Tourists’ appreciation of Maori culture in New Zealand

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Abstract

Tourists’ perspectives of indigenous tourism are not fully understood. This paper explores the nature of demand for indigenous tourism with particular attention to the appreciation of indigenous culture gained by tourists. The latter is explored using in-depth interviews with international tourists visiting New Zealand to examine tourists’ motivations, perceptions and experiences of Maori culture. Findings of the present study provide some evidence to support anecdotal conclusions about the similar demands tourists require from their encounters with indigenous peoples. Five central dimensions of experience from which tourists come to appreciate the cultures of indigenous peoples are reported, namely; gazing, lifestyle, authenticity, personal interaction and informal learning. Important issues of product development and options for the sustainable development of indigenous communities are considered.

Keywords: Indigenous tourism; Maori culture; Host culture; Tourist experience

1. Introduction

Tourism is seen as a major source of potential economic growth and independence for indigenous peoples. This is exemplified in the greater focus given in public policy to increasing the level of indigenous involvement in the tourism industry and in the search for development options (Altman, 1989; Anderson, 1991; Finlayson, 1991a; Altman & Finlayson, 1993; Ryan & Huyton, 2000a). In New Zealand for example, the recent New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2010 has called for “increased participation of Maori throughout the (tourism) sector” (p. i), building “Maori capability”, providing “greater resourcing and support for the sustainable development and management of Maori tourism” (p. 32) and developing “Maori tourism product” (p. 32). Perhaps symbolic of the increased national and international focus on economic development and cultural enhancement, the associated literature on indigenous tourism remains focused on issues of policy, indigenous participation in tourism planning and development (Anderson, 1991; Sofield, 1993; Butler & Hinch, 1996; Li, 2000), problems associated with development (Altman, 1989; Finlayson, 1991b) and the associated impacts of tourism on indigenous communities (Altman, 1989, 1996; Smith, 1989; Hollinshead, 1992; Altman & Finlayson, 1993; Ryan, 1997). Much of the literature thereby focuses on description, issues of supply, barriers to development and, to some extent, the exploitation of indigenous peoples through tourism (Blundell, 1993; Johnston, 2000).

To find ways to achieve economic growth through tourism while minimising the potential negative impacts of tourism on indigenous communities, significant discussion has been given, in particular, to the achievement of sustainable development (see for example, Sofield, 1991, 1993; Altman & Finlayson, 1993; Hinch, McIntosh, & Ingram, 1999; Russell & Walters, 1999; Li, 2000; McIntosh, Hinch, & Ingram, 2002). Tourism is essentially seen as a sustainable activity that provides a symbiotic relationship between cultural survival and economic success (Sofield, 1991; Butler & Hinch, 1996). Although the resultant benefits of this relationship can be called into question (see Craik, 1997), discussion relating to the achievement of sustainable indigenous tourism has predominantly focused on the need for development that is culturally sustainable, that is, owned, controlled, acceptable and desired by the indigenous communities affected, as well as economically sustainable.
In the achievement of sustainable indigenous tourism, there is also a need for market research to help identify what tourists want and expect from their experiences of an indigenous culture. Indeed, Prentice (1997, p. 229) has argued that, “Tourism will only be sustainable if it is simultaneously in harmony with hosts, environment, policy objectives and tourists’ demands”. Whilst attention to the culture and demands of the tourist can transform or have a significant influence in modifying cultural production (Cohen, 1988; Craik, 1997; McIntosh et al., 2002), an understanding of visitor demands and expectations is particularly important in the search for commercial opportunities to attract new audiences. Currently however, there exists anecdotal and piecemeal information to help indigenous tourism businesses adapt or develop their products to meet identified demand. The lack of research into visitors’ perspectives of Maori tourism in New Zealand is particularly noticeable. This is despite the fact that the Maori people of New Zealand have had a longer history of interaction with tourism than some other indigenous cultures. As such, demand perspectives of indigenous tourism are not fully understood. In contrast, there exists far better understanding of demand for ecotourism (Eagles, 1992; Ballantyne & Eagles, 1994) and cultural tourism (Stebbins, 1996; Foo & Rossetto, 1998) more generally.

The few empirical studies of visitors’ perspectives of indigenous tourism that have been published in the tourism literature have given emphasis to differing agendas, such as the segmentation of tourists based on their interest in experiencing culturally based products (Moscardo & Pearce, 1999; Ryan & Huyton, 2000a, b, 2002), issues of authenticity (Daniel, 1996; Moscardo & Pearce, 1999), tourist knowledge and perceptions (Dann, 1994; Milne, Grekin, & Woodley, 1998; Notzke, 1999) or tourists’ reactions to and satisfaction with indigenous experiences (Husbands, 1994; Milne et al., 1998; Notzke, 1999). In addition, there exist consultancy reports that remain unpublished in the tourism literature (for example, Finlayson, 1991a; Lang Research, 2000; Northern Territory Tourist Commission, 2000). The existing published studies have therefore provided only a piecemeal understanding of demand and have not provided debate about whether the sorts of experiences, perceptions or satisfactions gained by tourists are similar across indigenous cultures or indigenous products.

In addition, many of the existing studies have focused largely on the views of visitors at indigenous attractions or sites, and as such, offer little understanding of the level of interest and satisfaction expressed by the wider market, although a notable exception to this includes the research by Ryan and Huyton (2000a, b, 2002) on tourists’ attitudes towards Australian Aboriginal tourist attractions. Yet, this information is important for the economic viability of indigenous tourism enterprises and for consolidating appropriate strategies for sustainable indigenous tourism. In particular, there is some evidence to suggest that a high proportion of visitors to indigenous attractions have also experienced indigenous attractions in other countries (Moscardo & Pearce, 1999; McIntosh, Smith, & Ingram, 2000). As such, tourists may demand similar experiences from the indigenous attractions they visit. This paper will therefore aim to synthesise anecdotal conclusions about the nature of demand for indigenous tourism with initial insights gained from in-depth research into the nature of demand for experiences of Maori culture in New Zealand.

In analysing tourists’ perspectives of indigenous tourism, a further issue must be considered; the nature of cultural exchange. Butler and Hinch (1996, p. 5) have argued that much of the increasing participation of indigenous people in tourism is driven by the belief that “such activity facilitates understanding between indigenous and non-indigenous people”. That is, visitors’ experiences of indigenous cultures improves their awareness, understanding and appreciation of indigenous situations on major issues. This may result in improved understanding and changed attitudes and behaviours that can result in a more equitable relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples (Butler & Hinch, 1996). This view, despite being somewhat idealistic, has been advocated in sustainable models of cultural exchange (Sofield, 1991; Pearce, 1995) and has increasingly been the focus of attention in the literature on appreciation of host culture. Inherent in this view is the notion that tourism encounters and the nature of interaction between host and guest is mutually beneficial. Specifically, increased attention has been given to the ways in which tourists’ experiences of destination areas translate into an understanding and appreciation of local culture (Prentice, Witt, & Wydenbach, 1994; Taylor, 2001), or, change tourists’ perceptions and attitudes towards hosts (Anastasopolous, 1992; Pizam, Jafari, & Milman, 1991, 2000; Uriely & Reichel, 2000), thereby potentially minimising the negative impacts of tourism on host communities.

