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A Book Review:

**The Study of Tourism: Past Trends and Future Directions
(Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism and Mobility)***

Drawing from a critical and philosophical perspective, *The Study of Tourism: Past Trends and Future Directions* discusses the seemingly contradictory situation and possible developments of the study of tourism. The author, Richard Sharpley, is a Professor of Tourism Development at University of Central Lancashire and a member of the Institute for Dark Tourism Research.

In this book, Dr. Sharpley, as a researcher and educator, not only shares his teaching experience in the UK, but also provides insightful analyses of the development in tourism as an academic field. Using its previous and contemporary epistemology, he points out a series of important debates: What is tourism? What should be taught in tourism programs? Why should we study it? How should it be studied?

Reviewing this book for *e-Review of Tourism Research (eRTR)* seems particularly suitable as Sharpley explores tourism study in broad examples drawn from various times, different viewpoints (industry vs. academia) and diverse geographic scopes (Cyprus, Europe to the global appeal). This book is helpful to higher-level students, academics, educators and researchers, encouraging them to think critically about essential issues within tourism studies such as program design, supply and demand imbalance of workforce in industry and academic institutions, and the dilemma of the disciplinary identification.

This book has five major parts: (1) introduction; (2) the purpose of studying tourism; (3) contemporary tourism study; (4) approaches and critiques; and (5) future studies. Discussion of discipline credibility challenges, philosophy issues, the weight of skills, and knowledge in tourism program are deeply interwoven. This approach gives readers a sense of anfractuosity, indicating tourism as a study still requires further criticism and synthesis of different perspectives.

The introductory section discusses the overall theme of this book: what tourism is in an academic context and the significance of studying it. The first chapter points out that tourism, as a subject of academic study, struggling to obtain a broader academic legitimacy. Sharpley composes this chapter with four questions: Is the study of tourism a success story? Why study tourism? What are universities for? What is tourism? Questions can lead readers to answer with their personal philosophy and contribute to critical reflection and creative reasoning, which Sharpley considers crucial in contemporary tourism students.

In Chapter Two and Three, Sharpley focuses on tourism curriculum design and education programmes around the world and on comparing different schools of thought in the field of tourism study. He uses tourism education as a mirror to reflect on tourism research and further analyses why the study of tourism deals with management and marketing issues and why most tourism programmes are vocational. He mentions that many may have been unable to meet the broader objectives of a university education. He also points out the concept of the “philosophic practitioner” may be a solution for the lack of theoretical underpinning within the contemporary tourism curriculum. Even though Sharpley had ambitions to offer information and data worldwide, these chapters fail to fully explain the real situation around the world, especially in Africa, which the book almost ignores.

Although Sharpley provides some valuable evidence that can explain the relationships between general research trends and the curriculum design of postgraduate programmes, a question remains unanswered: who teaches those programmes? Sharpley analyses the content and titles of tourism programmes, but fails to tell readers who the teachers are. We should know that even in those courses sharing the same title, when teachers are from different fields, such as the tourism industry or from particular scholarly disciplines, the overall operation, direction, and outcome of the class would be totally different.

The last chapter returns to the core question: why study tourism? It also addresses possible future directions, development, and success in the study of tourism. Sharpley claims the tourism academic community should critically examine current tourism curriculum and research, prudently clarify the objects of tourism study and let it become a lens to view human society. In my opinion, opening the debate is necessary and we need to look beyond formal college education. There are various levels of tourism education programmes: vocational schools, universities, graduate schools, doctoral programmes, online courses, even night schools or workshops; all have different missions of tourism education and all are important portions of the tourism education community. When we contemplate future

directions of tourism study, we should include every stage of tourism education and all forms of institutions.

In summary, this is a book suitable for postgraduate level courses as reading material. It contains some essential questions every postgraduate student in tourism programmes should ask themselves. This is not a philosophy book, however; it makes you think critically. Its principal shortcoming is that it is less than 120 pages and leaves the reader hungry to discuss the most sophisticated issues of contemporary tourism study, as sometimes Sharpley cannot explain thoughts, theories, or ideas thoroughly. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that the references at the end of the book act as a remarkable initial point for further investigation.

* *The Study of Tourism: Past Trends and Future Directions (Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism and Mobility)*, by Richard Sharpley / edited by C. Michael Hall, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, Routledge, 2011, ix + 110 pp., US\$140.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-0-415-48217-2 (hardback).