

Mass tourism in a small world: David Harrison (editor) and Richard Sharpley (editor); CABI Publishing, Wallingford and Boston; 2017; 251 pp., (Hbk.), £108.67; ISBN: 978-1780648545; (Kindle Edition), £102.00; ISBN: 1780648545

Mass tourism in a small world is the first attempt at a comprehensive analysis of mass tourism, undertaken by an impressive team of leading scholars in the field. While widely recognised as a key driver for economic and social development in both developed and developing countries, over the last decade, mass tourism has been severely criticised and much attention has been given to the alternative forms of tourism typically considered as more sustainable. The purpose of the book set by its editors is two-fold: to 'address a notable gap in the tourism literature, namely an analysis of mass tourism from a global perspective', and to 'establish a link between historical and present studies of tourism' (p.232). The book does achieve its goal and is, perhaps, the most influential current text on the topic infused with theoretical and up-to-date factual knowledge, historical reviews and contemporary case studies.

The book is structured in 20 chapters, split into 5 sections. In Section 1, Harrison and Sharpley define the features of the 'ideal mass tourism' and provide a critical review of the evolution of the scholarly approaches and attitudes to this phenomenon. They call for a more complex type of analysis of mass tourism which better reflects the developments in the modern world. Section 2 sets the theoretical context for the analysis of mass tourism in the following sections and consists of six chapters, each one dealing with different aspects of mass tourism. Section 3 is concerned with the development of mass tourism through the decades and draws on examples from UK and USA. Section 4 considers the contemporary manifestations of mass tourism and each of the seven chapter brings valuable insights on mass tourism as it relates to current developments in specific destinations, including China, Thailand, Bulgaria, Mallorca, Tunisia, Malta and the Caribbean cruise ship tourism. Building on their extensive research on Malta, Ashworth and Turnbridge discuss the challenges of moving away from mass tourism to the seemingly more sustainable alternative of the heritage tourism, without appropriate product development and promotion. In the last section of the book, Harrison and Sharpley go beyond the past-present perspective and look into the future of mass tourism, defined by the changing nature of mass tourism demand and new trends such as the rise of city destinations. Using the example of Barcelona to illustrate their points, the authors argue that the alternative approach to mass tourism is to take into account not only the visitor spending, but also the well-being of the destination communities. The authors leave us with the question: Is there an alternative future for mass tourism?

Mass Tourism in a Small World has a number of strong features, including the wealth of current research brought in by a global team of researchers, the breadth and depth of analysis of mass tourism and the new case studies, such as the challenges of cruise ship tourism and city tourism in Barcelona and Venice, to name but a few. The case study of Malta makes a valuable contribution to the studies of heritage tourism in investigating the transition from a mass 'blue' to the heritage 'grey' type of tourism and has a wider relevance to other traditional beach resort destinations on the path to diversify the tourism product. The book goes beyond the defences of mass tourism as in more recent texts on mass tourism (see Aramberri, 2010) and offers a new interpretation of the related concepts of tourism development, sustainability, moralization in a world of increasing globalization and inter-dependence. There is a shared view that it is time to move beyond the criticism of mass tourism and undertake a more constructive approach of improving the way we assess the impacts of this global phenomenon, introducing effective planning and control mechanisms, and last, but not least, changing mindsets and behaviours.

Reading through the book, however, I wondered whether the purpose of the book, i.e. to offer a truly global perspective, isn't too ambitious. As Harrison and Sharpley rightly

recognise in the Introduction chapter, 'the coverage of global aspects of mass tourism is somewhat uneven and the assessment of mass tourism contributors to this book are varied' (p.10). I too felt that the book could have benefited from more historical studies of mass tourism destinations - Section 2 appears slightly UK-centred. A better geographical representation of modern mass tourism in Section 3 also would have contributed to the better understanding of the complexities of mass tourism and the wide range of its manifestations. While the book as a whole seems to meet its aim to start a wider and balanced debate about the nature and role of mass tourism, some of the case studies could use a more balanced approach to strengthen their arguments (see Chapter 15 and Chapter 19). We should recognise that while this might be a 'small world', mass tourism is full of complexities and one size does not fit all.

Overall, I found the book an up-to-date source of conceptual tools and case studies. Written in a lively and passionate style, it will be of great value to academics, researchers, practitioners and university students studying tourism, hospitality and leisure management and I strongly recommend it.

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References:

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