
Book Review

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Animals and Tourism - Understanding Diverse Relationships

by: Kevin Markwell (Ed)

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There is a growing body of research that evaluates the relationships between tourists, the tourism industry and animals. It follows the extended general debate on human-animal relations that has become more prominent since the 1980s. With regards to tourism the books *Tourism and Animal Ethics* by Fennell (2012) and *Zoos and Tourism* by Frost (2011) are just two examples for this development. The edited book *Animals and Tourism-Understanding Diverse Relationships* by Kevin Markwell (2015) continues that 'tradition'. It contains 18 chapters sub-divided into three themes: ethics and welfare; conflict, contradiction and contestation; and shifting relationships.

Since the beginning of human existence, animals and human (animals) share their habitats with each other. Whether humans live in heavily urbanised centres or rural areas, the touch points with animals are ubiquitous and manifold in their appearance. Tourism is no exception. During travel, diverse interrelationships between humans and animals arise, either intentionally or unintentionally. Animals serve as tourist attractions, dead or alive, in the wild or in captivity, as a destination image or culinary delight on dinner plates, as annoying pests or beasts of prey. This is reflected in the chapters of the reviewed book.

The authors make use of illustrative examples and well-founded research to establish the diverse connections between this growing research area of anthrozoology and tourism. Apart from the editor, 22 professionals from various scientific disciplines have contributed to the book. This is reflected in the different academic perspectives and the viewpoints from which the authors illuminate the subject, making the book a very interesting reading. Additionally, it provides many new insights and gives rise to questions about human relationships with and treatment of animals. Alongside these reflections, the book addresses scholars and students of this specific field of study and aims to encourage a critical examination of the subject.

The authors of the first part *Ethics and Animal Welfare* investigate the handling of animals in tourism and examine critically the usage of them as objects of human pleasure and entertainment. In order to obtain possible answers to the question of how to treat

animals ethically and how tourist experiences could be structured in a more responsible manner that is less human focused in its ethical stance, principles of an ecocentric approach to wildlife tourism (Burns et al., 2011) are applied and the importance of the ethical treatment of animals in tourism is illustrated by practical examples (e.g., dingoes, seals, whales and tahr hunting). Both, the value of the animals for travellers and tour operators as well as the motivations underlying the interchanges are discussed. The importance of ethics for the handling of animals in the context of new forms of tourism such as hunting tourism is deliberated. Overall, the six chapters of the first part are based on a broad theoretical basis and provide, if necessary, historical background knowledge to reflect touristic developments. Descriptive examples complement the first part and allow readers with a non-scientific background access to this important, applied topic.

In the next part *Conflict, Contradiction and Contestation*, the general treatment of the natural environment in the context of a capitalist economy is examined. Critical examples and historical developments underline the discussion and illustrate impressively and rather provocatively the contradiction mentioned in the title. On the basis of the seven chapters, the arbitrariness and the role of animals in economic and social models and their changes become clear. This is a thought-provoking part that presents mainly well-known touristic examples (e.g., dolphin watching, bird watching, elephant tours) and critically examines them in the context of social and economic practices (e.g., the conflict between cultural attitudes, development and ecotourism). It provides new perspectives on the role, importance and interdependencies of the relationship of animals and humans within capitalistic societies.

Part three, *Shifting Relationships*, examines the consequences and effects, as well as the opportunities and risks arising from the constantly changing human-animal relationships. Those shifting relationships are well presented by examples like the changing role of turtles in tourism from the plate to a destination image carrier or the rarely examined form of entomotourism (pursuit of particular insects while on holiday). Those, and further examples, showcase the links between animals and humans and the educational leverage initiated even by less noticed animals. Furthermore, image and charisma as well as the role of the animal in the respective anthropological environment and its culture are defined as an important factor for such connections. These are, in turn, influenced by space-time changes, resulting in opportunities, risks and a high level of inconsistencies in the human-animal encounter. This part of the text also convinces through well-founded research linked with explanatory examples and interdisciplinary perspectives.

