

BOOK REVIEWS

Tourism and Sustainable Development: Reconsidering a Concept of Vague Policies

Jörn W. Mundt (Berlin: Edich Schmidt Verlag, 2011; 205 pp,
Softcover €39.95; ISBN: 978-3-5-3-13041-2)

Aligned with increased global consideration of sustainability among academic disciplines, sustainable tourism is increasingly considered through tourism degree programs, arguably as a result of increased awareness caused by media, policy focus, and market-driven factors. In the first chapter of *Tourism and Sustainable Development* Jörn Mundt, Professor and Head of Travel Management at the Faculty of Economics of Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative Station University (Ravensburg, Germany), argues that the seemingly significant growth of interest in the field is less an indicator of the subject's burgeoning importance, but signifies less favorable factors, including the constant pressure placed upon academics to "publish or perish," leading to a focus on paper quantity rather than quality. He also suggests that the growing amount of literature is a result of a misled assumption, made by tourism academics, that tourism has a greater contribution to make in tackling the significant issues of the 21st century than is actually the case. From an early stage, it is apparent that this timely text is likely to present a highly critical emphasis on the field of sustainable tourism. Mundt sets out to readdress the concept of sustainable tourism, and at a time when the terms sustainable tourism, sustainable development, and, indeed, sustainability are increasingly being called into question, the promise of a text that applies greater

scrutiny to the field, from a perspective of policy, is very appealing.

The author begins with an immensely interesting account of the historical notion of sustainability. Mundt discusses the concealed fact that the concept of sustainability originated in the practice of forestry. He then uses this as a basis for contesting the "modern" adoption of the term sustainability, as presented within the report for the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future*, where it was defined in a manner that Mundt argues has allowed for its painful rehashing and uncritically presentation in policy documents, company material, and academic literature in every year since the report was published.

A further central argument of the text is that the "three pillars" approach to sustainability is essentially flawed and subsequently any consideration of sustainability should not consider economic, social, and, in the case of more recent calls, cultural impacts. Instead, Mundt argues that studies and initiatives should reflect preoccupations engendered in the "original" concept of sustainability, from a forestry perspective, which focused solely on environmental considerations. To this end, much of the text focuses on the flaws of the concept of sustainability, while tourism is only directly considered within the last quarter of the text, where the author argues that in considering sustainable tourism far too great a

focus is placed upon destinations, when considering tourism impacts. The author argues that focusing on tourism destinations alone skews the reality of impact, given the industry's reliance on activities occurring external to destinations, involving sectors that serve other purposes than to supply tourism services, for example, the transport and hospitality sectors, both of which cater for local markets, as well as the larger trade and industry. To this end, and perhaps controversially, for tourism academics who proclaim tourism as the world's largest industry, the author argues that tourism is not an industry, but a demand-led activity that pools together a range of interrelated industries and activities. It is on this basis that he ultimately disputes the development of policy, specifically related to sustainable tourism.

Provocative in nature, the text offers a well-argued critique of the field of sustainable tourism policy, while the historical commentary and situating sustainable tourism within a wider context of the problematized field of sustainability science is also of value. At times, however, some of the arguments presented appear somewhat digressive to the consideration of sustainable tourism. A related weakness is the overly strong focus on problems with fewer proposed solutions, to the point where

the author's frustrations with the state of play in policy come across as perhaps overly critical. For example, in chapter 4, a call is made for "the end of the wish-wash and twaddle that may be of use for soapbox speeches and preaching sermons but not for serious attempts to shape sustainable means of and ways of living on the planet" (p. 91). While one might be inclined to agree, the assumption that there are "serious attempts" that could shape means of sustainable action with an implicit assumption of the centrality of policy making, while "grassroots" and community-based movements, which tourism academics have advocated as change agents, are almost completely disregarded. This has the potential to alienate some readers. Nonetheless, this text presents a critique of tourism and its relationship with sustainable development that is both engaging and necessary, making a valuable contribution to the field by encouraging tourism academics to look beyond its ramparts, though it is perhaps not for those wanting to remain within the confines of a comfortable tourism academic bubble!

Ria Dunkley
Cardiff University, UK
University of Warwick, UK

Family Tourism: Multidisciplinary Perspectives

Heike Schanzel, Ian Yoeman, and Elisa Backer, Editors (Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications, 2012; 199 pp., Softcover £29.95, US\$49.95; ISBN-13: 978-1-84541-326-2; Hardcover £89.95, US\$159.95, ISBN-13: 978-1-84541-327-9)

The field of family tourism has been an admittedly modest English language research subject since at least the early 1980s, covering topics such as policy directions in Asia, the family gaze, holiday decision making, experience, diaspora communities, and holiday homes. The new millennium has brought a new social order and debates over family structures including same-sex marriages and adoptions, surrogacy, and high divorce rates. The common definition of the family is changing, particularly in the West. It is, therefore, time for the topic of family tourism to be reexamined in line with demographic, social and political change.

