

Book review

Gastronomy, Tourism and the Media

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This book is the 74th one to be published by Channel View Publications under their “Aspects of Tourism” theme, by the series Editors of Cooper, Hall and Timothy. The aim of this book series is to “provide readers with the latest thinking on tourism worldwide and push back the frontiers of tourism knowledge”. The aim of this particular book is to consider the “interaction between tourism, gastronomy and the media” so as to “understand their connections and influences upon each other”. The book covers 15 chapters written by six authors who are all based in Melbourne, Australia with all but one from the same university.

The book is divided into three sections, the first covers the foundations and principles of the three core topics: gastronomy, tourism and the media – an ambitious aim in itself, and develops some of the contentious issues and research questions that are explored in the subsequent sections. The second section focuses on the current trends and emerging innovations, such as: slow food, pop-up cafes and farmers markets. Although they are investigated from a gastronomy perspective, the link to tourism is also explored, as is the influence of the media on their development. The final section explores in more detail the role of the media in influencing changing perspectives of tourism and gastronomy. It does this through exploring the influences of: cinema, television cookery shows, restaurant reviewers, social media and well as discussing the impact of individual personalities such as: cooks, restaurateurs and travel writers. The final chapter brings

together all the discussions, and outlines possible topics for further research. Each of these three sections has between four and five chapters, all of which can be read by themselves without reference to the other chapters. However, to do so, would be like selecting one course from a 15-course sampling menu, enjoyable, but not fulfilling.

The book concludes with eight ideas for further research drawn from the previous 14 chapters: gastronomy in a digital age; media and trust; food-themed tourist experiences; trends in dining; children as foodies; non-western trends; new foodie destinations and finally placeless gastronomy. While most of these ideas are drawn from the various chapters, they are not necessarily discussed within the chapters. For example, there is very little discussion about the role by children in food decisions.

This book fits well into the aims of the “Aspects of Tourism” series, and as such it makes an interesting read. The book should be of interest to many groups, but in particular to hospitality and gastronomy researchers and students, who are looking for both a global overview of the development of hospitality and gastronomy, as well as insights into current issues. Many books written by authors based in the same location, tend to take a narrow perspective of the issues under discussion, this cannot be said of the authors of this book. While the authors try to take a world perspective, the discussions are short of examples from Africa and South America, however they do try to take a world perspective, and this is to be commended.

A number of the chapters start with a short story based around a movie, book, television series or a personal story about a chef, and these are used to set the scene for the discussion in the chapter. While an interesting and different form of introduction, I am unsure as to whether this is successful. Nevertheless, I did enjoy reading such introductions and when they were not included in some chapters, I was disappointed. However, some readers may find them a distraction. The listing of references at the end of the book, rather than in individual chapters is very

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helpful. This not only avoids duplication which is common in many multi-author books, but also provides a comprehensive overview of the source material.

Before making some minor criticisms of the book, let me state clearly that this book was a joy to read, and the criticisms should not detract from reading the book. I could argue that the title is slightly misleading, as hospitality should probably be included in the book title, given the many discussions in the book that focus on this subject. In addition, while the book has a number of very useful black and white pictures (many by the authors) especially of different food settings, their reproductions are disappointing. If they had been in colour, this would have helped to show more clearly the issues being highlighted. It is always easy to criticise a book for the topics it does not explore, such as food served on cruise ships and planes, but this must be set against the smorgasbord of ideas it did present.

The book certainly challenges the current somewhat narrow view of gastronomy tourism, and links gastronomy to a wider discussion on its societal importance, and this is to be welcomed. From a perspective of tourism futures, while the book does provide some hints of future research directions, and these are helpful, tourism futures insights is

not one the strengths of the book. That said, a number of the chapters do conclude with a discussion about the future of the chapter topic, for example the future of: food festivals; food rituals and etiquette; nutrition. To be fair, developing a tourism futures perspective was not the aim of the book.

Finally, in terms of a recommendation, the book was an enjoyable read, which provided insights into a wide range of topics. On first reading, I was worried that the three topics of gastronomy, tourism and media would be difficult to explore in one book, this was not the case. Perhaps the book is best described as providing both an interesting historic overview and an exploration of current issues concerning the developing and changing relationships between the three topics of gastronomy, tourism and media. As such, it provides a useful starting point for readers who want to explore tourism futures from a number of different perspectives, and through highlighting the interrelationships of these three topics, the book suggests some issues that tourism futurologists may want to explore.

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