Book Review

Reviewed by Alisha Ali

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Tourism Information Technology (2nd Edition)
by: P.J. Benckendorff, P.J. Sheldon and D.R. Fesenmaier
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Nosworthy Way, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 8DE, UK, 368pp
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Information technology has already radically altered the tourism landscape and with the constant development and refinement of new technologies, it is undeniable that these impacts will continue to challenge the tourism industry. This second edition text by Benckendorff, Sheldon and Fesenmaier (2014) is an integral update as it has amalgamated a vast body of knowledge in a comprehensive and organised approach to provide the reader with insightful developments in the field of tourism and information technology. This revised edition includes five new chapters and updated content, which reflect the dynamic nature of the field. The authors have achieved the aims of this book, which are to expound the concepts and theories in the field of tourism and information technology and to contextualise this with the use of real-world examples.

The chapters in this book are grouped into five themes, which comprise a total of 13 chapters. The first section sets the foundation for the rest of the text by clearly defining the field and scoping the digital landscape. It also identifies some of the theoretical approaches for understanding the application of information technology in tourism. The highlight of this section was in chapter 2 where comparisons were drawn to an ecosystem to develop the understanding of the role of information technology in tourism.

Section 2 focuses on the tourist's pre-trip termed here as 'looking and booking'. This covers a breadth of information relating to how tourists search and use information to inform their trip booking. The utility of these chapters is that they provide the reader with the historical context on how technology has changed they way tourists search for and use information. For example, chapter 3 documents disintermediation, chapter 4 provides an overview of the internet whilst chapter 5 delivers a useful account of social media. This helps a novel reader to the area get a strong grasp of the subject area.

The third section concentrates on the technologies involved in getting the tourist to, from and around the destination. It offers three chapters related to mobility, aviation and surface transport. The chapter on mobility is of particular interest as it succinctly draws together the influences of mobile technologies, not just mobile phones, on the tourist experiences. The authors identify wide-ranging impacts related to information search, contextualisation, personalisation, socialisation, managing tourists' experiences, translation, purchasing, gamifying, augmenting and reflecting. These are all critically

important for the industry to consider in delivering value to the tourists. The other two chapters offer the reader a flavour of the different technologies involved in air and land transport.

Section 4, which includes three chapters, discusses the in-trip technologies encountered by the tourists when they are at the destination. Chapter 9 covers a broad range of technologies employed by the hospitality sector. Chapter 10 offers a novel approach in understanding how technology is shaping the tourist experiences by considering it from how the tourists are attracted to the destination, how their experiences are created and then managed. The authors theorised ten different roles technology plays in staging the tourist experience. The last chapter of this section focuses on the technology used by destinations, primarily destination management systems.

The last section of this book deals with the issues and trends in tourism information technology. It was refreshing to see the authors considering the contribution that technology can make to sustainable tourism development in chapter 12, as this is an emerging area of research. They considered how technology could be used to support the three pillars of sustainable tourism; economic, environment and socio-cultural and provided some practical examples of technology in action. It is quite difficult to postulate the future of technologies for tourism given the vigorous nature of technology itself, however, these authors have left us with some trends which forces us to consider the next wave of technology in tourism which is nicely done in the final chapter of this text.

There are a large number of things that the authors should be commended for in the delivery of this text. Rather than approaching the tourism and information technology field from a sectoral perspective, they have adopted an alternative viewpoint, considering it from the tourist journey. This approach is very adept and relevant as after all customers are the heart of our business in tourism and they are becoming more interwoven with the technology. In each chapter, the reader is presented with research and industry insights, a case study, discussion questions and web links. This brings the context alive as it shows the readers the practical applications of the technology not only from the industry perspective but also what is happening in the research landscape. The text is research informed as it is grounded in the academic literature. It also provides concise coverage of the background information one needs to be able to understand the future development of information technology for tourism. However, because this text covers wide-ranging areas and it is introductory, it might not be suitable for someone who already has a sound working knowledge of the subject area and is seeking to deepen their understanding.

Tourism Information Technology will appeal to students, industry professionals, academics and anyone wanting to gain a broad base of knowledge on the applications to technology to the tourism industry. It will be an ideal choice for any introductory class relating tourism and information technology.

Book Review

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Identity and Intercultural Exchange in Travel and Tourism
by: A.D. Barker (Ed.)
Published 2014
by Channel View Publications
31-34 High Street, Bristol, BS1 2AW, UK, 220pp
ISBN: 9781845414627

The book *Identity and Intercultural Exchange in Travel and Tourism* edited by Anthony David Barker is a compendium of studies which deals with identity and the issues of cultural exchange, which inevitably happens when people take part in tourism and encounter the 'other', unknown. The editor states that "the purpose of this book is to look at some of the interfaces of business and leisure insofar as they affect national and local identities in transition". Migration and tourism in our increasingly globalised societies lead to high exposure to the encountered 'other', bringing foreign fashions, foods, languages, religions etc. to our doorsteps, which can have profound effects on both ourselves and the societies that we live in. This book succeeds in showing examples of these encounters and their effects.

