
Maximiliano E Korstanje
University of Palermo, Argentina
CERS, University of Leeds, UK

A Book Review:

Tourism Research Frontiers: beyond the boundaries of Knowledge *

In only eight chapters and 165 pages, this book discusses the needs of introducing new themes of investigation in the specialized literature of tourism research. Likely, this globalized world looks pretty different from a couple of decades back, when the discipline was founded. New times, new horizons and new challenges need new thinking.

As a part of prestigious Emerald Series, Chambers and Rakic present an edited book, oriented to expand the epistemological boundaries of tourism research, imagining not only new themes and issues to explore but new problems. Based on the legacy of Jafar Jafari, the editors worked hard to compile different voices, dotted of different arguments, into a shared viewpoint.

In the first chapter, the editors introduce the concept of frontiers as the fringe between the known and unknown. The fieldwork suggests that we shed light on some issues while others remain unchecked. The legitimacy of academic disciplines rests on their explanatory capacity. These borders, far from being stable, are in continuous renegotiation. Though tourism-research has been consolidated as a promising academic option for graduate and post-graduate students, a radical turn undermines the dominant understanding of tourism as it has been formulated by the founding parents. Most certainly, beyond tourism, critical scholars unveiled a commoditized discourse where the “Other” is subordinated to a ruling class of developed countries. As something else than a peace-making industry, tourism covers racialized allegories which lead to control of the periphery. This paradigm sees in tourism an alienatory mechanism of surveillance. Nonetheless, this book proposes an alternative way. Instead of proclaiming the dismantling of epistemological borders of tourism, the editors suggest a shift offering a fertile ground to shore up new paradigms.

Through the second chapter, Gyimothy et al, discuss the ebbs and flows of popculture tourism which represents an extension of cultural behaviour in a globalized and multiculturalist universe. In chapter 3, Mondoca presents a study case based on the relationships of stakeholders in Ilha do Grande, Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). Those communities

which adopt tourism as a primary option monopolize a “system of values” that to some extent re-organizes the individual practices of actors. In this respect, she coins the neologism “tourisimization” as a powerful socio-economic process that subordinates other economic forms of subsistence once adopted. Creating substantial changes in the social institutions, tourism recycles the already-existent traditional and tribal system of beliefs into a new, modern, secularized cosmology. Chapter 4 authored by Donna Chambers claims that scholars concerned with religious tourism not only misjudged the potentiality of festivals to revitalize the social capital, but misunderstood the complex nature of festival spaces. Robledo in chapter 5 distinguishes religion from spirituality. Spirituality and not religion, seems to be a key factor to boost attractiveness in tourist destinations. Tourists who visit shrines or cathedrals are seeking something else than an authentic experience, they look for spiritual growth.

Other less-investigated areas include the connection between elections and tourism. In chapter 6, Charles and Chambers explore, in the context of democratic societies, which are based on the fundamental freedom of peoples, how campaigns and politicians often incorporate tourism in their discourses as well as the reactions in voters. Feighery continues Charles and Chambers’ concern. Undoubtedly, tourism and politics are inextricably intertwined. Sometimes, strangers are targeted by racist groups, or by officials interested in strengthening the in-group solidarity (Chapter 7). The restant chapters are dedicated to the problems of sustainability and networking dynamics within the tourist system, an issue which merits to be discussed further in the next years.

This book exhibits a vast range of topics that are certainly of interest to students, social scientists and tourism practitioners. Nonetheless, it lacks originality since the proposed themes have been already studied at other times and in other languages. Far from proposing a new epistemology for tourism research which overcomes the obstacles or the fragmentation observed by some studies (Tribe, 2000; 2010; Korstanje 2015; Thirkettle & Korstanje 2013), Chambers and Rakic are unable to explain both the sociological nature of tourism and the crisis of meaning the discipline faces nowadays. They opt for proposing new original themes of investigation, reshaping the current boundaries but without questioning to what extent the pillars of tourist theories are firm.

