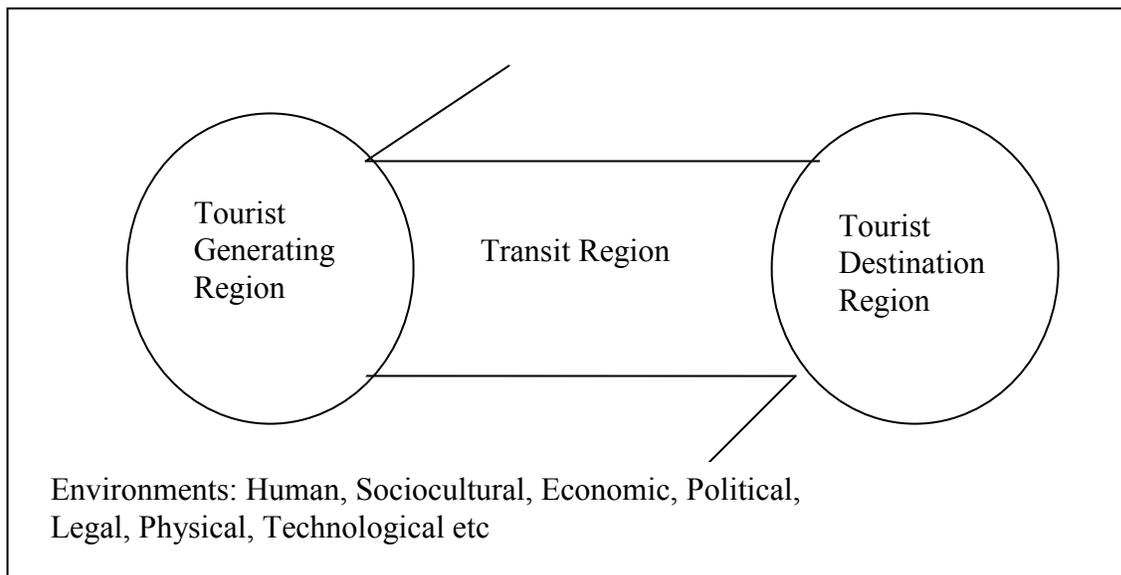


Fig 1 Whole Tourism System (Leiper 2003)

Definitions of Māori and tourism, and Māori tourism

Past work on Māori tourism has come up with a number of definitions, none of which are entirely satisfactory. Barnett (1997 p 472), cites Bennet's description of Māori tourism as 'any contact that the visitor has with Māori culture'. Zeppel (1997 p475) states that "Māori tourism includes any tourist experience of Māori culture". These definitions are too broad as they do not necessarily include Māori. A tourist visiting the British Museum could experience Māori culture in the Polynesian section. McIntosh, Zygadlo, Matunga (2004:332) also comment on the vagueness of definitions; "Although the terms "Māori tourism", "Māori tourism business" and "Māori tourism product" are widely applied and often used interchangeably in the literature, as well as within the tourism industry in New Zealand, there appears to be a lack of an agreed or recognised working definition of Māori tourism".

Kanara-Zygadlo, Shone, McIntosh and Matunga (2005) argue that a Māori business without a Māori cultural component is not an example of a Māori tourism product but this does not exclude other aspects of Māori tourism. In their definition it is the *product* that is important. Māori can be involved in other aspects of tourism but those do not include a Māori product.

It appears that most of the studies that have been conducted so far are only concerned with the product. However a number of other questions are raised by the concept of Māori tourism. A tourism business that is run by Māori but which does not include Māori culture does not constitute Māori tourism but it should still be of interest to scholars of Māori business and those interested in tourism and Māori. There may be aspects of Māori business models that differ from those of Pakeha models which result in a different emphasis placed on the product as a consequence.

Given that most work conducted on Māori and tourism, so far, have been concerned with the Māori tourism product this paper will start with a literature review of this aspect of Māori and tourism and will suggest other areas of research that would be of benefit to understanding of the social and cultural interaction of Māori with tourism, using Leiper's (2003) model as a framework.