1.1. Tourists’ appreciation of host culture

While the impact of tourism on host communities has received a significant amount of discussion in the study of tourism, the issue of host-guest interaction from tourists’ perspectives has only recently received attention. In effect, tourists interpret the environment and host communities they visit in their own personal ways. Cultural experiences are thus consumed and negotiated in terms of tourists’ prior knowledge, interests, expectations, mythologies and personal meaning, rather than by the cultural offerings of the destination (Walle, 1996; Craik, 1997; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999). As such,
implicit in an understanding of how tourists are affected by their experiences of host culture is the nature of what is in effect subjectively ‘consumed’ by tourists. In particular, it is increasingly understood that the appreciation of host culture often derives from the beneficial experiences gained from tourists’ ‘mindful’ interaction with local culture (Prentice et al., 1994; Pearce, 1995; Moscardo, 1996). Indeed, appreciation of host culture results from tourists’ emotional attachment to iconic landscapes (Prentice & Guerin, 1998), endearment to local people (Prentice et al., 1994), formal participation in authentic cultural experiences (Daniel, 1996) or symbolic purchase of authentic indigenous arts and crafts or souvenirs (Graburn, 1984; Littrell et al., 1994; Asplet & Cooper, 2000). As such, appreciation of a host culture can result from affective as well as cognitive dimensions of experience, from experiences of culture that is familiar or exotic, or, can derive from generalist interaction with local people in a destination as much as from more formal interaction with hosts. Importantly, these experiences may facilitate intercultural understanding or appreciation.

In addition to understanding what is in effect ‘consumed’ by tourists through the benefits or understanding they gain from experiencing host culture, a focus on tourists’ motivations and perceptions is also important. Specifically, two questions are appropriate. Firstly, what is the extent to which tourists seek cultural appreciation from their visit? Tourists are found to have multiple motives and as such, there is a need to understand the extent to which tourists seek learning as opposed to viewing from their experiences of host cultures (Anderson, Prentice, & Watanabe, 2000). In particular, it has been found that much tourism is consumed out of tourists’ search for novelty, spectacle and gazing on ‘difference’ (Craik, 1997; Ryan, Hughes, & Chirgwin, 2000; Schanzel & McIntosh, 2000) rather than the search for formal understanding. Secondly, what is the extent to which traditional perceptions of host cultures are held? As tourists rely on travel literature for information, it has been argued that tourists gain only a superficial, stereotypical image and understanding of indigenous peoples from the marketed representations of a culture (Silver, 1993). As such, tourists’ appreciation of host culture may be embedded in the search for the ‘exotic’ or ‘primitive other’, (Cohen, 1993; Taylor, 2001). In an examination of tourists’ appreciation of indigenous culture therefore, three perspectives are important: tourists’ perceptions of host culture, the extent to which tourists are culturally motivated and the beneficial experiences that tourists gain of a host culture. These three perspectives provide a framework for the present study.

As they have been mainly concerned with issues of marketing, existing studies of tourists’ perspectives of indigenous tourism have not sought to gain in-depth insight into the value that tourists place on their experiences of indigenous cultures or the level of cultural appreciation sought and gained by tourists. Furthermore, there has been no analysis of whether the nature of tourists’ experiences of indigenous cultures is comparable to the nature of cultural tourism consumption reported more generally. In particular, indigenous value and belief systems are difficult for outsiders to understand. For example, the Maori of New Zealand have a spiritual and symbolic bond with the environment. They perceive humankind not as separate from the environment but as part of an indivisible whole. The maori (spiritual life force) is “the life that is shared by all objects, animate and inanimate, the state of being, the interconnection between things that exist” (Ryan, 1997, p. 275). As such, the extent of cultural distance between tourist and indigenous host may affect the appreciation of host culture in ways not reported in the literature to date.

While this paper does not specifically aim to examine the extent of cultural difference or the nature of what tourists formally learn from their experiences of Maori culture, it does seek to compare the results of in-depth research into tourists’ motivations, perceptions and experiences of Maori culture in New Zealand with evidence about the appreciation of host culture reported in the tourism literature. As such, the paper seeks to advance our understanding of the central dimensions of experience from which tourists come to appreciate the cultures of indigenous peoples. From such understanding, important insights can be gained into appropriate development options for indigenous peoples that are not only grounded in pertinent consumer demands but that can also be mutually beneficial for tourists and hosts alike.

2. The study

In exploring tourists’ appreciation of Maori culture in New Zealand, the study had three objectives. Firstly, the study sought to explore tourists’ perceptions and expectations of Maori culture before and after their visit to New Zealand. Secondly, the study sought to examine the extent to which tourists visiting New Zealand are culturally motivated. Thirdly, the study sought to gain insight into the extent of cultural appreciation sought and gained by tourists. Integral to this, the study sought to gain insight into how tourists prefer to experience Maori culture, and the extent to which participation and immersion as opposed to viewing indigenous culture is considered important.

A focus on Maori culture is justified as Maori have experienced many of the social and economic problems evidenced by other indigenous communities around the world (Mitchell, Hall, & Keelan, 1992; Ryan & Crotts,
1997). The present paper therefore contributes to the increased global attention being given to the achievement of economic development and cultural independence for indigenous peoples. The study is thus contextualised in current concerns for lack of Maori participation and representation in the tourism sector compared to non-Maori participation, as well as the lack of representation of Maori culture in the marketing that is currently undertaken for tourism in New Zealand, for example (Barnett, 2001).

