



Publishing in tourism and hospitality journals: Is the past a prelude to the future?



Bob McKercher*, Vincent Tung¹

School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Hong Kong

HIGHLIGHTS

- This paper analyses 40 years of articles published in specialist tourism, hospitality and events journals.
- Doubling in the average number of authors; 2/3 of authors appearing once; 1% accounting for ¼ of all papers published.
- The experiences noted in our journals are typical and reflect the maturation of fields of study.
- Increased specialization, broadening of the journal base and risks of specialism fragmentation.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines trends in publishing in tourism and hospitality journals over the past 40 years. It places the findings within the context of experiences and inherent dynamism of other disciplines. Exponential growth has been observed in both the number of journals available and number of papers published per annum. The single authored paper is an endangered species and has recently been replaced with the three or more authored paper as the norm. What has been observed in tourism is not unique. Instead, similar patterns have been noted in other disciplines and fields of study as they mature. These findings also offer insights into future direction and research needs at both a field and individual academic level.

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1. Introduction

Tourism research and education has evolved from a peripheral area of study explored as a side interest by a small group of scholars from different disciplines into a recognized, mainstream field in its own right (McKercher & Prideaux, 2014). Historically, tourism studies was seen as frivolous, inconsequential (Nash, 1979), and not particularly credible (Dann, Nash, & Pearce, 1988; Tribe, 1997). Many of the first generation tourism scholars were also directed to publish in their home discipline if they wished to be promoted. This situation changed in the early 1990s with the emergence of dedicated, stand-alone programmes in North America, the UK and Australia, where a critical mass of scholars with shared interests worked together (Airey & Johnson, 1999; Craig-Smith, Davidson, & French, 1995) and where high caliber doctoral students conducted

research (Cheng, Li, Petrick, & O'Leary, 2011). Similar expansion is now being observed in Asia and South America (Gu & Hobson, 2008; Leal, 2004; Li and Xu 2014).

The exponential growth in journals has tracked the emergence of the field. A forthcoming entry in the *Encyclopedia of Tourism* shows the number of journals has grown from fewer than 10 titles before 1980 to about 290 today, with some 150 published in English. The sustained progression of tourism as a field of study depends largely on the continuity and growth of research scholarship. For a field to progress, it needs to be mindful of broad, historical patterns that may provide insight into possible future developments and implications for the accumulation of knowledge (Dwivedi, Venkitachalam, Sharif, Al-Karaghoul, & Weerakkody, 2011). Pattern data may inform the field as to whether research activity is becoming more standardized or diversified over time (Scandura & Williams, 2000). Publication trends could also affect researchers' topics and research design choices as they become aware of opportunities and challenges of publishing in top journals (Scandura & Williams, 2000). To date, little or no research has examined trends in publishing or compared what is occurring in

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +852 3400 2161.

E-mail addresses: bob.mckercher@polyu.edu.hk (B. McKercher), vincent.tung@polyu.edu.hk (V. Tung).

¹ Tel.: +852 3400 2183.

our field to what has happened elsewhere to gain insights into a range of salient issues that may affect our future. Instead, most of the work has focused on ranking journals, programmes and/or academics.

This study seeks to fill that void, at least partially. It has two broad goals. The first is to examine publishing trends in our journals through an analysis of the Scopus® database. The second objective is to compare these findings with those from other fields and disciplines to evaluate whether the experiences observed in tourism are unique or are reflective of a typical evolutionary path followed by other fields as they mature. In doing so future research needs can be identified to explain why the observed patterns are occurring.

2. Dynamism of disciplines and fields of study

The academic landscape is ever changing (Cohen & Lloyd, 2014; Krishnam, 2009). Whether and how well disciplines and fields of study (labeled disciplines hereafter) respond to this dynamism will determine if they remain relevant and vibrant. Herein lies the challenge, though, for a delicate balance exists between relevance and vibrancy (Krishnam, 2009; Thompson Klein, 1993). Disciplines may remain relevant by aggressively defending their traditional position but risk stagnating intellectually, especially if they fail to adjust to a rapidly changing external environment (Posner, 1987) or when its members become overly reliant on a small number of methods (Cohen & Lloyd, 2014; Thrift, 2002). Alternately, they may retain their vibrancy by moving into new areas of exploration, but risk losing their relevance as they become fragmented and unfocused (Hollingsworth, 1986). This situation is characterized by the type of adjectival creep that has engulfed geography (Clifford, 2002; Thrift, 2002), to the extent that 'geography' today is defined as much by the qualifiers used to modify the noun (economic, historical, physical, human, etc) as by the noun itself. As Clifford (2002: 433) comments "the mental gymnastics required to make sense of a bewildering and burgeoning array of 'geographies' (in substance) and methodologies (in practice) have become all but impossible to perform. Who but geographers would seriously attempt to sustain a dialog, let alone a working relationship, between researchers into cosmogenic nuclides and the commodity chain of cut flowers? Yet try we do ..."

