Focus op Toerisme
(Focus on Tourism: An Introduction in the Field)

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Despite the increasing number of books published in foreign languages, they are seldom reviewed in Annals. The time has come to advance Annals’ coverage into foreign languages, and it is particularly fitting that the language concerned is Dutch.

The Netherlands has a long tradition as a host country for tourists and is also a major tourist-generating country. There are many educational establishments offering tourism courses—both on a full- and part-time basis—at the secondary level. At the university level, the country boasts of the NWIT, the Netherlands Institute of Tourism and Leisure Studies. Yet, a handbook on tourism aimed at the level of university or higher professional education was never published in the Netherlands. Oddly enough, owing to a restructured educational system, students are obliged to opt for any one or two languages from German, French, or English at a rather early stage in secondary schools. Formerly, all three languages were compulsory subjects. Consequently, contrary to what one would expect, fewer students are able to study from foreign textbooks. Therefore, there has been an urgent need for Dutch handbooks.

The author, Deputy Director of NWIT, is a well-known expert in the field of tourism in the Netherlands. Professor Kosters also has contributed articles to leading foreign magazines and papers to international congresses and
thus has made his name at an international level. Within an international framework it may be interesting for other countries to see what progress is being made in the non-English speaking countries.

Compared with other works of current vintage (McIntosh 1972; Lundberg 1972; Burkart and Medlik 1974, 1975; and Hudman 1980), Kosters' contribution for the greater part may look like an elaboration of the work of Burkart and Medlik with a continental rather than a British approach. But, of course, it has its own merits and its own identity, which stands out most clearly in two excellent chapters on the Tourism Information Office and on the National Tourism Organization, respectively.

Other chapters deal with general aspects (chapters typical of this kind of book) like The History of Tourism, Definition of Tourism, Statistics, Economic Approach, Product, Attractions, Transport and Accommodation, the Travel Agent, and The Future of Tourism, which are all treated clearly and thoroughly. Kosters' strength—and weakness—is to be found in some more specific chapters, less frequently dealt with in such books. The subjects that give this book its unique character are: National Holiday and Leisure Research in the Benelux Countries; the European Holidaymaker; The Sociocultural Background of Holidaymaking; Tourism Policy in the Netherlands; The National Tourism Organization, and Tourism Education.

The author is at his best in the detailed description of the development and the state-of-the-art of each of the above mentioned general and specific subjects. Especially in the more general subjects, Kosters shows how to make an intelligent choice from the vast amount of literature, data and statistics. However, in the more specific subjects, one recognizes Kosters' hobby horses. This does not matter when he is dealing with subjects he is very much acquainted with, such as the National Tourism Organization, Tourism Education, and Tourism Policy. In the Netherlands the NTO is not under the jurisdiction of a ministry. It is more or less an independent, executive agency of the Directorate of Tourism of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. A disproportionate amount of attention has been paid to college and university education at the expense of secondary education. Here the author seems to have fallen victim to his own position.

To the outsider, the chapter on tourism policy looks like a set of organizational structures and memoranda rather than an overview of the component elements of tourism policies. This, however, was done on purpose. Kosters is a joint author of a book on tourism policies in the Netherlands and Belgium, which was published in the autumn of 1981, 6 months after Focus on Tourism. To avoid overlapping, he left out a lot of material on policy content.

In the chapter on European Holidaymaking, Kosters has restricted himself to an analysis of the three most important tourist-generating countries: Germany, the United Kingdom, and France. It is a pity, within the European context, that he did not deal with interesting tourist recipients like Austria, Italy, and Spain. Also, one wishes he had not omitted the interesting Eastern European countries, with their specific tourism phenomena such as Social Tourism, Health Tourism, etc. But perhaps this is asking too much of a book of some 600(!) pages already.
The weakest points are to be found in a chapter on Sociocultural Aspects, a subject with which Kosters seems to be not too familiar. He does not offer much more than a handful of partly outdated or stereotyped typologies and/or classifications. One will look in vain for theories. In this respect, the book's bibliography is a pointer. There are no references to writers on either the (sociocultural) impact of tourism, such as Bryden (1973), Turner and Ash (1975), Cleverdon (1979), or on the more general sociocultural aspects, for example, Knebel (1960), and Smith (1977), to mention just a few well-known authors in this specific field. It is not clear why Kosters, who pleads in his book for a multidisciplinary approach to tourism, pays most of his attention to a predominantly economic approach.

In my opinion, this may reflect the fact that he is an economist, not a generalist dealing with the psychology, anthropology, and sociology, let alone the geography and spatial consequences, of tourism. As a result there is a discrepancy between Kosters' objective—a systematic multidisciplinary approach to Tourism (why did he not make use of Leiper (1971) and Jafari and Ritchie 1981 with regard to these aspects?)—and what he offers in the book: a predominantly economic approach to almost all aspects of the tourism phenomenon. It will enhance the value of the book if in the next edition the other disciplines receive the same attention as economics.

As a general conclusion, one could state that Kosters' contribution to the field is a practical and very valuable one. The book is clearly written, very systematic and detailed without deviating too much from the main theme. It will be extremely helpful to both students and practitioners, including policymakers on the various levels of government. However, those who look for "theory" will not be satisfied. Without a doubt, Kosters is aware of the theoretical findings of, for example, the abovementioned authors on sociocultural aspects: Cohen's (1979) functionalistic approach; MacCannell's (1976) symbolic interactionism, or Armanski's (1978) critical approach. Their perspectives do not remain within the boundaries of sociology. Kosters, however, prefers classification, systemization, taxonomy, details, and presentation to fundamental research theory.

This final remark seems to be a severe judgement of the book that is intended to be no more than a practical introduction. But the mere fact that I have attempted to assess Focus on Tourism on the basis of this criterion is indicative of my appreciation of the quality of this book. Thus, a seemingly negative remark may act as a positive counterbalance.

REFERENCES

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Bryden, John M.

1983 ANNALS OF TOURISM RESEARCH 285
The Psychology of Leisure Travel
Effective Marketing and Selling of Travel Services


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The Psychology of Leisure Travel, as the title suggests, is an attempt to discover what goes on inside the tourist's head, to explain rather than