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## Book Review

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### **Tourism Planning and Development in South Asia**

**by: Dimitrios Stylidis and Boopen Seetanah (Editors)**

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It has been a long time since a book was published specifically on tourism in South Asia (Hall and Page, 2000). Therefore this new contribution is a welcome addition to the literature. It is part of CABI's highly successful *Regional Tourism Series* edited by Konstantinos Andriotis and Dimitrios Stylidis. The aim of the series is to offer a collection of books with comparative and individual case studies from at least eight regions and sub-regions of the world. These books will come under the following titles, each of which focusing on some of the countries or country clusters: Tourism in Western Europe, Tourism in Eastern Europe, Tourism in East and Southeast Asia, Tourism in Middle East, Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa, Tourism in the Caribbean, Tourism in Latin America, Tourism in Pacific Oceania.

This book is promoted as discussing tourism planning and development in South Asian countries and reveals successful and unsuccessful stories by providing thorough analyses of the nature and focus on tourism development in South Asia; analysing the experiences and challenges addressed via country-focused chapters; and identifying the key impacts and current challenges. It aims to fill the gap of research in the South Asian Region "by focusing on tourism impacts, development, planning and policy making in this sub-region of the world" (p.149).

The book has a brief Introduction and Conclusion with eight chapters between. Therefore overall it is a relatively short book which focuses on tourism planning and development in a number of countries. In the Introduction, Boopen Seetanah (*University of Mauritius*) sets the context of tourism in the region in both numbers of arrivals, contribution to employment and economic impact. Chapter 1 examines the impacts of community participation in tourism planning and destination management in Kerala, India (Anu Treesa George, *Victoria University, Australia*; Min Jiang, *City of Whittlesea, Australia*, and Terry DeLacy, *Victoria University*). It is a great case study outlining the contribution community participation in tourism planning makes in helping to manage the expectations and needs of the local population in relation to tourism development. Chapter 2 examines agritourism development in Sri Lanka (Frank Niranjana, *Ministry of*

*Agriculture, Sri Lanka* and Glen Croy, *Monash University, Australia*). The authors state that “in a constrained rural environment agritourism is an innovative diversification option” (p.38) but “those farmers with the most interest and demand for agritourism are also likely to be those who are the least resourced to adopt the opportunity” (p.39).

The third chapter describes the history of planning and development in Nepal especially in relation to sustainable tourism (Tek B. Dangi, *University of Southern Maine, USA*; Birenda KC, *University of North Texas*, and Laxman Gautam, *Nepal Tourism Board*). This well written chapter outlines the many tourism plans which have been produced in Nepal as “tourism development has always received a high priority” (p.43). Despite this, a number of challenges face the sustainable development of tourism in the country, especially in relation to “providing adequate infrastructure for tourism development” (p.59). Chapter 4 provides an overview of tourism development in Afghanistan (Adbul Wassay Najimi, *Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Afghanistan*). This is a rare insight into the country and the role of tourism within it which has waxed and waned in direct relation to periods of war and peace. It provides a sound overview of the links between tourism development and the need for security of travel.

Chapter 5 examines planning for sustainable development in Bhutan (Stephen Pratt, *University of the South Pacific, Fiji*, and Wantanee Suntikul, *Independent Researcher*). The authors contend that “tourism is becoming increasingly important to Bhutan” (p.86) especially in regard to regional and international visitors. However, “the country’s cautious protectionist approach to tourism development underlies many of the positive contributions to sustainability ... but is also at the foundation of some of the limitations that constrain performance” (p.95). Thus there is still an underlying tension between tradition and quality of life in Bhutan and the desire to open the country to tourism, and perhaps open themselves up to the adverse impacts on culture and environment, as has occurred in other parts of the world.

Chapter 6 examines tourism policy planning in Bangladesh (Azizul Hassan, *Tourism Consultants Network, The Tourism Society, UK*). The author suggests that policy implementation follows a ‘top down’ approach and is directive and bureaucratic as a result. However, as a result of his research he offers a number of suggestions for tourism policy planning in the country including increased collaboration between the public and private sectors as well as sitting firmly within the framework for the overall sustainable development of the country.

Tourism development and its economic impact on the economic growth of Pakistan is the focus of Chapter 7 (Sheereen Fauzel, Zameelah Khan Jaffur and Boopen Seetanah (*University of Mauritius*). Beginning by extolling the diversity of natural and cultural attractions in Pakistan the authors point out the close relationship between tourism growth and economic development in the country over a long period of time. Looking to the future they suggest that the country should invest in marketing and branding to overcome the perception of insecurity. The final contribution, Chapter 8, investigates the role of international tourism in the Maldives (Rajasundram Sathiendrakumar (*Sheridan Institute of Higher Education, Australia*) and Zameelah Khan Jaffur and Boopen Seetanah (*University of Mauritius*). The authors commence the chapter by stating that “Tourism remains the backbone of the economy of many small island developing states (SIDS) and is often seen as the only means for economic growth in these countries ... and that the ‘Maldives, often advertised as a tropical island paradise, is no exception” (p.132). However, the chapter notes that the country will be affected by rising sea levels due to climate change so this is a major challenge. Therefore it is suggested that the

future focus on tourism development in Mauritius should be given to policies which protect the environment whilst targeting high spending visitors from tourist generating countries.

The Conclusion (Dimitrios Stylidis) provides a brief summary of each preceding chapter as well as some general comments in relation to the understanding of tourism planning and development in South Asia. It points to the need for further comparative research in the countries across the region. Overall, this book fills a huge gap in our knowledge about tourism development in the most populated Region in the world (1.8 Billion), and one that is often under-researched and reported. It will be a great resource for tourism students, academics and researchers as well as to government departments with responsibility for tourism in the various countries of South Asia.

## Reference

Hall, C.M. and Page, S.J. (Eds.) (2000) *Tourism in South and Southeast Asia: Issues and Cases*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford.