

Reseña de Publicaciones

Tourist experience: Contemporary perspectives

Sharpley, R. & Stone, P. (Eds.). Oxon, UK: Routledge (2011)

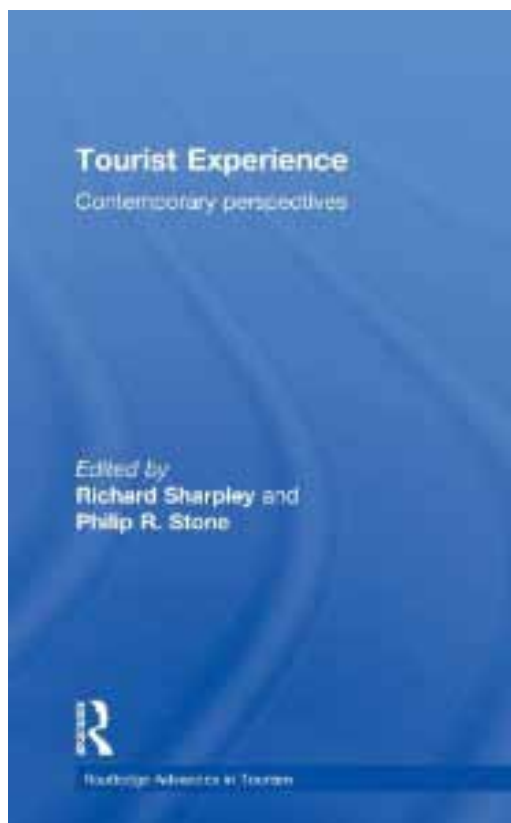
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The consumption of experiences has been acknowledged as a key research topic in tourism studies, since everything in a destination can be experienced by tourists, whether it be places, people, or activities. Along with changes in contemporary societies, continuous transformations in tourism both in scale and scope have led tourist experiences to become more complex and varied in their forms. In this vein, *Tourist Experience: Contemporary Perspectives* reflects on the diversified meanings attributed to the tourism experience by tourists through case studies representative of diverse geographical areas, in a multidisciplinary perspective. The compilation of research contributions from both academic and practitioner-based perspectives organized in eleven chapters offers an overview of current research themes, which are presented in five sections: dark tourism, poor places, sport tourism, writing and researching on the tourist experience.

The search for new experiences led tourists to places that some years ago have been thought as unusual destinations, such as the case of poor or *dark* places, somewhat associated with *authentic* areas to experience. In this context, dark tourism, also termed *thanatourism*, is approached as an institution mediating the dead and suffering and the living. A discussion on the label of “darkness” in tourism and the authenticity of the experience is provided along the two chapters dedicated to this theme. The potential of future research is



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highlighted since mortality has been historically related to art, literature and travel, involving not only meaning for the living but in some extend the gratification of the human senses.

From the perspective of social and cultural construction, in addition to the relationship between the individual and the place, the importance of the embodied experience is a sound and interesting topic connecting all chapters. Since sensory stimuli underlie the provision of satisfying environments for the consumption of tourism products and services, and boost human interactions, they are seen as appropriate for the planning of meaningful sensory tourist experiences. While encouraging responsible tourist experiences with respect to local resources and communities, sensory stimuli are also important markers for recollection.

This idea is especially evinced in the case studies of Millennium Stadium in Cardiff and Twickenham Stadium in London analyzed by Sean Gammon, who draws attention to the fact that sport sites are places to visit and sensorially experience rather than places where the event will take place. Whilst acknowledging that experiencing an *empty* stadium is different from experiencing an *awake* stadium, diverse sensory-informed markers can be managed. The desired outcomes are enhanced experiences for both the active and passive sport tourists and the development of the sense of identity, belonging, and attachment.

Since various forms of tourism, such as sports attraction tourism or rural tourism, became relevant and competitive markets, sensory stimuli can be explored not only with the aim to enhance tourist experiences in physical environments but also in virtual environments by using the potential of information and communication technologies in the different moments of travel. The role of new media in narrating travel experiences is especially emphasized in chapter 11 presented by Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Lee, and Tussyadiah. The anticipation and recollection stages of tourist experiences in addition to the *in loco* activity are seen as involving specific particularities that influence the type of use of consumer-generated media and mobile technologies by tourists who use them with the purpose of narrating their travel experiences. These forms of contemporary travel writing help tourists to enhance and add meaning to their experiences, document and share their stories with others, thus contributing to the process of cognitive and emotional attachment to products, brands and destinations. Hence, apart from being cultural and social constructions, these stories of encounters with locals, other tourists, and places go beyond the gaze, putting together all the bodily experience by including the non-visual senses along with sight.

While the diversity of ways of conceptualizing the tourist experience is explored in the first chapter by Chris Ryan, the last section of the book is dedicated to innovative and appropriate methodological approaches to researching tourist experiences. Mary Beth Gouthro stresses the importance of the advances in qualitative approaches in tourism research focused on revealing the phenomenological nature, richness and depth of tourist experiences. Martine Middleton highlights the senses as a means to differentiate culturally tourist experiences. The author suggests the use of Q methodology, which provides a numerical perspective on subjectivity allowing quantitative and qualitative understandings regarding tourist experiences. Responsible tourist behavior is explored in the last chapter by Davina Stanford, who considers the use of Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development concept as an appropriate framework to research tourists' reactions to persuasive messages aiming at influencing their behavior.

Overall, the ultimate goals of the research compiled in this book by Richard Sharpley and Philip Stone are offering new insights on how to facilitate positive and memorable tourist experiences, regardless their form, and understanding the nature and complexity of the contemporary tourism experience. Emergent motivations, behaviors, and responses towards new destination experiences are analyzed, which adequately represents some of the latest research trends proving the reader with important recommendations for future studies.

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