

BOOK REVIEW

Managing Coastal Tourism Resorts: A Global Perspective

Sheela Agarwal and Gareth Shaw (editors). A book in the series Aspects of Tourism (34). Channel View Publications.

The title of the book is slightly misleading, since this is not a handbook in resort management, but rather a tool for scientific understanding and analysis of problems related to resort development, for application in and aid to strategic planning at national or regional level. As such, it is indeed useful. Going through the book, one notes that the words ‘sustainable’ and ‘sustainability’ occur in all of the applied chapters, so ubiquitous that it’s not to be found in the index. The underlying theme in the book, from the point of this reader is however not so much sustainability, but rather globalisation and its consequences, cultural as well as economic. Another recurring theme is postmodernism, even if it seems that the term is often used without sufficient reflection. This is perhaps inevitable given ‘compendium’ structure of the book, where the (theoretically) interested reader will be inspired to study the primary literature. In general, the chapters are characterised by bold application of recent theoretical developments, by the authors themselves or other. The reader looking for directions to profitable destination management will surely be disappointed, as there is little on “how to plan” and “how to manage”. Still, important lessons can be learned from the examples of mistakes and lack of timely management, although at national and regional (political) level. The examples illustrate well several basic concepts such as the Tourist Area Life Cycle and “pleasure periphery”, at the same time informing the discussion of sensitive issues such as “authenticity” where heritage is to be used in destination marketing and of “eco-“ or “sustainable tourism”, each of which could be worth an anthology of global-scope in their own right.



The overall structure of the book is division into five parts: Coastal resorts in transition; Diversification and sustainable development of coastal resorts; The pleasure periphery and managing the postmodern coastal resort; Coastal resort structures: Variation versus standardisation; State intervention and the planning and development of coastal resorts.

The rather ambitious structure outlined here is not entirely reflected in the chapters, and the authors might just as well have used a geographical subdivision. From reading the book, it becomes clear that coastal resorts play a different role in the periphery, seen continentally as well as globally. This is nicely illustrated by cases. Still, the book struggles with a general challenge in compiling anthologies: similar observations and conclusion made over and over again. This is, however less of a problem here due to the diversity of destinations described, but still makes it hard to read the book from one end to another.

Geographically, the book covers the globe well: Starting in Britain and the North Sea Region and moving on to Europe's periphery in Malta, Cyprus, Tenerife (Spanish Canary Islands) and Spain, before going truly global with Australia, Malaysia, South Africa, Antigua and South Carolina and Mexico (all more or less covering the entire coast lines) – supplemented by chapters with focus on particular resorts: Tofino in Canada and Kusadasi in Turkey. In this last case, the authors had the very good idea to interview residents, particularly on such a sensitive issue as clientelism/corruption where myths tend to flourish and knowledge be anecdotic. In the concluding chapter, the editors point to the importance of understanding local settings in the context of global socioeconomic processes, given the many factors that may affect the deployment of local action. This is indeed correct, and it should be the departure point for further academic studies and applied development projects. Other chapters address very particular social-ideological situations influencing development in tourism, such as Malaysia with Islamic culture/Islamism, South Africa, where the influence of Apartheid is still felt and Egypt where the spectre of Terrorism is not to be gotten rid of. All in all, the book is also truly global thematically, probably since it has authors from outside the privileged positions at Northern American and European universities.

Particularly interesting chapters are no. 10 from Tofino dealing with commodification of wilderness, seemingly a contradiction in terms. The chapter is well written, including this precise observation: “the events and circumstances, that have contributed to Tofino's place identity are unique – as is true of any place”. Even if it leaved the reader asking himself whether it then is possible to learn by examples? Chapter 13 on Re-

engineering Coastal Resorts in Mexico could serve as model for some of the other chapters, which tend to be less focused in theme and scope. It is written by the editors of the book, indicating that they should perhaps done a bit more to get other contributors to tighten up their content and style.

Throughout the book, figures and maps are used to a modest degree, mainly in the form of map sketches to show the position of resorts and destination regions, rather than to reveal the internal structure of the resorts or the dichotomy between resort and hinterland discussed on some of the chapters. The common reference list represents an impressive collection of relevant literature, seemingly with no omissions. The concluding chapter also has a clear review of the issues touched upon in the book, with accompanying references to the most relevant literature. The book is rounded off with a list of remedies to encounter the challenges to coastal resorts globally: innovation, knowledge transfer and conflict resolution, with a discussion of how they could be implemented. In that way, the book can indeed provide inspiration for initiatives to advance sustainable development of coastal destinations. This is a sympathetic, constructive approach to the problems presented throughout the book, though obviously it is left to the reader to find the practical implementation for his or her own reality.

The most obvious target groups for this publication include students specialising in coastal tourism, scholars from adjacent disciplines and tourism professionals with a need to brush up their knowledge of global trends – rather than the individual manager at resort level in search of tools for enhancing competitiveness.

Niels Christian Nielsen

Niels Christian Nielsen (ncn@sitkom.sdu.dk) is a Post Doc. at the Syddansk Universitet, Institut for Fagsprog, Kommunikation og Informationsvidenskab, Niels Bohrs Vej 9, 6700 Esbjerg, Denmark.