



Enlightening Tourism.

A Pathmaking Journal



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BOOK REVIEW:

Handbook of Tourism Economics, edited by Clement Tisdell,
World Scientific, May 2013

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Steve Watson

York St. John University (UK)

s.watson@yorksj.ac.uk

Recently published and long in preparation, this expansive and yet detailed volume is one of the most useful of its kind in recent years. The title, however, is slightly misleading as it provides a lot more than it suggests. This is not just book that concerns itself with the micro- and macro-economics of the tourism industry, although there are plenty of equations to entertain and inform those with an interest in hardcore economics. On the contrary, this is a very wide ranging collection of papers with contributions from some of the world's leading authors and researchers in the field. As such it grapples with issues that go far beyond the economic basics and engages successfully with issues in marketing, strategic management and some of the key challenges facing the sector. Of course this is exactly what is required at a time of instability and considerable change in the global economy and the insights provided by the book's contributors are entirely consonant with a need to accept and respond to the concerns and uncertainties that are affecting the industry.

The book begins, appropriately, with Clement Tisdell's excellent overview of the collection as a whole, and his entirely justifiable claim that it covers a lot of ground. The context for this preliminary discussion is the growing global significance of tourism as an industry and its undoubted role as a driver for economic development and growth. This of course, is thrown into sharp relief by the world economic crisis, but there are other issues, not least that tourism continues to grow in terms of supply and demand and that it is also the subject of shifts and movements in flows of global capital. For example, the new tourism generating regions in Asia and particularly China are of great interest, as is the fact that as well as generating new global tourists these areas are also attracting them in significant numbers.

Another significant context for this collection is the operational reality of tourism as a composite commodity involving a range of different sectors from transport to hospitality and attractions, and a corresponding concern with investment on the one hand and services management and marketing on the other. These complexities are not lost on the editor who organises the content with consummate logic and fluidity, and with due concern for the overlaps and resonances that inevitably emerge in such collections. This is a considerable editorial achievement given the size and scope of this book.

The overview is followed by two sections that cover, respectively, tourism demand and supply. The section on demand begins with two chapters by Sarath Divisekera that very effectively set the scene in terms of theoretical orientation, methods, models and empirical orientations. These are followed by Sara Dolnicar's excellent and very helpful step-by-step guide to market segmentation and after that, detailed case studies of Singapore and India exploring in turn, the neighbourhood effects of tourism and the effects of the risk of violence on demand and costs. This balance between theory and case studies is extremely well executed by the editor.

The following section on supply issues deals effectively with internationalisation and sectoral and structural issues including the hotel industry in China, air transport and the changing dynamics of intermediaries. The third section deals with specific market segments including an excellent opening chapter by Stephen Wanhill on the development of tourist attractions and another on amusement parks. This section also contains chapters on educational tourism, the ever-important cruise industry and ever-popular beach, sun and surf tourism.

Section 5 provides the public economics context for tourism with chapters on cost-benefit analysis, the economic context of policy development and a particularly insightful chapter on beaches as societal assets. Section 6 will be of interest to practitioners and policy-makers as well as academics with its focus on the industrial context of tourism, its impacts and economic effects. Chapters on tourism satellite accounts and the direct and indirect economic impacts of tourism will be of particular to those of us who are concerned to demonstrate the primacy of tourism in contributing to local, regional and national GDP, especially where policy makers might not fully apprised of its significance as a sector.

The following two sections pursue issues around economic growth and the contribution of tourism to it, although I was a little surprised that the content of what is Section 7 with its detailed case studies of economic development issues around the world does not immediately follow section 5. Such editorial judgments are always difficult, however, and Section 6 looking at the international dynamics of tourism development does it least provide a useful basis for the case studies presented in Section 7.

I was very pleased to see the significance accorded to environmental and conservation matters in the book. This is entirely justified when the effects of tourism can potentially be so damaging and indeed have been in many instances. This very substantial section provides both balance and a worthwhile call to action when set against the more industry focussed sections that precede it. At a time when ethical

considerations are affecting many industries it is good to ask of tourism ‘what good does it do?’ and how its worst effects might be mitigated in the greater balance of costs and benefits that it represents as a whole. Sustainability, eco-tourism and community management are all given due consideration in this excellent section.

This is a large book at nearly a thousand pages and it is impossible to do it justice in a short review, but it is an essential and compelling contribution to the field and a must for university libraries, central and local government departments, NGOs and others involved in tourism. Its international approach, with contributions from leading experts around the globe, is also a major source of its value, as is its broad perspective and therefore, its equally broad appeal. Despite its size it is accessible, not least because of the skills of its editor in organising the content and creating such coherence from so varied a collection, but also because of its use of abstracts, key words and further reading. In a word: recommended.

P.S.: If you would like to review a new or recent book, or you have a suggestion for a book to be reviewed in the journal, please contact Steve Watson, Book Reviews Editor, at s.watson@yorks.ac.uk