

## Book review

Wendy Hillman and Kylie Radel (eds), *Qualitative Methods in Tourism Research: Theory and Practice* (Channel View Publications, Bristol, UK and Summit, PA, USA 2018) 320 pp.

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Doing qualitative tourism research in 2020 is far from being a peaceful road to travel. While qualitative research methods are now frequently used and qualitative work is widely published, qualitative researchers still encounter many obstacles throughout their academic career. One major obstacle is the narrow-minded view that a qualitative researcher is an ‘incomplete’ researcher. About ten years ago, as a novice researcher worried at the prospect of being downgraded by positivist examiners, I thought that, for my qualitative work to be accepted, I had to apologetically admit that my work was ‘only’ exploratory. Luckily mentalities have progressed since then; now an increasing number of tourism researchers (including myself) have become more assertive about their contribution to knowledge. The book *Qualitative Methods in Tourism Research: Theory and Practice*, edited by Wendy Hillman and Kylie Radel, not only provides valuable methodological guidance to students and emerging tourism scholars but the value of this book also resides in fostering researchers’ confidence to embark on qualitative research journeys. The book consists of 12 chapters written by a mix of early-career and established tourism scholars from various disciplines.

This edited volume provides an introduction to various qualitative research methods and most chapters include a case study that illustrates how the method under discussion was applied in a specific tourism context. In chapter 1, Killion and Fisher introduce the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research and suggest that the paradigmatic view chosen by the researcher will influence the way the research is conducted and reported. The discussion distinguishing reflexivity from reflectivity is insightful and a strength of this chapter. Ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology as key components to research paradigms are explained; however, linking the description of *multiple realities* to ontology conveys the idea that interpretivists (or most qualitative researchers) deny reality. In this respect, it is worth noting that not all scholars understand relativism the same way. For example, Charmaz (2008) embraces relativism as a theory of knowledge (epistemology), whereas Lincoln et al. (2011) understand relativism as a theory of being (ontology). Radel and Hillman write about grounded theory (GT) in chapter 2. A number of important aspects around the GT method are surprisingly not addressed in this chapter. For instance, the term ‘theory’ in GT would have deserved some clarification. These authors refer to ‘universal theory’ while constructivist grounded theorists tend to see the output of their research as middle-range (or substantive) theories or plausible accounts. What would have also

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been relevant to readers is a brief discussion about the main challenges in doing GT research, in particular with respect to theoretical sampling – a cornerstone of GT. While the focus on authoring GT texts is interesting, greater emphasis on how textual data analysis is performed would have been valuable. A further point of criticism is the authors' over-reliance on their own conference materials to illustrate GT studies in tourism; unfortunately a rich body of GT studies published in leading tourism journals is here ignored (for a review of GT studies in tourism, see Matteucci/Gnoth 2017). In chapter 3, Matthews clearly and insightfully presents ethnography as a so-far under-employed methodological approach in tourism research. Matthews reviews seminal ethnographic work in tourism before explaining the different forms of ethnographic modalities such as multi-sited and visual ethnographies which highlight the many ways researchers can best conduct fieldwork in tourism contexts. Chapter 4 and chapter 5 address phenomenology and action research respectively. Fendt's chapter is an excellent read for those who seek some clarification about the different streams within phenomenology. Likewise, Jennings reviews and insightfully explains the plethora of action research methods and indicates the potential of action research to bring forth learning and positive change to all research partners.

In chapter 6, Radel provides an interesting historical account of participant observation; she presents a new model of participant observation for cross-cultural research, which posits research participants as partners, and she discusses her own use of reflexivity as an essential element of her research praxis. Chapter 7 is concerned with indigenous methodologies. Radel here underscores the key ontological and epistemological challenges that Western scholars face when doing research with indigenous communities. In chapter 8, Daniels, Hillman and Radel present focus-group interviews as a useful vehicle for gathering rich data within mixed-method projects. These authors used focus groups in research exploring transformative heritage tourism experiences and argue that focus-group interviews allow us to 'give "voice" to groups and communities of people from varied backgrounds' in a short space of time. The interview, which remains certainly the most commonly used technique within the qualitative-research toolkit, is addressed in chapter 9. Picken here offers a thorough overview of the interview process and discusses the strategies available under different interviewing circumstances.

The role of qualitative research in mixed-method projects is brilliantly expounded in chapter 10. Iaquinto here presents a detailed case study outlining how he has used interviews and participant observation alongside two quantitative techniques to research backpackers' sustainable practices. Iaquinto demonstrates the value of qualitatively driven mixed-method research for understanding complex social phenomena like tourism. The last chapter before the conclusion is concerned with the use of visual data (here photographs) in researching destination and activity choice in Australia. Visual research methodologies have received some recent attention in tourism, with photographs being the most frequently employed form of data. Here Espinosa Abascal, Fluker and Jiang present a convergent mixed-method study in which images are ranked and sorted in order to understand consumer preferences. Researcher-found images also serve as triggers for the collection of interview data (photo elicitation) in order to establish factors for participation in cultural tourism activities.

This edited volume is a useful companion to novice researchers embarking on a qualitative-research journey for the first time. It is also valuable to early-career and more mature researchers interested in expanding their current qualitative-research knowledge. The book should also be of interest to quantitative researchers needing or

wishing to combine qualitative and quantitative data in a mixed-method study. The chapters follow a consistent format including some background information about the research methods accompanied by case studies that illustrate how the methods unfold in practice. Trends in qualitative inquiry point to the blurring of genres and creativity. In light of these trends, perhaps, this book may have put more emphasis on visual research methods to include art-based methods such as drawings, collage or video footage. Other data collection techniques such as visitor books, diaries and reflective essays can be powerful too and these are scarcely employed by tourism researchers. All contributors to this volume draw from case studies based in the Australian context; a more international perspective would appeal to a wider audience. In the concluding chapter, Hillman notes that the objectives of this volume were to illustrate what qualitative research can be like, how it may unfold and how qualitative data can be interpreted and resonate with us. The editors have compiled a solid set of qualitative-research examples and, overall, they have achieved their ambitious objectives. An informative and enjoyable read, *Qualitative Methods in Tourism Research: Theory and Practice* will not only help instructors teach research methodologies but the book will also inspire and give confidence to current and future generations of tourism qualitative researchers.

## REFERENCES

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