The book offers a comprehensive and multifaceted view of the human-animal relationship in a tourism context. In order to depict this relationship in a vivid manner, the renowned authors as well as junior scientists use expressive examples from tourism practice. This approach makes the book an interesting elaboration not only for students and scientists, but also for cautious (conscientious?) and interested travellers. Overall, the authors succeed very well in enabling both a critical perspective and the display of the partially positive impacts of tourism on human cohabitation with other animals. Through theoretically informed and empirically rich representations, the authors successfully communicate their intentions to the reader and initiate a critical analysis, to some extent by provoking depiction, which in the context of this subject is regarded as appropriate. Linguistically, the texts are excellently presented merely the pictures used in the

introduction to visualise the indicated examples do not always provide clear representations of what is aimed for by the editor. This minute criticism, however, does not diminish the overall quality of the book, which is highly recommendable to all those who have already dealt with the topic of animals in tourism or think about doing so.

Book Review

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Tourism Research in China: Themes and Issues
by: Songshan (Sam) Huang and Ganghua Chen
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Tourism research in China is extensive. However, due to language barriers, many of its 'gems' risk to remain 'hidden'. In the words of its authors, the reviewed book aims to "reveal these 'hidden gems' to the international tourism research community" (p.12). The book shares this communication-facilitating mission with other recent reviews of Chinese tourism research (e.g., Bao et al., 2014; Huang and Hsu, 2008). It provides a selective overview of the landscape of tourism research in China, with a special and detailed focus on its ideological and epistemological underpinnings, its specific accounts of rural tourism, community participation in tourism development, tourism behaviour, tourist attraction management and tour guiding.

The book does not only succeed in highlighting the breadth and depth of tourism research in China, but it provides the reader with an idea of how tourism research in China is linked to government priorities. Although tourism researchers based in Chinese universities tend to enjoy relative autonomy, still the "prevailing paradigms and approaches [...] may be a result of the dominant ideologies in the country" (p.139). It is conceivable that this does not come without contradictions and hybridity. For instance, Huang and Chen contend that although heavily inspired by Marxist theory, critical perspectives cannot always be easily adopted by tourism researchers in China.

Reading the text it becomes also clear that while tourism research in China is deeply embedded in the country's context and can only be fully understood as such, it offers relevant and original contributions to international theory development in tourism research. The book offers a few examples where such original contributions occur. One refers to the analyses of specific governance approaches in Chinese tourism development and the typologies derived thereof. They apparently constitute promising avenues to further international (comparative) research on the governance of tourism development. Another example refers to unheard theoretical constructs developed from scrutinising community participation, such as 'alternate systems' and 'work-point systems'.

The book's first chapter provides an overview of the institutional landscape of tourism research in China, which, encouraged by government policies, had its historical beginnings at the end of the 1970s. After decades of notable growth, hundreds of Chinese universities offer undergraduate programmes in tourism. The chapter highlights different types of institutional backgrounds of tourism researchers in China. Amongst them are not

only universities, but also government agencies and government-funded research institutes. Despite that, Huang and Chen report that some tourism researchers in China may tend to feel disadvantaged compared to more traditional disciplines.

The second chapter sheds light on the ideologies and epistemologies of the community of (tourism) academics in China. It asserts that “the academic community may still, more or less, be guided by a worldview collectively informed by Confucianism, Marxism and some Western thought” (p.17). The influence of traditional Chinese metaphysics reflects itself in the prevalence of holistic, integrated and metaphoric accounts of empirical phenomena. The influence of Marxism can be especially seen in the application of dialectic thinking. For instance, a consequence of this hybrid worldview might be holistic analyses of the ‘essence of tourism’ carried out by tourism scholars in China. In these accounts prevails an understanding of tourism as a type of experience that differs from everyday life. In a dialectic manner, researchers juxtapose ‘tourism world’ and ‘life world’. Although this approach might be strongly rooted in Chinese epistemological and cosmological traditions, it at the same time resembles systemic perspectives on tourism expressed by tourism researchers in the ‘Western’ world.

