

Domestic Tourists in the context of cultural tourism – who are they and why does it matter?

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Abstract

Researching the demand for Māori eco-cultural tourism we have discovered a number of nuances in the understanding of cultural identity which affect the results of our studies and others in New Zealand and overseas. Tourist studies usually segment tourists into international and domestic categories; however in the context of eco-cultural tourism this segmentation is neither straightforward nor sufficient. For example, New Zealand residents who are originally from overseas perceive Māori culture (and thus cultural tourism experiences) differently to both overseas visitors and to New Zealanders living in New Zealand. Similarly Māori New Zealanders may perceive Māori cultural tourism experiences differently to Pakeha New Zealanders and to each other depending on their own identities.

Scoping interviews indicate that New Zealand residents originally from overseas may be more interested in Māori tourism and more comfortable with not knowing about Māori culture than are New Zealanders who have grown up here. Similarly, New Zealanders are in some ways more familiar with Māori culture but may not choose to engage with the culture in a tourism frame. There is a need to take account of these issues in tourism research.