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A Pathmaking Journal



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BOOK REVIEW:

Tour Operators and Operations: Development, Management, and Responsibility, by Jacqueline Holland and David Leslie (2017), edited by CABI, Oxfordshire. ISBN: 978-178064-823-1, 292 pp.

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Tourism is rapidly developing worldwide, thereby resulting in the emphasis on tourism education to cultivate qualified personnel who can address the global tourism consumption. Conventionally, an educational activity comprises students, educators, and influencing factors (Handerson & Milstein, 2003). Accordingly, textbooks should be one of the important influencing factors. Although tour operators have played a crucial role in the development of modern tourism, textbooks and the related research on tour operators are extremely limited (Holland, 2015; Leslie, 2015; Holland & Leslie, 2017). Therefore, the book titled *Tour Operators and Operations: Development, Management and Responsibility* by Jacqueline Holland and David Leslie appropriately compensates for such a lack of fundamental textbooks for tourism students at various levels, including the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This book is divided into three parts: development (Chapters 2 to 4),

management (Chapters 5 to 11), and responsibility (Chapters 12 and 13). Although a few overlaps exist in the book, the majority of the content has a clear boundary and fall into each of the three major themes.

All chapters (except Chapter 1, which presents a brief introduction of the book) have a uniform format. Each chapter starts with the statement of the learning objectives and devotes the majority of its contents to explaining the major concepts involved in a particular chapter's theme. To better engage students' attention, the major concepts are presented with a detailed description and demonstrated using tables and figures. Chapters conclude with a summary of the main content and key terms. However, the mere provision of knowledge to students is insufficient for a good textbook. Hence, Holland and Leslie's book provides discussion questions, online exercises, and case studies to enable students to review and apply what they have learned to real-life situations. Note that the questions, exercises, and case studies in this book are relatively updated, thereby assisting students to further understand the status quo of the tourism industry. At the end of each chapter, recommended reading materials and references are listed, which is convenient for students, particularly postgraduate students, who intend to gain additional knowledge and explore the themes accordingly. The organization of this book is logical and impressive. Carlzon (2001) suggested that the first 15 golden seconds that customers devote to assess an organization are decisive. Similarly, this book can leave readers with a deep and nice impression if they can have a quick 15-second browse and evaluation of this reading material. Thus, we highly recommend that students, teachers, and industry practitioners in tourism read this book.

A detailed guidance of this book is presented as follows. Chapters 2 to 4 are mainly concerned with development issues. The package tour and increase in the number of tour operators are introduced first, followed by the presentation of the development of tour operators' operating environments (i.e., macro and micro environments). This part ends with detailed information on product development for tour operators, such as the necessity to develop itineraries, stages in product development, and different contracts that tour operators can consider while designing their products. The second part of the book centers on how tour operators can be better managed and how small- and medium-sized tour operators can become the first targets under the management theme. The factors that managers of adventure tour operators should consider are exemplified in detail because of the authors'

expertise. Chapter 6 discusses customer service management, which should be particularly stressed because customers' needs keep the industry existing and developing. Service quality is considered the key for customer service management. Hence, this book uses extensive content to introduce qualitative and quantitative methods to measure service quality in the industry, thereby possibly identifying problems in and further improving customer service.

The next management issue is on how to price a product to survive in the competitive market and gain maximum profit. Chapter 7 discusses such concepts as operating, operational, and distribution costs. Chapter 8 is related to key travel regulations, under which tour operators are running in their respective countries or regions. Chapter 9 is specifically written to introduce all the distribution channels that tour operators can use from conventional call centers and brochures to the modern and technology-based online travel agents. Moreover, Chapter 9 is mainly focused on the conventional channel. By contrast, Chapter 10 (Marketing) discusses the online and mobile channels, as well as deliberates the nature of tourism products, components of marketing planning, and concrete methods to market products. This book has collected regulations from the major tourism markets, thereby proving to be beneficial for readers to know the legal issues in a particular market. The last chapter of this part discusses human resource management, in which recruitment and selection, learning and development, performance appraisal, and other related issues are addressed. The last two chapters are pertinent to the responsibility that tour operators should assume. The first responsibility is what tour operators should do when a crisis happens, particularly during safety crisis in a travel. For the second responsibility, tour operators are suggested to assume additional responsibilities when challenges and other issues appear in their daily operation.

Apart from the aforementioned merits, certain limitations in this book have been observed. First, in the discussion of human resource management issues, the majority of the key concepts and practices mentioned are common to all industries without special consideration on the tourism context. Although we agree that managing human resources on the part of tour operators should follow the basic rules, the special features of the tourism industry and its products should be considered. This issue is also prevalent in the chapters on marketing and customer service. Evidently, this issue exists in this book and is likewise a common problem in other tourism textbooks. Hence, this matter should arouse substantial concern.

Second, another limitation is related to inconsistency. In the beginning of the book, the authors mentioned that tourists are those who travel for leisure rather than for business purposes. However, pages 173-175 present a short section to discuss business travel agents. We recommend that this part should be revised in the future edition of this book. Lastly, a few statements may be further clarified. For example, the book (page 4) states that many destinations bid to host international sporting events and a few of these events are listed as examples. Although the majority of these examples are acceptable, a few events may be inapplicable. In the case of the 2022 Asian Games, only one city intended to host this sports meet because the Asian Games is not as influential as other sporting events. In accordance with this argument, the use of Asian Games as an example should be examined again.

Overall, this book is updated, informative, and valuable. Moreover, this material is a beneficial tool in equipping students, teachers, and practitioners with sufficient knowledge to understand tour operators and operations. Therefore, we positively recommend this book.

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