

# Book review

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I received this book on same day that the last Holden car was produced in Australia, and wrote this review on the day it was announced that Uluru would be closed to visitors in two years. As the focus of this book is about the importance of national symbols, it is difficult to find a product more Australian than a Holden car, and more iconic than the Uluru. The importance of national symbols and the role they play in marketing a country is the key to what this book sets out to explore.

This book is published by Channel View under their "Aspects of tourism" theme, by its Series Editors who are spread over the world: Cooper (UK), Hall (New Zealand) and Timothy (USA) and this worldwide perspective is reflected in the countries covered by the book. The aim of this book series is to provide readers "with the latest thinking on tourism worldwide [...] and push back the frontiers of tourism knowledge". This particular edited book is developed from two previous books by the author which focussed on National Identity (2011) and Place Identity (2013), and develops these themes in the author's own words "by narrowing the focus of study to commercial nationalism while broadening the discussion of national identity to encompass both tourism and events". This edited book is written by 26 authors and covers 13 individual countries plus Africa, through 18 case study chapters, along with an introduction and conclusion chapter. The aim of this edited book is to "show how particular narratives are woven to tell (and sell) a national story" and to "demystify the various ways in which the nation has been imagined by key organisers and organisations and then communicated

to millions". Perhaps more simply, the book aims to explore and understand the relationship between national marketing strategies and how they are used, and maybe even misused, by both the commercial and public sector.

The book is divided into three sections: "National narratives, heritage and tourism"; "Tourism branding and promotion"; "Festivals, events and national identity", with six chapters or perhaps better described as six country case studies in each section. The first section explores the issues around how commercial nationalism relates to national stories and traditions, and this is discussed through case studies from: Canada, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Ukraine, China and India. It does this by taking a long view of history, and questions whose story is being told through a historic perspective of issues in each of the case studies. The second section covers case studies from: New Zealand, South Africa, Malta, Estonia, India and Colombia, and questions how national identity is linked to place branding and influence of historical colonial developments, while also exploring the ethnic vs nationality perspectives of residents and their diaspora. The third section explores festivals, events and national identity through case studies from Hungary, Japan, Canada, Singapore and the USA. These case studies are discussed through a mixture of relatively new constructed events, seasonality focussed events, ephemeral sporting events and government constructed nation-building events.

Although each of the case study chapters can be read alone, as with any edited book the difficulty in bringing the different chapters into a coherent whole, is always a challenge. A good editor will be skilled enough to rise to this challenge, and the editor of this book is to be commended for more than meeting this challenge. The introduction and conclusion chapters are worth reading by themselves, and alone justify buying the book. Rarely have I seen such insightful editor written chapters in a book, as often edited books lack either a

## Commercial Nationalism and Tourism: Selling the National Story

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meaningful introduction and/or a conclusions chapter. Because of the attractiveness of the individual chapters, I can understand why the reader may only read selected individual country chapters. However, I would urge them to also read the introduction and conclusions chapters, as they will provide a theoretical framework to better understand the selected country case study.

Despite generally praising this book, there are a number of small criticisms. The individual chapters are of variable quality, and while most are well-developed, a number are long on history and sometimes provide far too much irrelevant detail. They are also sometimes poor in ending their discussions with linkages back to the core aims of the book, and the role of commercial nationalism and tourism.

Although this book is clearly aimed at the academic market, in particular postgraduate and advanced undergraduate students, because of the wide range of case study chapters, it will have a strong international appeal. It should also appeal to both commercial marketers as well as national tourism organisations, as I am sure they will gain much from the global visions discussed in the individual case study chapters.

Finally, in terms of a recommendation, the book was an interesting read, which provided a smorgasbord of insights into how both nations and commercial enterprises develop, use, misuse and manipulate national images for their own ends. Before reading this book, I had not appreciated the importance of the historic issues that help to shape the relationship and interrelationships between commercial nationalism and tourism, and the role they both play in selling a story to residents, their diaspora and tourists. Although this book was an easy read, it also challenges the reader to think much more deeply, about the issues raised. On first reading the book, I questioned whether it would be of interest to tourism futurologists. I was wrong, and although the book was somewhat long on detailed descriptions and history, and could not be described as essential reading for tourism futurologists. It should certainly through selective reading, help futurologists better understand the tensions that exists between nations, their people (residents and diaspora) and the commercial providers of tourism services.

**Brian Hay**

*Brian Hay is a Professor of Tourism at the School of Social Sciences, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, UK.*