



Research Paper

Review of reviews: A systematic analysis of review papers in the hospitality and tourism literature



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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Hospitality and tourism
Review studies
Web of science journals
Citation analysis

ABSTRACT

This study provides a systematic analysis of review studies in selected hospitality and tourism journals published to date. Although a number of review studies published within the hospitality and tourism literature have examined a diverse/wide range of topics, no systematic overview of the trends and impacts of such review studies has been provided. This study, hence, presents a comprehensive classification of 171 review studies published in the leading hospitality and tourism journals listed in the *Web of Science*, and examines the impacts that the review studies have made in the literature. Based on its constructive overview of the review studies published to date, this study contributes to the hospitality and tourism literature by providing a table of reference for future researchers. Taking a look at the past and how far we have come as a discipline should reveal unexplored research avenues for the future.

1. Introduction

This study aims to provide scholars with an overview of the trends and impacts of review studies published in the hospitality and tourism literature. The sustained progression of a field of study largely depends on the continuity and growth of research scholarship. For a field to progress, it must be conscious of its historical patterns to obtain insights into possible future developments and implications that contribute to the accumulation of knowledge (Dwivedi et al., 2011). In general, the main purpose of review studies is to analyze what has already been done in the field. Review studies, despite contributing significantly to the development of knowledge, vary in their scope and comprehensiveness, as some may provide a thorough history but in doing so miss more recent developments (Law et al., 2012). This study identifies this gap in the literature and aims to provide a glimpse of the totality of our disciplines through the lens of a review of studies from past to present. It also seeks to mark the historical development of the review studies conducted in our disciplines and classify the process to uncover possible directions for future research.

More specifically, the current study has three objectives: 1) to provide an overview of how review studies have been conducted in the disciplines of hospitality and tourism, 2) to identify the research trends in review studies and 3) to explore the impacts of review studies in the literature. The remainder of this study is organized as follows. First, a brief review of the hospitality and tourism research, roles of review

studies and roles of citation analysis is presented. Second, detailed explanations of the methods are provided, along with a presentation of the results outlined in terms of the overall status quo of review studies, research trends and their research influence. Third, a discussion is presented based on the results of the study and its limitations and implications for future studies.

2. Literature review

2.1. Hospitality and tourism literature

The fields of hospitality and tourism have seen dramatic changes in the past 40 years, with exponential growth in journals, publication opportunities, papers and collaborations (Gursoy and Sandstrom, 2016; McKercher and Tung, 2015). The *Encyclopedia of Tourism* records an increase in the number of journals from fewer than 10 titles before 1980 to approximately 290 today, with about 150 published in English (McKercher and Tung, 2015). Hospitality is still a fairly young discipline within academia, and its short history has resulted in a lack of consensus on its scope and exposure (Kandampully et al., 2014; Ottenbacher et al., 2009). Hospitality studies have responded to the lack of a general overview with a conceptual classification of the hospitality literature (Ottenbacher et al., 2009). In the case of tourism, studies have provided pattern data to review research activities to determine whether they are becoming more standardized or diversified

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(Scandura and Williams, 2000). In more recent years, the fields of hospitality and tourism have been identified as independent academic categories in the *Web of Science*, reflecting the progression of the disciplines (Min et al., 2016). Hence, this study comes at an opportune moment, as the hospitality and tourism fields are growing to academic maturity.

Review studies have illustrated a broad view of the tourism academia, examining publishing trends within the tourism literature (Leung et al., 2015a; McKercher and Tung, 2015; Wu et al., 2012; Yuan et al., 2015) and comparing these trends with other disciplines and fields (McKercher and Tung, 2015). In the hospitality literature, many researchers have conducted systematic reviews of research subjects and publication trends in scholarly journals (Crawford-Welch and McCleary, 1992; Kandampully et al., 2014; Svensson et al., 2009). However, we have yet to see a comprehensive overview that is mindful of the historical patterns of the review studies that have sustained the progression of research scholarship in the fields of hospitality and tourism.

2.2. Roles of review studies

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a review article as ‘a paper in a journal that summarizes recent literature on or developments in a particular subject’. Starting with this broad definition, we can apply specific criteria to classify the selection of review studies to meet the purposes of this study.

A systematic review study provides a thorough review of topic-specific research along with managerial implications for industry practitioners and future research directions in a discipline (Wang et al., 2016). Review studies have also been defined as a type of research, one that systematically reviews the literature of a field using a certain set of research techniques and methods (Feldman, 1971). Based on the review typologies (Grant and Booth, 2009), this study classifies reviews into five types as follows.