*Tourism Research Frontiers: beyond the boundaries of Knowledge. Donna Chambers & Tijana Rakic (eds). 2015. Wagon Lane, Bingley, Emerald, UK. Vol 20. Tourism social science series. ISBN 978-178350993-5, pp.

References

- Korstanje, M. (2015). "Discussing the methodological inconsistencies of tourism research". Repository CERS. Centre for Ethnicity and Racism studies. University of Leeds. Working paper 24. Available at. http://cers.leeds.ac.uk/files/2013/05/Korstanje_CERS_3.pdf
- Thirkettle, A., & Korstanje, M. E. (2013). Creating a new epistemology for tourism and hospitality disciplines. *International Journal of Qualitative Research in Services*, 1(1), 13-34.
- Tribe, J. (2000). Indisciplined and unsubstantiated. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(3), 809-813.
- Tribe, J. (2010). Tribes, territories and networks in the tourism academy. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(1), 7-33.

Tourism is very often viewed as either a “golden duck” or a “scapegoat”. The first expression suggests that tourism is often used for showing its economic potential when referred to as one of the largest industries in the world that brings numerous benefits to the host communities and where businesses, firms, services and workforce engage in serving tourists. It is commonly viewed as a primary source for sustainable development and well-being of communities, but also a means of personal growth for those who indulge in travelling and exploring the world outside their home environment. On the other hand, tourism it is often blamed for various negative impacts that come along with tourism development, such as environmental damage, seasonality burden, obstruction of cultural tradition and heritage, issues connected to carrying capacities etc.

This book will provide the reader with an interesting insight into various tourism challenges. These are united under the umbrella of 11 theme-based chapters, which are discussed and debated across a total of 40 papers. The titles of the themes very well reflect some of the key issues of the multidisciplinary nature of tourism research. The editor, Tej Vir Singh, explains that “the early chapters take into account the need of the freshers and the beginners of tourism studies, while latter chapters discuss the challenges of borrowed concepts that refuse to translate into practice” (p. 3). Although the editor is right in acknowledging that the first chapters are more appropriate for those at the beginning of their tourism careers (being either academic- or business-oriented), I would like to add that these are a must-read also for established researchers and practitioners, since here and then we all need to be reminded of the origin of the concepts we usually take for granted.

Certain drawbacks in the majority of edited books are usually connected to the reader’s inability to adapt to each author’s style of writing. This is not the case in this book. Here, the editor blended together the authors’ understanding of the issues and their styles in a way giving the reader the impression that they were all in one room, debating on a specific topic, and their words were later transcribed into this book, which is simply marvellous. For example, Moscardo was the first author to discuss tourist motivation within the topic of tourism being the quest for the “self” or the “other”, for which she set a multidisciplinary framework that is sociological and psychological in nature. Her discussion was followed by Dann and McKercher, where the former disagrees with taking a psychological needs approach to explain the motivation to travel, whereas the latter provides substantial evidence for his simple suggestion that travelling is all about being selfish. As this was merely an example, the reader is in a position to look at the overall debate from different perspectives and to “pick the side” in favour of the ideas offered to address the challenging questions which are fundamental to tourism research.

Moreover, at the beginning of each chapter the editor provided Context to explain the rationale for the upcoming tourism challenge. Following the debate presented in the papers, the editor finished the chapter with some Concluding Remarks, Discussion Questions and lists of References and Further Reading suggestions. With this kind of structure, the book is also suitable for discussions within classrooms of postgraduate students in order to provide future tourism scholars and practitioners with the knowledge of critical reflection upon various issues and problems.

Overall, the editor succeeded to stimulate the debate among 37 leading scholars about carefully selected tourism paradoxes. In the following years, it would be very interesting to observe how the paradoxes will be chosen by researchers from various disciplines and in which direction future debates will be oriented.

*Singh, Tej Vir (ed.) (2015). *Challenges in Tourism Research*. Channel View Publications (xviii + 373 pp.). ISBN: 987-1-84541-533-4 [hbk]; ISBN: 987-1-84541-532-7 [pbk]