



Book Review

Research Methods for Tourism Students, R. Durbarry (Ed.). Routledge, Abingdon (2018). p. 294 pp paperback, £34.99, ISBN: 978-0-415-67319-8

The purpose of this book is to provide an introductory guide to research methods in tourism. Hence, it speaks to students undertaking their first research project. To achieve this goal, the book uses an easy language and applies a story-telling mode in combination with illustrative examples. This approach is engaging and overcomes the potential distance between the author and the student audience. Indeed, understanding and applying research methods is a key challenge for many social science students, thus, taking this approach is commendable. However, the book may be too simplistic for Master's or Ph.D. students who have initial research experience or completed a research methods course, hence limiting the potential audience.

The book covers the fundamental steps in the research process and introduces the reader to them in chronological order. Conveniently, the chapters allow the student to jump directly to a topic of interest. The book starts out by introducing the reader to the nature of research. Of particular use to many students will be the comprehensive introduction on research philosophy which also includes critical theory. Then, the book outlines the two domains of qualitative and quantitative research. Unfortunately, the third domain, conceptual research, is neglected in the book. While conceptual research is often seen as relatively marginal in tourism (Xin, Tribe, & Chambers, 2013), ignoring its existence and nature in a book whose purpose is to introduce students to tourism research methods is problematic. A second critique pertains to how the choice of method is reasoned. While the book makes the questionable claim that the choice of method depends on researcher ability, it is widely accepted that the research purpose and aim should determine the methods to be used. While this claim is not reiterated later, it is a problematic statement to make in a book for students who are exposed to research methods for the first time.

The editor is to be commended on the attempt to introduce students to the key role of academic journals, and the discussion mentions influential tourism journals. However, the book refers to a "Journal of Travel and Research" (p. 25) that does not exist (probably *Journal of Travel Research* is meant). Similarly, when introducing influential journals, the book fails to mention *Tourism Management* while referring to journals such as "Tourism Management International". This imprecision is problematic because this section could have served as a good orientation for students but may now become a source of confusion. Careful copy-editing would have eradicated this error.

While the book provides helpful overviews for approaching a research project, specifically on how to develop a research proposal (Chapter 4), preparing a literature review (Chapter 5) and the issue of research ethics (Chapter 6), the importance of which be overstated, it neglects probably the most challenging and important step in approaching a research project: finding a good topic and an original and

relevant research idea (Kock, Assaf and Tsionas, 2020). Some mention of this and perhaps some guidelines on how to identify and assess good research ideas would have been very useful.

The book continues with a detailed introduction of both qualitative (Chapter 8) and quantitative (Chapter 9) research, and their relationship. While the book claims to be balanced between qualitative and quantitative methods, this assertion is not always warranted. For example, the books prominently suggests that quantitative research would benefit from qualitative research but neglects that qualitative research can also benefit from quantitative research. The impression of a bias is further substantiated in Chapter 8, which is in large parts a criticism of quantitative research. This one-sided discussion (a similar critique of qualitative research in the quantitative chapter is absent) is questionable because it sets out a biased view on the nature of qualitative and quantitative research to students new to the subject. In addition, and because of the chapter's focus on criticizing quantitative research, it fails to explain what qualitative research actually is and why it should be used. Another shortcoming is that the qualitative and quantitative chapters have different structures and discuss different types of topics, thereby making it difficult for students to compare qualitative and quantitative research. The chapter on quantitative research uses illustrative examples but does so by using a formative index as an example. As the vast majority of scales used in tourism are reflective, this example may confuse rather than clarify the issue for students. Chapter 10 briefly discusses the mixed-methods approach. Given that it is a valuable solution to many shortcomings of qualitative and quantitative research, it would have been good if it was discussed in more detail.

Chapters 11 and 12 focus on how the internet can facilitate data collection, and these are useful and timely. Unfortunately, the chapter on online questionnaires (Chapter 12) only discusses a few free online survey tools but not the seminal tool Qualtrics. This is unfortunate because many disadvantages that the chapter highlights are not present in Qualtrics. Furthermore, the chapter neglects the existence of panels as an important means of data collection. This is surprising because panels such as Amazon Mechanical Turk are widely used in social science research. Indeed, while the chapter devotes much space to criticizing a lack of representativeness in online surveys, researchers in the social sciences agree that this is not necessarily always the case. Hence, this chapter does not adequately represent the vast potential of online surveys and may discourage students to use them.

Chapters 14–18 set out basic principles of qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The chapters will prove useful for the inexperienced but are probably too simplistic for Master's students, and of negligible use for Ph.D. students. Nevertheless, it provides a useful overview for students unfamiliar with analysis techniques. Chapter 19 discusses a critical, yet often underemphasized, aspect of research: writing it up. Richard Sharpley provides a very good discussion, and tackles various important aspects. This piece will be useful to students because writing up research is one of the most difficult things in academic life. Indeed,

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.104063>

tourism researchers may find this chapter useful as well.

Xin, S., Tribe, J., & Chambers, D. (2013). Conceptual research in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 41, 66–88.

Reference

Kock, F., Assaf, A. G., & Tsionas, M. (2020). Developing courageous research ideas. *Journal of Travel Research*.

Florian Kock, Associate Professor
Copenhagen Business School, Denmark
E-mail address: fk.marktg@cbs.dk.