Perceptions of the Māori Tourism Product

A number of papers have been written on the perceptions tourists have of the Māori tourism product. These perceptions are not what is necessarily desired. The December 2006 edition of *Tourism News* published by Tourism New Zealand was devoted primarily to Māori tourism products and included a number of comments on the value of Māori culture to tourism in New Zealand in general. What was missing was an appreciation of what tourists were actually understanding. Research findings on the perceptions of international tourists to Māori tourism have shown that outside obvious indigenous products, such as those offered in Rotorua, many aspects of Māori culture are not understood or recognised (Horn 2008, McIntosh 2004, Wilson et al 2006). Wilson et al (2006), for example, showed that many international tourists did not realize that whale

Watch Kaikoura is a Māori product. Some tourists who were interviewed after getting off the Whale Watch boats claimed that they had not met any Māori since leaving Rotorua. This led to the conclusion that Māori only perceived in 'historic' cultural guise (Wilson et al 2006). Ryan (2002) stated that Māori culture is of little interest to Asian tourists, though the spectacle provided is of interest. International tourists do not appear to come to New Zealand for the Māori tourism product. McIntosh (2004) believes that more visitors will be attracted by adding Māori culture to mainstream tourism products but this has the disadvantage of encouraging the previous experience effect – tourists *do* Māori tourism at Rotorua (Wilson et al 2006). In 2007 Tamaki Tours opened a new Māori attraction in Christchurch. It remains to be seen whether this changes the perception of tourists conceptualization of Māori tourism products and their place.

For domestic tourists the situation is confused by definitional problems. Ryan and Pike (2003), and Horn (2008) suggest that the level of interest in the Māori tourism product is low but these studies did not differentiate between Māori and Pakeha. Ryan (2002) argues that this is because of the difficulty for Pakeha society to accept bi-culturalism. His findings that Māori culture is more popular with foreign born (usually European) domestic tourists was echoed by Wilson et al (2006). Horn (2008) suggests that there may also be a problem of acting in a culturally inappropriate manner. As Māori have become more vocal about cultural rights in recent years Pakeha domestic tourists are more aware that they do not know about Māori culture and perhaps feel intimidated by their ignorance. A marae, for example, may be too intimidating to visit.

Providing the tourism product

Māori tourism has been seen as a means to increase employment, develop cultural pride and revival, to determine the authenticity of Māori culture and to develop the runanga (Zygodlo, Matunga, Simmons and Fairweather 2001). Apart from the first of these points, which is applicable to many aspects of tourism, the control of indigenous rights over culture is a common aspect of indigenous tourism (see, for example, Tourism New South Wales 1997). It is important that control of the Māori tourism product remains with Māori (Hall 1996, McClure 2004) including the rights over imagery and assets (Hall 1996, Ryan 2002). It is for these reasons that the definitions of the Māori tourism product have been developed. Tourists are not as concerned about authenticity as one might expect. Aplet and Cooper (2000) state that for nearly 50% of international tourists authenticity of design of souvenir clothing is important. This means that for more than half it is not important. It could be argued, therefore, that the level of authenticity is something that must be generated from the supply side rather than from the demand side. Authenticity, however, comes with meaning. Without meaning the object loses authenticity (Ryan and Crofts 1997), and the meaning may not be that which is supplied by the producer. Much debate has taken place on the meaning of authenticity. Wang (1998) argues that for many tourists existential authenticity is more important than objective authenticity. In other words, how the tourist defines authenticity is more important than whether an object or event is authentic. This problem, from a Māori point of view, is exacerbated by the fact that New Zealand is not seen as a cultural destination, culture is just part of the mix (Wilson et al 2006). Additionally concepts such as

inalienability of objects and activities are not generally understood by Western tourists and there is little or no concept of the differences between iwi, particularly for international tourists. Horn (2008) goes so far as to argue that there is little differentiation between Māori and other cultures in the South Pacific.

In recent years there has been an increase in Māori tourism products (Tourism News 2006) but a number of barriers to improving the product have been identified. These include:

- Lack of effective representation in mainstream tourism organisations
- Lack of Māori tourism agencies
- Lack of education/training
- Lack of capital and control of land
- Lack of marketing opportunities
- Relationship with DoC

(Zygadlo et al 2001).

Many of these factors are common to other Māori business products and reflect the socio-cultural position Māori have within the greater New Zealand society. From the perspective of tourism the way the Māori tourism product has been developed is restricting growth. Marketing and place promotion affect how tourists view a destination and a particular tourism product. Currently Rotorua is seen as the place where tourists learn about Māori. Motivation to visit the South Island is different. Even the motivation of tourists to avail themselves of Māori tourism products such as Whale Watch Kaikoura is not based upon a desire to learn about Māori culture. In a similar way representations of Māori past blind tourists to contemporary Māori (Wilson et al 2006). Māori culture is not represented as being part of the early twenty-first century.

Developing the Māori Tourism Product

Wilson et al (2006) argue that for the Māori tourism product to be developed a number of factors have to be recognised and mediated. First is the problem of Rotorua being seen as the place to learn about Māori. Ironically this has arisen as a consequence of the success of a Māori business. Another consequence of this place promotion is that the motivation to visit South Island different to North Island. The South Island is not a place to visit to learn about Māori. Second, contemporary Māori must be recognisable. Representations of the past blind international tourists to the present. Third, an understanding of the differences between international and domestic tourists is important. Given the likely downturn in the number of international tourists and possible increase in the number of domestic tourists as a consequence of the current world economic situation this is becoming more important. A way of making Māori tourism products attractive to Pakeha must be achieved and to achieve this research needs to be conducted.