Huang and Chen dedicate chapter three specifically to rural tourism development in China. Driven by the government agenda to consider tourism as a means to develop rural areas, a substantial body of Chinese literature on rural tourism has been produced. As the authors highlight, a significant part of the literature focuses on discussing different models along a continuum ranging from more exogenously driven development (government or company led) to more endogenous development approaches (village led). Tourism researchers in China suggest the middle ground between these two extremes to resolve the conflict, including the proposition to apply different models to ‘front stage’ and ‘back stage’ service delivery. Whereas on the ‘front stage’ it will be useful to strengthen local anchorage, the aim for ‘back stage’ operations ought to be economies of scale through more centralised operations.

Chapter four reviews tourism research in China on community participation and involvement. Huang and Chen distinguish four models of community participation in the tourism development process: model 1 covers tourism development projects strongly controlled by (local) government. In model 2, an external enterprise takes over the role of government in dominating the tourism development process. Model 3 might be conceived as a development governed by villagers stemming from the intellectual, political and economic elites. Model 4 includes all those tourism development processes with substantial and inclusive community participation. In models 1 to 3, ordinary villagers can mostly participate in the sharing of benefits of tourism development. However, only model 4 guarantees their full participation in tourism development decision making.

The fifth chapter gives an account of tourism behaviour oriented research in China. At the outset, Huang and Chen make clear that “[t]he Chinese tourism research community has paid more attention to tourism supply issues than to the demand-side issues” (p.78). Indeed, the chapter depicts a situation of demand-side oriented research that leaves room for improvement. While four fifth of the articles reviewed by Huang and Chen are descriptive in nature, only one fifth of the reviewed empirical articles can be classified as theory-driven.

Chapter six tackles tourism research in China on issues regarding tourist attraction management. Huang and Chen distinguish three relevant governance models regarding Chinese tourist attractions. The first governance approach focuses on protected areas. The

second category is termed tourist resorts. The third governance approach refers to attraction points in traditional villages. Whereas local government seems to consistently play a major role in the protected areas approach and in most traditional villages, its role is less uniform regarding tourist resorts. Research suggests that those resorts with a stronger local government involvement tend to perform considerably worse than those that foresee a leading role for private companies. Looking ahead and going beyond fragmented perspectives on the governance of single attraction points, Huang and Chen suggest that “[e]ffectively managing visitor flows appears to be a pressing research need” (p.112).

In chapter seven, Huang and Chen focus on existing research on tour guiding and interpretation in China. They emphasise that this research needs to be considered within the Chinese context, where tour guiding is heavily regulated. A significant part of the research is concentrated either on issues caused by this specific regulation system such as remuneration and quality assurance or on tour guiding performance and tourist satisfaction. A major issue seems to be that most tour guides are employed on a non-permanent basis. Consequently, tourism research in China has repeatedly indicated that tourist satisfaction with tour guiding remains particularly low.

Overall, by reviewing a significant number of articles published in four of the leading tourism research journals in China (*Tourism Tribune*, *Tourism Science*, *Economic Geography*, *Human Geography*), the book provides a valuable account of the legacy and the current situation of tourism research in China. The authors make clear that their coverage of topics is driven by their own research interests and expertise and does not purport to be complete. Indeed, core chapters of the book are organised around research on issues of tourism development, with particular regard to governance models, rural tourism development and community participation. While this emphasis seems to be in accordance with major real-world challenges faced by tourism in China today, a reader might eventually miss a contextualisation of the areas and publications covered in the book with regards to the whole tourism research landscape in China.

However, the book does well regarding another aspect of contextualisation: among its strengths is the ability to embed ongoing tourism research in China into a broader context of political, institutional and socio-economic developments in the country. In this vein, it becomes a highly valuable source for international researchers outside China to better understand both the what and the why of specific research foci of tourism researchers in China. In sum, there remains little doubt that the authors accomplish their mission and successfully contribute to helping international tourism researchers to better access the significant tourism research work that has been accomplished in China.

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