It is a well-known fact that a person's identity can be changed and developed by impressions and experiences gained during travel (Nelson, 2014; Wearing et al., 2010). Identity is defined in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English by Hornby (1995) as "who or what somebody is, the state of being very like or the same as somebody or something, or the state of being closely involved with or part of something" (p.588). The Merriam-Webster Dictionary online (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2015) further adds that identity is "the qualities, beliefs, etc., that make a particular person or group different from others" (p.1). Erikson (1963) claimed that identity exists both within the individual and the culture that the individual considers him/herself a part of. This dual focus on both the internal and external is indeed the focus point of this book. Culture is a form of identity which is shared among individuals in a community, and can more or less be seen and felt by an outsider. Thus, encounters with such collective identities can influence us when we travel to unknown destinations.

The book is divided into three main parts. The first part entitled 'Exchanging places' explores issues relating to tourism *activities*. The many niche markets which have emerged lately, as tourists become more sophisticated and have more specific interests, are creating challenges for destinations in catering to these markets. There are now many options to diversify, and the chapters in this part cover a wide range of topics including creative tourism, slow travel, migration, film tourism and a philosophical glance at the birth of the concept of travel itself. It is difficult to comment on this part of the book as a whole as the papers, methods, and topics are very diverse; however, it is clear that each

chapter is dealing with one niche aspect of tourism. These chapters note that cultural exchange is a two way street, as not only tourists are faced with a new culture in their chosen destination; local residents also encounter an 'other' by welcoming visitors. The opportunities and threats destinations face in catering for niche markets are explored in these chapters.

The second part entitled 'Narratives of travel and identity' moves focus more towards the inner processes of identity formation as it is concerned with people's stories of travel, with several studies taking a look at literature concerning travel and tourism. The authors contributing to this part analyse some quite well-known literary works, including the book *A Room with a View* by E.M. Forster and works by famous travel writers in order to show how travel and identity formation are closely linked. It explores inner processes which are at work when we encounter new cultures. This part also shows how representations of destinations in various media influence our expectations to the places that we associate with these media. The various texts complement each other very well in this section, and allow fiction to meet reality in a combination which is rare in academia. This makes for quite an exciting read looking at books and movies that many may already relate to, through the eyes of tourism scholars. This clever use of both fictional and actual travel narratives to explore identity trajectories brings a fresh element to existing literature.

The final part, 'The case of Portugal' comprises a collection of articles which deal with various aspects of tourism to and in Portugal. From a more practical viewpoint, the authors look at various cultural aspects, and how these can be used to favourably market Portugal as a prime tourism destination. The chapters include a look at an ancient encounter with a historical 'other', that of the Moors in Valpacos and a suggestion for developing a trail which communicates the story of the mythical Moors; wine tourism in Porto and the Duoro valley and how this is now organised in order to tell the story of port wine; differences in the perceptions of space among Portuguese and Polish; and finally, the challenge of communicating food culture to tourists who do not speak Portuguese. This final 'case study' of Portugal illustrates what was pointed out in the previous two parts of the book, and gives us a tangible example of the interplay between tourists' and locals' identity.

The collection of texts in this book is quite diverse, topics are quite varied, and I feel that the second part of the book which focuses on narratives is probably the one which is best put together. Most texts are well referenced and bring new aspects of cultural change/exchange and identity development to already existing literature. I would recommend this book to those who have an interest in identity and cultural exchange, either in a research or teaching context. As the level of writing is somewhat high, it is probably better suited to postgraduate students than to undergraduates.

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Book Review

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**Natural Area Tourism: Ecology, Impacts and Management
(2nd Edition)
by: David Newsome, Susan A. Moore and Ross K. Dowling
Published 2012
by Channel View Publications
St. Nicholas House, 31-34 High St. Bristol BS1 2AW, UK;
2250 Military Road, Towanda, NY 14150, 5201 Dufferin St.,
North York, Ontario, M3H5T8, Canada, 457pp
ISBN: 978-1-84541-381-1**

Natural Area Tourism: Ecology, Impacts and Management is clearly a comprehensive text book on natural area tourism inclusive of images, figures, boxes and significant amounts of information that is useful for a course and or multiple courses. The book is organised in logical content areas including: ecological perspectives, environmental impacts, visitor planning, management strategies and actions, interpretation and monitoring and its relationship to worldwide natural tourism. The book also provides excellent tables and figures, each page is packed with information and a good appendix is also provided.

