



Source: © Whale Watch Kaikoura

Whale Watch Kaikoura is a well-known example for a successful Maori Tourism business

Indigenous Tourism and Current Planning Issues The Case of Maori Tourism in Aotearoa New Zealand

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For about 160 years now, any tourism-related venture in New Zealand has either been focussed on the country's natural heritage or on Maori culture (TAYLOR 1998). The first involvement of Maori people in tourism is reported from the Rotorua district where in the 1840s early *Pakeha* (Maori word for white people, Europeans) tourists would watch Maori in their daily businesses. In the late 1850s already, Maori involvement became more proactive: some hotels and nearly all guiding operations in Rotorua were either wholly or partly owned or operated by Maori people. In the late nineteenth century, as awareness of the health benefits of spas and hot springs

increased, the volcanic regions of the central North Island began to market themselves as health tourism destinations. Yet again, Maori people participated in the tourism industry by providing accommodation, tour guiding and also entertainment. Very soon, Maori dance shows and feasts became a significant element in the tourism product: in the 1880s, 'Maoriland' became the iconic image of New Zealand internationally. In the same decade, Thomas Cook Tours started operating in the region on a regular basis, which ultimately established the destination New Zealand on the map of international tourism. (Tourism New Zealand 2001)

Willingly or not, Maori people became heavily involved in tourism. However, the nature of their tourism 'product', rising interest in entertainment, dances, food and so on, led to a displacement of Maori people in the burgeoning industry. The tourists' call for – what they perceived as – *authenticity* reduced their experience of Maori life and culture to something of a 'staged event'. Instead of managing their own tourism industry, Maori people had been lessened to tourist 'attractions' managed by non-Maori. This cultural misrepresentation continued well into the twentieth century. This article serves three purposes: Firstly, a discussion of Maori Tourism in the con-

text of indigenous tourism will take place. The second part describes current issues of indigenous tourism in New Zealand. An outline of recent national tourism planning and outcomes highlights the present state of Maori Tourism and gives an indication for the future.

Significance of Control in Indigenous Tourism

The understanding and definition of indigenous tourism – or in this case of Maori Tourism – have been widely discussed in the relevant literature (for example, BUTLER and HINCH 1996; TAYLOR 1998). The background of this argument is essentially shaped by considerations whether *control* on the tourism segment or the *topic* the tourism activity addresses determine the character of the venture (see Table 1).

Table 2 transfers these classifications to the New Zealand context and shows by the use of examples the distinction between Maori and non-Maori tourism ventures. Starting with the assumption that these classifications represent the tourists' point of view (any Maori related experience as being Maori Tourism), the term can be understood as 'any product or service that provides the visitor with an opportunity to have some contact with Maori culture – for instance via handicrafts, food, and food preparation, music and dance, dress styles, history and mythology and leisure activities that reflect distinctive lifestyles' (Stafford Group 2001). Therefore, any activity where tourists get in touch with Maori culture, either in the form of active exploration or coincidental contact, consumption of products provided by Maori, or alternatively products that allow a cultural experience, can be referred to as being Maori Tourism.

Theme	Control	Low Degree of Control	High Degree of Control
	Indigenous Theme present		Culture Dispossessed
Indigenous Theme absent		Non-Indigenous Tourism	Diversified Indigenous

Table 1: Degree of Involvement of Indigenous Cultures in Tourism

After: Butler & Hinch 1996

However, this rather broad definition can be questioned as it does not essentially include the indigenous culture's *proactive* participation. After all, control is *the* central issue in indigenous tourism development, as power makes for decisions on all critical factors such as the extent, speed and nature of development (BUTLER and HINCH 1996).

As KEELAN (1996) observed, "control - not wealth is at the heart of Maori aspirations in tourism development".

Maori Involvement in the Tourism Industry

So what does the current situation of Maori in the tourism industry look like? Do Maori have control over *their* tourism ventures? As is the case in many postcolonial societies, the indigenous Maori culture – even though to a considerable degree crucial to the tourism industry – tends to be marginalised from influence and control. Generally, it can be stated that there are many problems to be faced and issues to be addressed by current and future tourism planning and development.