Generally, Maori have had a long history of involvement in New Zealand tourism (see Hall, 1996; Ryan, 1997, 1999). Maori involvement in tourism has been categorised as entertainment, arts and crafts, display of taonga, cultural interpretation and accommodation operations (Barnett, 2001). Maori products are thus an important focus for tourism activity in New Zealand. Indeed, figures from the New Zealand International Visitor Survey showed that in 1995/96, nearly half of all international visitors to New Zealand visited a museum or art gallery interpreting Maori culture, while 36% attended a Maori performance and 18% attended an alternative Maori experience (New Zealand Tourism Board, 1996). The sorts of experiences of Maori culture gained by tourists can therefore be perceived to centre mainly on cultural product and performances—arguably, products specifically created for commercial ends. However, the figures exclude cultural interpretations that add value to tourism experiences, such as Maori perspectives of guided tours of a region, as well as experiences of the everyday lived nature of Maori culture as whanau, hapu and iwi. “For Maori, heritage is an everyday lived experience. The landscape is imbued with symbolic, personal, cultural and spiritual significance” (Hall, 1996, p. 160). As such, tourists’ experiences and appreciation of Maori culture can be broader than that recorded in market research to date, such as informal chatting with Maori people.

2.1. Method

To explore tourists’ appreciation of Maori culture in New Zealand, semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews were held with a range of nationalities and different types (i.e. age, gender, group, free and independent travellers) of international tourists arriving and departing through Christchurch International Airport, New Zealand, in May 2002. As such, visitors’ perspectives on Maori culture were attained by measuring tourists’ perceptions and experiences both immediately before and after a visit to New Zealand. The study also sought to focus on the value placed on experiencing Maori culture by the wider tourism market in contrast to the attraction based studies more readily reported in the literature. Interviews were conducted in different languages (English, Korean, Japanese, Chinese) using a team of four trained researchers on a range of days of the week and at various times of the day.

Although the aim of the research presented here was to gain qualitative understanding of the value that tourists place on experiencing Maori culture and compare the findings to conclusions drawn by other studies into the demand for indigenous tourism, it is hoped that the research will inform and guide the development of a subsequent quantitative phase to substantiate the present research findings. As such, the study should be considered in the context of a two-staged approach to data collection. Firstly, semi-structured in-depth interviews based on qualitative principles are used to gain insight and capture salient dimensions in tourist thinking. Secondly, these dimensions can be used to derive categories that form opinion measures that can be tested on a larger sample to validate findings. In this way, the insights gained from qualitative methods can be combined with the generality that quantitative methods provide. The complementary nature of qualitative and quantitative research has been advocated or similarly applied in other studies of tourist experiences (see for example, Otto & Ritchie, 1996; McIntosh, 1998; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999). As such, an inductive, consumer-focused approach is applied to identify pertinent consumer demands (McIntosh, 1998).

Overall, 24 short semi-structured arrival interviews were undertaken with international tourists to examine tourists’ perceptions of Maori culture before their visit, their intentions to experience Maori culture and the importance they place on those experiences. In addition, 46 in-depth departure interviews were undertaken with international tourists to explore tourists’ perceptions, experiences and appreciation of Maori culture at the end of their visit to New Zealand. Due to time constraints imposed on interviewing in a busy airport, each arrivals interview lasted approximately 2 minutes and each departure interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes. Though the sample sizes are small, they are consistent with other studies employing a two-stage approach to research design incorporating initial in-depth interviews (see for example, Becho & Prentice, 1997; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999), as well as studies that have employed a similar ‘laddering’ methodology (Jewel & Crotts, 2001; Jansen-Verbeke & van Rekom, 1996). As the initial qualitative phase of the research only is presented here, findings of the research should be seen as indicative, not substantive. However, in terms of demographic profile, the respondents were representative of the profile of international visitors to New Zealand generally in terms of gender, age, travel style and nationality. However, North American visitors were slightly under-represented in the final sample and this potentially represents seasonal fluctuation in visitation. In terms of type of tourists interviewed, 69% of the respondents had travelled free and independently, and half of the
respondents were staying in the private home of a friend or relative, or, were backpacking around New Zealand.

The interviews included standardised open-ended questions to ensure some degree of consistency in the way each interviewer asked the questions. Whilst a contextual analysis of demand for Maori tourism measured within a range of other tourism products (such as the approach adopted by Ryan & Huyton, 2000a, b) was considered during pilot testing, the time constraints imposed on the qualitative interviewing by busy airport arrivals and departure activity meant that a thematic analysis focusing more directly on tourists' thinking about Maori culture was necessary. However, open-ended questions were employed to elicit as accurately as possible tourists' appreciation for Maori culture, as expressed by them in their own words and in relation to pertinent issues raised by them. For example, respondents were asked if they had experienced anything of New Zealand's indigenous Maori culture during their visit, and if so, to describe what they had experienced. In addition, consistent with previous studies of the tourist experience (see for example, McIntosh & Prentice, 1999), the departure interviews employed the principles of the “laddering” technique (see Reynolds & Gutman, 1988) to gain in-depth insight into the value placed by tourists on their experiences of Maori culture. “Laddering” is a probing technique for connecting consumers' values to their behaviour by essentially asking people to describe why it is important to them. In this way, respondents can be asked to think on a more emotional level and can be questioned as to the importance of their underlying motivations and reported experiences gained (McIntosh, 1998). Respondents were therefore asked, for example, about the aspects of Maori culture they had been most interested to experience and why those aspects had been of interest to them. Respondents were also asked why an experience of Maori culture had been important to them, how and where they prefer to experience Maori culture and why those things were important to them. Other questions related to respondents' impressions or perceptions of Maori culture, their main considerations in experiencing Maori culture or visiting a cultural attraction, and whether respondents had learnt anything new about Maori culture from their visit.

Each departure interview was tape-recorded and transcribed to record as accurately as possible visitors' responses as expressed in their own words. Each member of the research team independently analysed the data, and conclusions were then compared, as advocated in analytical triangulation (Patton, 1990). Due to the qualitative nature of the data collected, content analysis of the interview transcripts was undertaken to elicit common themes relating to the nature of demand and tourists' appreciation of Maori culture.

3. Tourists' appreciation of Maori culture

The appreciation of Maori culture can be understood by the motivations, perceptions and experiences of Maori culture reported by tourists visiting New Zealand. The findings of the present study provided some evidence to confirm, in particular, that although Maori culture is not a primary motivation for visiting New Zealand and tourists appear to hold traditional perceptions of Maori culture, experiences of Maori culture gained during the visit are an important vehicle for cultural appreciation and understanding. The experiences of Maori culture preferred by tourists included five central dimensions, namely, gazing, lifestyle, authenticity, personal interaction and informal learning. Although these dimensions require further validation, the study findings provided some level of support for anecdotal evidence in relation to tourists' preferences for indigenous tourism experiences and, as such, raise important issues in the achievement of sustainable development for indigenous communities.