The main objectives of this book are to examine the relationship between natural environments and the human institutions that operate within these environments and to suggest methodologies to identify sustainable operations. The beginning of the book (page 11) also provides the reader with an illustration of the tourism system. This figure assists in understanding the multiple facets of tourism and hospitality and how natural area tourism relates to the entire system.

In reviewing the book, terms like impacts, preservation and conservation and ultimately sustainability are at the forefront as is the framework of human ecology as it relates to natural area tourism and the human institutions utilised and or needed. As far back as 1973, Amos Hawley, author of *Human Ecology: A Theory of Community Structure*, noted that human ecology, which is interested in the relations of human beings to their geographic environment, fastens its attention upon the human interdependencies that develop in the action and reaction of a population to its habitat. Tourism by its nature implies human impacts and therefore the implications of natural area tourism in a continually developing world. For example, a recent conference trip to the Black Forest area of Germany introduced the reviewer to a discrepancy between natural areas tourism supporters (much from a landscape perspective) and energy supporters interested in becoming energy self-sufficient. The confrontation revolves around the placement of power generating windmills on the hills and in the landscapes of the Black Forest causing

much disagreement. These type of examples are illustrated and discussed in the text and therefore, could act as catalysts for many additional discussions of this sort.

The book provides a very comprehensive view of natural area tourism and notes its strengths, issues and challenges examining human controlled factors and natural impacts. The authors note the importance of sustainability in the early stages of the book. Natural area topics such as flora and fauna are included as well as recreation activities, and the overlapping environment between the two. Topics such as trail loss and the highway deaths of animals are also included. As briefly noted the authors also spend time on climate change and weather and the ecological perspectives of natural area tourism, taking into account landscapes, various ecosystems, communities and populations. Issues related to these factors such as sewage and pollution are also included. From a business of tourism perspective, there is also some discussion of demand generators which might also be a great introduction into the recreation opportunity spectrum models. The foci of the book stress the need for development balanced with preservation issues, and that the targeted market segments must be complimentary to the needs of the site(s). In this context, the authors also note codes of conduct and certification programs.

The book is comprehensive and thorough and therefore looks at both policy issues and operations. The target audiences for this book are graduate and undergraduate programmes in tourism as well as departments focused on recreation and leisure. Social science departments such as anthropology and or geography that often offer tourism related courses might also consider this book. In that framework, undergraduate courses in a common core might also benefit from a comprehensive book like this one. This book could and should be recommended as a comprehensive reference for a university library where tourism and hospitality programmes are offered.

The text spends an adequate amount on management and or governance issues. Much of that effort is aligned with the management of natural areas by government agencies and or entities. The book could however benefit from some deeper discussion on the relationship of natural area tourism and the private sector. Furthermore, a discussion of technology would also be beneficial. The book does discuss the management of the tourism industry and refers to accommodations, etc. Typically, the enabling legislation of a natural area for tourism brings into the decision making process the issues of 'necessary and appropriate'. The issue of concessions and or an outsourced management of commercial facilities could be useful as a much more developed discussion. Answering questions such as: do we need accommodations in natural areas?, Camp sites?, Hotels?, food service? Could trigger valuable discourse.

This book provides a good insight into the broad spectrum of natural tourism and its management. As it also looks at natural areas across the globe, it embraces natural areas from multiple countries and multiple audiences. This comprehensive perspective implies the need for a global effort in the management, preservation and conservation of our natural areas. Also included in the text are a number of short and well placed case studies. The content of the book is well balanced and in addition to the framework of sustainability the authors also consider consumer satisfaction and different aspects of tourism that occur in natural areas including geological tourism and adventure tourism The book rounds out its chapters by defining and explaining monitoring and the systems needed for monitoring to be a useful function in the management of natural area tourism. The importance of monitoring systems as a component of assessment relates the needs of the natural areas to how we view tourism and hospitality education today.

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Book Review

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Understanding and Governing Sustainable Tourism Mobility:
Psychological and Behavioural Approaches
by: Scott A. Cohen, James E.S. Higham, Paul Peeters and
Stephen Gössling (Eds.)
Published 2014
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA, 312pp
ISBN: 9780415839372

Currently, sustainable tourism policies and practices have seen widespread applications in various forms of tourism throughout the world. Nonetheless, corresponding challenges such as CO_2 emissions have posed new threats. Given this context, this newly launched book edited by Scott A. Cohen, James E.S. Higham, Paul Peeters and Stephen Gössling can be considered a timely addition in grasping the depth of and options for sustainable tourism mobility. The book is organised in 16 chapters contributed by 31 experienced authors, including the editors. Following the Introduction (chapter 1), chapters 2–16 are grouped in three parts based on three varying themes:

1   psychological understanding of climate change and tourism mobilities (chapters 2–7)

2   behavioural aspects of climate change and tourism mobilities (chapters 8–13)

3   governance and policies based upon psychological, behavioural and social mechanisms (chapters 14–16).

