



Enlightening Tourism.

A Pathmaking Journal



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BOOK REVIEW:

Issues in Cultural Tourism Studies,

by Melanie K. Smith

Third Edition (2016), edited by Routledge, New York.

ISBN: 978-1-315-76769-7, 288 pp.

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The third edition of *Issues in Cultural Studies* by Melanie K. Smith is a valuable handbook for the theoretical and practical study and analysis of cultural tourism. The multidisciplinary approach of the text allows the reader to obtain a broad and comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the topics discussed and promotes reflection and debate. The book contains eleven chapters, each dedicated to either a specific topic of a special interest related to cultural tourism or the study of a segment or sub-type of cultural tourism.

The first chapter includes definitions, concepts and perspectives necessary for understanding the rest of the book. After reviewing the different authors' definitions of cultural tourism, Smith proposes the following (page 17):

“Cultural tourism: passive, active and interactive engagement with heritage, arts and culture(s) of communities, whereby the visitor gains new experiences of educational, creative, and/or entertaining nature.”

In addition to the general concept, the author analyses other concepts related to sub-sector typologies of cultural tourism.

The second chapter addresses a new topic not considered in the second edition of the book. Here, the author analyses the different factors that motivate cultural tourists and the difficulties encountered when trying to classify this type of tourist. The author rightly highlights that the majority of tourists are not motivated solely by their desire to have an experience related to another culture, but are also motivated by the desire to relax and have fun. Most tourists combine both types of activities and this makes it even more difficult to profile tourists and determine their main motivation.

The third chapter focuses on the geography of cultural tourism and how this type of tourism, which used to be almost exclusive to Western countries, has now been extended to the rest of the world. In line with this evolution, the author highlights how (p.54) "the World Heritage List has become better geographically distributed throughout the world." The chapter provides a summary of the great cultural diversity which exists across a large number of regions and countries throughout the world.

The fourth chapter analyses different policies on cultural tourism. Although the author rejects generalisations, she makes an effort to group the different regions according to their histories or similar characteristics. She explores the results of policies adopted in post-colonial and socialist countries, as well as countries with indigenous peoples. This chapter also briefly considers the relationship between globalisation and tourism. Smith concludes that (p.98), "despite the process of globalization, many destinations are unique precisely because of local historical and cultural processes".

The fifth chapter provides a summary of a number of controversial issues related to heritage, tourism and museums. The author examines how cultural tourism and the interpretation and representation of heritage may or may not favour societal development.

The sixth chapter is dedicated to indigenous cultural tourism. The author defines this sub-type of cultural tourism and explains what is meant by the term indigenous peoples. Smith addresses the debate over the drawbacks and benefits derived from this type of tourism. On the one hand, negative consequences of this type of tourism include the gradual erosion of social fabric, acculturation and the irreversible destruction of natural habitats. However, on the other hand, cultural tourism can serve as an instrument to conserve and revitalise local customs and improve the social and economic welfare of indigenous communities.

The seventh chapter focuses on a new theme not addressed in the previous edition of this book. Here, the author draws attention to the study of the creation and development of one of the newest sub-types of cultural tourism: ethnic and minority tourism. The author makes a comparison between this type of cultural tourism and indigenous cultural tourism. Table 7.1 (p.148) shows the fundamental differences between these two sub-types of cultural tourism. The chapter demonstrates the complexity and variety of ethnic and minority cultural tourism and some of its accompanying problems.

The eighth chapter is concerned with the relationship between arts, festivals and cultural tourism. Smith points out that although the relationship between arts and tourism has not always been good, it has been shown that collaboration can be mutually beneficial, particularly for the local community.

The ninth chapter is dedicated to the study of creative tourism. According to the author, this type of tourism has come into being in order to respond to tourists' desire to live more authentic and more active experiences where interaction with the destination and its local people predominates.

Chapter Ten is concerned with tourist experience and authenticity. Here, the author highlights tourists' growing interest in interacting with their destinations and enjoying experiential activities (p 211 and 211). The author describes the concept of the experience economy proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1998) and offers a summary of the varied definitions of the concept of authenticity by different authors. In addition, Smith compares the concepts of the cultural tourist, the post-tourist and the new leisure tourist (p.220). Smith very aptly writes that "the quest for authenticity seems to be one of the main differences between cultural tourists and the others. ... This is particularly significant to the experience economy, as explored by Pine and Gilmore (2007)".

The eleventh and final chapter of this book addresses the recent problem of the sustainability of cultural tourism. Smith reveals the controversy that has arisen in this subject. On the one hand the data suggests that cultural tourism has no limit in its numbers, so that every year the number of visitors and the income they bring increases, but on the other hand, recent studies demand that the development of cultural tourism be made in a sustainable way, so that the use of resources does not compromise their use by future generations. The author analyses the characteristics of sustainable development as well as the impact of cultural tourism today.

In summary, this book is a very complete and interesting manual for people interested in deepening their understanding and study of issues related to cultural tourism. Its value lies in its multidisciplinary approach, both theoretically and practically, and in the excellent presentation and exposition of the contents. In each of the chapters, the theoretical contents are always accompanied by several practical examples that induce reflection and dialogue on the issue. The author ends each chapter by proposing questions for consideration and discussion, and suggesting readings related to the topic discussed, which readers may find stimulating and interesting.

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