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RESEARCHING HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM, BOB BROTHERTON

(2015)

2nd ed., London: Sage, 336 pp.,

ISBN: 9781446287552, p/bk, £27.99

Reviewed by Maarja Kaaristo, Manchester Metropolitan University

Researching Hospitality and Tourism is a general methodological textbook aimed primarily at final-year undergraduate students in tourism and hospitality programmes, providing guidelines on how to write a successful coursework, assignment or a dissertation. The student is taken 'through each decision and action stage of the research process, from identifying a topic and formulating the research question or aim and objectives to writing up the final document' (xv). This is done by giving practical tips and suggestions on how to develop the research proposal and research plan, review the literature, choose the appropriate research design, collect empirical data (both quantitative and qualitative), analyse it and write up a research project. Bob Brotherton's writing reads easily, approach is hands-on and the book is truly tailor-made for hospitality and tourism students, addressing them as future managers working in the industry. In short, it covers most of the subjects on research methods that one would expect an undergraduate student in tourism and hospitality to be familiar with.

The main differences between quantitative and qualitative research, ontologies and epistemologies, positivist and interpretive philosophies, and inductive and deductive approaches to research are all addressed. Compared to the previous edition, there are also new features such as separate key concepts, 'technique tips' that demonstrate what using a certain technique or method actually means, and 'research reality scenarios' helping the students to make sense of academic jargon, explaining concepts and terms using actual business situations as examples. Cases of 'research in action' show how various methods are applied to different topics, and 'research action checklists' help students make sure that they have addressed all the issues related to that particular method. All these help to structure the book into easy-to-follow sections and are designed to keep the student firmly on course during the research process. What is most important and making this textbook stand out from similar ones is its informal, personal style and way of addressing the reader – the undergraduate student – directly, giving relatable, real-world examples. There is also supposed to be a companion website – study.sagepub.com/brotherton – including further reading suggestions, videos, weblinks as well as test questions. This would make indeed for an excellent

teaching resource; however, the site was not accessible at least during writing this review, therefore unfortunately rendering numerous references to the website in the book unusable.

Of course, the author's task is rather gargantuan, as he has set out to give a comprehensive overview of both qualitative and quantitative (as well as mixed) methods. This means he clearly had to make some difficult choices, but the result is well balanced, with the most important as well as most useful methods for undergraduate tourism students being presented. Whether consciously or not, the author directs the student away from some methodologies (such as ethnography, only explained in a short paragraph) and directs them towards others, considering the usual time limitations, perhaps more suitable research designs for undergraduates, such as survey or case study. This practical approach is welcome, as it clearly grows out from the author's own teaching experience and therefore focuses on what the students on tourism and hospitality programmes would most probably actually use when undertaking their research projects as well as later when working in the industry.

Nevertheless, as follows, I will make some points from the perspective of a qualitative tourism researcher that might be worth considering in the future editions of the book (which, I am sure, there will be many). On a general level, I am not entirely convinced by the use of phenomenology as the main research philosophy juxtaposed to positivism. Phenomenology is not a generic cover term for all the various approaches developed during the modernist period of thinking in social sciences and I would rather use the wider term interpretivist or interpretative approach, as this would include different schools of thought, phenomenological among them. I am also not sure whether I agree to the choice of looking at 'positivism, phenomenology and postmodernism as distinctive, ideology-driven choices' (40), since postmodernism could also be seen as a continuation to and critique of the phenomenological project. As the book does cover both positivist and interpretivist research philosophies, I would also disagree with the author when he argues that only third person should be used in order to convey an 'objective approach' (286) to the research question: 'This means that you have to write as though you are an independent, uninvolved observer' (286). The choice between the use of first- or third-person is an important epistemological decision and as such both options should be discussed. Reflexivity, a self-analytical view of the researcher's activities (that tends to presuppose the use of first person pronoun), has had a rightful place in qualitative tourism studies for some time. Therefore, a methodology textbook published in 2015 setting out to discuss qualitative methods really should not have completely omitted the idea – one of the main properties of qualitative approach since the postmodernist turn in the social sciences in the end of 1970s. Especially so, as the author actually touches the issue here and there when discussing qualitative approaches, for example mentioning that 'the collection, recording and

analysis of observational data are inevitably affected by subjective influences' (195). There is a well-established way of dealing with these inevitable subjectivities in order to ensure quality research: namely, a reflexive approach.

While designing questionnaires (quite rightfully) takes a substantial part of the data collection chapter, the interview, the most frequently and widely used method of collecting qualitative data across humanities and social sciences, is not explained in such depth. One would expect to find a detailed discussion of various interview formats (structured, semi-structured, unstructured / informal), developing the interview protocol, as well as practical recommendations on conducting an interview: from body language, non-verbal cues, and notetaking during an interview to the selection of location.

The chapter on analysing qualitative data focuses on 'content analysis and semiotics' (267). As Brotherton explains, content analysis is 'often viewed as a quantitative method of data analysis, that employs a deductive approach to analysing qualitative data because it tends to emphasise the counting, or enumeration, of key words, phrases, images and so on' (275–76). Therefore, it would be useful to introduce other, more common ways of analysing qualitative data, such as thematic analysis, but also narrative analysis or discourse analysis. Semiotic analysis (as it should be referred to, rather than 'semiotics', which is the name of the discipline) would require some theoretical knowledge of the actual field of semiotics, the study of signs, communication and meaning-making, and is not the first (or most common) way of data analysis to suggest to undergraduate tourism students.

The above-mentioned considerations, however, do not diminish the usefulness of the book. Brotherton explains in every step of the way why obtaining proper knowledge of research methodologies is important, beyond completing coursework successfully, including to those who will not continue their studies as it will also be useful in the students' future careers in the tourism and hospitality industry. In doing this, Brotherton takes great care to wonderfully 'humanize' the research process for the undergraduate student who might at first be terrified by the scholarly jargon (or discourse). In conclusion, therefore, *Researching Hospitality and Tourism* is a very welcome handbook, and thanks to its friendly, personal and down-to-earth style (yet not compromising on the academic content!) I found it a very welcome addition to undergraduate tourism and hospitality reading lists.

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