

WHY CITATION IMPACT IS SO IMPORTANT FOR TOURISM RESEARCHERS?

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ABSTRACT

During long time academy pondered the productivity of authors as criterion of distinction, but this model seems to be changed to citation impacts. In this short essay review, which is centred in my own experience, we discuss to what an extent the current editorial system is sustainable for the discipline as well as in interests of market to restrict the number of published papers. Nowadays, H-Index which is oft-used as a useful instrument to rank scholars and scientists confers further impact to those scholars who publish few but are highly cited. Readers will see why this model leads to feed editorial monopolies which are ideologically framed to the belief that quality of papers are not associated to their quality but the journal where they are pipelined and published.

Keywords

Editorial Problems
Citation Impacts
Tourism Research

Although those disciplines that were considered as scientific varied from time to time, no less true is that tourism scholars are obsessed for their research and findings to be considered a serious option for other well-established social disciplines as anthropology, sociology or even psychology (Thirkettle & Korstanje, 2013). After Jafari's contributions, many voices emphasized on the needs to reach a state of maturation for the discipline. The Scientification of tourism, started from the moment Ph

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Doctorate dissertations, journals and books surged, played a crucial role in the expansion of discipline (Jafari, 2005).

In this context, some studies over-valorised the number of studies, which took tourism as a main object, from others criteria. In view of this, it is not surprisingly to see some papers that measured the most prolific authors of tourism. For example, McKercher (2005) goes on to say that academy is in decline unless journal ranking system is adopted. At some extent, these works will give as a result who were the authoritative voices of the discipline (Pechlaner, Zehrer, Matzler, & Abfalter, 2004; Ryan, 2005; Xiao & Smith, 2005; Mckercher, Law, & Lam, 2006; McKercher, 2007; Zhao & Ritchie, 2007; Hall, 2011). Even if there is still some interest for the volume of research, now things has changed a lot. John Tribe and Maximiliano E Korstanje have alarmed in the fragmentation (indiscipline) of knowledge production which will lead to a misunderstanding of what tourism is (Tribe, 1997; 2010; Thirkettle & Korstanje, 2013; Korstanje, 2015). However, in recent years, the number of published papers set the pace to web citation and citation impacts (Xiao & Smith, 2006; Jamal, Smith, & Watson, 2008; McKercher, 2008; Beckendorff, 2009). This does not mean any conflict of interests between two factions in academy, but a change of paradigm. The same authors who years ago embraced the belief that a scientific ranking of authors, which should be based on their productivity, from 2006 on changed their mind adopting citation impact as their primary value of distinction (Korstanje, 2014). In other conditions, the reputation of authors was elaborated combining the two factors, productivity and citation impact (Rodrigues Leal, 2006; Moreno Gil & Picazo Peral, 2012; Picazo Peral & Moreno Gil, 2013). The present piece will explore the reasons behind this shift. This begs a more than interesting question, why citation impact and derived indexes are so important for tourism-research? At a closer look, some scholars argue convincingly that basic citation metrics quantify the impact of researchers into the core of an academic discipline. Total citations per article summed to an index which gives different scores to a plenty of authors. Depending on this score, authors gain further recognition. It is assumed that post-graduate students dream to become in a global scholar but this no matter the citations gained in rare occasions occur. If papers are published in what specialists dubbed as "top tier journals" the probabilities to resonate in the field is higher than those scholars who decide lower-tiered journals are a fertile source for their outcomes (Garfield, 1955). In the same way, top-tier journals monopolize a great portion of what are produced leaving peripheral journals without papers to publish. Likewise, high impact

journals, which are centred in a pay for journal logic, are not free to access their content. Latin American universities or other educational establishment with low funds to invest so that their readers may access the produced knowledge are under this system relegated. In recent years, publishers cynically accepted to publish free access content but charging authors with expensive fees. Nor author neither university is paid by publishers once the paper has been reviewed and accepted. It opens the doors for a paradoxical situation simply because universities which already paid the wages of researchers should repay a new fee for students to read what they professors wrote. Most likely, here is where the problem lies; those indexes that often decide to add a journal is engaged to enhance its quality in order for obtaining further access and audience. Well-read open access journals have more likelihood to be cited than other pay-for-journals. However, this is not what happens in the current editorial system. It is important not to lose the sight that journals which often lock their content are more cited. One hypothesis is that pay for journals developed a superior ladder of quality respecting to other editorial options.

