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A Book Review: Handbook of Tourism Studies*

To adequately review an edited book of over 700 pages with fifty authors (plus the editors) contributing to 39 chapters in a few words is almost impossible, especially one as rich and rewarding as this. Rather than provide an overview of each chapter, I will focus on three aspects: the quality of contributors, the structure of the book (including the usefulness of the Index) and the publication's relevance to the daily work and concerns of practitioners.

The first indication of the quality of any publication is the reputation, knowledge and expertise of the authors. While Jamal and Robinson note that they could not invite all of the authors they would have liked to contribute, the list is impressive. While not wanting to single out one author above another, they are all recognised experts in their fields, many the acknowledged leaders, with substantial experience. While predominantly academic researchers, there are many welcome contributions from practitioners. The editors have also been conscious to present a global perspective, with contributors from around the world. While the contributors also present their work in a global context, it can be argued that the dominant 'western' paradigm prevails, however the editors have tried to incorporate other voices and paradigms. Nevertheless, one would expect future editions to incorporate a broader range of perspectives as they become more dominant.

With a reference book such as this, one rarely reads it from cover to cover, yet there is a logical progression in its presentation. The book is divided into three sections, following an introduction from the editors on the evolution of the study of tourism, which sets the scene for the book, and an excellent final concluding chapter. The sections are: *Approaches to Tourism Studies*, *Key Topics in Tourism* and finally *Critical Issues and Emerging Perspectives*. The first part covers the disciplinary range of the study of tourism, from anthropology and sociology through to geography, economics and politics and numerous other approaches. *Key Topics* tends to revolve around management, planning and conservation, with many excellent chapters. These sections demonstrate that, while Sage is a well known social sciences publisher, the book addresses other areas not generally addressed in the social sciences paradigm. The final section addresses many of the emerging fields of

tourism studies, including information technology, gender, mobilities and methodological approaches.

As noted above, it is rare to read such a book from start to finish, consequently not only is it important for the Table of Contents to provide a reasonable amount of information in a logical format, but the Index becomes an invaluable tool. Prior to reading the book, I dipped in and out of it via the Index, focusing on the areas I was most familiar with, in order to ascertain if the Index adequately directed me to the appropriate pages, and to test the completeness of the work. While there will always be areas that, in each reader's opinion have not been sufficiently dealt with (which I suggest may be addressed in future editions if the editors are informed), I found that the Index worked quite well without becoming overly complex. For example, there is only one chapter that appears to refer to research methods (Chapter 38), yet there are numerous other pages cited in the Index under topics such as 'research paradigms' and 'methods'.

While these days I am now known as an academic, I have worked as an adventure tour guide and author of a guidebook on adventure horse-riding, industry representative and industry training consultant. Most of this work revolved around small and micro enterprises, while I also worked with destination marketers and management committees; consequently, this is the lens through which I have assessed the publication's relevance to practitioners.

In many ways, the publication is unashamedly academic, introducing and developing theoretical perspectives, yet it covers many areas of interest and direct relevance to practitioners. In terms of tourism practice, theory has tended to be separated from practice, however practitioners with a view to the future acknowledge this link and seek out knowledge such as that contained in this publication. Furthermore, as noted earlier, there are a number of practitioners who have contributed to the book, which contributes to the symbiotic relationship between academia and practice. While the book is not a 'how to' manual for practitioners, judicious searching and reading presents many practical approaches and concepts. This is where dipping in and out of the book via the Index comes into its own, enabling the practitioner to access information on a specific area, be that economic multipliers, policy approaches, adventure tourism, dealing with crime or environmental management. I suspect that once they delve into their desired areas of interest or need, in many instances they will find themselves reading on!

In conclusion, this is an outstanding publication, measuring up well to its inferred claim of providing a strong picture of the field of tourism study. I know that I will refer to it regularly and will be recommending it to my students and colleagues as an essential reference resource.

* **The SAGE Handbook of Tourism Studies**, Edited by Tazim Jamal and Mike Robinson, 716pp, ISBN 978-1-4129-2397-2