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### 2050 - Tomorrow's tourism

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## BOOK REVIEW

**2050 – Tomorrow’s tourism**, by Ian Yeoman, Tan Li Yu Rebecca, Michelle Mars and Mariska Wouters, Bristol, Channel View, 2012, 258 pp., ISBN 978-1-84541-302-6 (hbk), ISBN 978-1-84541-301-9 (pbk)

Ian Yeoman has established himself at the forefront of debate about tourism’s futures and how the sector may develop, indeed claiming “eligibility (as) the world’s only professional crystal ball gazer or futurologist specializing in travel and tourism” (p. ix). This status sets the tone for a confident and wide-ranging analysis of available evidence with which to paint compelling pictures of tourism in what is, after all, just 37 years hence. If we wind the clock back over the same time span to 1976, some of us are old enough to remember what the world and tourism were like back then – Concorde’s first commercial flight; Freddie Laker’s Skytrain, the forerunner of today’s low cost carriers, just a year from launch; only 400,000 tourist arrivals in Australia; the UK’s longest heatwave with temperatures running in excess of 35° for days on end; and, as a portent for what we now know as MICE tourism, the National Exhibition Centre opening in Birmingham, England. Politically, the world was in the grip of the Cold War; China’s Cultural Revolution was drawing to a close but there were no signs of an impending economic and tourism boom there; and the Entebbe rescue of passengers (tourists) from a hijacked aircraft, subsequently made famous in a movie, took place. Very significant in retrospect, Apple Computers was formed and, finally, of particular interest to the book’s author and to this reviewer, Sunderland was English Division 2 soccer Champions and Southampton won the FA Cup!! In other words, a 37-year time span seems to take us back to a very different world, and it is clearly the author’s contention, with respect to this book, that 2050 will, likewise, herald changes every bit as dramatic, indeed in all probability, far more so. So many things about today’s world, in political, economic, technological and, indeed, tourism terms would have been incomprehensible to most of us back in 1976, so how successful is Ian Yeoman in visualizing tourism futures which are likely to be dominated by what Donald Rumsfeld called the “unknown unknowns . . . things we do not know we don’t know”?

The underpinning methodology for this book and, indeed, for all of Ian Yeoman’s futurology is scenario planning, a widely adopted approach which draws on soundly predictable evidence about the future (such as demographic trends which feature strongly in this book) combined with the development of possible scenarios of how alternative futures may look. However, the use of scenario planning in this book is innovative and accessible to the reader. Scenarios, or stories as Yeoman calls them, “are used to express what the future could be in the form of a narrative” (p. 8).

The book is structured around three primary drivers of tourism’s future – wealth, technology, and resources – and, within the limitations of any approach to anticipating the world as it may evolve, these drivers are underpinned with extensive analysis of available trend data. Following a relatively brief Introduction which sets the tone for the book, the main body of the volume is divided into three sections which address these drivers.

Under Wealth, the book addresses the changing world economic order and what this means for tourism, with a, perhaps, predictable focus on the emerging domination of BRICS economies and what this means for travel, alongside the declining significance of

traditional tourism powerhouses. This is followed by the analysis of the demographic time bomb of an ageing population in today's developed world, linked to wealth themes because of the collapse of the pension cushion which forms the basis of today's grey tourism. This chapter uses Germany as its case context, but the implications are clear for other outbound markets such as Japan. The final chapter in this section addresses changing notions of identity and how fluid and simple identities may impact on how tourists engage with destinations and, indeed, where they travel as well.

Technology drives the second section in the book, and the four chapters are all contextualized in specific locations – Edinburgh, Singapore, Amsterdam, and New Zealand – in order to portray differing dimensions of the interaction between technology and tourism from social as well as supply-side perspectives. Thus, the narrative addresses technology in the context of everyday life and living, MICE tourism, sex tourism, and sports tourism and makes excellent use of the selected destinations in order to underpin a future gaze with contemporary and identifiable reality – in other words, what we read is believable within the boundaries of contemporary lived experience.

Resources, as the final section, uses three locations – California, Seoul, and Shanghai – to address themes relating to future cities, future consumption (of food) and the shape of future hotels with a final assessment of the future of transport rounding off a wide ranging and fascinating discussion.

It is difficult to fault this book. It is accessibly written, persuasive, and well informed. The use of specific locations as a means of illustrating what futures might look like in relation to specific dimensions of tourism is particularly effective. If there is a disappointment, it is that the choice of locations is ultra-conservative. Maybe 2050 is too soon to see the emergence of major destinations beyond those covered in this book – Europe, South-East and East Asia, North America, and Australasia – but some sense of tourism's futures in the context of economically and geographically peripheral and developing locations would have added an important dimension to this discussion. Surprisingly, what many of us might have considered an obvious way to go – placing space travel to the forefront of a 2050 future – only merits a brief reference in the final chapter. Maybe this is confirmation of Ian Yeoman's grounded approach to tourism futures and, as such, perhaps gives credibility to the overall discussion.

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