3.1. Perceptions of Maori culture

Perceptions of host culture can be understood by tourists' awareness, knowledge and images or impressions held of that culture. Furthermore, Dann (1994) has argued that certain variables, for example, repeater status or tourists' prior knowledge of a host culture, have some part to play in opening a certain type of tourist to cultural awareness of the way of life of a host culture. Findings of the present study showed that the majority of respondents interviewed were aware of New Zealand's indigenous culture despite the fact that the majority of respondents had not visited New Zealand before. However, findings of the present study also showed that despite the high level of recognition of Maori culture as New Zealand's indigenous culture, respondents' specific prior knowledge of Maori culture was limited. For example, only 9 out of the 46 respondents interviewed in the departure survey claimed that they knew something about Maori culture before their visit to New Zealand. This knowledge predominantly related to the history of Maori as first settlers in New Zealand and perceptions of the physical appearance of Maori people.

The most frequently reported sources of awareness of Maori culture included guidebooks, specifically, the Lonely Planet Guide and film or television. Other sources mentioned included New Zealand's association with rugby, from discussion with friends, relatives or other travellers, or, from learning about Maori culture at school. However, almost all the respondents (19 of the 24 interviewed in the arrivals survey and 35 of the 46 interviewed in the departure survey) reported that they had not looked for any specific information on Maori
culture prior to their departure. This finding provides some support for previous studies that have found that tourists’ prior knowledge of host culture is generally low (Dann, 1994; Northern Territory Tourist Commission, 2000).

The arrivals survey also sought to capture respondents’ impressions of Maori culture prior to their visit. For the majority of visitors arriving in New Zealand, their impressions of Maori culture were traditional and somewhat stereotypical. This finding is consistent with arguments concerning tourists’ perceptions of host culture reported elsewhere (Silver, 1993; Anderson et al., 2000). Indeed, the most frequently used words reported by respondents to describe their impressions of Maori culture on their arrival in New Zealand were ‘rugby’, ‘All Blacks’, ‘haka’, ‘painted faces’ or ‘face tattoos’, ‘warriors’ and ‘tribal image’, ‘mostly black/dark skin colour’ and ‘concert or dance performance’. When shown a list of words to describe Maori culture, most respondents interviewed in the arrivals survey described Maori culture as ‘traditional’ (reported by 14 out of the 24 respondents interviewed), ‘exotic’ (reported by 9 respondents) and ‘different’ (7 respondents). These responses were in contrast to word associations of Maori culture as ‘familiar’, ‘contemporary’ and ‘everyday’. As such, findings of the present study provide some support for Ryan and Huyton’s (2002) analysis that suggests tourists seem relatively unaware of the contemporary nature of indigenous cultures.

Similarly, results of the departure surveys further confirmed that tourists visiting New Zealand hold traditional and stereotypical views of Maori people and Maori culture. When asked to describe their impressions of Maori culture unprompted, the most frequently used words reported by respondents interviewed in the department survey included ‘haka’, ‘tribal warriors’, ‘tattoos’, ‘tribal dance’ or ‘concert performance’ and ‘passionate’ or ‘friendly people’. Other words used to describe Maori culture included ‘Rotorua’, ‘nose rubbing’, ‘tongues sticking out’, ‘dark skin colour’, ‘big/strong’, ‘artistic’ or their ‘skills as artists and craftsmen’, ‘integrated into the society’, ‘close family unit’ and ‘distinct language’. Respondents reported that these impressions had mainly been formed from watching rugby, from their travels throughout New Zealand and from film (some respondents mentioned the film ‘Once Were Warriors’), television or from guidebooks.

The majority of respondents (32 of the 46 respondents) did not feel that their impressions of Maori culture had changed as a result of their visit to New Zealand. Despite this, there was some evidence to suggest that fewer respondents interviewed in the department survey, when prompted, perceived Maori culture as ‘exotic’ than those interviewed in the arrivals survey (see Table 1). Indeed, there was slight evidence to suggest that more respondents perceived Maori culture as ‘everyday’ and ‘familiar’ following their visit to New Zealand. Although this finding requires further substantiation, it does suggest that some tourists did receive a more contemporary and less stereotypical experience and impression of Maori culture from their visit to New Zealand, albeit to a minimal extent. It appears more likely however that, for the majority of tourists, stereotypical impressions of Maori people and their culture are to some extent being reinforced by tourists’ experiences of Maori culture during their visit to New Zealand, potentially due to the nature of existing tourism products.

Of the minority of respondents who stated that their impressions of Maori culture had changed following their visit, some respondents commented on their prior perception of Maori people as ‘aggressive’ in nature. However, following their visit to New Zealand, respondents had found Maori people to be ‘friendly people’, ‘very proud and passionate about their culture’ and that Maori people valued ‘keeping their culture and language alive’.

### 3.2. Extent of cultural motivation

As found in some other studies of demand for indigenous tourism (Northern Territory Tourist Commission, 2000; Ryan & Huyton, 2000a, 2002), findings of the present study provided some evidence that Maori culture was not a major motivation for visiting New Zealand. Of those tourists interviewed in the arrivals survey, less than half of the respondents (10 out of the 24 respondents) reported that they were intending to gain an experience of New Zealand’s Maori culture during their visit, while a further 3 respondents were unsure of their intention to experience Maori culture. Similarly, more respondents interviewed in the department survey (18 of the 46 interviewed) reported that Maori culture was a secondary influence on their decision to visit New Zealand, with a further 5 respondents reporting that Maori culture had no

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impression of Maori culture (prompted)</th>
<th>Number of responses (Arrivals survey) (N ≥ 24)</th>
<th>Number of responses (Departure survey) (N ≥ 46)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contemporary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exotic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
influence whatsoever on their decision to visit New Zealand.

Despite not being a primary motivation for visiting New Zealand, most respondents interviewed in the arrivals and departure surveys rated experiencing Maori culture as an important part of their visit to New Zealand. Indeed, of the 24 respondents interviewed in the arrivals survey, 3 respondents rated an experience of Maori culture to be very important to them and 10 respondents reported it to be quite important. Similarly, 5 out of the 46 respondents interviewed in the departure survey rated an experience of Maori culture as very important to them and 24 respondents rated it as quite important. In particular, Maori culture was felt to represent a point of ‘difference’ in the total experience of New Zealand. As one respondent commented, “My reasons for travelling were to see the country, to see the culture; hopefully to immerse myself in it as much as possible, the landscape, geology, the people. It was very important for me to do that. I like learning about history, about places that are different”. Another respondent commented on how it was important, “Because we have no culture back home; I was interested in the culture and I think it’s a part of New Zealand, so if you want to know the country or get to know the country, then you also put effort into trying to find out about their native culture”.

