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Introduction: Luxury Yachting—a Growing but Largely Unknown Industry

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This book offers its readers an insight into the luxury yacht industry as a provider and facilitator of a luxury yacht experience. Luxury yachting is an exclusive area of tourism and practice which operates in a relatively small and niche environment. Often concealed from the broad

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public attention, it attracts a very special type of clientele with high-end income and high social status (Katsioloudes & Hadjidakis, 2007). However, despite being small and niche, it operates on a global scale and the number of newly built yachts is rapidly growing. According to Statista, the value of the luxury yacht and private jet market worldwide has grown from 21 billion Euros in 2018 to 24 billion Euros in 2019 (www.statista.com, 2020). The Times (2020) has recently reported with reference to Boat, the private yacht 'bible', that the private yacht sales 'are tracking up 10%' compared with the same quarter last year. Analysts expect the sales to break the record over the next few months. The surge in sales has been accelerated by the desire to escape COVID-19 on what seems to be the safest place on the planet at the time of pandemic (The Times, 2020).

This book introduces a new form of special interest tourism (SIT), namely Luxury Yachting Tourism or Superyacht Tourism. It contributes to a wider range of SIT which also includes gastro tourism, atomic tourism, backpacking, booze tourism, Christina tourism and Halal tourism. The very detailed list of SIT does not include Luxury Yachting Tourism. How does this form of tourism fit within the existing definition of SIT? Special Interest Tourism (SIT) can be observed 'when the traveler's motivation and decision-making are primarily determined by a particular special interest with a focus either on activity/ies and/or destinations and settings' (Trauer, 2006: 186). SIT appears to accommodate the varied and specialized needs and tastes of tourists and is to be opposed to mass consumption and non-commercialized individual travel (Park, 2014; Trauer, 2006). This form of tourism emerged in the 1980s (Trauer, 2006) and was stimulated by a need for cultural and environmental holidays. SIT contributes to enhancing the image of a destination, enriching tourists' experiences and is profitable to a wider range of providers (Jin & Sparks, 2017). Other terms used alongside SIT are: alternative, sustainable, appropriate, new, responsible, eco, niche and ego tourism (Jin & Sparks, 2017; Trauer, 2006).

Currently the literature of luxury yachting is highly limited. The book search on www.amazon.co.uk only returns results on vacation planners, cruise diaries and generally yachting but not on luxury yachting specifically. Numerous publications can be found on luxury products, luxury

fashion, luxury end of various industries but almost nothing appears on superyachts and luxury yacht tourism. *Sea the World Differently* by Todd Beechey (2017) and *The Law of Yachts and Yachting* by Coles and Lorenzon (2018) are the closest publications to our book on superyachts but they focus on the experience of holidaying on luxury yachts discussed in *Sea the World Differently* and the legal perspective adopted by *The Law of Yachts and Yachting* offers a very different angle and therefore these books find themselves in a very different category.

Methodology

This book aims at filling the gap in luxury yachting tourism literature and offers a unique approach of combining academic investigations of the industry with practitioners' perspectives on daily realities in the world of luxury yachting. Part I adopts more traditional academic research methodologies underpinning their investigations by already existing theoretical frameworks. In Part II an experiential evidence-based approach builds on the professional experience and judgment of four luxury yachting practitioners (Barends et al., 2014) where primary evidence is generated through our contributors' first-hand experiences. Additionally, it utilizes subjective personal introspection (SPI) (Holbrook, 1995) into the lives of crew who are currently working in this sector. The chapters in Part III are informed by a synthesized methodological approach of the two previous chapters. The methodology of this section of the book utilizes the codes of the Delphi method, without a *stricto sensu* adoption of its protocol. The Delphi method is characterized by the collection and interpretation of experts with a wide range of experience and a diversity of opinions in responses to the questions raised (Hammond & Wellington, 2013). In this book, the Delphi technique brings the real-life insight into the industry through the lens of those who have experienced it from the service provider perspective. Thus, in addition to the value brought from academic and practitioner perspectives on luxury yachting, this book also adds to the methodological developments in researching social reality in the post-modern world.

From a philosophical perspective widely accepted in business research, the book has adopted a Critical Research paradigm (Myers & Klein, 2011) which has been found very helpful in supporting the introspection into how existing professional/business practices influence people and communities. This method of knowledge creation is linked to and supported by the ethnographic approach of Lifecourse of the researcher, which brings together personal and professional experiences in connecting the researcher and the researched (Fois, 2017). The Lifecourse paradigm allows researchers to immerse themselves in insightful investigations of life journeys, critical points, influences and trajectories (Elder et al., 2003). This has proved very helpful in uncovering the reality of life of luxury yacht crew through the authors' exploration of luxury yachting experiences.