The opening chapter by the editors provides foundational information about the inescapable phenomenon of anthropogenic climate change and suggests only drastic emission reduction measures "in all sectors of the economy, and across all aspects of society" (p.1) as viable options to mitigate those challenges. They further state consumer behaviours of discretionary air travel are projected to increase annually and are less likely to be addressed through 'game-changing' innovations alone. In search of a complete response to carbon emission challenges, the editors embark upon (in the succeeding chapters) exploring the psychological, behavioural and social aspects of travellers for a better understanding of sustainable tourism mobility, and for suggesting workable policy measures as called upon in papers presented at the *Freiburg* workshop, 2012, Germany.

The remaining chapters in the first part explore psychological understanding of climate change and tourism mobilities. The authors emphasise the need for consumer behaviour change to achieve sustainability while illustrating several barriers arising due to attitude-behaviour gaps. Specifically, the role of self-identity expressed through

various forms including self-discovery, VFR networks, strengthening family bonds through travel and so on trigger the desire for and the attainment of the escape and novelty. The fulfilment of these travel motivations contributes to personal happiness, but also increases the mobility and distance concomitantly. These self-identity factors were also found to override environmental and social responsibilities and cost factors. Other barriers investigated include the notion of 'holiday is a holiday' attitude, consumers' less willingness to donate frequent-flying miles to environmental conservation and charities than upgrading their own flights, and knowledge-action gap in the choice of transport-mode during mega events. Some of the measures proposed to minimise these gaps include connecting with significant others through virtual media, social recognition for sustainable travellers rather than frequent flyers, discouraging speed-distance-demand, providing policy options that alter the desire for escape and change, applying new research methods to reveal new facets in tourism mobility behaviour, and managing reliable and efficient systems of transportation with viable alternatives for convenience and safety during mega-events. A major conclusion made is that since consumers are not going to change their travel habits voluntarily for the sake of environment and sustainable mobility, an increased role of 'government intervention' (p.83) is needed if the global climate standards have to be met.

As mentioned earlier, part two of the book deals with behavioural aspects of climate change and tourism mobilities. It discusses that though carbon-offsetters are more concerned about carbon emissions than the non-offsetters, they are inclined to travel more frequently and further away than non-offsetters, which further compounds the problem. The role of new information technologies in reshaping mobility-related decisions are also discussed as more tourists opt for flexible travel opportunities and modes. The need for envisioning a long-term perspective for climate change, targeting up to the year 2100, through a tourism travel behaviour model is presented. For promoting sustainable urban tourism attractions through public transport options to reduce CO_2 emissions, recommendations are made for improving service quality and offering reasonable prices which target both residents and tourists. Study findings revealed that the majority of tourists referred to relative (travel) distance in terms of time and economy (not miles and kilometres), sought novelty across different cultures, and preferred long-distance travel as an experience; these factors stood as barriers to sustainable tourism behaviour. The study suggested the need for policy measures to address tourists' time and cost-related behaviours for reducing travel distance and emissions.

Touching upon the earlier discussions on psychological, behavioural and social dimensions of travel behaviour, part three of the book focuses on governance and policies. The discussion begins with the limitations of three past and existing climate change communication campaigns, namely; cognitive-analytical, affective-experiential and social-normative. Hence, an integrated framework influencing all cognitive, experiential, and normative processes to understand complex human-behaviour is recommended with the aim of bridging attitude-behaviour gaps. The last chapter of this part concludes by identifying three approaches to sustainable tourism mobility: utilitarian, social/psychological and systems of provision/institutional (p.282). The suggestion is made that rather than analysing consumer behaviour through an approach in isolation, it should instead be tackled through all approaches as one approach reinforces another. Moving beyond psychological and behavioural approaches, the role of

governance for drastic structural changes is underlined to tackle the climate change challenges.

In the concluding chapter, the editors sum-up and reaffirm the earlier statements that the current problem of high aviation mobility is largely spurred by policies and structures compounded by desire for more travel and disparities in 'home' and 'away' behaviour of tourists. They contend that technology-based solutions will remain inadequate to respond to the impacts of tourist mobility, and behaviour change on the part of travellers, coupled with policy interventions, can bring about a positive change. They also call for a new research agenda that attempts to better understand the structures of consumer reasoning.

In summary, the book successfully presents critical insights into the social, behavioural and psychological approaches relating to sustainable tourism mobility. Furthermore, this book provides rich feedback for tourism mobility governance and policy intervention. In the midst of isolated public concerns and skepticism elsewhere regarding climate change and behavioural adaptation, carbon offsetting, and responsive governance, this book provides answers and options for all.