These findings were consistent with conclusions about the demand for experiences of Australian Aboriginal culture. Specifically, while not a primary drawcard, most visitors do express some level of interest in experiencing Aboriginal culture (Northern Territory Tourist Commission, 2000). As such, interest in Maori culture is potentially as a part of the total context of New Zealand and relates as much to the history, culture and heritage of New Zealand as it does specifically to Maori, although this requires further substantiation. Previous studies have however similarly concluded that ‘purposeful’ cultural tourists, or, those tourists who are highly motivated to travel for cultural tourism reasons are a minority of visitors, although they may still participate in some form of cultural activity, and for the most part, these experiences are demanded for their ability to reinforce the nature of ‘difference’ at a host destination (Lang Research, 2000; McKercher & Du Cros, 2002; Ryan & Huyton, 2000a, 2002).

That Maori culture represents a point of difference for visitors to New Zealand was further confirmed in the sorts of experiences that respondents reported as being most appealing to them. Of the respondents interviewed during the arrivals survey who were intending to experience Maori culture, the most frequently mentioned activity that respondents intended to experience was a visit to a Maori ‘dance or concert/performance’ (mentioned by 7 of the 10 respondents). Other frequently mentioned experiences included ‘visiting a marae or Maori community’, ‘buying Maori arts and crafts’, or ‘sampling Maori food’. However, as evidenced elsewhere (see Northern Territory Tourist Commission, 2000), none of these respondents had made any specific enquiries about how to experience these activities prior to their arrival in New Zealand.

Similarly, when respondents interviewed in the departure survey were asked to name aspects of Maori culture they found most intriguing or appealing, the most frequently mentioned aspects included the Maori ‘way of living’, ‘food/hangi’, a Maori ‘dance performance or concert’, Maori ‘history’, Maori ‘reactions to white settlers’, ‘museums/galleries’, ‘Maori myths and legends’, the ‘haka’, ‘how Maori fit with modern life in New Zealand’, their ‘crafts, art and music’, the ‘difference’ between life in New Zealand and that of the respondent’s own home country, the ‘compatibility of cultures in New Zealand’ and the Maori ‘language’. One tourist commented on how, “It’s just different to anything at home, when I go to new places I want to see what the difference is between cultures. I was more interested in where they come from, how they live their lives different to ours, how they integrate now into society”. Other respondents explained how the point of difference is in hearing Maori stories, “the stories they used to explain certain things, like how and why mountains are there, how they explained natural environments with stories”, or, “Seeing their dance; I think in England everyone finds the dance quite fascinating, especially the one they do at the rugby”; “obviously the haka is not done in other cultures so it’s just different”.

As such, there is some evidence to suggest that tourists were most interested in points of cultural difference, notably, Maori history as well as contemporary lifestyle and visual aspects of Maori culture such as dance performances/haka, crafts, art and hangi. For the most part, these attractions represent the traditional products or staged experiences provided of Maori culture in New Zealand and perhaps suggest that tourists visiting New Zealand seek an experience of the more traditional aspects of Maori culture that constitute a point of difference from experiences of other cultures. Ryan and Huyton (2002) and McKercher and Du Cros (2002) have further suggested that this may result from tourists’ search for experiences that are entertaining as opposed to more intellectual motives for experiencing host culture.

3.3. Tourists’ experiences of Maori culture

Despite representing a secondary influence on their decision to visit New Zealand, the majority of
respondents interviewed in the departure survey (32 out of the 46 interviewed) reported that they had gained an experience of Maori culture during their visit. Furthermore, just over half of the respondents stated that they would have liked to have experienced something else of Maori culture but had not had the opportunity. As such, Maori culture appears to be an integral part of what tourists experience during their visit to New Zealand.

Of those respondents who had not gained an experience of Maori culture, the main reason for not experiencing it related to the fact that it had ‘not been what they had come for’, suggesting other interest areas of higher priority. Interestingly, while some of these respondents reported that they had visited museums interpreting Maori culture during their visit, they did not consider these visits to constitute ‘experiences’ of Maori culture, potentially because of the lack of actual contact or interaction with Maori people. Barriers for experiencing Maori culture reported by respondents included ‘lack of time’, that ‘not everything was open’, or, that they felt had ‘already seen it once before’. Indeed, that indigenous tourism experiences are one-off experiences during a short length of stay is a conclusion made elsewhere (Finlayson 1991a; Northern Territory Tourist Commission, 2000; Ryan & Huyton, 2002).

The most frequently gained experiences of Maori culture included visits to museums, seeing a dance performance, visiting a Maori village, going to a hangi, social interaction with Maori, visiting the Treaty house, watching a haka, or seeing a demonstration of Maori carving. Respondents reported that they had become aware of the opportunity for experiencing Maori culture mainly through their tour operators, travel guides or brochures and information centres. Most of the experiences gained of Maori culture were in Rotorua or Waitangi; areas notable for their associations with Maori history. Respondents commented, unprompted, that there needed to be more advertising of opportunities to experience Maori culture, especially in the South Island of New Zealand, suggesting that some tourists perceived a lack of promotion and opportunities for experiences of Maori culture in certain parts of New Zealand.

Essential for product development is the need to understand the types of indigenous experiences demanded by tourists. Furthermore, an understanding of how tourists prefer to experience Maori culture is important for achieving heightened cultural understanding through tourism. When respondents interviewed in the departure survey were asked to reflect on the experiences they had gained of Maori culture and describe how they would have preferred to experience Maori culture, five dimensions of experience were revealed. These were experiences of gazing, lifestyle, authenticity, personal interaction and informal learning. These dimensions of experience are elaborated below.

3.3.1. Gazing

Findings of the present study provided some evidence to suggest that the nature of the experiences of Maori culture preferred by respondents constituted the desire to ‘gaze on difference’ through the viewing of host culture. This is consistent with the nature of tourism consumption reported elsewhere (Urry, 1990; Ryan et al., 2000; Ryan & Huyton, 2002; Schanzel & McIntosh, 2000). When respondents were asked to describe how they prefer to experience Maori culture, most respondents commented that they prefer the experience to be ‘visual’. For example, one respondent described how viewing host culture was preferable, “So that I remember it more. When you are on holiday, you lose the momentum of reading books and absorbing information like that. It’s probably easier when you’re travelling to absorb things and see things visually and actual people then it is to read books about it”.

Similarly, McKercher and Du Cros (2002) have concluded that the majority of cultural tourists seem to seek fairly shallow, easy to consume experiences. As such, appreciation of indigenous culture demands consideration of the potentially superficial and generalist nature of tourism consumption.

Icons of cultural ‘difference’ were also found to be an important part of what respondents preferred to view. Indeed, of the experiences gained by respondents, the hangi and concert were reported to be the experiences that respondents found most interesting because respondents saw them as representing ‘something different’ and had involved participation in something ‘traditional’. As one respondent described, “It’s different. It’s not everyday you throw your food in a hole in the ground and cook it like that. You feel like you are doing something, a part of something that has been around for a long time; you are actually involved for that period in time you are acting a certain way”.

