



Negotiating the rapidly changing research, publishing, and career landscape



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Examines how scholars are negotiating the research and publishing landscape.
- Collaboration and co-authorship were highly ranked publishing advice.
- Academics may risk sacrificing long-term career prospects for short-term survival.

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ABSTRACT

The career prospects of tourism and hospitality academics have changed radically in the past 40 years, and this study examines how senior researchers, mid-career academics, and new and emerging scholars are negotiating the rapidly changing research, publishing, and ultimately career progression landscape. A total of 264 respondents were recruited via TRINET and CIRET. Respondents assessed their perceived pressures to adopt research and publishing approaches and provided career advice that were analyzed via content analysis. Collaboration, selection of journal, topic choice, and contribution to the field were highly ranked publishing advice from academics. Pressures to adopt authorship tactics were reported among new and emerging, and mid-career academics to maximize publication output. This study suggests academics may risk sacrificing longer-term career prospects for short-term survival as increased emphasis of performance metrics becomes more common, and considers the implications of shifting goal posts in research and publishing for the field.

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1. Introduction

While the career aspirations of academics have not changed over time, almost everything else relating to the ability to achieve them has. Promotion, tenure and job security are now out of reach for many, due to a combination of the shift toward marketization of higher education, a record number of doctoral students vying for a declining share of full time jobs, and stagnant enrolments in many programmes (AAUP, 2015; Bexley, James, & Arkoudis, 2011; Harley, Muller-Camen, & Collin, 2004; Weissmann, 2013). Moreover, academics are under unprecedented pressure to produce high impact research to comply with externally imposed research assessment exercises (Bexley, James, & Arkoudis, 2011; De Rond & Miller, 2005; Dubini, Galimberti, & Micheli, 2010).

Our field is not immune, as both the profile and career prospects of tourism and hospitality academics have changed radically in the past 40 years (McKercher & Prideaux, 2014). First generation of tourism academics who began to explore this field in the 1970s and 1980s studied tourism as a side interest of their home discipline (Nash, 1979). Second generation academics rode the wave of expansion of dedicated tourism programmes in the 1990s and early 2000s. Many came from industry, earned their doctorates while taking up academic posts, and benefited from being able to learn their craft over time in a relatively non-competitive environment. Today's third generation tourism academics face a much tougher environment, though, as high supply and diminishing job opportunities mean that many candidates must hold a doctoral qualification and have an extensive publication record just to qualify for an interview. Assuming they are fortunate enough to find a full-time job, they are expected to produce research at or above the level of more experienced academics or risk having their careers stall, or worse still, finding themselves unemployed.

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Perceptions of what is required to develop successful careers, successful tactics, and attitudes to various research and publication practices used to enhance research output are likely to differ among academics at different career stages. Experiences of senior academics may no longer be applicable to prospective academics who are completing doctoral studies as well as emerging and mid career scholars. Instead, they may feel pressured to behave differently to respond to the changing university environment. In this regard, this study examines the question of how senior researchers (SR), mid-career researchers (MCR), and new and emerging scholars (NES) in tourism and hospitality are negotiating the rapidly changing research and publishing landscape. What insights do they have for other tourism and hospitality academics who are looking to develop a successful career in the field?

2. Career progression in tourism and hospitality

It is becoming increasingly more difficult to develop a career in academia, with some studies suggesting that less than 0.5% of doctoral students in the hard sciences eventually become full professors (Royal Society, 2010). As a result, studies have sought to provide insights for future academics by identifying the factors that may affect career progression. For example, tourism and hospitality academics who have had success in their careers had past industry experience and were willing to be mobile (Ladkin & Weber, 2009; Phelan, Mejia, & Hertzman, 2013). Others also had articulated career plans, and demonstrated passion and commitment to excellence in their work (Bagilhole & White, 2013; Castle & Schutz, 2013; dgrasso, 2014; Smith, 2011).

Career progression in today's academic environment, including appointment and promotion decisions, however, is increasingly based predominantly on one's research track record (De Rond & Miller, 2005; Law & Chon, 2007). This form of industrialization of academic research could hinder the development of many academics (Pain, 2015; Walsh & Lee, 2015). Traditionally junior scientists were trained under a craft model where they were regarded more as apprentices working under an experienced mentor to learn the full array of tasks involved in conceiving, operationalizing, and presenting research (Walsh & Lee, 2015). They became fully proficient at the skills of the trade over time and were then able to lead research independently (Pain, 2015). Today, though, research is far more likely to be conducted by large teams where junior researchers perform specialist tasks, potentially becoming expert in one area but deficient in others. A real risk exists that this model produces sub-scientists who rely on others to fill their skill gaps (Pain, 2015; Walsh & Lee, 2015). Wyatt (2012) also observed that the increasing division of responsibilities among authors is one reason for the downward trend in individual creativity in physics research, while Fisher, Cobane, Ven, and Cullen (1998) cautioned that too much collaboration could make projects less innovative.

