

Book review

Review of *Scenario Planning and Tourism Futures: Theory Building, Methodologies and Case Studies*

**Albert Postma, Stefan Hartman,
and Ian Yeoman**
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Scenario Planning and Tourism Futures: Theory Building, Methodologies and Case Studies by Albert Postma, Stefan Hartman and Ian Yeoman is a seminal contribution to the burgeoning field of tourism futures research. The book's central purpose is to demonstrate the power of scenario planning as both a theoretical framework and a practical tool for navigating the uncertainties inherent in the tourism industry. In an era marked by unprecedented challenges, such as climate change, geopolitical instability and the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, this work is both timely and necessary. It seeks to equip academics, practitioners and policymakers with the conceptual and methodological tools to anticipate and shape the future of tourism in a rapidly changing world.

The book begins by establishing a strong theoretical foundation, exploring the origins and evolution of scenario planning within future studies. Chapter 1 situates scenario planning within the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) framework, highlighting its relevance in a world where traditional forecasting falls short. The authors argue that the focus of scenario planning on multiple plausible futures offers a more adaptable approach to strategic planning in tourism, particularly given the industry's vulnerability to external shocks. The discussion is enriched by references to the European Tourism Futures Institute (ETFI), which has significantly advanced scenario planning methodologies tailored to tourism. Chapter 2 deepens the exploration of scenario planning's methodological

underpinnings, debating its role as both a theory-building tool and a research methodology. The authors navigate this complex terrain by positioning scenario planning as a bridge between theory and practice, essential for tourism researchers who balance theoretical rigor with practical applicability. They also critique the limitations of current practices, particularly the risk of methodological orthodoxy stifling innovation.

Chapters 3 through 6 complement the theoretical discussion with practical applications, examining how scenario planning enhances the resilience of tourism destinations. The authors frame resilience within the context of complex adaptive systems, offering nuanced insights into how destinations can thrive amidst uncertainty. Various case studies from the ETFI portfolio illustrate the versatility of scenario planning in addressing issues ranging from crisis management to long-term strategic planning. Chapter 5 serves as a pivotal point in the book, applying scenario planning to specific tourism contexts through five detailed case studies. These include policy-driven scenarios for New Zealand, crisis preparedness strategies in response to COVID-19 and innovative approaches to future hotel design. While rich in detail, the chapter could benefit from a more critical examination of the challenges and limitations encountered during implementation, which would provide a more balanced view of scenario planning's applicability.

The penultimate chapters (7–12) explore scenario planning in specific regions and events, such as rural Friesland and the Notting Hill Carnival, demonstrating its adaptability to different scales and contexts within tourism. The rural Friesland case

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highlights the integration of scenario planning with broader spatial planning frameworks, addressing tourism-specific and regional socio-economic and environmental factors. The Notting Hill Carnival case underscores the importance of engaging diverse stakeholders in co-creating sustainable futures for cultural events. The final chapter synthesizes the book's key themes, offering critical reflections from ontological and epistemological perspectives. It discusses emerging trends and research gaps in scenario planning, advocating for an integrated approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods to better capture tourism futures' complexities. The authors call for more empirical research to validate the theoretical claims made throughout the book, a necessary step for advancing the discipline.

Scenario Planning and Tourism Futures: Theory Building, Methodologies and Case Studies stands out as a pivotal resource in the realm of tourism studies, offering an in-depth exploration of how scenario planning can serve as both a theoretical framework and a practical tool. The book's thorough examination of the methodology, coupled with its practical case studies, demonstrates the versatility and applicability of scenario planning in addressing the complex challenges facing the tourism industry. By integrating strategic foresight into the fabric of tourism planning, the authors not only provide a robust guide for practitioners but also contribute significantly to academic discourse by advancing scenario planning as a critical component of future studies. The book's clear structure and comprehensive coverage make it an invaluable reference for those seeking to understand and implement scenario planning in a variety of contexts.

The contribution of this book to our understanding of the future of tourism is profound. It pushes the boundaries of traditional forecasting by embracing the uncertainty and complexity inherent in the tourism sector. The authors

emphasize the importance of resilience and strategic foresight, offering a forward-thinking approach that is essential in today's volatile global environment. By framing scenario planning as a tool for sustainable development and adaptive management, the book provides a blueprint for how tourism stakeholders can proactively shape the future rather than merely reacting to it. This perspective is crucial for ensuring the long-term viability and sustainability of the tourism industry, making *Scenario Planning and Tourism Futures: Theory Building, Methodologies and Case Studies* a seminal work that will influence both research and practice for years to come.

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