Another respondent commented, “I went to a feast and concert because I like too see how they do different things”. When these respondents were further prompted as to what they meant by ‘different’, they used words such as ‘iconic’, ‘unique’ and ‘can’t do it at home’ to describe the sorts of experiences they preferred. This potentially confirms Craik’s (1997) analysis that tourists revel in the ‘otherness’ of destinations, peoples and/or activities as that presents them with a level of difference and counterpart to the everyday.

3.3.2. Lifestyle

Although gazing on traditional activities was important, the majority of respondents commented that their interest was in learning about the difference between
traditional and contemporary Maori lifestyles. Indeed, when asked to rate the importance of certain cultural opportunities, the majority of respondents (29 of the 46 respondents) stated that it was very important or quite important to have the opportunity to see how Maori people live in everyday life. For example, comments made by respondents included, “I like to know if they still practice their old ways and integrate with others”; “Most countries only showcase traditional lifestyles but that does not reflect how Maoris are living today”; “Just to see the way of life; I don’t think it’s that different nowadays to your everyday New Zealander; they are everyday New Zealanders after all. I’m ignorant to how well the integration is in society between some of you who would be classed as a Maori and white New Zealanders”; “It’s just interesting to know how people in the country you are visiting live. How it’s different for them to how you live”; “I guess the people in everyday life is quite important to me”. Furthermore, when asked to rate if any cultural opportunities were more important than the others, more respondents reported the need to have the opportunity to see how Maori people live in everyday life. Tourists’ desire to learn about contemporary lifestyle and issues, as opposed to just historic culture, is a finding supported by evidence reported elsewhere (Finlayson, 1991a; Notzke, 1999; Northern Territory Tourist Commission, 2000; Ryan & Huyton, 2000a).

Tourists’ desire to experience the lifestyle of Maori people can be further evidenced in tourists’ reported preferences for where they prefer to experience Maori culture. That is, the majority of respondents (20 of the 32 respondents who had experienced Maori culture) stated that they would have preferred to experience Maori culture by visiting a Maori community or marae. Confirming this finding, when respondents were asked specifically if there were aspects of Maori culture that they would have liked to have had the opportunity to experience but didn’t, just over half of all the respondents interviewed mentioned, unprompted, that they would have liked to have visited a Maori community or village. Indeed, respondents in the present study reported some level of dissatisfaction with the limited opportunity in New Zealand for visitors to visit a Maori community.

When asked to comment on perceived attributes of a ‘Maori community’, respondents perceived visiting a community to involve ‘seeing Maori people at home’, ‘having an opportunity to exchange culture or sharing ideas and thoughts about life’, meeting Maori people in ‘a genuine encounter’, an experience that is ‘less commercial’, ‘more realistic’ and ‘more natural’. When asked why this was important to them, respondents described how, “You can move from an outside view to a non-tourist inside view and that’s more meaningful”; “It makes the experience more genuine and you get to see life at home; get to know someone more real”; “The experience is not a commercial representation and you are not just an audience member at a show”. Further comments made by respondents included, “I would prefer to go to the community first but you need to know the history first before you go and see another culture”; “I prefer to see it hands-on; I prefer to see it myself by visiting a community, but museums are still good”; “It makes it more realistic; it’s like anything, why would you visit a country when you can look it up on the internet or look at it on TV”; “In a museum, you see the traditional old exhibits and in the community you see people that were a native tribe and how they are just trying to hang on to their lifestyle for actually showing to other people”; “I prefer to feel the real life situation, environment; you don’t get that kind of feeling in a museum”; “I think some of these organised things where you go and meet them are a bit contrived”.

Tourists’ interest in visiting indigenous communities is a conclusion supported by research findings from the Northern Territory Tourist Commission, (2000) in their study of demand for Aboriginal tourism in Australia. However, in view of respondents’ reported desire to visit a Maori community in order to learn about authentic contemporary Maori lifestyle, it could be argued that tourists potentially seek only a partial selection of the reality of the Maori world. Indeed, Craik, (1997) has stated that although tourists want authenticity, most require some degree of ‘negotiated’ experience from which they can selectively sample certain experiences to promote enjoyment. As such, it could be argued that by preferring to visit a Maori community or marae, tourists seek to negotiate or transform experiences of Maori culture into their own ‘romanticised’ version of the culture so that upon consumption, it becomes inherently ‘meaningful’ to them.

3.3.3. Authenticity

Although 31 out of the 32 respondents who had experienced Maori culture during their visit stated that they were satisfied with their experiences, many respondents commented, unprompted, on the reported ‘fake’ nature of some experiences of Maori culture they had received. For example, one respondent commented on how, “I experienced the hangi, although that wasn’t like a proper hangi; it was the kind of commercial one in Rotorua”. Other comments included how, “the experience was a little too ‘touristy’; I would rather have met some local people and spoken to them rather than gone to such a staged sort of event”. As confirmed in some other studies of demand for indigenous tourism (see Finlayson, 1991a; Asplet & Cooper, 2000; Northern Territory Tourist Commission, 2000), authenticity or an experience that was ‘not artificial’ was therefore felt to be an important aspect of experiencing Maori culture.
When further prompted as to what they meant by an ‘authentic’ experience of Maori culture, respondents described being able to, ‘get personally involved in the experience’, ‘experience the culture in its natural landscape’, as having ‘original values’ and experiencing ‘daily life’; preferring to have ‘incidental contact’ with Maori people, ‘rather than an organised, commercial experience’. However, many respondents in the present study commented that they perceived limited opportunity in New Zealand to get a truly authentic experience of Maori culture. For example, comments made by respondents included, “The only thing that we had was the commercial hangi in Rotorua. There wasn’t anything for the rest of the trip; I think it needs to be more accessible to the public”; “I think what’s presently offered is a bit touristy, but if you can’t get anything else, that would have to do”. These comments, while requiring further substantiation, potentially confirm the iconic nature of Maori tourism experiences, as perceived by visitors to New Zealand and, arguably, may be a result of the current product offering available.

Further comments made by respondents in relation to their preference for authentic experiences included, “I think there are certain times when you are a tourist and you see things that aren’t really proper culture and you feel like you are, not cheated, but it’s a bit of a tourist gimmick. I think it’s important that you see things really how they are not just for a show”; “If it’s not authentic, then I don’t think it’s good to see the lifestyle; it’s going to be too made to fit with tourists doing a quick trip through the islands as opposed to seeing the real true facts”; “We live in such a plastic society these days, you really don’t know what to believe when you see it; whether it’s real or not, so you are always hesitant; if you are seeing something that is genuine or think that is genuine, then it means a little more”; “I wouldn’t like it to be seen as just a money making venture. I would like it to be seen as educational; a way of educating people from around the world of their culture. Just acknowledging, respecting and appreciating their culture and their ways and traditions”.

