



Book Review

Tourism Research in China: Themes and Issues, S. Huang, G. Chen. Channel View Publications, Bristol (2015). 168 pp., (Pbk.), £24.95, ISBN: 978-1-845415-46-4

Research on issues related to tourism in China or China tourism has been well published in international journals. It is now very common to see in a single issue of a top tourism journal like *Tourism Management*, a significant number of articles are based on studies in relation to China. Furthermore, as a dedicated research journal, the *Journal of China Tourism Research* publishes research outputs pertaining to China tourism. It is also a notable phenomenon that an increasing number of Chinese authors are publishing in international journals and many of them are based in Chinese universities and research institutions.

Despite the highly visible research on tourism issues in China within international research journals, tourism research in China remains largely hidden to researchers outside China, especially those who cannot read Chinese in their research work. Needless to say, given the size of tourism education in China, a substantial volume of tourism research outputs is being produced in Chinese and published in Chinese journals in China. Although some authors in China are able to publish their research in international journals, in most cases in collaboration with researchers in the English-speaking countries, such publications can hardly represent the whole 'landscape' of tourism research in China. As noted by some scholars (e.g., Ryan & Huang, 2013, p. 209), the Chinese institution that influences research practices in China is quite different from that in most western countries. There is a unique 'Chinese way' of producing tourism research in China.

Huang and Chen did an excellent job in identifying the research communication gap between tourism research communities in China and outside China and presenting this book. The two authors have a history of research collaboration with each other. Both are ethnic Chinese scholars. While Chen is based in China, Huang works in an Australian university. The mixed insider-outsider views between the two authors are commendable and have made the book more balanced in the perspectives presented to serve the wider audience in the international research community.

The book is a relatively short volume in Channel View's *Tourism Essentials* book series. It contains 8 chapters. The first chapter as the introductory chapter of the book provides an overview of the 'landscape' of tourism research in China. This chapter is very helpful for researchers without due knowledge of China to understand and possess the necessary background or contextual knowledge of tourism research in China. In this chapter, Huang and Chen discussed tourism researchers, China's research institution, tourism research themes and topics, tourism research methods and methodologies in China. At the end of the chapter, the whole structure of the book is outlined. The authors also acknowledged that the whole book is based on their comprehensive critical review of

pertinent articles published in four leading Chinese tourism journals for the period from 2006 to 2013. The four journals are *Tourism Tribune*, *Tourism Science*, *Economic Geography* and *Human Geography*.

In the second chapter, the authors attempted to present a meaningful comparison on the philosophical and epistemological perspectives and views between Chinese scholars and their counterparts in the international academy. It is interesting to see that the words "Travel" and "Tourism" in Chinese have their rich linguistic and cultural connotations in China and the indigenous cultural meanings of travel and tourism in China have not been made known in the international tourism academy although a notable scope and volume of research in this regard has been done in China. Furthermore, some perspectives of understanding the essence of tourism which can only be accessed in the Chinese literature are discussed. These perspectives complement as a valuable part the philosophical understandings of tourism in the English literature (e.g., Tribe, 2009).

The topic of rural tourism is covered in Chapter 3. Rural tourism is significant in China as a lot of tourism attractions are based in rural areas and a large proportion of domestic tourism happens in China's rural regions. Rural tourism is a multidisciplinary field of research and tourism researchers in China have approached the relevant issues from both supply and demand perspectives. In addition, a plethora of studies have attended socio-economic issues in rural tourism. Topics include community participation and empowerment, power relations in rural tourism, entrepreneurship, development pathways and governance models. As China exercises a "socialist" land ownership system, issues around land use and property rights in rural tourism development exhibit a high level of complexity in China. Accordingly, research on these complex issues in rural tourism in China is believed to be a valuable addition to the tourism literature. This argument can be applied to the cases and models presented in Chapter 4 regarding community participation and involvement in tourism. By reviewing the representative cases and models in the Chinese literature, Huang and Chen developed a typology of community participation in tourism development in China. According to the typology, existing community participations in tourism development can be classified into 4 categories: limited participation in government-dominated tourism development; limited participation in enterprise-dominated development; limited participation in community-dominated development; and full participation in community-dominated development.

In Chapter 5, Huang and Chen reviewed the state of research on tourism market and behaviours in China. Tourist market and behaviour studies are popular among tourism researchers in China. The commonly surveyed behavioural constructs include tourist perceptions/cognition, needs, motivation, and expectation, decision-making/destination choice, satisfaction, behavioural intentions. Geographic studies of tourist behaviours are also

commonly found among Chinese researchers. Most researchers adopted quantitative methods in studying tourist behaviours. Building upon the review, Huang and Chen also applied Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan's (2007) in evaluating the academic contributions of these studies. They found that this body of research "is still at a developing stage with limited theoretical contributions" (p.90).

Chapter 6 focuses on tourist attraction management in China. Key issues like governance models, tourist attraction admission ticketing, environment and ecological system management, as well as safety and risk management are reviewed and discussed. Most of these issues bear unique "Chinese" characteristics and are not well discussed in international research journals. Chapter 7 deals with tour guiding and interpretation research in China. Relevant topics covered in the Chinese literature include tour guiding service quality and quality assurance, tour guide behaviour, legal issues regarding tour guiding, and interpretation. Chapter 8 as the final chapter provides some key remarks to conclude the book. These include: the role of government and power relations in tourism development, research institutions in China and their continuing influence on China's tourism research, Chinese laws in relation to tourism and further speculations on tourist behaviour research in China.

Generally, the book represents a piece of original work to address the gap between tourism research in China and that in the international tourism academy. The authors should be commended for their effort to present a well-balanced and structured book. More often, in our academic life, researchers tend to focus

more on those types of research output preferred by the research evaluation system, such as journal articles. However, some research work, such as that reflected in this book, would be more valuable and suitable if presented as a volume of book. Despite all its merits, the book appears to be limited in its contents and some important themes and issues, such as tourism economics, Chinese tourism policies, tourism planning, tourism education, are missed out. In some sections, readability could be improved with more careful English editing. This book is a good reference for academic researchers and postgraduate students in tourism to learn more about tourism research in China. It is also suitable for industry professional to develop in-depth understanding of the tourism industry realities and challenges in China.

References

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