1. A *critical/narrative review* aims to demonstrate extensively researched literature and conduct a critical evaluation of its quality. The main purpose of a critical/narrative review is to identify significant items in the field; no formal quality assessment for each study is required, and the review is typically conducted in a conceptual or chronological way (Crouch, 1995). The critical/narrative review is a traditional and frequently used way of reviewing and integrating studies to provide an overarching theory to reconcile the findings of each study (Crouch, 1995), and results are commonly presented in a hypothesis or a model (Grant and Booth, 2009). In this study, the term ‘narrative review’ is used to represent both critical and narrative reviews.
2. A *qualitative thematic review* integrates or compares the findings from sample studies. ‘Themes’ or ‘constructs’ found in or across the individual studies are selected for thematic analysis. In this study, this type of review is referred to as a ‘thematic review’.
3. A *quantitative systematic review* attempts to categorize the literature and aims to support future research by identifying gaps in the literature. There is evidence of completeness in the search phase, which involves time/scope constraints (Grant and Booth, 2009). The results are usually presented in graphics and tables. The systematic review approach involves a comprehensive search for relevant research works, followed by an appraisal and a synthesis of those works according to a predetermined framework (Klassen et al., 1998). In this study, we use the term ‘systematic review’ to represent this type of review.
4. A *meta-analysis review* is an analytical process that combines the results of quantitative studies statistically to provide a more accurate result of the effect (Grant and Booth, 2009). This type of review study can reveal the status of research and suggestions for future study in an area (Franke, 2001).

5. A *mixed methods review* refers to any combination of review approaches with a quantitative and qualitative method of research or outcome, usually including a systematic literature review.

Review studies are often conducted with the aim of telling a story that can illustrate the broader picture of a particular topic or focus within a discipline (Kandampully et al., 2014). Review studies are conducted with the primary purpose of examining the changes and evolution of a discipline to provide scholars with a better understanding of the development of a field and discover any trends (Cheng et al., 2011). The main objective of this study is to trace the history and development of the disciplines of hospitality and tourism through a systematic review of the review studies that have been conducted.

2.3. Roles of citation analysis

Citation is a critical standard used to evaluate a journal or paper (Benckendorff, 2009), and there is a growing research trend of using citation analysis to examine a journal’s influence (Law and van der Veen, 2008), influential scholars (McKercher, 2008; Schmidgall et al., 2007), and/or the influence of an individual article (Zhao and Ritchie, 2007) in the hospitality and tourism literature. Citation analyses have commonly been conducted in academia to evaluate influence, measured typically through citation counts to generate various bibliometric impact scores (McKercher, 2012). For example, statistical information relating to citations is one type of metric used to produce journal rankings in academic journal quality guides (Hall, 2011). Citation counts are often made through engines like *Google Scholar*. In their study analyzing the most influential publications in tourism journals from 2000 to 2007, Law et al. (2009) also suggested the use of alternative databases such as the *Social Science Citation Index* (SSCI) or *Elsevier* to generate citation reports.

Citation count has been noted as one of the most important indicators in evaluating the quality of academic research and considered as an indication of the influence of a study. Studies by McKercher (2008) and Schmidgall et al. (2007) found a positive relationship between citation counts and quality of publications. Hence, citation analyses are conducted in this study with the aim of comprehending the influence of review studies that have been published within our fields thus far.

Bollen et al. (2009) classified three performance metric groups to measure scientific impacts: productivity, impact and hybrid metrics. Productivity metrics refer to the frequency of publications per year or per author, or total citation counts. Impact metrics measure the citation-relevant metrics of a study, such as citations per year and per journal. The third performance metric group, hybrid metrics, comprises indicators that represent both productivity and impact in the same figure, such as the *h* index. In our study, productivity metrics are used to analyze the review article trend by calculating the total number of review studies per year, journal, subject, etc. Impact metrics, such as citations per year, subject and research method are also used to explore the scientific impact that review studies have made in the field.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection

We applied a systematic literature review approach to ensure the rigor and transparency of our review process (Okoli and Schabram, 2010). Our data collection process involved the following three stages. The first stage was a keyword search for relevant review studies in *Hospitality and Tourism Complete* from the *EBSCOhost* database. The second stage was a manual search of all 32 vols of the hospitality and tourism journals listed in the *Web of Science*, including 17 SSCI journals and 15 *Emerging Sources Citation Index* (ESCI) journals, respectively. Our manual search showed that only 21 of the *Web of Science* journals had

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