While disciplines may be clearly placed within a university hierarchy that classifies them according to their home faculties and departments (Cohen & Lloyd, 2014), in fact, the boundaries are blurred and often contested (Thompson Klein, 1993). Disciplines tend to be loose collectives differentiated as much by the academics who define themselves by their affiliation and what journals they select, as by the more traditionally accepted criteria of common areas of investigation, research methods and epistemologies (Schommer-Aikins, Duell, & Barker, 2003).

In addition, they evolve over time (Cohen & Lloyd, 2014), in some cases splitting at their edges (Thompson Klein, 1993), in other cases losing their autonomy (Posner, 1987) and in extreme cases, going extinct (Cohen & Lloyd, 2014). Rarely do divergent disciplines combine. Instead, new disciplines often start as additive fields of study embedded in a foundation discipline and then, over time separate to become distinct fields in their own right (Thompson Klein, 1993). As they mature, their scope of enquiry broadens, which leads to increased specialization and ultimately fragmentation (Hollingsworth, 1986). Stigler, Stigler, and Friedland (1995) comment that the resultant expansion in the number of journals and the emergence of increasingly specialized titles is a reflection of this growth.

Such an evolutionary path poses a number of challenges. Hargens (1991) and Hollingsworth (1986) comment on the

potential loss of intellectual cohesion as fragmentation makes it impossible to remain current with the literature. Krishnam (2009) and Thrift (2002) go further arguing that the distinct identities of disciplines such as 'geography' or 'political science' are all about. Stinchcombe (1994) commenting on the future of sociology, notes it is impossible to teach an elementary introductory subject that leads to recognizable advanced courses once disciplines start to disintegrate, while Abbott (2000) is more blunt, stating that disciplines can be nickel-and-dimed to death.

The history of tourism studies is unique in many ways, but common in other areas. This field grew out of and was informed by a series of host disciplines, as described in Jafari and Ritchie (1981) wheel. As such, it emerged as a deeply fragmented field of study, whose evolutionary path has been defined by trying to find common ground while simultaneously staying true to its broad origins. This has led to much soul searching about whether tourism is a discipline or a field of study (Tribe, 1997) or whether it has matured enough to develop its own theory, rather than relying on theory imposed by so called core disciplines (Ritchie, Sheehan, & Timur, 2008). It has also led to concerns being voiced about the risk of even greater fragmentation posed by the quest for ever finer research subdivisions (Franklin & Crang, 2001). At the same time, it is an incredibly vibrant field, as revealed by both the growth in the number of journals and the number of institutions offering tourism programmes. The growth in the number of journals, though, has resulted both in a narrowing of discipline coverage per journals (Cheng et al. 2011) and adjectivization, with specialist titles focusing on tourism history, geography, economics, human resources, financial management, sport, marine environments, geo-tourism, and the like being launched.

3. Publishing trends in tourism and hospitality

This part of the paper reports on publishing trends in tourism and hospitality journals by analyzing entries listed in the Scopus data base.

3.1. Constructing the dataset

Scopus is part of the Elsevier publishing group, and according to its website (Scopus, 2014), is the largest abstract and citation database of peer reviewed literature, covering 53 million records, about 22,000 titles and 5000 publishers. This study focuses on full articles published in specialist tourism, hospitality and events journals between 1975 and the end of 2014. The final data set that was created consists of 19,291 papers found in 58 journals. These papers list more than 36,650 authors, with just over 15,360 discrete author names identified. While this figure may sound impressive, it must be appreciated that coverage is not complete. Data for papers published before 1996 are limited to four journals (*Tourism Management*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management* and the *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*). In other cases, journal coverage is patchy, and may skip some publication years or some editions within a given year.

Construction of the dataset commenced in October, 2014 with weekly updates run to the end of December. Journals were identified using the 'Source Title' function with the keywords: 'Tourism' OR 'Travel' OR 'Tourist' OR 'Ecotourism' OR 'Tourismos' OR 'Vacation' OR 'Hotel' OR 'Hospitality' OR 'Event'. Preliminary cleaning excluded book chapters, books and editorials before the data set was downloaded in excel format and then later transferred onto an SPSS spreadsheet. The database lists the paper title, names of all authors, journal title, publication date and citations. It does not list

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