As the title suggests, *Family Tourism: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* looks at the broad subject of family tourism through several lenses, including family studies, sociology, marketing, empowerment, and inclusion. Edited by Heike Schanzel (who is well published in the field of family tourism), Ian Yoeman (a specialist tourism forecaster), and Elisa Backer (who has a particular interest in marketing and VFR tourism), the edition brings together a range of contributors with interests and expertise in fields as diverse as trends analysis, pink tourism, marketing, events, contract and operations management, and communications. The book attempts to explode invalid preconceptions of the family and the family holiday, bringing research into the current century through redefinitions and reexplorations of the field. It presents itself as a starting point to further discussion and research with the hope of developing a more systematic framework of inquiry into the role of the family holiday and of the family in society. The volume presents a conceptual framework for the study of family tourism, with a view to the future, intended for academics, students, and the tourism industry.

The book is divided into three sections, with the first consisting of three chapters dedicated to the

ideology, social trends, and history of family tourism in order to provide a theoretical context for family tourism studies. The first chapter in this section (chapter 2) concerns itself with a discussion of society and ideology pertaining to families and family holidays, drawing a distinction between the notion of quality and routine family time that all families are obliged to live by. The idealization of family leisure time is also explored, along with the role of fatherhood and the voice of the child in leisure pursuits. The next chapter focuses on demographic changes in the Western world and the implications for family structure and the nature of a family vacation. The section ends with an analysis of the history of family holidays and implications for the future.

The book then progresses into five chapters dealing with family tourism experiences. The first of these (chapter 5) deals with the inclusion of the voices of all family members, including fathers and children, thereby breaking with the gender studies focus on the voice and experience of the mother. Chapter 6 takes a marketing approach to VFR travel and questions the tradition of defining VFR as a market. Chapter 7 engages the topic of social tourism for poor families, pointing to the benefits of social (family) capital and children's well-being. Chapter 8 challenges the image of family holidays as entirely happy times and introduces the concept of the family vacation as a time of conflict and stress. The experience section concludes with an examination of the increasingly recognized same-sex family, looking at the role of children in such families and the size of the gay and lesbian family tourism market.

The concluding section of the book contains three chapters that examine the future for family tourism. Chapter 10 takes up the theme of children as participants in holiday decision making, investigating

as it does the marketing of urban tourism to young people. Chapter 11 examines the validity of the family life cycle and its value for marketers of family vacations. The culminating chapter summarizes the book and looks at the future shape of family tourism through cognitive mapping.

The book is undeniably well structured, nicely laid out, and suitably indexed. It is a mostly easy but stimulating read. The editors admit that a complete coverage of family tourism is beyond the scope of the book, but they have done a creditable job of identifying the key concepts and providing a basis from which to launch further studies. The recurring themes reinforce the importance of changing family definitions and demographic structures as well as the impacts of economic conditions on the family tourism market. The interdisciplinary, holistic approach stands as one of the book's great strengths. This aids in positioning family tourism as more than just an economic activity. It is part and parcel of family and therefore social development. The publication also stands as a resource for teaching, not just family tourism per se, but also events and urban tourism. In challenging the myth of the stereotypical white, nuclear family, this volume takes a step in the right direction of broadening perceptions and understanding.

Unfortunately, it fails to dispel the traditional family stereotype completely. The image chosen for the front cover is of a smiling, young, almost entirely blonde family of four happily making sandcastles on the beach. The editors bemoan the fact that no suitable author could be found to contribute a chapter on Asian family travel and the book relies almost exclusively on research into Western European, US, Australian, and New

Zealand families. While mention is made of ethnic minorities and migrant families, there is no discussion of the multiethnic family or the role of family travel to the home country of the foreign parent. While this probably reflects the lack of research into such areas, the heavy balance in favor of Western family groups does not sit well with the book's aim of broadening perceptions. The editors encourage a sequential reading of the volume and have gone to some trouble to structure it accordingly. Unfortunately, there is considerable repetition of information across the stand-alone chapters, making sequential reading, at times, a little tedious. The positioning of the historical analysis in chapter 4 also seems curious in a book that is intended to be read from start to finish. A more active role in editing might have alleviated these concerns. Although the publication claims to be an encyclopedia of family tourism, this seems a grandiose assertion in such a slender and limited volume.

Family Tourism: Multidisciplinary Perspectives is a solid starting point in redefining families and family tourism for the 21st century. It provides a workable frame for conducting research into the topic and demonstrates the potential for family tourism studies to inform and influence research in sociology and family studies, thereby improving the status and acceptance of tourism studies in general. It seems well poised to meet its aim of stimulating debate and research into the broad field of family tourism and stands, therefore, as a timely and welcome contribution to the literature.

Gary Lacey
Monash University
Australia