
Book Reviews

Destination Benchmarking: Concepts, Practices and Operations. Metin Kozak. Oxon, UK: CABI Publishing, 2004

Reviewed by Christine Vogt, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan; and Lori Pennington-Gray, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida

Academic books on tourism have taken off like "hot cakes" in recent years. North America has seen a remarkable growth in the breadth and depth of books on tourism. However, Europe has seen even greater growth. *Destination Benchmarking*, published by CABI of England, and authored by Kozak of Turkey, demonstrates the strength in the Europeans who study tourism. This book, in particular, fills a need for business-oriented knowledge and strategy for academicians and professionals. While benchmarking is not a new concept, it is very important in today's competitive marketplace. Kozak recently (2000) completed his Ph.D. dissertation on this topic and shows critical thinking and crystallizing of the topic of benchmarking. Overall, this book makes a genuine contribution to tourism studies and can also aid those in other related fields such as park and recreation management in developing and implementing a benchmarking system.

This book is strong in several areas. First, the focus of the book is on destination benchmarking, not just tourism benchmarking. Very few books actually exist which focus on management issues for the destination manager/marketer. Although, Gartrell's (1988) book on convention and visitors bureau has sold for over a decade, few other books focus primarily on destination management organizations (DMO). While Gartrell provides the basics on how to structure a DMO, Kozak details how to be successful and competitive.

A second strength of the book is the business insight that Kozak provides to the tourism industry. The book is rich with management and marketing strategies. An example of this can be found in the conclusion (Chapter 10), "Benchmarking, if properly implemented, could help the management of a destination by comparing itself either with its earlier performance levels or with other destinations so as to learn from their past or current practices" (p. 195). He provides numerous examples of "what" to benchmark. In his examples of internal destination benchmarking, he illustrates nine practices for good airport management (p 89). Later in his examples of generic destination benchmarking, he provides ten examples of tourism industry standards and awards that could be followed for benchmarking, including the famed US Malcolm Baldrige Award and the European Tourfor Award.

A third strength of the book is the treatment and discussion of cultural sensitivity. In Europe, where cultural differences may be more central to everyday living, Kozak shows his experience in working with destinations or

countries that are very different in terms of their policies and the persona of the host residents, as well as the diversity of the guests who visit these destinations. The book has many, mostly southern European examples, of the opportunities and challenges this diversity brings to tourism, particularly when benchmarking is employed. By benchmarking with oneself or other destinations, a comparison can be made. Kozak points out that differences identified through a benchmarking process are not about destinations copying other destinations, but rather identifying competitive advantages that will make them more successful.

A final strength of the book is the use of literature. Kozak provides a rich framework and discussion of published scholarship. The section on qualitative measures for destination benchmarking (in Chapter 4, pages 56-66) is tightly written and inclusive of appropriate citations. The reference list and the review of past benchmarking research shown in Table 2.1 are resources unto their own, particularly for tourism scholars and graduate students.

While this book is strong on many elements, a few areas for improvement were identified. As Kozak points out, "to date, there have been far more conceptual papers on benchmarking, than literature that illustrates how to measure performance gaps (p 194)." *Destination Benchmarking* attempts to fill that void, but could have included even more illustrations of actual or hypothetical benchmarking scenarios.

One recommendation would have been to provide an example using a quantitative methodology. A comparison of destinations that might have looked like a financial balance sheet with meaningful performance measures would have been enlightening. Then with Kozak's business insights, an interpretation or presentation of strategies would have been interesting and useful. In Chapter 6, comparisons between Mallorca and Turkey were provided (see Table 6.2 and Figure 6.2) and discussed, but lacked the thoroughness that a case study approach might have provided.

Additionally, benchmarking of destinations in other continents would have been useful. Clare Gunn (2002, 2004) provides a good example in his tourism planning books of the value that dozens of destination examples can provide. Possibly a second edition of *Destination Benchmarking* or other books can continue to illustrate the techniques of benchmarking and the real benefits or outcomes of adhering to benchmarking organizational performance.

A related comment to benchmarking is on the necessary information systems and analysts needed to fully implement the process. Benchmarking is only as good as the information considered. Organizations, in tourism and parks and recreation, often lack the multitude of information systems to capture the necessary information for internal benchmarking. Acquiring generic benchmarking standards can be easy if third parties take on this effort. Agencies like the National Recreation and Park Association play an important role in their award and standard programs, thus enabling recreation providers to benchmark to nationally recognized standards of excellence in quality. Information systems that provide external information from other

similar organizations are often the most difficult challenge to benchmarking. Measurement standards and systems differ and proprietary or competitive information precludes sharing. A deeper consideration of the necessary information systems and architecture to support an effective benchmarking program would be useful to both researchers and practitioners.

A final improvement of the book could be in the area of organization. Chapters 8 (Data Collection and Analysis) and 9 (Destination Benchmarking: Characteristics and Limitations) seemed too late in the book and might have been placed before the chapters on internal, external and generic benchmarking. Kozak's conceptual framing of the destination benchmarking model (Figure 3.1) might also been used more effectively throughout the book in place of the less insightful Figures 5.1, 6.1 and 7.2.

Destination Benchmarking is a book that supplements the generic tourism literature in a "specialized" way. The application of business concepts to destination management is very much needed and appears to be a "hot" topic among academicians and the industry. Books, conferences and workshops are presenting both the theory and the practice of benchmarking. Kozak has provided a thorough coverage of the topic, while still leaving room for deeper discussion on some of the nuances of benchmarking.

References

- Gartrell, R. (1988). *Destination marketing for convention and visitor bureaus*. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, Iowa.
- Gunn, C. (2002). *Tourism planning* (fourth edition). Routledge/Taylor & Francis, New York.
- Gunn, C. (2004). *Western tourism: Can paradise be reclaimed?* Cognizant Communications Corp., New York.

101 Fun Warm-Up and Cool-Down Games, John Byl, Ph.D. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2004

Reviewed by Annette Moore, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina

In the preface to his newly released book, John Byl poses the question, "Why start a practice or a class with something boring, when the warm-up experience can begin the activity in an invigorating and motivating way?" (xxiii). Byl's *101 Fun Warm-Up and Cool-Down Games* provides the reader with plenty of options to the often utilized ho-hum alternatives. Presented in an informative and practical manner, this book would be of value to coaches, physical education teachers and recreation leaders, as well as to the players themselves.

Drawing from more than 25 years of experience coaching and teaching physical education, Dr. Byl has organized his material in a very readable and logical manner. *101 Fun Warm-Up and Cool-Down Games* begins with an alphabetically arranged matrix of the games and variations listed in the book. Each entry includes the game's name, page location, number of players needed, level of experience required, type of playing area, sport(s) for which the