

BOOK REVIEW

***The Tourism Industry: An International Analysis.* Edited by M. Thea Sinclair and M. J. Stabler, C.A.B. International (Wallingford, Oxford OX10 8DE, United Kingdom) ISBN 0-85198-718-4, 1991, xi + 244 pp (tables, charts, references, index) cost??? (cloth).**

**Douglas C. Frechtling
The George Washington University, USA
Department of Exercise Science and Tourism Studies
817 Twenty-third Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20052 USA
Telephone 202/994-7087
Fax: 202/994-1420**

The editors of this book promise "a variety of new, analytical perspectives on the tourism industry" (p. 1), "new methods of analysis" (p. 1), and "to fill key gaps previously identified in the literature." (p. 2) In all, the editors have collected twelve chapters by a dozen scholars and one practitioner. Several of these are quite good, but they fail to redress the sad but true observation at the beginning of this book that, though the serious study of tourism goes back 25 years, it "has not yet established a firm theoretical foundation." (p. 16)

In Chapter 2, Stabler reviews various types of tourism models concerned with aspects of the consumer-industry-product link: geographic models, economic models, and psychological/sociological models. He concludes that none so far are sufficiently general to explain the consumer decision-making process in relation to the array of leisure travel choices, the structure of the tourism industry, and the relationship between origin and destination areas. (p. 19) He proposes to produce a more general analytical framework (although "not necessarily an all-embracing model" [p. 20]), with the tourism industry at the center. He calls this framework, "tourism opportunity sets" -- the sets of leisure travel opportunities that exist at any point in time. (p. 21)

These sets can be considered in total, or, alternatively, from the individual vantage points of industry, consumers, and destinations. Industry offers a certain range of leisure travel opportunities. The consumer is aware of a certain set of leisure travel opportunities which is a portion of those offered by industry. And only a portion of *these* is attainable, that is, can be acquired with the time and money the consumer has. Destination area opportunity sets relate to the tourism product as a location and not the organization and sale of leisure travel: these latter are the industry's purview.

Stabler argues that the consumer will go through a sequential process, optimizing from the attainable and perceived sets. While this process may differ among consumers, he maintains the whole concept of tourism opportunity sets "rests on the foundation that there is a hierarchy of holiday attributes which requires the satisfaction of a set of requirement before the consumer can move on to the next decision stage." (p. 30) This is not self-evident, and the authors present no research to support this key assumption.

Moreover, Stabler notes, "Until the preferences of consumers are included, which should be ranked in order of priorities, it is not possible to make the model predictive in the sense of identifying possible choices of holidays." (p. 30) Again, this foundation stone is not provided.

Stabler observes that there are two requirements for making this framework operational. One is to describe the leisure travel products that comprise the various tourism opportunity sets, that is, to enumerate their attributes. The second requisite is to resolve key methodological issues, such as how to demarcate these "products," and how to simulate consumer and business decision-making processes. (p. 34) The succeeding 10 chapters are intended to contribute to these requirements.

Four chapters address factors affecting the opportunity sets offered by industry. Bennett and Radburn examine the impact of information technology on competition in the tourism industry: specifically, the display of tour operators' products on travel agents' computer screens and interactive booking, computerized reservation systems, and travel agents' automated administration, accounting and ticketing systems. Gómez and Sinclair focus on integration of the tourism industries in the UK, Spain, Germany, France and Italy. Goodall and Bergsma examine the tour operator markets in the UK and the Netherlands, concentrating on ski holidays offered. Redmond discusses the linkages between sport and tourism, concentrating particularly on the development of sports resorts and vacations; the growth of sports museums, festivals and championships; and sports facilities in national parks. While interesting, there is no convincing evidence that the conclusions drawn in these articles can be generalized across nations.

Two chapters contribute explanations of consumer choice behavior. Edwards attempts to delineate differences between guest and host perceptions of rural tourism: specifically, serviced accommodation in farmhouses in England and Portugal. He found no significant differences between guest perceptions and those of hosts in either country for significant groups of criteria. Kent addresses holiday choice behavior, but his survey's 30 percent response rate banishes any confidence in his findings.

Finally, four chapters cover certain aspects of destination opportunities. Ashworth addresses marketing with the destination as the product in discussions of tour operator images of Turkey, customer images of Egypt and Tunisia, government-promoted images of Malta and Cyprus, and promoted images versus received images along the Languedoc Coast of France. Sinclair examines the foreign exchange "leakage" from the purchase of package holidays in Kenya: the amount of foreign exchange that flows to foreign tour operators and foreign airlines rather than to the residents of the country visited. Long provides a fascinating and well-written analysis of the impact of a major resort development on a rural native population along Mexico's Pacific coast. Pearce examines factors that may spell the difference between success and failure in eastern European countries that try to develop domestic and foreign tourism. Unfortunately, the author chose Yugoslavia for his analysis, and it is difficult to see how this case can be generalized to the other Eastern European countries in view of the extraordinary carnage in Yugoslavia. While these are all worthy studies in their own rights, it is often not clear how they contribute to filling out the opportunity set framework.

In conclusion, this book appears to be a collection of studies in search of a framework. Despite the promises at the outset, the papers do not expand significantly on the tourism opportunity set framework, nor do they appear to have been commissioned specially for this book.

The book is written more for the thinker than the doer. It should stimulate additional research, but it is doubtful that many practitioners will take the time to read through it. It can serve, however, as a useful reference for those concerned with tourism planning, development and marketing, particularly of destinations.

The editors should be commended for attempting such a worthy but formidable project: to provide a general theoretical framework that is so desperately needed in tourism analysis. Like Dr. Samuel Johnson's example of a dog walking on its hind legs, "It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all." (Boswell 1952, p.126) No one has proposed such a general approach to understanding tourism in all of its facets. Their effort should be a challenge to us all.

Boswell, James (1952). *The Life of Samuel Johnson*. New York: The Modern Library, Random House

Assigned: 14 April 1992

Submitted: 15 June 1992

Resubmitted: 7 July 1992

Published: *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1993), pp. 391-393.