Managing Airports: An International Perspective


This book is timely! In the last decade, airports management has changed dramatically. Airports used to be considered only as a transportation terminal where passengers switched from airplanes to other transportation modes and vice-versa. Nowadays, after having entered into a more competitive era, facing issues such as privatization, competition and globalization, airport operators are becoming global. At the same time, airport managers ought to have become experts in subjects like marketing, quality management and commercial facilities.

The main objective of this book is to present the changing nature of airports in the last decade. Airports have become a part of globalization, facing competition at the local, national and international level, and many of them have changed from being state-owned to being privatized. Graham also emphasizes that airports are not only mere transportation terminals, linking airlines to other land transportation modes, but also a commercial facility. Therefore, airport managers are more and more aware of the importance of the non-aeronautical revenues (Chapter Six).

In this book, the author has attempted to “provide a comprehensive appreciation of the key management issues facing modern-day airport operators” (p. xi). She has achieved this objective by writing a volume that covers the diverse functions of the airport management with an international perspective. There are a great number of interesting international case studies, despite the lack of information regarding developing countries (mainly in South America and Africa). In a certain way this is not a fault of the author, as not so many publications have been written about these regions (apart from later ones such as Fernandes and Pacheco, 2002). However, a kind of “silent revolution” is happening in some of these countries and probably they can be included in future editions.

The textbook, indeed, makes a worthwhile contribution to the field of air transportation. As stated by the author, there is a limited supply of books about the airport industry. Most of the literature in this area is “overshadowed by the airline sector” (p. xi). In comparison to Ashford et al. (1997), Caves & Gosling (1999) and Wells (2000), Managing Airports has the great advantage to the tourism readers that it is not an operational or a technical book. Doganis (1992), in which Graham wrote the chapter about North American airports, is probably the most similar book to Managing Airports. Nevertheless, it has a great disadvantage of having been written at the beginning of the last decade when the airports’ reality was just starting to change. Due to this, the present book is probably the most suitable reading for those who want to be introduced in the airport study field and also to have a broader perspective about the air transportation industry.

Managing Airports is composed of ten chapters. Apart from the first and the last chapter, “Introduction” and “Future prospects”, the others deal with both old and new problems regarding airport management. The second chapter sets the tone for “The changing nature of airports”. Here the author shows how airports are moving from public ownership to the private sector,
illustrating this new reality with a variety of examples worldwide (Vienna airport, United Kingdom, Australia, United States of America, Schiphol Group – Amsterdam airport - etc.). Different types of privatization are explained and the benefits of the existence of global operators are discussed. This new paradigm has a huge impact on passengers and airlines and consequently on the whole tourism industry. Chapters Three, Four and Seven cover a range of issues related to management, such as costs and revenues (aeronautical and non-aeronautical), benchmarking, service quality and marketing with a focus on the airport environment. In Chapter Seven, tourism experts may find interesting the short section about travel agents where the author discusses how regional and small airports can work together with them in order to attract passengers from their catchment area. The fifth and sixth chapters concentrate on aeronautical charges and non-aeronautical revenues. The former discusses “The airport-airline relationship” and, apart from themes like slot allocation and overcapacity, it mainly explains how airlines are battling against the airport authorities in order to decrease its aeronautical charges (landing fees, passenger charges, ground handling and fuel charges, government taxes etc.). On the other hand, through the increase of commercial activities, airports are realizing that it is possible to decrease the aeronautical charges. Therefore, it can be used to attract more airlines and consequently more passengers. In some airports non-aeronautical revenues (retail, car parking, catering etc.) have become the most important source of revenues once airport operators are exploiting all revenue generating opportunities. Finally, Chapters Eight and Nine deal with the airports’ impacts (economic and environmental). The different types of economic impacts are defined in Chapter Eight (direct, indirect, induced and catalytic) and some examples are given to European and North American airports. “The environmental impacts of airports” is the heading of the Chapter Nine. Here mention is made of not only the different types of impacts (noise, emissions, water pollution, waste and energy management and wildlife, heritage and landscape), but also of how the accessibility to the airport can contribute to a better environment area, mainly through the use of train links.

In conclusion, despite Managing Airports being primarily targeted for professionals involved in airport management, its content has the potential to be valuable to other readers, such as transportation planners, aviation and tourism experts and even university students and researchers. Moreover, the author’s style makes the reading very pleasurable, not only because it is updated and covers all aspects of airports, but also because most of the topics are illustrated with case studies and real examples.

Guilherme Lohmann Palhares: Tourism Management, School of Business and Public Management, Victoria University of Wellington, Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand. Email <gui.lohmann@vuw.ac.nz>.

REFERENCES