Are top tier journals exhibiting higher-quality publications? In my experience as reviewer, editor and author my answer is negative. Many editors coming from leading journals pass papers which are accepted by similar-minded colleagues who are suitable with the reviewed theory. In other cases, authors are pressed to cite in the text the studies published by editorial board and editor in chief. Whatever the case may be, less is said on the limitations faced by peer review process. Often, top tier journals gather a lot of papers which cannot be carefully reviewed by other senior scholars. Since editorial board members are concerned by publishing to gain further scores, the peer-review task is left to post graduate students who sometimes reject works without understanding what they read, while in other accept low-quality research. The recent lack of interests of professional researchers for reviewing is one of the main worries of editors in top ranked magazines. Furthermore, a radical criticism has been done by Korstanje in earlier approaches by some journals which struggle to rise in the Scopus or ISI Thompson ranking. Editors accept or push authors to cite papers which have been published in their respective journals, creating a vicious circle that obscures more than it clarifies (Korstanje, 2015). This suggests that it is preferably to be cited than creating further texts. It is truism that top tiers journals function whether writers are not prolific. The volume of production is proportional inverse to citation impact. The editorial system which draws the policies of economic

concentration, where first world scholars pivot those paradigms to reconstruct the epistemology of discipline, does need few papers that can be placed in no more than 10 journals. Otherwise, large volume of produced papers can be allocated in a plenty of free access journals which may place the business in jeopardy. Of course, those academicians who praise for this system are not familiar with the sinister logic behind. Rather they naively insist in prefiguring international rankings based on the citation per article each scholar has. To my end, the main leading journals in tourism as *Tourism Management*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, and so forth are pondered in the top items not by the quality of their publications but how many citations. In order for the ideology works, the spin doctors of this system need from a convincing reason why authors should limit not to write much texts believing in the fact that top journals will make their job in ensuring a higher citation impact in the network.

To expand our current understanding of this issue, it is important to delve into H-index. The most important scientific indexes in almost all disciplines, even in tourism, prioritize H(irsch)-index over other ways of measuring. Hirsch Index was recently coined by Hirsch (2005) to infer the impact of an author in a specific field. This index is considered an Author-level metric that prioritizes citation impact over productivity. Its calculation is based on a cube resulting from the times a published paper can be cited, in which case it means that those researchers dotted with few publications which have been extensively cited are further prone to be ranked in higher positions than others who lovely write much but gains less citations. Here two main problems arise. On one hand, sometimes each discipline and country has their own pace for citations. Culturally while Anglo-Saxon readers cite much than Latin American, one might speculate that the construction of an international ranking based in H index is almost impossible. On another, some authors are well read exponents but not cited. Doubtless, H-Hirsch is posed as the main criterion by measuring scientific performance because it is functional to the current (gated) editorial system. If researchers are trapped between wall and blue sea, universities are not in a better situation. International rankings of universities as QS gives importance to the number of papers published in ISI-web database. Professors are monetary awarded by a standard number of publication reaching journals previously recognized by ISI Thompson or Elsevier. Though in a preliminary basis, this answers to the above question. To wit, colleagues are interested in citation impact not by their genuine legacy in the discipline, which only can be judged with the passing of time, but by the one-sided editorial policies over them.

Unless this resolved, universities are driven to abandon their hosted editorials and journals. Last but not least, the commercial hegemony of publishers as Elsevier, Macmillan, Routledge or Willey and Sons only can be granted whether the volume of publications is restricted. In doing so, not only journals are distributed to those who can pay for them, but also scholars are disciplined to kill their creativity. This is the reason why today citations are more relevant than what is being published. In several times I have been told, your works are fine but please stop publishing them elsewhere, focus on top tier journals. Though I have well received their suggestions I understand the background where they moved.

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