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Tour operators and operations: Development, Management and Responsibility Wallingford, Oxfordshire: CABI International

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The book "Tour operators and tour operations: Development, management and responsibility" authored by Jacqueline Holland and David Leslie focuses on the tour operators as one of the most important intermediaries in the travel and tourism industry. Its main purpose is to provide a comprehensive study of the management and development of tour operators and their practices.

The 13 book chapters attempt to embrace all multifaceted elements of tour operations. Each chapter aims to enable students in their understanding of the particular topic by following the same structure – starting with the objectives and finishing with discussion questions, as well as relevant case studies for further analysis. Additionally, there is a glossary with specific industry terms used in the chapter, selected related websites and recommended reading, which enhance the pedagogical value of the book. The chapters

follow the intuitive business logic from product elaboration to customer relationship and internal operations. Although the conceptual structure might be better illustrated by a figure or model, the authors have pursued a thorough examination of the issues, and have included all management functions, macro- and microenvironment, as well as other peculiarities of the tour operations.

Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the historical evolution of the tourism industry, in general, and tour operations, in particular. After elaborating the operating environment of tour operators' business (Chapter 3), the authors pay special attention to package holidays as the core product of tour operators (Chapter 4). The authors adopt a step-by-step approach in revealing the entire product development process, outlining not only the main issues that might occur, but also demonstrate the major management concept applications of the tour operations business.

Moreover, the book provides sample calculations and planning procedures of a package tour. A very positive aspect of this chapter is the deep examination of hotel-tour operator contract agreements (commitment, allotment, on-request, etc.). Additionally, authors propose common cases about charter transportation and draw the attention to the critical points and the possible solutions. Both of the above mentioned issues are well-known and exploited among the professionals in the field, but rarely find their place in the textbooks and academic studies. Similarly, the role and operations of niche tour operators are discussed (Chapter 5), supported by relevant examples of specialised programmes, itineraries and calculations.

Following the ultimate pursuit for comprehensive coverage, Chapters 7, 9, 10 and 11 explore the rest of the functional dimensions – Finance & accounting, Marketing and distribution, and Human resource management. What is typical and valuable for all of the chapters is the very focused presentation, incorporating the peculiarities of the tour operations. The authors provide specific details of the business, thus making the text comprehensive and useful. Although many popular frameworks are applied, they are always supported by examples from the tourism and tour operations. Moreover, in parallel with the eminent concepts and models, the authors analyse contemporary phenomena (e.g. digital marketing tools, social media, mobile devices, apps and user-generated content), placing them in the context of tourism and with regard to their impact on the tour operator business.

A separate chapter (Chapter 6) encompasses multiple aspects related to customer service and quality (satisfaction, measurement of quality, pertaining loyalty and customer relationship management). The good point here is the adaptation of the Service Profit Chain and Balanced Score Card concepts to the tour operations context.

Chapter 8 deserves special mention, because it deals with important travel regulations and legal relationships within tour operations. The role of tour operators as mediators certainly generates a lot of liability provisions, which are crucial for their business. Although the chapter focuses mainly on EU travel regulations, many of the issues discussed in it are applicable to the rest of the world as well. The chapter goes into details regarding the liability of the different parties involved in a journey (not only the tour operator, but also the travel agent/retailer, the consumer, the suppliers), providing certain cases and extracts of regulations. The last sections provide an overview of travel and tour operations legislation in other countries as well – China, Singapore, Hong Kong, USA and Canada. Obviously, the chapter cannot encompass all possible cases and questions, but still it offers a good overview of the main issues and several directions for further investigation, especially with regard to customer protection, security and transnational operations and payments.

The penultimate chapter (Chapter 12) deals with crisis management – a very topical issue, attracting much attention in recent years. Probably for this reason the authors have chosen to present it in a separate chapter, thus emphasising its impact on the business of tour operators. However, the topic contrasts the previous context and seems a little unexpected and incoherent. Still, considering the significance of safety and security in travel, the chapter reflects the serious concerns of tour operators in often unpredictable environment. Along with reported incidents and risk management specifications, the authors suggest particular points to consider and some common crisis situations, applicable for tour operations.

Finally, the concluding chapter (Chapter 13) puts the last touches to the full circle of tour operations with a look in the future development and trends. In anticipation of technological progress, turbulent political situations in some regions and other relevant issues discussed in the previous chapters, the authors draw an agenda for the expected

challenges and changes in tour operations, e.g. impact of phenomena like electric vehicles, green consumerism, etc. It is a positive approach to make cross-references with the previous chapters, enhancing the consistency of the book, despite the missing initial framework of the book structure.

Considering the wide scope of the book, it is suitable for both practitioners and academicians, and especially for students. What I really like and appreciate in the book is the demonstration of core management theories, constructs, models, strategies (e.g. Porter's five forces, Ansoff's matrix, BCG matrix, PESTEL analytical framework, SERVQUAL model, Importance/Performance matrix, to mention just a few), all of them applied to tour operations and with particular examples from tour operations. This increases very much the pedagogical value of the book, because it allows cross-sectional overview and exploration of tour operations as a business.

As a weakness, I miss the initial overview of the book, supported by a visual model or framework, which would serve as a red thread to facilitate readers and provide consistency of the book. In a similar vein, the chapter structure might also be standardised, so that the information is found easier. Nevertheless, these issues do not reduce the value of the book, since they concern its format, not the contents.

The book would be a very appropriate core reading textbook for undergraduate courses in Tour operations/ Tourism intermediaries. It can be an additional reading material in introductory courses to tourism both at the Bachelor and Master levels.