

Book review

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This book was published in April 2016 and aims to explore the world of Corporate Travel, which the author suggests is a hidden tourism sector, and “many people struggle to explain what we actually do in this industry”. The author worked in academia before joining the corporate travel sector, where she led the research and intelligence team at BCD travel, a travel management company (TMC). Therefore, not surprising, the book is written from a practitioner’s, rather than an academic perspective. The focus of the book is to provide a wide overview and introduction to the corporate travel sector and is designed for those seeking employment in the sector, and makes the assumption that the average reader has little detailed knowledge of either tourism or the corporate travel sector.

The book covers five chapters, namely: “Corporate travel: part of the big picture”; “Corporate travel: past, present, and future”; “Who is who in corporate travel”; “The travel program”; and “The trip life cycle”. Each of these five chapters follows the same format and starts with a Quick Facts section, then a detailed discussion of between three and five topics and ends with a very useful summary of the key points. The book concludes with a glossary of over 50 terms and abbreviations commonly used in corporate travel.

As the book is written from a practitioner’s perspective, many of the references are drawn from media outlets, corporate travel businesses and industry suppliers whose information and research is often in the public domain, supplemented with additional references from Wikipedia. The great majority of references are drawn from the internet and their full internet address is provided. The book could not be described as an academic textbook, with a strong reliance on academic journal articles or text books to support the discussions points, but is clearly designed for those who are seeking a career in the

corporate travel sector. The author is obviously passionate about the subject, and this is reflected in her writing style, which is best described as friendly and informal. This makes the book suitable for introductory university level courses in tourism, or for those in the technical education sector who are seeking a practical introduction to the corporate travel sector. It would also be suitable for in-house training courses for businesses operating in the corporate travel sector.

The content of the book provides a good overview of the corporate travel world, both in its discussion of the many issues that face those working in the sector, and why organisations should consider using TMC. Many topics are discussed, some in more detail than others, such as: safety and security, pricing options, hidden costs, the life cycle of the business trip and communications, which all help to paint a picture of the work of TMC’s. Perhaps not surprising, given the author’s background she does an excellent job in “selling” the positive points of TMC’s, but does not explore the downside of organisations employing TMC’s. Detailed discussions are provided across a number of chapters about the three main components of corporate travel (accommodation, travel, dining) and how the TMC can work with the various sectors: hotels, airlines, rail and car hire firms, as well as the providers of ancillary services such as mobile phone providers and business entertainment providers. The various components of an organisation’s travel policy is explored in some detail, including the travel authorisation and booking processes. Also, and in some detail, the processes TMC’s use to source the best deals for their clients and how they can add value to their clients travel experience.

In addition, and this may be of more interest, the book not only explores some of the more recent changes in travel product innovation, such as the sharing economy as illustrated by Uber and Airbnb, but also how the sharing economy impacts the services provided by TMC. It also explores some future travel

Corporate Travel: Hiding in Plain Sight

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trends and how TMC's should be preparing for the future. Topics such as holography conferences, virtual meetings, crowd sourcing, virtual payments, safety and security and virtual collaboration are discussed in some detail.

I am always suspicious of books without an ISBN number or indeed a publisher, as this tends to reflect badly on the quality of the book. However, while this book is easy to read, there are a number of minor issues that detract from its readability, such as: poor duplication of figures and diagrams; figure numbering that re-starts with each chapter; listing all the figures alongside the contents of Chapter 5; lack of numbering system for the tables and diagrams; missing titles for the tables and diagrams in the text. This makes it difficult to understand the significance of the information, particular when the reader may be unsure if the text is referring to a specific table or diagram. In Chapter 2 perhaps the book tries to cover too many irrelevant topics, such as the early history of tourism and drifts away from the focus of corporate travel. For example, does the reader really to know that the word spa is from a Belgium town, or that the Wright brothers are credited with building the first plane. Also it would have benefited from more careful editing, as some of the casual English language detracts from the discussions. A conclusions chapter would also have been helpful, as this could bring together the many ideas, issues and key points debated in the individual chapters, so

as provide a full and rounded overview of the corporate travel sector.

It has to be said this is not a general academic textbook about tourism, but is best described as an introductory guide to the corporate travel world, and as such it will appeal to those thinking of working in the sector. However, it should also be of general interest to tourism academics who are looking for insights into the world of corporate travel. The book is also likely to appeal to training practitioners working in corporate travel, as it provides an understanding into the daily issues that face employees working in the sector.

Finally, in terms of a recommendation to buy the book or not, perhaps the book is best described as an introduction to the world of corporate travel, and could prove useful to readers who want to start to explore tourism from a different perspective. As to those who interest lies in tourism futures, while the book does explore such issues, this is not a core focus of the book. It does, however, at least provide some insight into issues that are likely to face the sector in the near and known future and may provide a starting point for thinking about such issues, therefore the book could be seen as a useful initial supplementary reader.

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