

Tourism Research Methods: Integrating Theory with Practice

Brent Ritchie, Peter Burns and Catherine Palmer
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This book is a timely and contemporary contribution to the discourse on tourism research. It can be considered as an essential read for anyone, who is keen to gain a profound insight into how different research methods are applied in the realm of tourism.

Like any other publication, this book is not exempt from weaknesses but it also has some strong points, both the weaknesses and strengths are summarised and discussed below.

PROS

The book's strengths are its willingness to engage in philosophical and ontological debates, its variety of contributions which offer a wide range of viewpoints and paradigms, and its attempt to progress beyond the realm of business and positivist approaches to tourism research. It offers a broad perspective to research in tourism, which is realised by including methodological discussions such as those related to ethics, gender and reflexivity, all of which are popular discussion themes in various research disciplines.

Contributors in this book focus on the philosophical contexts underlying the methods about which they have written in conjunction with personal reflections on how their research actually affected their work and the participants/subjects in the various research studies. Editors should also be commended for including a vast and rich array of research methods and data collection techniques that includes the

following:

- Case studies
- Visual/film analysis
- Action ethnography and participant observation
- The Delphi technique
- Qualitative interviewing
- Mystery shopping
- Longitudinal research
- Framing analysis of the mediated nature of tourism texts
- GIS techniques in the planning of wildlife tourism
- Qualitative focus group research
- Content analysis
- Cluster analysis and ecotourism market segmentation.

The text also focuses on personal consideration for the role of ethics and responsibility in tourism research and also includes a thorough discussion on the feminist and gender approaches to tourism/leisure research.

CONS

The book suffers from a lack of consistency within some sections of its chapters. To expound further on this point: some of the chapters did not have an 'introduction' and/or 'conclusion' section at all.

The presentation and the structure of the book would look more articulate and consistent



if the chapters were grouped according to (1) the type of research method or strategy (eg content analysis, ethnography/field research, etc) used in the research study or (2) the type of research paradigm adopted for the research study (eg quantitative versus qualitative).

To put the critique in a nutshell, there is a little correlation between the chapters. The book seems to have a sequence but the content sometimes looks fragmented. The final chapter does not summarise the contributions and key concepts of this book. The final part of this book seems to end in an abrupt manner: the reader would not be able to understand the overall message that the book is trying to emphasise.

Finally, contrary to the editors' claim (in the preface of the book), as a result of the aforementioned shortcomings, the book looks more like a 'piled up' compilation of some informative research studies that were conducted in the field of tourism rather than achieving its more intended purpose of becoming a comprehensive 'research method' textbook for researchers in tourism.

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