

coming out, being seen to be a sustainable business delivering on the 100% Pure brand in how you run your business is going to be a big thing.

"In the next few years it will be very important that businesses walk the talk... If we are to continue to use the 100% Pure positioning line we have to deliver on that and all the implications of that."

She believes that visitor's expectations will move quite markedly, particularly those from Europe, who will expect quite significant signs that we are responsible and sustainable.

And she and Simmons are not alone in their thinking.

Well before the latest outbreak of intense publicity around climate change; before the Stern Report and before Helen Clark's speech on a carbon neutral future for New Zealand, the Ministerial Advisory Group on Tourism came out noting that; "New Zealand's biggest industry of the future will be a sustainable one".

The Minister of Tourism, Damien O'Connor issued a press release in October reporting on the Ministerial Advisory Group which is overseeing the update of the New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2010.

The group had considered the outcome of a broad consultation across the tourism sector and O'Connor said tourism, which was likely to be New Zealand's largest and most important industry in the future, "...must be developed in a way that continues to protect the environment, communities, visitors' quality of experience, and the industry's profit expectations".

Strategy director Geoff Burns said the group had reached

consensus on key issues and directions and he believed the industry was at a breakthrough point in the development of New Zealand tourism.

"New Zealand is a small country and most of our international visitors have to travel a great distance to get here. We believe that with careful management these features can be turned into a positive - building on the strong conservation and community values intrinsic to New Zealanders. We will be an example to the rest of the world in sustainability and environmental management."

### The baby-boomer element

So, presuming tourists will continue to come to New Zealand, an aging global population means that our tourists are also likely to be older.

While that won't happen rapidly and business owners probably don't need to be factoring it into next year's business plan, Luhrs says if she were a business owner, over the next few years she'd look at what products she had for older baby boomers.

This might include softer options. While they still want adventure they probably won't want ultimate adventure; instead of going to the back country, they might prefer the front country. They want food and wine and cultural experiences; they'll look for personalised experiences such as Maori tours; or fishing tours.

"They will be driven by their passion and will start to look for cooking lessons, going fishing, playing golf."



Te Puia.

And it seems likely that cultural tourism will play an increasingly important role too in the wider tourism picture.

As Damien O'Connor pointed out in a recent speech one of the real points of difference New Zealand has to offer is our culture.

"Tourism offerings that provide insights into New Zealand's indigenous culture in particular, can serve to truly set the New Zealand travel experience apart from any other in the world."

Thus, he says, it is important to ensure that truly authentic cultural tourism experiences are both available, and widely visible.

And if anything illustrates this it must be Te Puia which, with its 500,000 visitors per annum is the largest cultural tourism business in New Zealand. The organisation has just spent \$17.5m (self funded) on a major redesign of its centre in Rotorua.

The new design promises "an enhanced visitor offering which will include a high-spec interactive experience using leading edge tourism technologies along with a spectacular new building which contains a number of physical and cultural elements "believed to be a first, not only for New Zealand but the world" .

In a recent speech in Hawaii, the CEO of Te Puia, Andrew Te Whaiti, noted that international visitors "crave" stories and are

prepared to pay a premium for them.

"Visitors come not just to encounter a place or a tradition but to interact with the living stewards of the place."

### A fresh look at China

Another issue to address is the prospect of 100 million Chinese tourists venturing out into the world by the year 2020. Luhrs says TIA is not supportive of the way the China market is working at present "but we are supportive of the trade training TNZ has been undertaking, the work with Chinese government officials being undertaken by the Ministry of Tourism and of the more structured approach that Air NZ is going to take to it".

"They are targeting two specific markets in Shanghai and looking for the FIT travellers with a good grasp of English. Air NZ has bought Chinese celebrities down to NZ who have blogged about their NZ experiences."

The market from China that New Zealand wants is at the upper end and Luhrs notes that the China market is counter cyclical to NZ with 40 deg. Celsius temperatures in Shanghai in July. "We can market .. autumn here and suggest people escape to the freshness of New Zealand."

In the big picture it seems the general consensus is that where-ever tourists come from, it's our people and our landscapes they come to see. We just have to ensure we are ready for them and offering the best, most authentic experience possible.

(See page 42 for the Ministry of Tourism's view on the China market and Geoge Hickton's analysis on page 44.)

## Keeping it real



Melissa Crockett and her business partner Bianca Ranson could almost be seen as something of pin-up girls for the changing face of New Zealand tourism.

These two young women (Ranson is 27 and Crockett 29) run Potiki Adventures in Auckland which offers urban contemporary Maori tour experiences along with adventure tours with a Maori focus.

And their business encompasses much that tourism analysts see as New Zealand's best chance of holding its own in the fiercely competitive global tourism market.

Potiki offers authentic experiences, that allow tourists to interact and engage with local people and local landscapes; it offers small group or individual tours personalised to their customers wants; and the tours are underpinned with a strong cultural element.

Crockett and Ranson started in February 2004 and it's been a steep learning curve.

"Our tours are not really tours so much, they are slice of life. We treat our visitors as we would family and friends," says Crockett.

"We pride ourselves on providing unique tours that

are innovative and truly memorable."

Ranson, who is fluent in Maori, says they are working hard to "keep the tours small, real and authentic".

They have standard and also customised tours which might include the Pa site at One Tree Hill, a tour of the Otara Markets; a visit to a Maori artist in his or her home for a cup of tea and a chat; local cafes, contemporary Maori art galleries and Auckland's wild West Coast beaches and rainforest.

Another excursion to Leigh, just north of Auckland, sees the visitor pop in on Melissa's parents for morning tea; followed by kayaking & snorkelling, shellfish gathering concluding with fish and chips on the beach.

And all this is overlaid with the Maori stories and traditions behind what they are doing and where they are going. Crockett and Ranson are of Nga Puhī and Ngati Kahu and Te Rarawa heritage.

While they won't talk figures the turnover of the business is more than doubling each year and the company has had some great publicity locally and offshore. They regularly provide famil trips for Tourism Auckland

and the Tourism NZ International Media Programme. In turn Crockett won the PATA Young Tourism Professional Award at the Tourism Industry Awards earlier this year.

The pair are very marketing savvy and as a small company, without a big marketing budget, they are well aware of utilising every opportunity possible.

So what makes their business different?

Crockett notes that visitors want an interactive experience. They want to learn and to interact with locals. She cites providing customised Maori art tours, where predominantly wealthy clients visit a range of Maori artists in their homes. The clients love the rare opportunity to meet real people in their homes and gain direct insights about their art and their lives.



Above: Melissa Crockett and Bianca Ranson. Far left: Ranson teaches traditional weaving.