



**Book Review: Tourism Research Methods: Integrating Theory with Practice, Brent W. Ritchie, Peter Burns and Catherine Palmer (eds). Wallingford, UK: CABI Publishing, 2005.**

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**Tourism Research Methods: Integrating Theory with Practice, Brent W. Ritchie, Peter Burns and Catherine Palmer (eds). Wallingford, UK: CABI Publishing, 2005. Pp. x + 232. ISBN 0-85199-96-4 (pbk): £25.00, US\$ 45.00.**

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According to the editors, their aim was to produce a textbook that bridges the divide between tourism as industry and tourism as social phenomenon; integrates theory and practice; and, by implication at least, could be used as the sole text for teaching tourism research methods to university students. Such a textbook would indeed be valuable.

Their approach was to ask their col-leagues to write case studies on the application of various research techniques to tourism-related issues. It appears that the writing instructions were, perhaps, to select a particular research application, review the relevant method, and describe how it was applied and what difficulties were encountered. This was a useful idea, and some of the examples are interesting and informative, but they do not add up to a textbook on tourism research methods.

The case studies do address one important issue apparently raised by various tourism students: general business and social science texts may not include many tourism examples. As some of the chapter authors note, however, many different disciplines of academic inquiry are applied to investigate tourism. Surely students, and indeed researchers, need to understand those disciplines before they can appreciate applications in tourism. GIS, Delphi techniques, interviews or cluster analysis are not specific to any one industry sector. So a stand-alone text may not be a realistic option.

Any book which aims to be a textbook in tourism research methods surely needs to be far more comprehensive than a collection of 15 case studies. Should it not start by reviewing theoretical bases for tourism research? If bridges are to be constructed between positivism and phenomenology, should the book not first explain why such a divide is perceived to exist? If the book is to cover perspectives and disciplines on both sides of such a divide, why are there no case studies of economic or scientific methods?

In addition, an undergraduate student textbook on research methods surely needs to cover issues such as how to identify critical research fields; how to select and formulate meaningful research questions, whether or not these are couched as hypotheses; how to design data collection systems;

how to collect and analyse different types of data; and so on. At the very least, the editors might have provided an overview of methods and commented on their applications.

Some of the individual case studies do address some of these issues, but the editors do not seem to have drawn out any common themes. One case study, for example, compares the types of data collected through surveys with those collected through interviews. There is no general chapter on survey design as such, however, or on statistical analyses of survey results.

What this compilation does contribute is a set of interesting reflections by the individual chapter authors, on how they carried out particular pieces of research and what particular issues they encountered. This does not qualify it as a textbook, but does indeed make it a useful resource for researchers and perhaps particularly for postgraduate students, as well as supplementary student teaching materials for undergraduate courses.

Since there seem to be no general under-lying themes, a review must necessarily summarise chapter by chapter. Chris Ryan says that strippers he interviewed in a sex club wanted to see what he wrote about them. So he wrote them a sex club song, which he gives us in full. Is it a little ironic that the next chapter is all about feminist perspectives? Or is such juxtaposition perfectly postmodern?

Sue Beeton writes well about case-study approaches: hers is an excellent chapter, one of the best in the book. There is perhaps only one critical issue which has been omitted: when there are as yet no theories to be tested and no recognised patterns to examine, case studies are the only way to start compiling data.

Burns and Lester watched a movie about New Guinea and pulled it to pieces. Stroma Cole lived in an Indonesian village, and she and the villagers got to know each other well. David Crouch went caravanning in England to find out why others did so.

Garrod and Fyall used a Delphi approach to define marine ecotourism, which was apparently confusing to the EU. This chapter lists strengths and weaknesses of Delphi approaches, and provides some useful practical tips for other researchers. Good chapter.

Gayle Jennings built a yacht and sailed it around the Pacific for seven years. In the process she completed a PhD on the ethnography of other long-term ocean cruisers. Her case study indicates that to find out about any social group or subculture, one must first achieve status within that group. Agreed.

Jennings' chapter includes a thorough textbook-style review of interview techniques and issues. This chapter, and those by Beeton and by Garrod and Fyall, are the only ones which really review the methods used as well as discussing a particular application.

Miller et al. describe a so-called mystery shopping exercise carried out for a large tour operator (perhaps as a consultancy?). Unfortunately for a textbook, they do not say what mystery shopping is: the reader has to figure it out. They also attribute a well-known (but mistranslated) quote to Hardin's famous 'Tragedy of the Commons' article in Science in 1968, though it actually originates from Juvenal almost two millennia earlier. Minor details perhaps, and it is still an interesting story.

J. R. Brent Ritchie reviews longitudinal research methods with an application to the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics. He hopes, apparently, that his work 'will come to be known as a "true classic"'. Don't we all!

Karla Almeida Santos asks how four major American newspapers described Portugal as a tourist destination. Over a seven-year period, however, only 45 articles mentioned it in these terms.

Pascal Tremblay described a GIS for wildlife tourism in northern Australia. Many of the data available apparently proved 'highly questionable' (p 172), and there were difficulties in analysis and interpretation. Such issues are not unusual, but they do indeed make it a useful methodological case study.

Clare Weeden used focus groups in an attempt to define ethical tourism. The focus groups thought the term 'irrelevant and meaningless', but gave her many useful insights nonetheless.

Hall and Valentin examined the content of articles about terrorism in a New Zealand newspaper before and after 11 September 2001. They also questioned their students about the same issue. The students lost interest sooner than the journalists.

In the last case study, Weaver and Lawton re-examined their well-known study of ecotourists in a World Heritage area in the hinterland of the Gold Coast, Australia's archetypal 3S/4S tourist destination. They explain why they used cluster analysis and just what the results mean.

The concluding chapter by Michael Hall is entitled 'The future of tourism research', but actually seems to focus more on the future of tourism itself. It contains some intriguing ideas on different types of 'temporary mobility' which may well spark some new research, but rather few suggestions for research priorities in other aspects of tourism.

The book would have been stronger if it had also included a comprehensive concluding chapter by the editors them-selves, as a first step in teaching students to understand the complexities of the research methods concerned.

In summary: a good idea, some useful case studies, many interesting anecdotes, but not really a textbook on tourism research methods. By all means refer your students to this volume for some tourism research examples, but do make sure they also learn some basic social science methods, not forgetting their statistics.