Respondents also reported that it was very or quite important to them to know that the arts and crafts they purchased are Maori made (stated by 37 out of the 46 respondents). The majority of respondents also stated that it was either very important or quite important to them to have a Maori perspective or interpretation provided on tours (stated by 30 of the 46 respondents) but that this perspective must be ‘authentic’ and ‘given by a Maori person’. Respondents reported how, “It’s more real if you get the traditions passed on first hand rather than from another source like a museum”; “Having the Maori individual talking about his experiences and him speaking of his culture; not just someone else saying the Maori culture. It was his culture”; “You feel you learn the culture more because they [Maori] are teaching you”; “Because that’s the authentic way of getting to know them. If you just look at them and how they present themselves, that’s like going to the theatre”. This finding provides further support for the suggestion by Ryan and Huyton, (2000a) and the Northern Territory Tourist Commission, (2000) that visitors potentially place some level of importance on cultural information being provided among a range of other experiences on a tour, essentially as an added-value experience. Therefore, in terms of tourists’ expressed desire for authentic experiences of Maori culture, it is perhaps questionable whether tourists really search for dedicated reality instead of a negotiated experience of host culture, as discussed above, or indeed, whether promoters can ever truly deliver authentic experiences in the short time frame and generalist nature of most tourist experiences.

3.3.4. Personal interaction

Previous studies of tourists’ perspectives of indigenous tourism have provided increasing evidence that tourists demand direct contact with indigenous people through meeting them in a genuine manner (Finlayson, 1991a; Milne et al., 1998; Notzke, 1999; Northern Territory Tourist Commission, 2000; Ryan & Huyton, 2000a, 2002). Indeed, respondents in the present study similarly mentioned that ‘personal interaction’, ‘hands-on’ experience or contact with Maori people was also an important part of experiencing Maori culture. Indeed, when asked to rate the importance of certain cultural opportunities, the majority of respondents felt it was very important or quite important to have the opportunity to interact with Maori people (reported by 28 of the 46 respondents). For example, respondents commented that, “I personally find it better when someone is talking to me and you’re there and seeing things relate to the information he/she is giving you”; “Interacting with Maori people is most important because that is the only way you learn about the culture; from having interaction with that culture”; “I guess it’s not just a paragraph in a book, it’s a personal and interactive experience. It’s more meaningful that way”; “I think it’s important that you learn about it from people because it knocks down things like ignorance and racism barriers”. As such, personal interaction with Maori people was perceived to include the opportunity for an ‘involving’ or ‘meaningful’ encounter and, the chance to get to know New Zealanders.

This is comparable with conclusions from studies of heritage tourism consumption more generally (Moscardo, 1996; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999), whereby tourists gain increased insight and appreciation from interactive
and personal encounters of host culture. However, some respondents commented on the “difficulty in having this contact” as the opportunities are not currently easily available. One respondent commented on how, “Many people were looking for interaction but it’s usually all touristic experiences”. As such, even though it appears that respondents may prefer to interact with indigenous people, they currently do not know how to organise this. Indeed, McKercher & Du Cros, (2002) have similarly concluded that cultural tourism consumption experiences are largely based on convenience and ease of access and as such, tourists do not venture widely for experiences.

Most respondents stated that in their interaction with Maori people, they preferred to have a ‘brief’ experience rather than be more ‘immersed’ in the culture, thus further reinforcing the generalist and rather superficial nature of consumption. The main reason given for this was that it was felt to be “difficult to be immersed” in Maori culture because there were felt to be barriers to gaining an immersive experience of Maori culture; notably, the short trip duration. Comments made by respondents included, “Brief is better; I was only here for three weeks”; “Just a brief experience; I did not have enough time”; “Very brief. If I was really interested in it; doing study or something, then yeah, I’d rather just learn as I was travelling around the country”; “Because my mission when I set out was to see the land itself, not to study Maori culture, and if I happened to come by that along the way, then so be it”. As such, respondents’ preferences for brief rather than immersed experiences of Maori culture potentially confirms tourists’ preferences for gazing on indigenous culture as discussed above but potentially within a context that is perceived to be authentic, interactive and personally meaningful.

3.3.5. Informal learning

The dimensions of experience discussed above provide further evidence about how tourists prefer to gain an understanding of host culture. In particular, it could be argued that tourists’ appreciation of Maori culture centres around a preference for viewing culture as a generalist tourism activity and for informal interaction with Maori people. Important for the achievement of appreciation of host culture in the pursuit of sustainable tourism is the need to examine what knowledge or understanding tourists reportedly gain from their generalist experiences of host culture. In the present study, 30 out of the 46 interviewed during the departure survey stated that they had ‘learnt something new’ about Maori culture from their visit. This finding thereby provides further support for anecdotal evidence provided by previous studies (see Finlayson, 1991a; Dann, 1994; Notzke, 1999), that visitors may indeed acquire new knowledge about a host culture, despite visitors’ multiple or generalist motivations, or, even if the opportunities to interact personally with indigenous people are limited.

However, while some degree of learning had reportedly taken place, it could be argued that the nature of learning gained by respondents was shallow. This is perhaps not surprising given respondents’ lack of prior knowledge about Maori culture and the iconic generalist nature of consumption. Aspects that respondents had reportedly learned included aspects of Maori history, traditional lifestyle, Maori legends, stories and customs, the fact that there are different Maori tribes and controversy over the way Maori are viewed in New Zealand. Respondents described for example how, “I’ve learnt about their history in more detail in terms of what happened when New Zealand was settled when the white man arrived. The persecution, the loss of land; that side I didn’t know very much about”; “Probably I never realised the way they are viewed in New Zealand. I was expecting it to be very equal between everyone in New Zealand but coming here I found that the Maoris don’t feel that way and they want more recognition than they have”. Perhaps also not surprising given the generalist nature of consumption, respondents reported that the majority of new knowledge that they had gained was achieved informally by, for example, watching television and film, reading travel guides or brochures and from general conversations while travelling, rather than by formally visiting Maori tourist attractions. As such, it has been argued that the knowledge gained by tourists is unlikely to be extensive, especially due to the spatial and cultural distance between host and tourist (Prentice et al., 1994).

