

# Book review

## International Tourism Futures: The Drivers and Impacts of Change

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Goodfellow Publishers Limited  
Oxford, UK  
2019  
256 p.  
ISBN-9781911635-222 HBK;  
9781911635-239 PBK; 9781911635-246  
eBook  
Review DOI  
10.1108/JTF-03-2021-188

This comprehensive textbook encourages the reader to consider emerging demographic, political, economic and technological trends that will impact tourism, hospitality and events. It covers various interrelated trends in four sections: first by ably setting the scene in Futures (tourists and hospitality of the future), Sectors (visitor attractions and events), then some plausible Themes (film tourism, health and wellness tourism, sustainable development and responsible tourism) before an excellent discussion on ways in which use could be made of Foresight (future proofing a crisis and building scenarios). Each chapter uses international case studies to contextualise, including Chinese outbound travel, the “personalisation” of the travel experience, robotic hospitality in Asia, the 2028 LA Summer Olympics, Wellness Spa Tourism in Thailand and a fascinating unravelling of France’s “International Action Against Terrorism” initiative.

Clearly written, jargon-free and presented with graphics (and a few holiday snaps) plus supporting references from both the academic literature and the grey literature, the book will be invaluable to undergraduates and postgraduates. Although the seven academic authors are all Australian based, it would have been interesting to have heard more

about the shifts in tourism in Asia and the USA and the extent to which this might reflect growing concerns in the international relations field, such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) and shifts in global authority between superpowers. There is a very generalised approach to positioning (p. 3) within social theory generally and futures studies more specifically which is perhaps not relevant for an undergraduate text book but which could underpin many assumptions about the economic and environmental role of tourism in neoliberal societies. There are, however, some wonderful insights that could easily be explored further such as dark tourism (p. 58, 193) and meme tourism (p. 59) though it would also have been interesting to hear more about the potential development of adventure tourism such as that emerging around the Three Poles (North, South and Everest/Sagarmatha/Qomolangma). A further critique concerns the time frames of the putative futures. In several instances, this appears to be relatively near-term (say 5–10 years) which in terms of foresight is more tactical than strategic.

Inevitably in both the book and any review, attention must turn to the black swan event of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact that this will have on the tourism sector. Although the book was mainly written prior to the initial outbreak, there have been various edits and insertions indicating how the pandemic is a potentially massive game changer for the global economy and, more specifically, the tourism sector (especially as summarised in Ch. 15). Reviewing this a few months later, it is increasingly clear that even with the possibilities of

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viable vaccines on the horizon, it could be well into 2022, and most likely later, before tourism will recover to anywhere near to its pre-pandemic numbers. In a sense, this might echo the time taken for various tourism ventures from the Global Financial Crisis (2007–2008) which took at least Antarctic cruise ship tourism 10 years to recover its pre-existing levels. This seems to have been passed over in a mood of what might be termed “performative optimism”. For COVID-19, of course, many aspects of the pandemic will influence a return to mass tourism. This, in itself, could be the subject of an entire book especially if the possibility of re-engineering the tourism industry not just for pandemics but for broader attention to climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals were

considered. Nonetheless, it is behind several of the plausible futures in Ch. 13 which should spark other speculative possibilities. Although it would have to be left until an almost complete revision in a second edition, the authors certainly identify the likely pathways needed.

In summary, an excellent text book though caught up in the very futures that it sought to discuss. As such, it captures a moment in which tourism itself is a critical juncture and for which the future is highly uncertain but open to possibilities that will benefit not just the business sector but broader environmental and social aspects too.

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