First of all, there are economic concerns to be aware of. The economic marginalisation of Maori in New Zealand hampers their participation in the industry in many ways. They are not only underrepresented as employees in general, but more spe-

cifically they are hardly ever employed in middle and senior tourism management positions. One of the main reasons is the limited skills base among Maori. In the tourism industry, less than 40% of Maori staff have a tourism qualification (Stafford Group 2001).

Even though there is a growing number of Maori-owned companies, the level of investment is generally low. Due to tourism being dominated by big players, business start-ups are difficult in any case. But banks do not only hold negative perceptions of tourism businesses in general, they seem to particularly lack confidence in Maori businesses. Unresolved problems concerning the ownership of land and resources result in tribal land hardly ever being offered as an asset; and even if, it is generally not favoured by banks. Also, banks perceive a lack of transparency in Maori business practices, including accounting practices, which is often the case because the tribal and *whanau* ("extended family") structure of the Maori society mirrors in their business structures (Stafford Group 2001). Therefore, Maori businesses have limited access to financial support and varying access to non-financial resources. This, combined with often high costs of rents and rates in tourism hot spots, leads to the fact that Maori people in many cases tend to hesi-

Theme	Control	Non-Maori Tourism Business	Maori Tourism Business
	Maori Tourism Product		Non-Maori shop selling Maori art Non-Maori Bus Tour Company with Maori interpretation by Non-Maori Guide
Non-Maori Tourism Product		Non-Maori hotel owner Non-Maori gondola business	Maori owned and operated B&B Maori employee of B&B

Table 2: Maori & Non-Maori Tourism

After: Butler & Hinch 1996

tate when considering starting their own company. As a result, Maori(-owned) tourism businesses are notably outnumbered by non-Maori tourism businesses. This does not only refer to companies that offer a Maori-related product but to tourism businesses in general.

Other concerns refer to the Maori tourism product itself and its quality. Generally, there is the view that it could – with a few exceptions – be improved. To date, there is no monitoring or auditing procedure for Maori tourism products in place. That implies that there is a lack of data to rely on for business and tourism forecasts. It is often argued that the current Maori tourism product is narrow and superficial and that there is still large capacity to vary it and introduce more businesses and products into the market. On the other hand, possible providers often perceive that there are limited business opportunities and therefore a lack of commercial perspective.

The need of appropriate planning efforts towards future development and the requirement of institutionalised structures

are also perceived as problems. In the past, there has been no regional tourism organisation or local government support to specifically manage and foster Maori tourism ventures.

Another issue with respect to product development refers to the preservation of the indigenous culture and the protection of intellectual property rights. Some people fear that a commercialisation of the culture could lead to further misinterpretation and therefore oversimplification. Many Maori perceive a high level of misunderstanding of their culture and values by non-Maori through tourism; many hold negative perceptions of the tourism industry as such. In terms of controlling culture, this becomes especially problematic in the cases when non-Maori interpret a Maori product and Maori consequently become detached from a proactive development of their own cultural expression. (Stafford Group 2001)

In conclusion, to a high degree Maori lack control in the tourism industry, and of the interpretation and promotion of their own culture. It is therefore up to

current and future planning efforts to resolve these issues.

The Planning Response

That is the situation current national tourism planning sets out to improve. Unlike other countries with a postcolonial history, New Zealand has the legal obligation to protect Maori culture. The Treaty of Waitangi (1840) obliges the government to build and maintain partnerships with *tangata whenua* (Maori; people of the land). Contemporary interpretations of the Treaty also place an obligation on Tourism New Zealand to facilitate Maori Tourism development. Three principles have to be taken into account to improve Maori involvement and contribution. These are partnership; protection of integrity and authenticity of the (business) environment, of culture, heritage and their interpretation and presentation; and participation in the development, promotion and implementation of strategies for tourism (Destination Planning w.y.). According to DOVER SAMUELS, Associate Minister of Tourism, “Maori Tourism’s key objective is to offer a quality

authentic product and to achieve excellence in its presentation.” (SAMUELS 2005).