Although further research into the effects of cultural distance on cross-cultural understanding is required, it may be postulated from findings of the present study that the nature of appreciation reported here is potentially less affective and more formal (cognitive) than has been reported in tourists’ experiences of more familiar cultural contexts (see Prentice et al., 1994; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999). In particular, emotional reactions or experiences of personal relevance or attachment were not reported by respondents in their experiences of Maori culture. This may be a result of the shallow nature of the experiences gained and tourists’ lack of ‘connectivity’ to Maori heritage (Timothy, 1997). It may also be argued that tourists will never be able to fully appreciate the affective and spiritual dimensions of Maori culture. Nevertheless, that tourists reported heightened appreciation for certain aspects of Maori culture and indigenous issues appears to confirm that some level of cultural understanding can be achieved despite the generalist context of consumption.
4. Conclusions

Tourists’ perspectives of indigenous tourism are important for identifying consumer demand for product development and for assessing appreciation of host culture in the pursuit of tourism that is mutually beneficial to both host and tourist. While much emphasis in the literature on indigenous tourism has been given to issues of sustainable development, there remains only anecdotal information about the nature of demand for indigenous tourism and tourists’ appreciation of indigenous culture. This paper has sought to synthesise anecdotal conclusions about demand for indigenous tourism with exploratory research into tourists’ appreciation for Maori culture in New Zealand. Appreciation of host culture, for the purposes of this paper, was measured as tourists’ reported motivations, perceptions and experiences of indigenous culture. As such, important insights were gained into tourists’ preferences for indigenous tourism product and the central dimensions of experience from which tourists come to gain knowledge about the culture of an indigenous people.

Findings from the present study, while indicative, provided some level of support for anecdotal evidence that is increasingly being reported by studies of tourists’ perspectives of indigenous tourism. As such, the findings raise important issues in the achievement of sustainable development for indigenous communities. For instance, the present study provided further evidence that Maori culture, as noted in other studies of indigenous tourism, may not represent a primary motivation for visiting a destination. Instead, demand for indigenous tourism potentially needs to be seen in terms of how it reinforces the nature of ‘difference’ at the host destination. While this finding is comparable with research into demand for cultural tourism more generally (for example, Anderson et al., 2000; McKercher & Du Cros, 2002), it suggests that previous claims concerning the demand for indigenous tourism may be inflated (see Zeppel, 1998, 2001). This has important consequences for indigenous product development and the economic viability of indigenous tourism enterprises. Indeed, Altman and Finlayson (1993) have argued that unrealistic expectations about the potential demand for indigenous tourism ventures can lead to increased dependence on long-term government financial sponsorship that prolongs the welfare dependency of indigenous communities.

Tourists’ prior knowledge of Maori culture was found to be low and tourists were found to hold traditional stereotypical impressions of Maori culture. This may in part be a result of the generalist and iconic nature of experiences sought by tourists, as well as a result of the nature of existing Maori tourism product available in New Zealand. That is, existing Maori tourism product that centres on cultural product and performances may have created a limited stereotyping of Maori imagery that has been created for commercial ends (see Craik, 1997). Indeed, Finlayson (1991a) has argued that tourists tend to consume what they see as identifiable symbols of a host culture and, as such, a focus on traditional image may potentially inhibit growth for indigenous tourism. In achieving economic development for indigenous peoples, it is therefore important to look beyond traditional images in the promotion of Maori culture and address the contemporary nature of Maori culture in product development. In this way, the notion of Maori as ‘exotic’ and ‘traditional’ people frozen in time is not perpetuated in tourists’ perceptions.

Findings of the study also revealed five important dimensions of experience that provided further support for anecdotal conclusions about tourists’ preferences for indigenous tourism experiences. These dimensions are important variables to heighten tourist participation and appreciation of Maori culture in the pursuit of sustainable tourism development. The five dimensions included preferences for gazing, lifestyle, authenticity, personal interaction and informal learning. As such, there is increasing evidence that tourists seek similar experiences from their encounters with indigenous peoples. In particular, tourists appear to demand opportunities to be provided for authentic and genuine interaction or ‘sincere’ contact with indigenous peoples (Taylor, 2001). As such, tourists seek opportunities to visit indigenous communities to learn about the culture from the indigenous people themselves, albeit in a superficial manner. The most meaningful experiences for tourists may thus occur through informal personal contact with indigenous people, such as in the process of ‘endearment’ (Prentice et al., 1994), in contrast to experiences of staged cultural events. However, this contrasts somewhat with the nature of existing Maori tourism product in New Zealand, as well as the current priority of public policy for further indigenous product development (see Finlayson, 1991b; New Zealand Tourism Strategy, 2010). The findings of the study therefore raise important implications for indigenous product development and delivery. In the achievement of sustainable indigenous tourism, the findings also have implications for impact management as staged performances generally have less impact on a community and its way of life.

Despite tourists’ reported preferences for ‘sincere’ interaction with indigenous peoples, the brief and rather superficial nature as well as generalist context of tourism consumption must be taken into consideration. As such, this study shares Ryan and Huyton’s, (2000b)
concern that it would be a mistake to regard tourists as amateur anthropologists seeking a detailed understanding of indigenous peoples and their culture. Findings from the present study did provide some evidence that tourists did reportedly gain an increased understanding and appreciation for Maori culture from their visit, although the level of learning was shallow. However, an increasing number of studies have concluded that indigenous culture is consumed somewhat superficially as a unique ‘point of difference’, or as an object of the tourist gaze. As such, there is increasing concern that experiences of indigenous culture are consumed out of the desire for a ‘romanticised’ version of the culture and may constitute desirable but not essential aspects of a trip itinerary, or alternatively, constitute ‘one-off’ experiences.

For this reason, recent studies by Ryan and Huyton, (2000a) and McIntosh, (2001) have suggested that offering mainstream tourism products that present indigenous culture as an added-value product may attract a wider visitor market for indigenous tourism. Although, in discussing Aboriginal tourism in Australia, Ryan and Huyton, (2000a) have argued that this strategy could lead to simplification and commodification of Aboriginal culture at a risk of loss of control by Aboriginal people over Aboriginal tourism products. However, delivering cultural information as an added-value product to tourism experiences may serve as an appropriate development option that meets tourists’ desires for meaningful and sincere encounters whilst ensuring heightened appreciation of indigenous culture. Indeed, the Maori people of New Zealand have great ability to capitalise on their warm hospitality whilst adding depth of experience to what a destination has to offer. As such, less formally structured or less staged cultural experiences that allows both tourist and host to communicate and interact in a meaningful manner, in what may be termed an ‘exchange of sincerity’, may constitute the most appropriate development option for indigenous tourism, thus effecting the ability of tourism encounters to be mutually beneficial for host and tourist alike.

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