Book review

The Future of European Tourism

Future studies in tourism although very much in its infancy is an area of research which is increasing in terms of its popularity and also relevance. Recent concerns with respect to sustainability of tourism in particular, have highlighted the need for a holistic understanding of the forces that shape tourism development. Governments, tourism organisations and other stakeholders have recognised that growth within in the industry cannot continue unchecked without an economic and/or environmental backlash (Walker *et al.*, 1998). Proactively planning for the future presents a significant opportunity for stakeholders within the sector to take an active role in shaping a sustainable tourism industry which can be passed on to future generations. But how should this planning be undertaken? Thanks in large part to the forces of globalization, tourism systems are becoming more and more complex and are increasingly characterized by "fuzzy boundaries" and "unanticipated indirect and induced impacts that arise from unpredictable cause and effect relationships" (Gossling *et al.*, 2009, p. 4). Postma *et al.*'s *The Future of European Tourism* provides readers with a collection of articles which address the uncertainties faced by the tourism industry as well as a systematic approach by which the can be addressed.

In introducing readers to the text, the editors are careful to explain that the articles do not attempt to make definitive predictions of the future of tourism but rather "a series of arguments" which seek to provide an "understanding of the future" (Postma *et al.*, 2013, p. 29). Central to this understanding is the recognition the pace at which change takes place in the tourism is growing exponentially. Thus the approach taken by the contributors to the text is to focus on the drivers of uncertainty in tourism, rather than on past events because in a rapidly changing environment the future will bear little resemblance to the past. Among the issues highlighted are technology, climate change, political instability, competition and the financial crisis. The contributors in exploring these issues also provide guidance on how their implications can be addressed, which gives the text an uplifting feel.

When compared to other recently published texts within this field, for example Leigh *et al.*'s (2013) *Future Tourism: Political, Social and Economic Challenges* and Gossling *et al.*'s (2009) *Future Tourism: Political, Social and Economic Challenges*, the 13 chapters of the text offer a surprising breath of coverage both in terms of themes examined and also the specific contexts within which they are explored. Authors discuss topics that range from RFID microchips and virtual reality hotels to political devolution and tourism policy. By harnessing the European Tourism Futures Institute's extensive network of partners, the text is able to provide a truly European feel by showcasing the concerns of a range of European destinations including, the Dutch Wadden Sea region, Scotland and Turkey. This highlights the potential for future editions of the text to be explicitly organised around a number of themes enhancing the reader's understanding of these areas.

In terms of usage, the text offers an excellent introduction to tourism futures research. Especially helpful in this regard is the editors' overview of the text which explains the basics of future-oriented planning and how it differs from traditional backward-looking approaches. They also connect the individual contributions to the key drivers within the tourism industry. However, there is also sufficient depth to the chapters so that researchers in the field can discover new and unexpected insights. The focus on the future actions and simple language used the also means that there is scope for the text to be a reference for practitioners within the field such as policy makers, destination planners and tourism operators. *The Future of European Tourism* can potentially become a key resource on Tourism Futures for years to come.

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References

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Leigh, J., Webster, C. and Ivanov, S. (Eds) (2013), *Future Tourism: Political, Social and Economic Challenges*, Routledge, Oxford.

Postma, A., Yeoman, I. and Oskam, J. (2013), "Introduction", in Postma, A., Yeoman, I. and Oskam, J. (Eds), *The Future of European Tourism*, Stenden University of Applied Sciences, Leeuwarden, pp. 24-34.

Walker, P., Greiner, R., McDonald, D. and Lyne, V. (1998), "The tourism futures simulator: a systems thinking approach", *Environmental Modelling & Software*, Vol. 41 No. 1, pp. 59-67.

Further reading

Gössling, S., Hall, C.M. and Weaver, D. (Eds) (2008), *Sustainable Tourism Futures: Perspectives on Systems, Restructuring and Innovations*, Routledge, Oxford.

Webster, C., Leigh, J. and Ivanov, S. (Eds) (2012), *Future Tourism: Political, Social and Economic Challenges*, Vol. 28, Routledge, Oxford.