



Epilogue

This book explored a range of theories, concepts, models and ideas that shape how we think about tourism, the way we do. In doing so, it revealed that tourism is a true multi-discipline. It is informed by such core disciplines as geography, anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, leisure and demography, as well as by a multitude of other disciplines and fields of study as identified in Chapter 2. Historically, though, tourism studies has been beset by a high degree of silofication – a varied field of study examined strictly within the confines of individual disciplinary silos. Even when attempts have been made to be multi-disciplinary, the results have often been less than satisfactory, for usually one school of thought dominates, while others are placed in subservient roles. Add to this the force field of tourism, and it is not surprising that tourism studies have been labelled as fragmented and disjointed, typified by multiple communities of discourse with historically little cross-fertilization between communities.

Yet, at its most basic, we are talking about two simple things, regardless of the disciplinary focus, methodology adopted or personal bias of the author. They are: tourism as a phenomenon; and the tourist as the person participating in that phenomenon. The former relates to its structure, functioning, evolution, interaction with the broader community and its impacts; while the latter examines people who travel, why they travel, what they do and what impacts they exert. Indeed, different disciplines often examine the same event, but from different sides of the same coin. Destination evolution is a classic case in point. Butler (1980) adopted a supply side, geographer's perspective, Plog (1974) adopted a demand side, social psychologist's perspective, while the advent of complexity theory added a third dimension. The same situation occurs with motivation studies where sociologists and psychologists have vied for dominance. Geographers, anthropologists, economists and environmentalists have examine impacts. And the list goes on. Each approach has its merits and each has its limitations. None is perfect and certainly none is more 'right' or valid than others.