Recommendations made in most of the book chapters are highly relevant to the issues reviewed. However, some of the case-studies conducted in a single country with limited samples make the research claims questionable (i.e., Finnish tourists in chapter four and the Dutch tourists in chapter eight). Unlike some other books, this volume is geographically more representative given it has one contributor per country such as Brazil, Cyprus, Malaysia, Israel and Venezuela. However, an overwhelming number of contributing authors from the UK (13) followed by Germany, Netherlands and Australia make the book more Euro/Western centric. While the book presents one case-study from South Africa, some of the case studies from North American countries and future tourism giants, such as China and India among others, would have made it more representative and palatable.

In the book, the statement that tourism contributes 5% of total CO_2 emissions (share of travel at 75% and air-travel at 40%) has emphatically been repeated. With little reference of other major sources of CO_2 emitters such as energy, industry, land-use changes, agriculture, transportation and so on, the book leaves readers guessing as to who the other major culprits of global environment are? A paragraph or two by the editors at the introduction or conclusion reflecting the whole gamut of CO_2 emissions would have presented all readers a broader perspective of the climate change conundrum.

Undoubtedly, one of the strengths of the book chapters is that they introduce the issues of concern and prescribe issue-based remedies and recommendations. However, at times, the book chapters forward controversial policy recommendations such as altering travel motivations for novelty and change (p.51) in favour of sustainable tourism mobility. This recommendation seems counter-intuitive to the basic notion of holiday as escape, change (novelty) and family bonding. At a time when tourism academics are advocating travel as a remedy for many mental and psychological illnesses – through escape and novelty – any such recommendations will presumably invite more controversies than dialogue and solutions. Likewise, suggesting options such as connecting to significant others through virtual media rather than physically visiting may sound more hypothetical than practical for many readers.

One recurrent, but strong theme underlined in most of the chapters is the need for technological innovation and efficiency, behavioural change, awareness/knowledge and information flow, and policy intervention to go hand in hand if climate change issues resulting from travel are to be addressed adequately and fully. The book is exemplary in

the sense that it has brought together divergent ideas, practices, and innovations supported by theoretical and empirical studies relating to social, psychological, behavioural, and governance dimensions of tourism mobility, which is hardly available in any other single volume. For these reasons, the book is a highly and equally invaluable source of information for students, academia, practitioners, travellers, and policy-makers to make a call for a sustainable earth through responsible travel policies, practices and behaviours.

Book Review

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Trails and routes have played a major role in travel and tourism development during the last centuries, as they form the basis of mobility patterns of the past and the present. However, despite their importance in tourism and recreation, their contribution to tourism research has been generally overlooked. In this vein, this book aims to explore the evolution, the management and the impacts of routes and trails by bringing together under one cover the theories and concepts from various disciplines that can explain this phenomenon from both a micro- and macro- (destination) perspective as well as from the supply and demand view. The book also includes numerous international case studies that nicely complement and further explain the practical implications and applications of these theories. The book includes eight chapters that follow a logical sequence and rational. Every chapter provides a critical review of the related literature, empirical findings and several mini or extended case studies. The book is reader-friendly which is demonstrated in its writing style and language.

The book starts with chapter one which provides a nice introduction into the book's topic. The definitions and the meanings of various related concepts such as routes, trails, paths, bridleways, greenways and tour circuits are explained. The chapter also presents and develops a holistic conceptual model for studying trails and routes that also provides the foundation on which the following chapters of the book are developed.

Chapters 2 and 3 discuss the supply side of tourism routes and trails. Specifically, chapter 2 focuses on cultural routes and heritage trails by analysing the following issues: the purposes of cultural heritage trails (including enjoyment, preservation, image enhancement of place, economic development as an instruments of power and preservation); and a typology and model of cultural heritage trails based on the distinction of organically evolved routes (such as, trade routes, religious routes, intentionally built linear resources, e.g. railway routes) and purposive routes (such as, maritime routes, urban heritage ways, film and music trails). The focus of chapter 3 is on natural trails and mixed natural and cultural routes. The chapter identifies and presents a number of sub-typologies of such routes based on criteria such as how they are traversed, their settings, contexts and resources.

Chapter 4 concentrates on discussing the demand side of routes and trails in terms of the tourists' volumes of use and levels of participation in route-based tourism and leisure.

A number of trails are examined for explaining the general patterns of use of trail-based outdoor recreation by studying statics related to: the trail user characteristics such as gender, age, level of education and ethnicity; and locational factors of trail use. The chapter also explores issues related to people's motivation to use trails such as personal health, fitness, quality of life, commuting, nostalgia, enjoyment and meaningful experiences. Factors leading to non-participation such as intra-personal, inter-personal and structural constraints are also examined.