The most dominant national tourism planning effort has been made with the Tourism Strategy New Zealand 2010 (TSNZ 2010), released in 2001. In the making of the strategy Maori were represented by the Maori Tourism Advisory Group (MTAG). The MTAG was constituted by twelve members who represent several local and regional tourism groups, as well as national authorities concerned with Maori affairs. Other parties involved were a specially founded Strategy Group and several external project managers.



Source: © Hell's Gate WaiOra

The interpretation of natural sites, here at a geothermal reserve near Rotorua, has become an essential part of the Maori Tourism experience.

The necessary increase of Maori participation has been recognised as a crucial point. One of the objectives of the strategy is to “ensure Maori participate and are partners in the tourism sector and that Maori culture and identity is protected” (TSG 2001). This not only implies more employment of Maori people in the sector but also more control and power to influence tourism development. Furthermore, the Maori tourism product should be enhanced and diversified in order to foster tourism’s sustainability and attractiveness. The creation of representative bodies to assist in these tasks is yet another aim of the TSNZ 2010. Importantly, the strategy not only focuses on the product but also on Maori people themselves when it calls for appreciation of the unique contribution of Maori culture, and for the potential for Maori to benefit from tourism growth in different respects.

Moreover, the TSNZ 2010 states the need for institutionalised Maori participation in tourism. It specifically calls for a Maori group fostering tourism on a national level to coordinate efforts. So far, Maori participation in tourism mostly happens on a regional or local level. Regional tourism development in New Zealand is managed by Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) and Maori Regional Tourism Organisations (MRTOs). Their founding has been heavily financially supported by the government who granted NZ\$1.3 million to help MRTOs get started (INZ 2004). A major task for the MRTOs is to help Maori companies set off as there is agreement that Maori participation can best be improved at the local level (TSG 2001). In addition, MRTOs should assist in enhancing industry standards and detecting business opportunities.

Altogether, there are thirteen MRTOs, eleven of which are in the North Island, where there is the larger residential Maori population and where most of the Maori tourism product is situated. The borders of the MRTOs, however, do not match those of the RTOs, resulting in structural problems for organisation, co-operation

and collaboration. The mid-term aim of the collaboration between RTOs and MRTOs should be to cooperate not only in planning and development but also specifically in destination marketing and destination management.

The TSNZ 2010 calls for greater institutionalised participation of Maori on the national level, leading to the establishment of the New Zealand Maori Tourism Council. The Council’s organisational structure “integrates operator, regional and national Maori tourism entities” (INZ 2006), for the promotion of Maori Tourism to help achieve social and economical sustainability in tourism. This is widely understood as the most successful accomplishment of the TSNZ 2010 in terms of Maori Tourism so far.

Other recommendations of the strategy that respond to the aforementioned problems in the establishment of Maori Tourism include the development and maintenance of a database of relevant information, the implementation of a monitoring and auditing structure, fixed quality standards and an evaluation framework. Better resourcing is seen as a means to strengthen capacity and confidence. Even though first efforts have been made to implement a business assessment and mentoring programme for Maori Tourism operators, these recommendations have yet to be fully implemented.

All in all, it is widely recognised that the Maori cultural heritage is a cornerstone of New Zealand’s cultural identity and that therein lies the unique selling point that distinguishes the country from other destinations. Over the last few years, with increased demand for cultural tourism in general, there has been an incremental growth in the number of Maori-owned and operated tourism businesses. Also, Maori Tourism now goes far beyond ‘*hangi*’ (Maori feast) and dance show; it provides a wide range of quality products and services to the industry, many of these are unique products that are exclusively offered by Maori. Cultural values such as *manaakitanga* (hospitality) and

kaitiakitanga (guardianship, responsibility for the land) experience much recognition and acknowledgement in current tourism ventures. Examples of successful Maori-owned and operated businesses include whale watch tours (Photo Whale Watch Kaikoura), bush walks with Maori guides and culturally safe interpretation of historically significant sites (Photo Hell’s Gate WaiOra), visits to *marae* (meeting places) and Maori homes.

The contribution of recent tourism planning to these developments cannot be underestimated. A promising start to holistic future tourism in New Zealand has been made.

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