Book Review

Tourist Behaviour and the Contemporary World
Pearce, P. L. (2011)
189p. Bristol: Channel Views
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Tourist Behaviour and the Contemporary World offers an aptly-timed, fascinating and in-depth exploration of tourist behaviour. A contemporary tourism study, besides providing an outline of the emerging themes of tourist behaviour, this book endeavors to provide an understanding and realistic application of a number of research paradigms and conceptual schemes which the readers can pick up for future research. The book is well organised into seven chapters. The first chapter is the most important and complex, especially for readers who are not familiar with research on tourist behaviour. Pearce begins the intriguing journey by first setting scenes where he examines the various definitions of tourist behaviour, followed by a comprehensive review on the relevant conceptual schemes. In this book, a holistic definition for ‘tourist behaviour’ is adopted which encompasses tourists’ senses, emotions, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours. Subsequently, the author rigorously reviews the emic-etic perspective and paradigmatic issues pertinent to tourist behaviour research. The final part of this introductory chapter introduces 12 conceptual schemes, including travel career pattern model, role theory, equity theory, social representations, etc. Pearce opines that conceptual schemes which can be likened to mini-theories are more significant to tourism studies rather than the large scale classic theories which have limited explanation power to specific areas of interest. The conceptual discussion in Chapter 1 prepares the readers with the fundamental knowledge to apprehend the following chapters where the author reviews five emerging topics in tourist behaviour.

The rest of the book comprises six chapters with the first five featuring different emerging themes and the last one providing additional perspectives on contemporary tourist behaviour. Chapter two outlines advances in technology in tourism and its impact on tourist behaviour. Pearce examines the existing literature on Web 2.0 communications and addresses the benefits and pitfalls of these social platforms. It is noted that digital elasticity is replacing the concept of liminality. New mobile technology has led to cultural confusion as tourists stay in the bubble of familiar cultural practices when confronting novel destinations and challenging conditions. As a result, mobile technology helps soften cultural shock but at the same time, it diminishes the experience of travel. Chapter three features the safety and security issues in tourism with special reference to tourist scam, crime, and health-related risks. Pearce brings together motivation theory and attribution theory to explain why some tourists choose to engage themselves in adventurous yet risky activities. The discussion is followed by a detailed introduction to Travel Career Pattern (TCP) – a tourist motivation model developed by Pearce in his previous studies. TCP illustrates the changing patterns of 14 core motives

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categorised in three motivation layers, based on the influence of travel experience and tourists’ life cycle. This model is emphasised throughout the rest of the chapters.

Chapter four, entitled “The Tourists’ Footprints” tackles a series of issues related to the patterns and symbolic meanings of tourist movement, of which the perception of crowding and sustainable tourist behaviour are included. Chapter five touches on a less developed topic, that is, the dimensions of personal change through travel. The author attempts to illustrate tourists’ emotional state by linking TCP model with neuroscience literature. The influence of travel on social identity, knowledge acquisition, and relationship enhancement are discussed. The following chapter, entitled “Tourists Connecting to Others” extends the discussion to the external world where the author reviews tourists’ reaction towards poverty in five broad-meaning themes: the disengaged; compartmentalisation; the lucky self; empathy, sympathy, and the self; and corrective actions. Volunteer tourism and humour are also covered in the study of tourists’ relationship with others. The last chapter gives attention to some rising yet lightly explored topics in the field of tourist behaviour, which includes slow tourism, tipping and bargaining, and other themed tourist behaviours. The final section of the book which is entitled “Final Souvenir” proposes a framework for contemporary tourist behaviour. The framework is divided into three phases: pre-travel factors, on-site experience, and post-travel outcomes. All themes mentioned in the previous chapters are included in this framework. Using the metaphor of chameleon, Pearce concludes the book by highlighting the changing nature of tourist behaviour in the contemporary tourism context, mainly due to the advances in technology and the rising global issues.

As the scope of tourism has expanded, tourists’ needs and behaviours become diverse and complex. There is a necessity to stay updated with emerging trends and this book, indeed, has made a significant contribution to the understanding of contemporary tourist behaviour by reviewing and updating the existing literature. The featuring themes are highly relevant as many of the individual topics have gained increasing importance in the past decade. One of the most prominent examples is the study of tourist safety and security which has received greater attention after the 9/11 attack in 2001. The value of this book is that it assembles the scattering themes of tourist behaviour in one compilation. This book is comparable to Conrady & Buck’s (2012) Trends and Issues in Global Tourism 2012 as many of the themes in both works overlap. For example, both authors touch on sustainable tourism and the impacts of social networks on tourism. The difference is that Pearce’s arguments are solely based on the tourist perspective whereas Conrady and Buck discuss the emerging tourism trends in a broader sense.

The balance between empirical evidences and theoretical discussions constitutes the greatest merit of this book. Another merit of this book lies in its attempts to indicate the future research opportunities and directions instead of merely presenting what has been done in the field of tourist behaviour. This feature is a highlight of the book as there is a ‘Directions’ section at the end of each chapter. The author elaborates his argument using a pleasant narrative style, for instance, at the beginning of the book, he compares the studies of tourist behaviour to a full orchestra. Likewise, subjective writing is noticeable during the course of reading. ‘Tourists’ tales and photos are used instead of wordy case studies and hard facts have enhanced the reading experience of the text. Therefore, this book could be a good reference for the students but is still far from being an academic text book.
However, the book is not without a few shortcomings. There is a lack of managerial implications throughout the chapters. It is not clear how the industry players can utilise the content of this book, except for being informed of the current trends of tourist behaviour. The book is written from a very academic standpoint as the author tends to elaborate on the theoretical underpinnings for each topic. Another weakness of this book is the lack of in-depth discussion which has been traded off for comprehensiveness. For example, the author addresses the trend of sustainable tourism under the section of “Ecological Footprints” in only six pages. It might be insufficient for the readers to fully comprehend the idea of sustainable tourism. Therefore, the book is good as an introduction to brief the readers on the current trends, but additional references are needed in order to grasp the essence of the topics and themes discussed.

In sum, the book is well written and comprehensible to students and researchers. General readers who are interested in knowing more about themselves as a tourist are likely to find this book interesting. The author’s knowledge is reflected in the chapters supported by empirical evidences. The book provides valuable insights on contemporary tourist behaviour. It serves as a good reference for researchers as it has opened doors for future research by clearly indicating the possible directions for each topic.

Reference