Chapter 5 focuses on identifying the ecological, social and economic impacts arising from trail and route utilisation. Several detailed impact case studies are analysed to provide evidence of these type of impacts (both positive and negative), while suggestions on how to manage these impacts are also provided.

Chapter 6 provides further suggestions on how to manage the impacts of trails and routes by investigating the issues of their planning and development. To achieve that the chapter includes a critical review of a rather disparate literature. Hence, the chapter first discusses the development of routes as a result of government policies including related legislation. Later, the chapter reviews planning and development models and processes such as the use of volunteers, the need to acquire land-use rights and the issue of funding. The third field that is reviewed relates to trials design by discussing issues related to location selection, trail hardening/softening, slope consideration/gradient, signage, trail amenities, access and accessibility.

The management of trails and routes is further discussed in chapter 7 which focuses on how to design trails in order to minimise physical impacts from erosion and visitor use, while also enhancing the visitor experience. To achieve that, the chapter reviews two major issues:

a   established knowledge related to supply and demand approaches

b   visitor management frameworks and procedures, including stakeholder approaches that focus on maximising opportunities, limiting use or engaging with all stakeholders.

The book concludes with chapter 8 which provides a good summary and reflections of the major issues discussed in the book. In addition, the chapter also provides some good predictions and future challenges in terms of trails and routes and specifically to issues related to their impacts, supply and demand management.

Overall, this is an easy-to-read book that provides a rich set of both theoretical background and empirical evidence of the multi-facet form of tourism routes and trails. The book explores routes and trails from an international perspective by investigating their evolution, development, management and impacts through the analyses of numerous international case studies. The book chapters also provide useful food for thought regarding the future development of tourism routes and trails. The book constitutes a very useful reading for researchers-academics, students, professionals and policy makers involved and interested in tourism routes and trail.

Book Review

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Future Tourism: Political, Social and Economic Challenges
by: James Leigh, Craig Webster and Stanislav Ivanov (Eds.)
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by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN, UK
and
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA, 204pp
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Any project that has as its objective to eavesdrop on the future, in this case, the future of tourism, is bound to arouse interest, particularly so if the task has been undertaken by eminent academics, as is the case that concerns us here. When this occurs, such a project may even go so far as to arouse expectation. In an environment as fluid as the current one, the entire cast of public and private agents that constitute the complex mosaic that is the tourist industry are eager to receive even the feeblest of signs relating to how the factors that will condition and shape the future of tourism may evolve. They need, or rather we need, to prepare ourselves for these changes by adopting a proactive, long-term vision.

It is precisely this 'long-term' aspect that is so especially treacherous and difficult to approach, and is approached in the work in question because it is a requirement, albeit one that incurs a high level of risk and exposure to criticism, and more so when its scientific provenance and academic baggage are as diverse as they are, with all the corresponding pros and cons this implies. The publishers of the work have taken this into consideration, as have the authors of the corresponding chapters, an initial factor that is to be viewed in a very positive light.

Of economists (the writer is one), it is often said that we are capable (not always, in my opinion) of finding explanations for what has happened in the past, but are almost always wrong when it comes to anticipating the future (and more so if it is long-term), maybe, as explained in chapter 7, because the future is personal, in other words, that it depends above all on ourselves; the future we anticipate is moulded by the decisions we take, the main problem being that our capacity for controlling the consequences of our actions is very limited: remember the famous butterfly effect used to illustrate what is known as complexity theory, or the phenomenon of the autopoies is proposed by Maturana and Varela, in which we are simultaneously producers and product. Environmental factors condition our behaviour (chapter 6 analyses and expounds tendencies in this area), but we must not forget that our behaviour also affects this environment. All this should lead us, in my opinion, to a more relational approach to understanding the future of tourism that places more emphasis on the inter-relationships

among the tourism network nodes rather than the individual actions of each element in the network. In any case, as chapter 3 concludes, the future has not been written (and, it adds, cannot be written), though we should bear in mind that not all aspects of the future are uncertain (consider, for example, western population ageing, the progressive inversion of the population pyramid and the corresponding effects on the industry in question of a growing and increasingly attractive sector: senior tourism). Chapter 6 is particularly interesting in this regard.

That being said, the structure of the work is clearly an editorial option and, as with any option, it may not be to everyone's liking. For my part, in chapter 1, I would have liked to have seen a clear-cut argument outlining the work. Without diminishing the relevance of the chapters, the three parts into which the work is defined (leaving aside the final chapter, which attempts to unite the various – 12 – pieces of the puzzle) are not clearly articulated. For example, almost all the topics approached in part II could have been treated as trends or global changes (part I) – Chapter 8 has its own, distinctive character – and we come across classic topics such as sustainability, that are explicitly interwoven into a number of chapters 5 and 11, and implicitly into others, chapter 7, in relation to the quality of life of both the tourists and the receptor communities in terms of the social dimension of sustainability.

