

Book Review

Jamie Halsall

*Edge Hill College of Higher Education, Lancashire, UK**

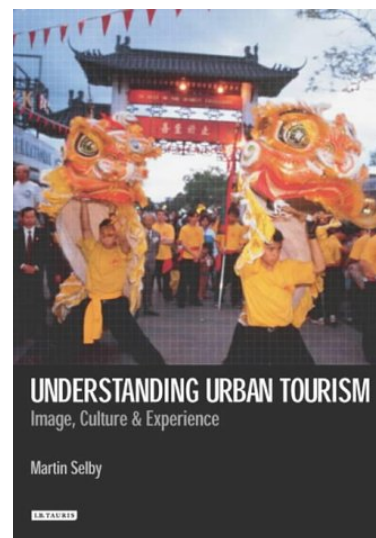
Understanding Urban Tourism: Images, Culture and Experience

By Martin Selby, I.B. Tauris, London, ISBN 1860648010.

Paperback: £17.95. Hardcover: £31.50.



Tourism has been conceptualised in many different ways within the discipline of social science. Up to fairly recently literature relating to urban tourism has seen a formidable growth. However, within urban tourism there has been little critical engagement with the subject. Martin Selby's book allows the reader to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of urban tourism and the key concepts that are at present enhancing and transforming our understanding of society in the field of social science. This book complements existing literature on urban tourism. The book has 8 chapters. Chapter 1, the introduction, introduces the reader to the key concepts of urban tourism and establishes the different perspectives on urban tourism presented throughout the book. In the opening chapter it is stressed that there is an 'urgent' requirement to comment on the development of urban tourism research.



The main priority in chapter 2 is to outline the philosophy and practice of urban tourism. This chapter also focuses on the rooted relationship between economic, social and political change. The case studies of the 'Curry Debate' (Birmingham, Leicester, and London) and 'Destination Benchmark' (Liverpool) are used to justify Selby's analytical arguments on urban tourism. Chapter 3 focuses on urban tourism and postmodernity. The chapter starts with an explanation of the relationship between urban tourism and the postmodern city. Selby uses contemporary scholars, such as David Harvey, Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja. The case study of the consumers of Wigan Pier is amplified within the remit of urban tourism regarding the growth of heritage and the limitations of the materialist perspective.

Chapter 4 concentrates on the theory behind place image and urban tourism. In this chapter, Selby highlights the potential of place research as a tool for researchers and the methodological limitations of place image research. This section is useful for dissertation students who wish to comprehend the presentation of research methodology and data analysis.

*Assistant Editor of GBER, (ICDES), Edge Hill College, UK, Email: Halsallj@edgehill.ac.uk

Chapter 5 focuses on the culture of urban tourism. The chapter starts with an introduction to cultural analysis and the potential of culture in the context of understanding urban tourism. The chapter also examines the way researchers and practitioners examine the application of key concepts from cultural analysis, which is influenced by urban tourism. The aim of chapter 6 focuses on the experiences of urban tourism. Selby gives the reader a narrative account on the humanistic approach to urban tourism and shows examples of how the humanistic approach can be used, for example, the meanings, values and emotions of individuals in relation to place. Chapter 7's focal point is Selby's view of how urban tourism fits within a theoretical perspective. In this chapter the reader is introduced to the conceptual model in terms of culture and the experience of urban tourism. The chapter goes on to examine the research agenda for urban tourism.

The concluding chapter summarises the conceptualisation of urban tourism and the research output. The chapter also has an interesting piece on the practice and praxis of urban tourism research. Selby argues that there is an 'overemphasis' on developing deductive research methodologies which therefore distracts from the theoretical debate 'underpinning' urban tourism research.

This publication is well written, with justified case studies and offers readers suggested further reading. However, one of the obstacles with this book is that it does not focus on social science theory within the framework of urban tourism. Martin Selby is more concerned with the application of different types of knowledge and understanding to urban tourism research and management. This book is recommended to students and lecturers at undergraduate level in Human Geography, Tourism, Planning and Sociology.