

Ian Yeoman, Albert Postma and Jeroen Oskam

In the beginning ...

This first issue of the *Journal of Tourism Futures* is a result of the growing awareness, in academia, but especially in the professional world, of the increasing importance of tourism as a social phenomenon and as an economic sector. If we see that the impact on our lives, our culture and our economy is growing, it becomes urgent that we understand how things will evolve, which variables determine this development and where we should intervene. The goal of this initiative is to bring academic rigor to the study of the future of tourism.

It is no more than a few decades ago that access to both free time and to the resources to spend this time on holiday travel became generalized in the traditional markets. Tourist destinations started to flourish and could optimize their benefits by reactively creating new services and new businesses; but there was hardly any strategic anticipation of the changes these developments would cause, for the good – intensification of international contact, economic, economic growth – and for the bad – the destruction of environmental and cultural riches of some destinations. Now that the economic magnitude of tourism has become evident (the numbers are known: tourism represents 9 per cent of world GDP and a trillion US dollars in international receipts, 6 per cent of world exports, and it employs 258 million people) (Yeoman, 2012), businesses and destinations realize that they can no longer afford to just wait and see what happens.

When the European Tourism Futures Institute was created in 2009, industry leaders had observed correctly that research always told them what had happened in the past, whereas they were far more interested in anticipating what was going to come. “The future is the only thing we can change”, as Ian Yeoman reminds us. The academic challenge is therefore to develop methods and perspectives to systematically reflect on what lies ahead. An unusual approach, as the future is about the unknown and uncertainty, while research councils and pay masters oblige us to look for certainty. We have initiated the *Journal of Tourism Futures* as a forum to discuss the theories of futures studies along with their practical implications in our field. As in this first issue, we will include studies on the future of tourism from a theoretical perspective, research on global trends and scenarios as well as the evolution and strategies of specific destinations, viewpoints of thought leaders and other approaches that are relevant for the interpretation of imminent or potential changes. Within this focus on the future of tourism, the journal will welcome contributions from a range of perspectives inclusive of, but not limited to, economics, spatial and social sciences. We hope to not only advance the academic debate on tourism futures, but also to promote the exchange of ideas between scholars, policy makers, entrepreneurs and others involved in the future of tourist activities and of tourist destinations. As researchers, we do not advocate a certain outcome of current tourist developments; but it is our ambition that this debate on futures studies will contribute to “well informed choices”.

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The contributions

Research papers

Enger and colleagues highlight how the Norwegian travel industry faces decline in important international tourism segments and needs an industry wide and future-oriented strategy to face these challenges. The scenario makes contrasting reading for the country which at present is suffering from Dutch Disease in which the currency is stronger because of demand for oil, therefore other exporting goods and services suffer. Thus, four scenarios portray different pathways into the future indicating tourism to become the “new oil” if

the oil economy declines. The scenarios draw out the debate about different degrees of governance and market liberation as the issues the country needs to address as strategic imperatives.

Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie's scenario analysis about a choice New Zealand could make in addressing climate change and scarcity of resources. *EcoParadise* portrays a future of collective individualism, where a high degree of personal freedom exists but within the constraints of a world in which there is a scarcity of resources. At the centre of the scenario is a classic tale of a prisoner's dilemma in which decision makers and consumers ponder the betterment of humankind against individualism. The scenario concludes with a strategic map of the core decisions New Zealand's tourism industry would have to take. The significance of the paper is its portrayal of a possible future to industry leaders, researchers and stakeholders thereby facilitating decision making in order to adapt to this future.

Viewpoint

Eminent futurist Jim Dator provides a personal insight of how he "sees" the past, present and futures of Hawaiian tourism. An interesting point is Dator's use of biblical references to focus the mind on difference and the future. "The Unholy Trinity" reference is namely the end of cheap and abundant energy; a profoundly unstable environment and a dysfunctional global economic system. Dator concludes that no government now governs satisfactorily, and so the future of tourism is extremely precarious and uncertain. The originality and value of Dator's frank views are thought provoking, going beyond present wisdom and comfort. Postma discusses the European Tourism Futures Institute's approach to scenario planning highlighting the development of a conceptual framework of localized practice. The model adapted from Shell Oil is positioned along the dimension of time (from present to future) and the dimension of specificity (from concrete to abstract). Webster and Ivanov investigate the major political and economic changes in the world and the likely impact that these changes will bring to tourism and hospitality industries through identifying six geopolitical drivers of tourist flows in the future, namely: "the fall of the American Empire", the rise of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) and the PINE (Philippines, Indonesia, Nigeria and Ethiopia) countries, increased global political instability, increased importance of regional supranational organizations, greater control of the individuals on a global scale, and the greater importance and power of corporations than national governments. Wouters provides an insight in the future of hotel rating predicting a full integration of conventional rating systems with online guest reviews from the different guest review platforms leading to greater transparency for the consumer and better positioning opportunities for innovative hotels is forthcoming. It is further predicted that those conventional rating systems that do not seek integration and alignment will see a continued drop in hotel participation and will cease to exist.

Trends

Imagine a world in which half human-half machine has arrived. Exploring the journey to Singularity, Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie envisage a near future of how cyborgisation could and will occur drawing attention to the forthcoming Cybathlon (www.cybathlon.ethz.ch).

Reviews

Ferdinand critiques the recently published *The Future of European Tourism* (Postma *et al.*, 2013) stating that the book provides a surprising breadth and depth in coverage making a suitable reference for both novices and researchers looking for new insights into the future of tourism whereas Oskam and Karijomedjo review the Tourism in Tomorrow's World conference which depicted global trends and developments to zoom in on specific opportunities for tourism development in the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) area. This conference was the first international conference on long-term tourism strategies in the region with the underlying motivation for the need of economic diversification away from oil dependency.

In conclusion ...

We clearly cannot predict an exact future for tourism, but what the *Journal of Tourism Futures* sets out to do is to facilitate a journey of understanding and debate through scholarly articles about the future and how to make sense of the future through a variety of methods and tools. It is hoped the *Journal of Tourism Futures* will be the written forum and first point of reference for argument, dispute, controversy, ideas, direction, research and discussion.

So, just enjoy the journey as we are passionate about what this journal is all about – that is the future of tourism.

The editorial team

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PS: One person we must mention is Dr Falco De Klerk Wolters who made this all possible, and he is a nice guy as well.

References

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