On another note, it is worth asking oneself whether the case of New Zealand (chapter 12) is representative of what the book is attempting to demonstrate. Without devaluing the lessons that can be learned, other parts of the world present diverse realities in terms of tourist profiles. For example, in a European Union that has suffered the implementation of austerity policies (infused with high doses of uncertainty) since the last crisis, and which many countries in the southern Eurozone continue to endure, one of the consequences of this austerity on society in general, and on tourism in particular, is the dualisation of society, in other words, a society in which the middle classes are the most penalised and in which the profile of the national tourist in these countries is increasingly polarised, giving rise to two increasingly-distanced categories: the 'low cost' tourist and the 'upscale' tourist, the former of which relates to the phenomenon of social tourism discussed in chapter 5.

The technological dependency experienced by the tourism industry today, and which will increase in the future (another 'future' facet that is not uncertain, except in terms of the technological standards that will eventually prevail and their evolution) as a result of the formidable challenges and changes that this dependency implies, which are expressed in chapter 9 (some operators see it as an opportunity, others as a threat), combined with the implications that this irreversible phenomenon, one which transforms tourism into something it previously was not, i.e., a technology-intensive sector, has for human resources and their new competencies (chapter 10), is another laudable aspect of the work. Scientific literature, however, shows us that sustainable competitive advantages are the result of both technological and non-technological resources, the latter being human and administrative, and I find myself longing for a chapter that deals with the new administrative approaches that both companies and tourist destinations will be obliged to implement as a result of this revolution. Along these lines there exist phenomena such as intelligent tourist destinations which, while they are still in the early stages of development, are already generating great notoriety and interest – it is time to make way for a new perspective on management.

Unfortunately, the increasingly extensive nature of the conflicts prevailing throughout the globe, and from the disastrous effects of which none of us can feel entirely safe, give rise, in the manner of a global trend, to problems of security in tourist destinations; a most sensitive area from the point of view of the tourist (chapter 4). The importance of working towards the certification of safe destinations becomes increasingly evident, almost a very significant added value, when it comes to placing oneself in the mind of a potential customer when they are choosing a destination. This could give rise to a new wave of certifications similar to those that took place some years ago now with quality, the environment and, more recently, responsible tourism.

All told, the structure of chapter 6 could, in itself, form the basis of a work of this nature. The chapter in question discusses key tendencies: economic, socio-cultural, demographic, technological, environmental, political and including climate change, which I choose to underline. Each of these could constitute a chapter containing content pertinent to our better understanding of the future(s) that await(s) us. I use the plural here because I feel that the best way of dealing with the uncertainty that is currently inexorably linked to the future is through the construction of scenarios, as the author has done in the 13th and final chapters, that contemplate three possible situations, namely the most optimistic, the most pessimistic, and an intermediary scenario, which is invariably the most realistic.

A good example of this can be found in the subject approached in chapter 2: the price of oil, for its extraordinary influence on specific companies in the tourism sector (for example in the balance sheets of airline and transport companies in general) and its knock-on effect on other tourism services. The unpredictability of recent months has been such that a barrel of Brent costing well above US$100 (the days of cheap oil were over, they said!) costs approximately US$50 at the time of writing. There are, of course, a number of world geopolitical factors that come into play, and, in addition, new technologies have emerged (such as *fracking*) that allow this nonetheless limited resource to be extracted in situations where previously it was impossible, thereby incrementing the offer. Without diminishing their significance in any sense, alternative energy sources will continue to be developed and we now have, almost anecdotal but not for that any less significant, a prototype of airplane that operates exclusively on solar energy.

Summing up, this is an undoubtedly interesting book and is recommended reading for all lovers of futurology in general, and for those involved in the tourism industry in particular. The book provides the basis for strategic thinking that must evolve from previously established linear approaches (with clearly defined causal relationships) to the non-linear and even chaotic approaches of today, where the past tells us increasingly less about the future. It is not a question of eliminating uncertainty, an impossible and pointless exercise, but rather making the best of it in an effort to create or mould our own future. The challenge of living in the age we are in has been laid down, and it is an exciting challenge. This is the world of the future, and it is one that offers wonderful opportunities if we are capable of understanding it properly; not an easy task, by any means, hence the need for experts to enlighten us, such as those who have taken part in the collective shaping of this book.

