



# Enlightening Tourism.

## A Pathmaking Journal



Universidad  
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## **BOOK REVIEW:**

*Mietzner, A.; Storch, A. (2019).*

*Language and Tourism in Postcolonial Settings.*

*Bristol: Channel View Publications.*

*978-1-84541-680-5 (epub), 200 pp.*

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This book offers readers an in-depth insight into the interaction and relationship between different participants in tourism and researchers at tourist sites, and what role language plays in postcolonial and neo-colonial times. Language is a medium or tool of communication in travel, but it is importantly commodified to serve social functions in travel and tourism as well. This book covers a wide range of uses of various language forms relevant to travel, including researcher interaction, tourists' blogs, tour guides' multimodal use of language, tourists' intentional use of the local language, and the naming practice. To the best of my knowledge, it is the most comprehensive book regarding the use of language and its social function in travel.

The first chapter serves as an introduction to the function of language in tourism. The chapter covers the common forms of language in divergent tourism activities, and the meaning these types of language a user may intend to convey. Overall, the readers are encouraged to interpret meaning from a socio-linguistic perspective, and special attention is paid to the understanding of colonialism in tourism within the postcolonial context.

In chapter 2, the researcher explores the research context and shares pictures taken with linguistic icons to convey her perspective in this destination. Various colonial legacies are manifest in these icons, which arouses reflection on why colonialism is still so prevalent in the African context. Language, in this context, becomes a tool for some to express their colonial tendencies. It calls for global attention on this issue.

Chapter 3 centres on five conversations between the researcher and other backpackers. During these conversations, the backpackers shared their past life experiences and the reasons why they went backpacking. They also reflected on how certain scenarios encountered in travel can trigger memories of a previous life. For these backpackers, travel is a way for them to revive their spirit and regain their psychological strength.

The next chapter focuses on the researcher's attendance of a local festival and the communication with other tourists. Novelty-seeking is vital in many forms of tourism, and to experience a unique cultural event is definitely a novelty. However, in the case the researcher presents, the process involved in the ritual itself is very common, while the meaning behind it is more significant. The modern tourists expressed their disappointment as they could not interpret the hidden meaning of the festival and did not perceive anything novel. This case reveals that, for many western tourists, the motivation to participate in local events remains shallow.

The pictures taken by the researcher are the focus of chapter 5. The pro-poor tour intends to bring benefits to locals, but it interferes in their life as well; for example, taking non-consensual pictures, disturbing the class, etc. In this type of travel, only simple words can be used to communicate between donators and locals. Donators are more interested in taking pictures instead of chatting with locals. Though photos are regarded as a tool to show tourists' gaze, they act as a barrier between tourists and locals. Hence, how photos can be taken and what role tourist's photos can play attracts scholarly attention.

The next chapter investigates the naming practice prevalent in postcolonial destinations. Underprivileged workers serving foreign tourists are named with little respect; for example, using object names to refer to certain types of workers. In turn, locals also use the key features of objects they wanted to name their desire. This kind of practice reveals the colonial continuities and the unequal relationship between locals and the foreign tourists.

Chapter 7 focuses on how a local guide can use multimodal resources to offer tourists an experience of the colonial history and the postcolonial status of the destination. With his abundant knowledge of the past and ability to effectively interact with tourists, the guide was appointed as the city's tourism consultant by the government. He acted as an agent to mediate the tourists' understanding of colonialism and inequality.

In the last chapter, we see how the tourists started to use the local language, but they did not pay attention to the use of grammatical rules. They simply regarded the local language as a means to carry out their fun-seeking touristic activities. Meanwhile, they even intentionally used the local language in a different way than the locals, as the style of language use is also a reflection of postcolonial identity.

Overall, the book is different from most tourism books in which the studies mainly follow a rigid style of reporting, as the studies in this book present the researchers' findings mostly with very little, or no, covering of the methodology or implications. Hence, the book mainly intends to give researchers a new insight into the social phenomenon behind tourism, rather than acting as a further exploration of tourists' perceptions of tourism using linguistic data, such as tourists' superficial quest for novel experiences instead of a deep understanding of the culture, western tourists' presentation of inborn superiority in African destinations, and general colonial sensibilities.

The book is suitable for readers who are interested in exploring the development of tourism in destinations that were previously colonies, and especially the legacy of colonialism in these destinations. The book can facilitate readers' understanding of the social and anthropological elements of tourism, and can also serve as the basis for addressing those negative legacies in order to develop these destinations and promote equality among human beings. One issue worth mentioning is that the book is written in a sociological or anthropological style, which may not be easy for tourism majors, whose main interpretive framework arises from management or economics discipline. Hence, we have given a summary of each chapter in order to help the readers understand the key ideas. Overall, this text is better suited to postgraduates or scholars who have certain sociological or anthropological backgrounds, for whom it may help to enrich their future studies.