Beyond the Māori Tourism Product

Māori tourism research has, until now, considered little more than the supply side of Māori cultural products and the motivation of tourists to purchase these. While research in this area is obviously needed there are a range of other areas that should be investigated when considering Māori and tourism. These include the social and cultural impacts of tourism on Māori and the ways in which Māori business practices result in

differences to Māori businesses. There is also a huge potential for anthropological work on how Māori are tourists. It is assumed that Māori behave in the same way as Pakeha tourists but is this assumption justified?

Social impacts of tourism for Māori

Leiper's Whole Tourism System shows the potential for tourism to affect the socio-cultural environment. Te Awekotu (1981, 1991) argues that there has been some cultural loss for Māori but other than her study little work has been carried out in this area. Kirby (1997) shows how Māori cultural values have been over-ridden by tourism in the development of Tongariro National Park and Zygadlo et al (2001) argue that tourism created cultural stereotypes have been detrimental to Māori, which is supported by McClure's (2004) documentation of the use of Maori in tourism promotions during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There is room, however, for much more work to be carried out in this area. There is the possibility that tourism has also promoted cultural revival along the lines of theoretical work by Dogan (1989), for example. Whether this is the case for Māori has not been studied. Allied to this is the problem of tourists only getting involved in Māori culture in Rotorua. What are the impacts on other iwi of this occurring?

Tourism also has cultural impacts on traditional arts. Ryan and Crofts (1997) point out that there have been some changes to artistic output – whether carving, weaving or performance- for tourists. How far this has gone in commodifying the culture needs further investigation. According to Ryan and Crofts (1997:915) “(t)here are differences of attitudes between iwi and generations” over this. Much depends on what is demanded by tourists and the competency of the artist (Asplet and Cooper 1999). Te Awekotuku (1991:105), however, warns that “dogged adherence to these cultural forms deny the dimension that is also basic to Māori cultural institutions – the ability to adapt.”

Studies on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on Māori would also encourage examination of Māori involvement in non-cultural tourism. It would not matter that such tourism does not conform to the definition of Māori tourism because it would be research about Māori in a tourism context. To ignore Māori in other tourism products is to devalue the input of Māori.

Māori demand for tourism

Māori demand for tourism has received very little, if any, attention but there are many questions that need to be answered. These questions revolved around three conditions for travel: tourism motivators; tourism facilitators; and tourism inhibitors. We do not know if there are differences in these conditions between Māori and other groups. It would seem likely that there are differences that go beyond those that can be explained by socio-economic reasons. Earlier it was noted that Pakeha tourists are not likely to visit Māori tourism products or marae. It would seem unlikely for this to be the case for Māori. Have the traditions of reciprocity been so eroded that Māori cannot visit another marae without invoking reciprocal agreements?

Another question that needs to be addressed is if travel, particularly long term travel heightens a sense of cultural awareness in Māori. Wilson (2006) found that the New Zealand tradition of the OE has resulted in all sorts of Māori cultural and social groups developing in London. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some Māori have even learnt Te Reo as a consequence of increased cultural awareness whilst living in cities such as London and Sydney.

Other areas of limited knowledge that this literature review has highlighted include a greater understanding of Pakeha resistance to visiting Māori tourism products. Is it, as Ryan (2002) suggest, a result of an inability to accept bi-culturalism, a fear of doing something culturally inappropriate, or something much more mundane such as a lack of interest in anything that portrays a culture. There is also scant work on Māori attitudes towards tourists and tourism. Work around the world suggests that people who are involved in the tourism sector, or who have family in the sector, are much more likely to be sympathetic to tourism. Is this the case for Māori?

Finally there is no history of tourism as practiced by Māori. What sort of travel occurred in pre-contact times and what sort of travel has occurred since European contact. Wilson (2007) shows that the first OEs were conducted by Māori and that Māori have been travelling to Europe ever since. Where else have Māori travelled, why have they travelled there and what have been the consequences of that travel both in terms of the world view of Māori and to Māori society once the travellers have returned?

Conclusion

There is only one possible conclusion that can be reached on this topic of Māori and tourism, and that is that there has been so little work carried out in this area that one could almost argue that it is virgin territory. Māori involvement in tourism goes far beyond the ability to provide international visitors with a flavour of Māori culture. It is more than the ability to make some money by selling aspect of the culture. Tourism from a Māori perspective is something that needs to be explored.

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