Utilizing one's personal insight in knowledge generation is argued by De Ascaniis and Grecco-Marasso (2011) to be valuable and trustworthy, as personal experience and consequent reflection enables the reader to engage with the tale of life experience. This can be related to travel writing as it depicts the tale of a journey and offers witness value (Séraphin & Mansfield, 2017). Overall, bringing practitioner experience and expertise gained from working in the industry is a useful approach in the book. The invaluable practitioner perspective sheds light into the world of luxury yachting and helps us achieve the goal of shaping a better understanding of the industry through practice-based theory building. As a helpful way of knowledge generation it enables bridging the gap between rigour and relevance of academic–practitioner relationships (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014).

The Structure of the Book

The book consists of an Introduction (this Chapter), three Parts (Chapters 2–11) and a Conclusion (Part IV, Chapter 12). This chapter, Introduction, offers the rationale for writing this book, discusses its methodological approach for researching the issues raised and provides a brief overview of each chapter. Conclusion, Chapter 12, synthesizes the

findings of the book, highlights its main arguments and raises further questions stimulated by the discussions in this publication.

Part I focuses on luxury yachting from a tourism perspective and offers academic contributions evaluating the industry in the context of COVID, from a perspective of value proposition and co-creation of customer experiences, and in contrast to luxury cruising. Chapter Two, a conceptual study based on secondary research, proposes that the breakout of COVID-19 has offered the tourism industry an opportunity to review its current practice. It investigates the benefits and limitations of this sector, and its level of resilience. Chapter 3 builds on a reflexive account of a luxury yacht charter experience and offers a discussion on the importance of co-creation of experiences and the role of authenticity in experiences. Chapter 4 analyses the differences between luxury yachting and luxury cruising. Relevant theoretical knowledge on luxury, with a focus on signalling wealth, privacy and exclusivity, underpins the discussion and helps to untangle the similarities and differences of sea holidays, as well as customer preferences of choosing one over another.

Part II of the book further develops its interpretivist nature by providing an insight into the industry from the practitioner perspective. It includes narratives from luxury yacht professionals who have experienced/are experiencing the daily reality of working on luxury yachts and the industry more broadly. Their first-hand information enlightens the reader through their discussions of luxury yacht practices, successes and challenges in a complex intercultural context of the yacht crew. Chapter 5 reflects on the portrayal of the luxury yachting industry in the media and contrasts this with first-hand experiences from crew members actively working on yachts. It discusses the main responsibilities of the Deck, Interior and Engineering departments from a practitioner's perspective, and addresses a range of topics, including transportation to and from the vessel, communications between guests and crew, serving guest requirements including tourist experiences, entertainment and water sports.

Chapter 6 considers environmental practices of day-to-day operations and proposes an evaluation of the development of the move towards sustainability in the industry and discusses the ways of furthering green experiences for crew and guests. Chapter 7 discusses the differences

between the work of land-based and luxury yacht-based chefs and the challenges they face respectively in order to work sustainably. It emphasizes the peculiarities of day-to-day luxury yacht chefs' operations and demonstrates the culinary side of luxury yachting in order to better understand the yachting industry as a whole. In Chapter 8 the author reflects on her own professional experiences and highlights challenges and advantages typically encountered by the crew which evoke a range of attitudes and perceptions of the industry among yachties, often experienced on a scale of contrasting and contradicting emotions, localities and memories. The author also acknowledges the impact of the industry on local communities in yachting destinations. We would like to highlight again the uniqueness of Part II of the book which lies in its real-life accounts written by practitioners.

Part III stimulates the discussions of the context of luxury yachting and offers discussions of the industry's practices and challenges from the point of view of destinations and engagement with local economies and communities. It discusses the regional treatment of localized tourist hubs. Chapter 9 investigates the marine tourism conditions in Indonesia before the COVID-19 pandemic and identifies the potential and challenges for developing sustainable geo-marine tourism as a tool for recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, while building the path to serve luxury yachters and suggests key strategies to maximize socio-economic benefits of sustainable marine tourism through collaboration among stakeholders and adopting a participatory management approach. Chapter 10 examines the significance and potential of yachting tourism in Singapore using the 'policy mobility' lens. The findings indicate the need for a more pronounced policy promoting luxury yachting tourism and proposes approaches to invigorate the luxury yachting segment in Southeast Asia to a level similar to the Caribbean and European Mediterranean Seas. In response, Chapter 11 discusses the Rolex Middle Sea sailing event as a specific luxury tourism example in Malta. It evaluates current and future contributions that such an event can bring to the local tourist economy and evaluates broader lessons that such events could offer for other destinations.

Chapter 12, Conclusion, highlights the global outlook of the book afforded through the academic and practitioner insights obtained in

different parts of the world. It reflects on the methodological uniqueness of this publication and stresses its contribution to expanding our knowledge of the luxury yachting industry through the rigour of academic considerations and invaluable practitioner perspectives. The mentioning of a specific mindset, characteristic to luxury yachting and raised in various chapters, allows us to pose a question whether the industry with its global span of operations and truly intercultural and transnational character can be seen as a platform for addressing global challenges by influencing the development of a global mindset among its stakeholders.

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