

Antarctic Tourism – Where To?
Tourism and New Zealand's Future Role: A Case Study

LITERATURE REVIEW

During the investigation into the future of Antarctic tourism and New Zealand's role, abundant literature was found which covered the historical record of human activity in the Antarctic, and the advent of people arriving in the Antarctic for the sole purpose of tourism. There was less information available on the history of New Zealand's involvement in Antarctic tourism. Generally, any information would be referred to within the context of work based on another research area or in reference to the danger of tourist activity in the Antarctic, especially the Mount Erebus crash. A number of articles available on Antarctic tourism are beginning to research the status of tourism to the Ross Sea Region, which is administered by New Zealand, and has become the second most popular tourist destination in Antarctica. As will be shown below, there is limited literature available on the future of New Zealand in Antarctic tourism.

The institutional arrangements surrounding Antarctic tourism also include a policy and a political dimension. The development of Antarctic tourism, its legislative basis, the relationship with state departments, national governments, the private sector and non-governmental associations, are all affected by a variety of political values and interests. Historical information on the political involvement of New Zealand in Antarctica and the attitude towards tourism in the Antarctic is available but again there is limited information on New Zealand's current and likely future policy on its role in Antarctic tourism.

Tourism management does not occur in a vacuum, in particular Antarctic tourism. Tourism development and management are influenced by the culture in which the tourism is situated and by values at the individual, community, national and international level. The tourism management system is affected by the various perceptions and values of stakeholders regarding the significance of tourism and the nature of the tourism resource. It is this paradox – the tension in the values of a stakeholder, often economic, and that of environmental stewardship, which marks the underlying discourse on the future of New Zealand Antarctic tourism management. An analysis of this paradox formed an integral part of the literature search.

Therefore, the literature search included three main areas of investigation:

- The history of tourism in the Ross Dependency, its current status and the future;
- The New Zealand Antarctic tourism policy environment;
- Environmental stewardship versus economic return - the issue of values.

The history of tourism in the Ross Dependency, its current status and the future

In 1992-1993, when this author examined the paradox of ecotourism to the Antarctic and the sub-Antarctic islands concentrating on a New Zealand perspective for a Master's thesis (Wouters 1993), it was difficult to find comprehensive information directly relevant to New Zealand's role in Antarctic tourism. Gradually more research became available on the situation and management of Antarctic tourism. Most of this information was being published in the form of journal articles, often quite dispersed.

Since the submission of the thesis in 1993, two works have been published which have provided a detailed and useful summary of the state of tourism in Antarctica and contain reference to New Zealand. The first of these is a "Special Issue" of *The Annals of Tourism Research* entitled Antarctic Tourism and which was published in 1994. This issue contains essays which together provide a detailed summary of the components constituting Antarctic tourism. The publication covers the historical background, the current situation, the environmental implications, the policy and legal setting internationally and nationally, of Antarctic tourism, as well as providing case studies of tourism at an Antarctic research station and the New Zealand sub-Antarctic islands. Overall, this is a valuable resource describing the historical and current status of tourism to the Antarctic.

The second publication referred to above, edited by C. M. Hall and M. E. Johnston, is entitled Polar Tourism – Tourism in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions published in 1995. This work aims to fill a gap in the literature on tourist activities in the northern and southern polar regions. It uses a comparative approach in their analysis of tourism development, management and policy in Arctic and Antarctic tourism and provides a useful resource of academic study. This publication would probably be more valuable if it contained information on in-situ observation of the nature of Antarctic tourism and more information on the practical application of its recommendations.

The most comprehensive and current publication on the role of New Zealand in Antarctic tourism has been prepared by Bev Abbott entitled Tourism Opportunities in the Ross Sea Region and which was published in 1997. This is the most up-to-date and far-reaching record this author has encountered in the search on New Zealand's involvement in Antarctic tourism.

Recent information on the numbers and motivations of tourists, and sites visited by tourists to the Ross Sea Region has been described by Cessford and Dingwall (1996, 1998). Their work is based on physical research and is useful preliminary information on tourism in the Ross Sea Region. A number of other researchers, primarily from New Zealand, such as Mason (1996), Mason and Legg (1998) and Hall and Johnston (1995), have described the issues surrounding Antarctic tourism from an academic perspective and are useful background reading. Little on-the-ground research has been completed and is available in the public arena on the physical impacts and practical implications of tourism to the Ross Dependency, as well as on New Zealand's research facility, Scott Base. Other than the publication prepared by Abbott, there is limited information on the future of tourism in the Ross Dependency from a New Zealand perspective.

The New Zealand Antarctic Tourism Policy Environment

Aside from the acts which relate to the Antarctic (*Antarctic (Environmental Protection) Act* 1994 and the *New Zealand Antarctic Institute Act* 1996) and the mission statement and strategic goals provided by Antarctica New Zealand, there is little review of the strategic aspect of the current and future roles New Zealand intends to have in the involvement and management of Antarctic tourism, other than the findings of the Abbott report referred to above. The definition of sustainable tourism and the practical implications of promoting sustainable tourism in the Antarctic context have not been clearly stated.