Book Review

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European Tourism Planning and Organization Systems – The EU Member States
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In 2010, the European Commission drafted a tourism policy document whose main objective was: 'To make Europe the no. 1 destination'. Tourism has become one of the fastest growing, yet vulnerable, socio-economic industries in the world. The growing number of destinations that are accessible today have made the more traditional tourism zones, such as Europe and the Mediterranean, strain to keep up their market share amid this global phenomenon of travel and tourism. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reported that worldwide travel had reached 1.087 billion travellers in 2013. But tourism cannot happen without a plan, without strategies and policies in place that ensure hospitality, service and sustainability for key stakeholders, local authorities, local businesses and the local communities. This book gathers the 28 strategies and policies of the EU member states (EUMS) and presents both the similar and divergent processes and implementations that make this a dynamic and multidimensional undertaking.

In studying the eight priorities that have been outlined by the new EU Commissioner responsible for tourism today, one cannot help but notice the commonalities that are affecting the continent – namely the issues of developing a responsible and sustainable sector and its seasonality to name but two. One particular point of discussion that was raised by the commission concerns the branding of Europe or, to put it more eloquently, the marketing of Europe as the no. 1 destination. This book describes the development of the strategies and policies for the 28 member states and it is very clear that there is no inclination to pursue this synergy for a singular and diverse visitor experience. On the other hand, however, throughout the last decade the EU has provided funds for the implementation of a number of projects to enhance this product and the tourism value chain, although in many cases these initiatives ceased to function once the EU funding stopped – a sure sign that the incentive for some synergy is dependent on outside financing and there is no inclination to build these initiatives together. On the other hand, national funding processes such as European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and

European Social Fund (ESF) provide a useful and effective tool for politicians to improve the quality of life for citizens.

It is interesting to find such a publication that details the development of the tourism activity in all 28 member states of this socio-economic bloc. This development happened, more or less, with the same impetus and motivation at different times throughout the last 50 years. What is so interesting is the fact that the strategies and policies evolved from the same basic principles for a strong socio-economic industry as well as to ensure that the local communities are made aware of the improvements to their quality of life stemming from this sector. But, in truth, the book is just about that….the benefits from tourism as a socio-economic industry. There is no reference as to how the wider community can contribute to this activity and how they can benefit from a more socio-cultural activity.

The best way of describing this publication is through a SWOT analysis that identifies the strong issues and those that may need more research and study.

1   Strengths – The book provides information that can be a key factor in integrating tourism activities and understanding policies and strategies in all EUMS. This issue reminds me of the case for branding Europe as a single destination for visitors, but with an immense amount of diversity. On the other hand, this case for branding may not be such an easy task given the amount of fragmentation we find at national, regional and local levels within each member state and the amount of fragmentation between the NGOs and other stakeholders in delivering one clear and united message for a sustainable tourism industry.

2   Weaknesses – Low to no participation in consultation processes for tourism planning and strategies by the local community. This, as has already been pointed out earlier in this review, could be a threat since we are disregarding the broadest cross-section of stakeholders. The policies that have been developed discuss strategies to motivate the business investor and they talk about organising the local and national authorities in terms of effectiveness and structural organisation through its employees. Tourism is all about a host-visitor interaction which will produce an authentic and unique experience rather than a stereotypical package which evolved outside the destination.

3   Opportunities – There are a number of opportunities that can be identified from this book. These include the fact that by understanding how strategies and policies are formulated, this can then stimulate the need for best practice experiences and exchange of knowledge. Funds through the EU for network projects to involve all stakeholders including the local communities benefitting directly from tourism and an improved quality of life (MOTUS initiative) have helped to achieve, albeit for a temporary or short period at times, this synergy and exchange of ideas. The challenge now is to look for real opportunities to establish these exchanges and synergies on a longer timeframe.

4   Threats – Tourism is seen, in most EU member states, as an activity that does not require a dedicated Ministry or official status. This is then reflected in the lack of real political will to enhance tourism development. Governments are, however, interested in the short-term perspectives, the quantitative returns from tourism (the amount of arrivals, the revenue generated from this activity as well as the number of bed-nights). But if there were a concerted determination to develop tourism from a socio-cultural perspective by including communities then the short-term views may

be greatly boosted by the growth in economic wealth and the satisfaction of the visitor, making the destination a natural choice rather than one induced by price and availability alone.

Certainly, this book could open doors to further research for a more inclusive and socio-cultural perspective when it comes to tourism, and I would certainly recommend that tourism consultants use the material from this book to delve deeper and investigate the gaps between the social and economic aspects of the industry or activity. Tourism officers can find in this book vital information for understanding the way in which tourism functions in the various member states of the European Union. Likewise, public officials, NTO officials and those senior and middle managers within government entities who are tasked with the job of developing policies and strategies will find this book useful to learn some best practices. Students of tourism need to refer to this book and look for those gaps that will link up all key stakeholders for this socio-cultural activity including the local community.