There is evidence that career progression in our field is closely mapping this global trend, and concerns have been raised on the pressures on tourism and hospitality academics to produce research outputs, particularly for those on contracts who are seeking tenure (Ladkin & Weber, 2009). While a significant number of tourism and hospitality academics cited passion for teaching and passing on knowledge to the next generation for choosing an academic career, research performance remains closely tied to recruitment and promotion decisions as the ranking of tourism and hospitality programs is largely based on research output (Severt, Tesone, Bottorff, & Carpenter, 2009). University program heads in tourism and hospitality oftentimes evaluate research performance based a narrow set of items, such as the volume of papers published in first- and second-tier journals, single authorship, and supervision of doctoral students, despite calls for more holistic and

comprehensive approaches to assess research quality as well as the impact of an academic (Hall, 2011; Law & Chon, 2007). Consequently, new academics are expected to be fully research active while established academics must produce at much higher levels than their predecessors to be promoted (De Janasz & Sullivan, 2004; Walsh & Lee, 2015).

2.1. Pressures to adopt research and publishing approaches

The aforementioned changes in pressures to produce research output could impact research and publishing approaches undertaken by tourism and hospitality academics in a number of ways. Studies have pointed to an increased level of gamesmanship and unethical behaviour among academics in other fields in order to reach performance targets (Bennett & Taylor, 2003; Boff, 2012; De Rond & Miller, 2005; Dighe & Berquist, 2011; Kwok, 2005). Fanelli (2010) noted the publish or perish culture may conflict with the objectivity and integrity of research, forcing scientists to produce publishable results at any costs, including biasing studies to ensure "positive" results that support research hypotheses are found.

Additionally, 'salami slicing' of a larger research project into smallest publishable units that will yield a paper could become common (Boff, 2012; McKercher & Tung, 2015). Yet, how much of this represents new knowledge and how much is either derivative, repetitive or the product of salami slicing is unknown. Concerns have been raised that the intellectual development of our field is stalling, while much of the research into specific subject areas such as social impacts of tourism seems to be largely derivative (Deery, Jago, & Fredline, 2012; Mazanec, 2009).

Pressure to publish poses an additional challenge for junior researchers, non-native English speakers, and those resident in emerging economies to publish in journals with questionable reputations. The exponential growth in tourism and hospitality journals worldwide, from fewer than 30 before 1990 to more 330 today, also reflects the growth of pay-to-publish predatory journals (Xia et al., 2015). Publishing in such journals may come at a long term costs as authors may find their careers blocked when review panels recognize the lack of credibility of these outlets (Kearney, 2015).

A range of authorship tactics could also be adopted by academics to reach performance targets. In general, the number of authors per paper has doubled in recent years in many fields (Boff, 2012; Endersby, 1996; Inkpen & Beamish, 1994; Maina & Di Napoli, 2011; Wyatt, 2012), including tourism (McKercher & Tung, 2015). Yet, there has been no increase in mean productivity per individual author; instead, individual productivity, as measured on a pro rata basis, has declined (McKercher & Tung, 2016). While there may be valid reasons in some cases (Bennett & Taylor, 2003; Moore & Griffin, 2006), in many other instances, authors' names are added in expectation of some reciprocal benefit or as the result of pressure placed by more senior staff on junior staff and doctoral students. Gift authorship occurs when an author's name is 'gifted' to a paper, usually in exchange for some future benefit, such as being 'gifted' on their papers in return (Boff, 2012; Dighe & Berquist, 2011; Macfarlane, 2015; Strange, 2008). In extreme cases, gifting represents a premeditated agreement between peers, whereby each agrees to include the other as an author to give the appearance of higher productivity, even though that person has played no part in the project (Strange, 2008). Guest or honorary authorships (Bennett & Taylor, 2003; Dighe & Berquist, 2011) occur when a senior academic's name is included on a paper with the hope that the person's reputation will enhance the paper's chance of success.

Finally, pressure to adopt research and publishing approaches are not limited to junior academics. In the medical field, senior academics have demanded junior researchers to involve them in

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