

Book Review

Contemporary Tourism Reviews Volume One, C. Cooper (ed), Goodfellow Publishers Limited, ISBN 9781910158050, Oxford, 2013, pp. 376, (hbk), £65

This is the first volume of an annual series that also comprise downloadable and hard copies of the reviews of the field of tourism. It mirrors the initial series of “Progress” articles published annually by Belhaven Press which charted research activity in the field. Some twenty five years since these initial reviews which the Editor compiled for Belhaven Press, the field has undoubtedly moved on. Indeed many journals carry such review articles that document the evolving nature of tourism research and so review pieces are no longer the remit of annual state of the art publications in book format. The initial book series ‘Progress in Tourism’ launched in 1989, was among the most frequently used book series I consulted and cited in both teaching and research through to the 1990s as the most useful synthesis of the field at the time. Since then, the nature of tourism publishing has changed and the field is little short of being saturated by journals, books and commentary. Therefore the situation surrounding the need for review articles and reviews has changed. In the 1980s these reviews “discovered” and mapped out new territory for tourism investigation. In 2015, the demand is now for incisive, coherent and scholarly material that can synthesise the main progress now gauged amidst this saturated academic landscape of research output. Therefore, this new book has to be judged in relation to the ability to offer insightfully analysis, signposting the main issues and credible studies in the field. At its heart should be the ability to draw upon the most seminal studies in the field.

This book is a collection of 10 eclectic essays spread across the tourism field of study. The first contribution (these are not called chapters as it is a collection of hyperlinked PDFs available for sale) is on the Economics of Tourism. It is light on the development of the field from its original expansion in the 1960’s (according to the authors) though I suspect a more in-depth historical analysis would take the development back much further than that. The discussion focusses on four observations to explain the state of the field of research. The justification of the structure of the discussion is not made and so the material is structured under the heading “Developments and current issues in tourism economics” around well-known themes: tourism demand and forecasting, supply and pricing, measuring tourism’s economic contribution, investment and innovation, taxation, environment and sustainability, destination competitiveness. The contribution concludes with a section “Tourism the way forward”. When reviewing the bibliography, there is a high degree of self-citation by the authors (32 of the 140 references excluding material cited in books the authors have edited). Irrespective of the author’s contribution to the field, I find this level of self-citation unnecessary. A glossary accompanies each contribution.

The second contribution on Tourism and History by Walton is a more argued and justified high end scholarly contribution, probing us to think more critically about the subject matter which is what one expects from a review. This is nothing less than I would have expected from the leading scholar in the field who has effectively help carve out this specialist focus in research. A wide range of topics are reviewed from more philosophical debates around tourism and the historical profession, why tourism needs history through to why history needs tourism. A number of practical examples are cited such as heritage railways, railway preservation and the challenge of authenticity. In terms of self-citation, 16 of the 118 studies cited are by Walton which is a much more acceptable level and justified by the huge contribution made by this individual is shaping the field.

The third contribution by Scott on Tourism Policy reads like a book chapter without a highly critical theme compared to the work of authors like C.M. Hall on this topic. The contribution treads a familiar path through key concepts rather than the critical debate around policy

conundrum. The fourth contribution by Solnet entitled Service Management and Tourism is an awkward piece to read, with reference lists embedded in the text, tables of references with hyperlinks and bullet lists from the common student texts in the field or key articles. This is probably two review articles rather than one given the overlap between Service Management and Marketing. The fifth contribution on Tourism and Transport by Lohmann and Duval is inherently geographical in the context it focuses on whilst also adopting a focus on models. A number of contemporary issues such as passenger security, subsidising public transport and economic externalities are reviewed. Future agenda issues such as emissions and security are also discussed.

The following contribution by Butler on the Tourism Area Life Cycle reviews the evolution of the concept, key controversies around its use and application as a familiar theme for many scholars. Whiford's contribution on Event Management is a poorly constructed review, stating 'this review provides some introductory insights into the global phenomenon called events and event management' which is more aligned to a textbook chapter. The contribution lacks a critical debate. It is certainly not a focused and challenging piece akin to other recent reviews of the field. It tends to map out the nature of the field rather than focus on key features and links to tourism. The eighth contribution by Atkinson and Jones on Hospitality and Tourism Management Accounting is a comparatively concise review and adopts the same rationale as the previous piece: "This review seeks to explore the key themes in hospitality and tourism applied management (managerial) accounting research. This work focuses on research published through key peer reviewed journals in the field", although it sets out to critically review the field. It is predominantly a bibliometric-focused review of the area within which key themes are documented. This is not a critical review by any definition, being a compilation of literature in one place. This is disappointing despite the statement at the onset.

The penultimate piece by Lin and Song on Judgemental Forecasting in Tourism introduces a new area to a wider audience setting forecasting in a broader context of asking stakeholders, asking experts, asking the public surveys and judgement-aided methods. This is by far the most incisive review in the collection along with Walton's contribution, being useful to the novice and researcher working in the field. The last contribution by Heeley "City branding: Is it really a good idea?" reviews branding and urbanism. Much of the discussion is descriptive and reflective rather than anchored in a detailed academic synthesis of the field. One could question the lack of fit between this review and others in the collection though it is likely to appeal to a wide student audience.

Unfortunately I found this a real disappointment as a collection, drawn from a significant number of contributors from Australia (40% of the author teams) and some of the contributions have a great deal of self-citation. Whilst the Editor points to the inclusion of thematic and applied reviews, the problem is the lack of a consistent style or model for the contributions. Each contribution has been structured by the author(s) and so you do not have a uniformly excellent threshold akin to the series published in the 1980s and 1970s.

I am sure students will like these reviews and make use of them in essays and assignments. However, I do not see many of these essays as seminal in line with the 1980s and 1990s progress essays. This is not necessarily a criticism of the book, authors or the Editor. It is just the huge challenge of trying to make sense of this huge information overload that surrounds tourism research in 2015 compared to the 1980s. Writing seminal syntheses of the progress is now more challenging, potentially overwhelming and requiring very different skills to the reviews of the 1980s and 1990s. Some of the reviews in this collection skate over the surface; others adopt a very critical stance and others simply describe what they find. Clearly any author has their own bias, both disciplinary focus and expectations. The fact

that some reviews work very well is an indication that it is possible to construct a volume such as this. It may be that the Editor and Publisher may need to think more fully about the focus, market and audience as well as a consistent style so these reviews stand out in a crowded marketplace. They are unlikely to compete with the more scholarly reviews which many of the key journals in the field now publish although these are directed to academics whereas these reviews also target students more fully.

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