From an operational perspective, information available exists in the form of Guidelines and Procedures for Visitors to the Ross Sea Region (1997) published by the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs. This information is not entirely “user friendly” and does not provide an indication of New Zealand’s future purpose in the Antarctic.

The Environmental Strategy (Antarctica New Zealand 1998) contains the guiding principles for New Zealand’s Antarctic involvement for the next three years. Another Antarctica New Zealand publication, New Zealand’s Future in Antarctica (no date) highlights the company’s vision and strategic statements. One reason for the limited amount of information available is the relatively recent creation of Antarctica New Zealand in 1996.

Useful summaries of conferences held in the last ten years to gather a wide range of opinions on the future of New Zealand’s Antarctic policy can be found in Antarctica 150: Scientific Perspectives <-> Policy Futures (Hay, Hemmings, Thom 1990) and Antarctica 2010 – A Notebook (Tetley 1998).

Environmental Stewardship versus Economic Return - The Issue of Values

A review of the literature points to the need for research to be done in the area of the definition of environmental stewardship and the present and future role of New Zealand in the Antarctic.

“having an identified political agenda is more useful than pretending that what we do is ‘value free’ and ‘neutral’ ... because it provides a clearer starting point for negotiations over contested pasts and values. In addition, it becomes harder for the values and notions of significance that practitioners attribute to sites to become obscured by notions of ‘objectivity’ and ‘neutrality’.”

Nixon, Smith and Upcher (1995:139) quoted in Hall and McArthur (1996:11)

In International Environmental Politics – Protecting the Antarctic, Elliott (1994:1) suggests that the Environmental Protocol “represents a change of values and ideas about how best to protect the Antarctic from the impact of human activity”. This publication examines the international politics of environmental protection within the Treaty and the norms and values that have shaped decision making on international environmental issues. It uses the Antarctic as a case-study of how states define their interests and how these are redefined. She suggests that a paradigm shift is required resulting in an emphasis on “interdependence norms, a recognition of the importance of environmental values that is then translated into action, and the participation of other actors besides states” (Elliott 1994:3). The publication explores how both policy and practices of environmental protection were constrained by the political interests dominating the regime. This work makes a valuable contribution to the debate about international relations and environmental regimes and upon what basis these are judged. However, the primary focus is on mineral resources and living resources and there is only a small focus on the position of Antarctic tourism in Antarctic environmental politics and the need for a definition of values in the management of tourism. An extension into the area of tourism by this author would have made the book a very complete analysis of the resource, political and value pressures facing Antarctica.

Another area where there is little information available is who benefits from the development of Antarctic tourism. As in any form of tourism, there is a focus on economic return in Antarctic tourism. Generally, a country seeking economic growth and development may encourage tourism. Obviously one does not need to worry about the needs of indigenous populations in the case of Antarctic tourism, however, countries which are Antarctic gate-

ways can be motivated to benefit from Antarctic tourism. This can be complicated by a desire for monetary gain as well as political gain. Governments of these countries may see tourism as a fruitful source of foreign currency, employment opportunities (both in New Zealand and in the Antarctic), investment potential, infrastructure improvement, enhanced prestige and image. In the future the development of Antarctic gate-way tourism may become a serious impact of Antarctic tourism.

Prosser (1992:43) believes that, in relation to the cost of tourism, "the problems most commonly stem from the issue of who controls the development and running of the tourism". A significant amount of research has been conducted on the issue of who controls and polices tourist activities in the Antarctic but not a lot of research has been done on the issue of ownership and control of the development of Antarctic tourism. Prosser (1992:43) suggests that, generally, in tourism only a small elite group reaps the benefits and that "articulating an effective system for spreading this wealth directly or indirectly through all strata of a society is proving one of the more intractable dilemmas of development policy, both internally and internationally". This is particularly relevant for the development of Antarctic tourism – since the signing of the Antarctic Treaty, and the subsequent development of the Antarctic Treaty System, a number of developing nations have called for a more equal system whereby not just the developed nations would have access to resources. A generic study on the value of Antarctic tourism from a wide range of perspectives as well as a description of the New Zealand situation would be a useful asset in the discussion on the future development of Antarctic tourism and the role New Zealand intends to play simultaneously of environmental steward.

Conclusion

The environmental, social, political and economic benefits and costs of Antarctic tourism are likely to become more intense. There is increasing debate about the paradox of increased access to the continent and the confluent impact of the presence of humans in the Antarctic. As outlined above, the literature contains sufficient information on the likely impacts of tourism to the Antarctic. There is less information available on tourism to the Ross Sea Region. Similarly, there is little information at the government level on the likely future involvement of New Zealand in Antarctic tourism. The literature also contains little analysis of the effects involvement by New Zealand in Antarctic tourism (within New Zealand and in the Ross Dependency) may have. Finally, although worldwide there is increasing study of environmental ethics, little has been done on the description of the values New Zealand places on the Antarctic.

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