

Decolonising Māori Tourism: “Representation and Identity”

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Abstract

Since the late nineteenth century the tourism industry has focused primarily on two things in selling holidays to New Zealand: the natural landscape and Māori culture. Māori have been involved in tourism for more than 150 years however their "identity" as tourist attractions rather than tourism managers has to some extent marginalised Māori from the control of their own cultural expression. Prior to the 1990s much of New Zealand's offshore tourism marketing represented Māori as the exotic "Other" manifest through what Edward Said (1978) has termed *Orientalism* - the discursive and textual production of colonial meanings whereby language becomes a medium through which a hierarchical structure of power between coloniser (Pākehā) and colonised (Māori) is perpetuated. Such images have constructed a homogenous identity of Māori culture. The impact of such demand driven international tourism marketing is reflected in the call by Māori tourism stakeholders to control the representation and meanings of their image, tribal identities and cultural difference. Amongst the key objectives stated in the New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2010 is to 'ensure Māori participate and are partners in the tourism sector and that Māori culture and identity is protected'. However, the notion of identity has been subject to a bicultural relationship between Māori and Pākehā that is at odds with Māori aspirations to autonomous development. If increased Māori capacity in the tourism sector is to be effectively managed and sustainable there is a need to recognise and promote the diversity of Māori culture. The industry's notion of "Māori identity" must reflect the multiplicity of the "Māori subject"; the reality is that modern Māori negotiate a number of identities including tribal.

This thesis draws on postcolonial theory to critically examine the representation of Māori cultural tourism in New Zealand. I argue that tribal diversity offers a means by which Māori tourism practice and practitioners subvert the homogenous Other and re-inscribe new subjectivities and meanings in a tourism environment by utilising Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity. The mixing that hybridity represents cannot fit within the bicultural framework of Māori Pākehā relations that works against the notion of culture as dynamic and changing. Research findings reveal that tribal differences create regionally diverse subcultures and representations of Māori and show a complex "inclusivity" of Māori tourism development working within a third space of equity, innovation, creativity and self-empowerment. The third space effectively re-negotiates biculturalism. These issues are discussed within a tourism context that reflects the wider politics of Māori Pākehā relations in New

Zealand. Thus tourism might act as a medium for offering postcolonial counter-narratives that reclaim cultural power and political discourse in the wider domain of indigenous self-determination.