

# Book review

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Positing that park managers, environmentalists, and others often dismiss nature-based tourism as being yet another example of unrestrained travel-based capitalism, the authors aim their text at testing this proposition and asking two controversial questions in relation to the marketing of national parks:

Should marketing continue to be seen [...] as the quintessential exhibit of a neoliberalist based industry standing in direct opposition to environmental preservation? Or is it perhaps not better seen as tool that can be used by park managers to advance their dominant environmental preservation agenda? (p. 2).

Based on Drucker's (1958) notion that marketing represents the process through which economy is integrated into the society to serve human needs, the authors (p. 1) put forward Kotler's (2011) view that: parks:

The marketing of tourism in sensitive environments [...] is not a zero sum game. Neoliberalist based strategic marketing decisions do inevitably have a range of social, cultural, experiential and ecological consequents for the environment in which they seek to operate.

The argument is that by adopting an ecological marketing approach targeting environmentally conscious consumers, a form of sustainable marketing – which accepts the limits of market orientation and acknowledges the necessity of regulatory alternatives to market mechanisms in order to foster corporate and collective commitment to sustainable development – can be used to

develop tourism in national parks which follows the tenets of sustainable development: the protection of environmental integrity through responsible, realistic, relationships based on research in a regional context (p. 12). Such an approach requires the adoption of “A marketing strategy [which] represents an internally integrated but externally focussed set of choices about how the firm [i.e. park managers] addresses its customers in the context of a competitive environment” (Clegg *et al.*, 2011, p. 150). The goal is the recognition that “Sustainable tourism [...] is not just about the preservation of an industry's position in an economically competitive travel market place; it is about the role that tourism has to protect the sociocultural and physical environment in which it is situated from unsustainable development” (p. 4).

The book has six chapters. The first, “An environmental context for sustainable national park marketing,” presents a critical reflection of sustainable national park-based tourism marketing, strategy, and marketing (as practice) and tourism, principles of marketing and its application in national parks, and a model for national park marketing. In the second chapter, “Mainstream to alternative tourism marketing,” sustainable marketing and the tree model of marketing delivery are introduced in order lay the ground for complementary approaches to marketing and a summary of marketing strategies. The third chapter, “Sustainable tourism marketing – a wicked policy challenge for park managers,” uses the notion that “many policy problems cannot be described in positivist, measurable scientific terms. Instead, because of their social construction they possess a range of intractable characteristics that characterise them as ‘wicked’” (p. 54) to understand the dynamic and wicked business environment involving tourism and national parks. The following chapter, “Approaches to marketing ephemeral tourist experiences,” focuses on marketing a national park visitor experience, visitor perceptions of parks, and visitor interpretations of wilderness, marketing

## Marketing National Parks for Sustainable Tourism

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authenticity, interpretation, and peak and consumer experiences of nature on national park trails. The fifth chapter, "The multifaceted rural, power and the marketing of culture through interpretation," deals with the cultural legitimacy of interpretation in a multifaceted rural setting, Halfacree's threefold model of rural place, Frisvoll's power extension, and cultural legitimacy of the interpretive message. The book concludes with "Tragedy of the commons or solution for the commons," a discussion of whether marketing of national parks for sustainable tourism is the problem or the solution.

The book is an important addition to the literature on national park planning and management, particularly because it presents to both the academic and the professional a new conception of marketing national parks, one which is based on such concepts as sustainable marketing, power relationships, cultural legitimacy, and demarketing in order support the goals of both tourism and national parks within a context of visitors, communities, and parks. This argument is succinctly brought together in the concluding chapter in which the authors argue that, while the nexus between tourism and national parks is a wicked problem and that wicked problems by their very nature cannot be solved, wicked problems can be tamed. Such an effort aimed at taming this problem requires the implementation of four principles (Clegg *et al.*, 2011, pp. 24-5): stakeholder involvement, strategic planning, a focus on action, and the adoption of a forward orientation that scans the environment for weak signals that might indicate possible better futures. Such an approach requires that an equal voice be given to both park managers and tourism developers in collaboration with communities and visitors. If that takes place, the authors conclude that "the development of tourism in parks does not have to be perceived as at odds to the development of a sustainable park ecosystem. Instead, if they are framed correctly, tourism will be a vehicle for national park sustainable development" (p. 129). It is recognized, however, that the specific circumstances of each park will vary and that there is no single model of sustainable marketing that fits all parks.

The book has important lessons for those concerned with managing tourism in national parks in both developed and developing countries in the immediate and long-term

future, given current levels of visitation and the likelihood of growing interest in national parks and resulting increases in pressure on critical and sensitive natural environments and cultures. That pressure will come not only from traditional demands and uses, but also from innovative and even unforeseen demands and uses. For example, national park managers must face the apparent explosion in social media and their possible impacts, such as calls for the provision of internet capabilities in previously remote areas. This will include demands for internet access in campgrounds for communications, on trails for interpretive information, and GPS and mapping functions for those wishing to access areas which have largely been out of the range of capability of use for many users, such as back-country hiking and wilderness exploration. All of these forces will affect policy, marketing, and planning of national parks.

The book is extremely well-written, extensively referenced in terms of both theory and practice, and provocative. The case studies present interesting examples of attempts at successful marketing sustainable tourism in a variety of national parks and highlight some of the real-world shortcomings and pitfalls of a relatively novel and innovative approach to reconciling the seemingly oppositional forces involved in attempting to bring together the goals of both national parks and tourism. As such, the book would be a useful addition to the library of academics, students, and professionals involved interested in national parks and tourism.

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