

Chapter 3

Flexible Labour Markets, Ethnicity and Tourism-related Migration in Australia and New Zealand

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This chapter is concerned with the impact of particular groups of non-English speaking tourists on local labour markets in an Australia/New Zealand setting. Japanese and Korean tourism to the Gold Coast and Far North Queensland (Cairns based) Regions of Australia, and Japanese, Taiwanese and Korean tourism to the Rotorua Region of New Zealand, are examined for clues as to the importance of tourism induced (consumption-led) labour migration in promoting regional tourism.

Migration is a difficult issue in both Australia and New Zealand. Since the 1980s in Australia, and the 1990s in New Zealand, when Asian immigration numbers began to rise sharply, the media in both countries have churned out dozens of soul-searching analyses of attitudes to immigrants. Yet for all this media attention, there has been little of an attitudinal shift in either Country. Despite the fact that both owe much of what they are to immigration (over 40% of Australia's current population is either first or second generation migrant), it remains as thorny a topic as ever, the grasp of the issues woefully inadequate, and the debate infested with ethnocentrism. Coming to terms with the removal of the common 'white (Northern European) country' policies of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in favour of engagement with the Pacific Rim has not been easy.

One of the ways forward has been to actively promote the often-touted tourism-business link. Many of the first wave of business immigrants had previously been tourists who, once the traditional source country policies had been overturned, returned to seek out the opportunities they had first seen as visitors (Brown and Moore, 1970; Cohen, 1985; Monk and Alexander, 1986; King, 1995; Snepenger, et al., 1995; Legat, 1996; Ko, 1996; McDonnell, 1997). However, in recent times the economic value of business migrants has been questioned as the expected investment has not eventuated or has not been easily identifiable. Indeed, some recent commentators have gone as far to say that Australasia has become a dumping ground for families, while real business interests remain in the country or region of origin (Legat, 1996). Immigrant commentators counter this by rejecting the unrealistic notion that capital can be moved quickly, especially where there is a

language barrier. They also note that business links (and hence investment) take time to mature even when there are people of the same family or group at both ends of the arrangement.

Nevertheless, immigration has aided investment and tourism. One of the key reasons for this with respect to Asian tourism in both Australia and New Zealand has been a social/cultural safety factor. For the majority of travellers from this region (and, indeed from many others) to benefit from the tourism experience offered, there has to be significantly similar levels and types of social interactions in the tourist experience as occur in everyday life in their own country (Pearce, 1992; Wang, et al., 1998). In destinations where the native language is not theirs, and the social mores are different, tourists' own nationals (or at least language speakers) employed in the industry in that location assist them to function more easily, and therefore to want/enjoy the tourism experience (King and Gamage, 1995; Navarro and Turco, 1994). Businesses in the destination(s) run and/or staffed by people from their own ethnic group have a distinct attraction to the tourist as a point of relation/stability within an often-chaotic experience.

Asian tourism to the Gold Coast and Far North Queensland (centered on Cairns), Australia and to Rotorua, New Zealand exhibits many features of this. Businesses run by Japanese, Taiwanese, and Korean entrepreneurs, and employing their nationals/language speakers, dominate many of the critical economic relationships within the tourism industry in both areas. Ranging from travel agents, through tour operators to souvenir shops, these businesses provide both an avenue for communication in the tourist's own language, and an insurance policy with respect to correct social mores as well as with respect to the retention of economic returns in origin country hands. While this perhaps does not hasten or even assist the cross-cultural understanding suggested as the major benefit of tourism by many authors (Craik, 1991), it does at least provide for satisfied customers in the main, and therefore positive feelings towards the host region or country. These points will be examined in more depth below.

A recent trend in both destinations has been a tendency to employ backpackers (students from Japan, Taiwan and/or Korea), and other itinerant workers (Japanese, Taiwanese and Korean speakers but Australian/New Zealand nationals); in businesses locally owned by Japanese, Taiwanese and Korean people. This form of labour migration is having an impact on the nature and geographical extent of tourist flows from these countries (Brown and Moore, 1970; King, 1995; Williams and Hall, 2000). Where such flexible labour markets are occurring, Free Independent Travel (FIT) (including Visit Friends and Relations specific flows) tourism is becoming more important, possibly due to the recognition that there are likely to be people of the same age, ethnic background and/or education background to welcome the FIT traveller, thus lessening the uncertainty involved. Favourable social situations are news and such news travels fast!

1. FLEXIBLE LABOUR MARKETS, CULTURE AND MIGRATION

1.1 Tourism Labour Markets

Most studies of tourism employment in Australia and New Zealand have been concerned with estimating the aggregate employment effects of tourism in the national or regional context (Bureau of Industry Economics (BIE), 1979; Cooper and Pigram, 1984; Bureau of Tourism Research, 1999). Very few have been directly concerned with the characteristics of the tourism labour market proper (Norris, et al., 1995). For employment impact purposes the most practical definition of the tourism labour market is obtained by categorising relevant industry and occupational groups using the Australian Standard Industry Classification (ASIC), the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO), and their New Zealand equivalents. While the boundaries of these categories may not always be perfectly suited to describing tourism activities (Cooper and Pigram, 1984); defining the tourism labour market in such terms allows a close approximation of the industry. Thus several ASIC categories can be identified as tourism industries on the basis that either:

- A high proportion of the industry's activity is directly related to tourism; or
- A high proportion of tourism related demand is met by goods and services supplied by that industry.

Tourism's share of each industry's employment can then be attributed according to its share of total demand in that industry, and according to the existing occupational structure of employment in that industry. In Australia, some 1.1 million jobs in total are currently attributed to tourism, spread across 53 different occupational categories, and comprising 8.4% of the total workforce (BTR, 1999). In New Zealand it is estimated that tourism supports some 120,000 jobs. From this point the characteristics of the tourism labour market can be ascertained.

A high proportion of sales and personal services workers dominate the occupational distribution of employment in the tourism labour markets of both Countries. Sales workers are predominantly located in allied wholesale and retail industries, while personal services occupations are the archetypal tourism occupations. The latter group, consisting mainly of bar attendants and waiters, dominate employment in the restaurants, hotels and clubs sector. More than one-third of employment in the tourism industry is part-time. For Australia, this proportion is highest in the recreation, personal and other services industry (45%) and, within this industry, highest in the sales and personal services occupations (around 65%). In fact, by comparison with the labour market as a whole, the incidence of part-time work in the recreation, personal and other services industry is higher for all occupations. Part-time employment of the few professionals and para-professionals is also very high at around 40%. A further characteristic is that the gender balance amongst part-time employment in the Tourism industry is much less biased than in the rest of the workforce in Australia. In this industry no less than 31% of male employment is part-time, compared to 15% male part-time employment in the labour market as a whole (BTR, 1999).

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