

**[Opinion]**

## **The Citation Factor Reconsidered: New Alternative for Tourism and Hospitality Research**

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In a moment where tourism epistemology is in crisis, I shall put here my own experience as editor, reviewer and author, in which case, I hope the lines helps others in the difficult task of publishing their works. Let's explain it is not a tutorial that guide students to publish in professional journals, but a radical criticism on the strong position of commercial academic publishers today. The academic world surprised when academicians pertaining to the most important universities of the World as Oxford, Cambridge and Harvard called their researchers to boycott an important publisher because the higher fees the establishments should pay for their students to access what their professor publish (The Bookseller, 2012). Not only this scandal revealed the dichotomies of professional research in the Academy but also the limitations in the objectivity of what is being produced.

The present short note of research exhibits my own concerns respecting to the obsessions for citation impacts in social sciences and tourism research. After all, citation impact can be deciphered as the triumph of our own narcissism which needs from the others to feel pleasure. In English Speaking nations there would be a culture of achievement that appeals to the construction of tables and ranking to keep scholars comfortably numb. As David Riesman puts it, the other-centered character expresses a radical shift, that marks the passing from industrial-Victorian era to a new more narcissist atmosphere, where the others point of view is over valorized over our own emotional world. One of the main troubling aspects of citation impact seems to be associated to what Tribe (1997; 2010) dubbed as 'the indiscipline of tourism', which means the dispersion of what is being produced, created or even the ways applied-research is communicated to students. Tourism academy first failed, but the academic community - as well - to forge a basic consensus of what tourism is. Over the recent years, the reputation of authors,

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as well as professional fieldworkers are not given by their sizes of their classes, or the number of conferences in the world, but - and this is a big trouble - it follows the citation impact factor as the primary criterion of distinction respecting other scholars. As we shall discuss here, the concept of ranking factor is inextricably intertwined to the copyright logic, which was originally created to protect the author against plagiarism. With the passing of time, it becomes in real 'iron-cage', paraphrasing Max Weber, that sooner or later allowed the greatest commercial publishers to monopolize the academic production.

At a first glimpse, as I discussed in my recently-published chapter 'Failed Prestige', tourism-related scholars not only did not succeed in forging a shared epistemology but also dangled the possibility to evolve in inferior conditions respecting to other established disciplines as sociology, psychology and of course anthropology. Although anthropologists and sociologists focused their attention on tourism as the touchstone of modern civilization (MacCannell, 1976; Urry, 1990; Cohen, 1988), no less true was that the activity was defined as mechanism of alienation aimed at distorting the sense of reality. Jafar Jafari (2001) devoted considerable time of his life in unpuzzling the complexity of tourism into a consolidated discipline, but his contributions were miscarried by his followers. The efforts of Jafari's exegetes were certainly oriented to maximize the production of knowledge in the forms of books, Ph D thesis, journals and events, instead of struggling to create an epistemology for the discipline (Korstanje 2017). This accelerated a rapid dispersion of publications that brought an interesting misunderstanding of tourism and hospitality. Other additional problem was the introduction of the 'economic-centered paradigm' which discussed tourism from the material benefits for community (Li & Petrick, 2008; Aramberri, 2001). The politicians validate the management of economies according to the number of tourists the country received or the multiplication effects at the main destinations. Tourism represents an ideological discourse which merits to be deciphered. However, because of time and space we limit hereby to analyze only the impact of citation-factor in tourism fields.

As the previous argument given, tourism was enthusiastically valorized as an instrument towards progress, development (De Kadt, 1979), or the touchstone for political governance in the quest of a more sustainable world (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). Other voices alluded to tourism as a something else than a mere industry, grappling with a new fresh vision. Per their viewpoints, tourism should be understood as a social institution which is used to revitalize the psychological frustrations happened in workplaces and working timeframe (MacCannell, 1976; Krippendorf, 2010). This opened the doors for a much deeper tension between tourism-as-social institution and tourism-as-industry definitions.

Equally important, the evolution of copyright laws - tended in its onset to protect the autonomy of scholars before plagiarism - was gradually mutating towards draconian practices where the author not only is not paid for his work - in the case of top ranked journals - but also is unauthorized to reproduce its own work in other contexts. The term *self-plagiarism* signals to unethical practice, or behaviour where the author reproduces verbatim or partially part of a previously-published text. This begs a more than interesting question, why do we think authors do not reproduce their work while publishers do?

Unless otherwise resolved, academic publishers offer a *contract* where authors are ethically constrained and compromised not to share freely their work - to their students -, nor copying part of their published papers. At the bottom, this restriction mysteriously does not apply for publishers which are legally entitled to make countless reproduction according to their discretion and profit-maximization goals. Paradoxically, journals concentrate a double subscription because the universities are pressed to pay for research while students and universities should pay for accessing to the material published in paid-for journals. Other interesting point of entry in this discussion is the role of 'predatory journals', which opposed to the status quo, charge authors for fastest and easily-handled processes of publication. Of course, predatory journals are not recommendable because they lack - in some cases - of the necessarily rigorist peer-review which improves the manuscript when it is not ready to see the light of publicity, but at least, predatory journals allows free access publications. Other pungent question here surfaces, why paying for article-access is good, while charging authors is bad?

Recently, paid-for journals launched a new innovative option for those researchers who embrace free access journals. It consists in charging authors to publish their investigation as open-access. Although some colleagues agree with this mode as a legitimate pathway, I still do not see the difference with predatory journals, if someone asks me.

Last but not least, the role of citation factor, which over the recent decades crystalized in JCR and Scopus, plays a leading role avoiding the cooperation among scholars. Imposing a Darwinist climate - of a war of all against all - the commercial publishers worked hard to construct an electronic platform, which is based not only in the number of publication but also citations each author has. The dilemma of publish or perish that illuminated Jafari's followers, set the pace towards the needs of being cited as a criterion of recognition. In the lists deployed by Scopus and JCR there are a bunch of journals, often divided by ranks or tiers. The quality of these journals is not given by the content or quality of the published manuscript, but only by the number of citations. Neither citations bespeak of the authority of a scholar in the field nor the most awarded personalities were the most cited. In any case, editors are rushed to survive struggling with others to catch more papers. In a market where few concentrates a lot of manuscripts while the rest is ripe to extinction, scholars write and target the top-ranked journals. In consequence, many journals originally hosted and funded by universities should be sold to these commercial publishers in order not to see the bankruptcy. As Riesman noted, in the other- based character the image of the Other, like in citations - situates as the mainstream cultural value in the academic circles. However, one might ask, why pay-for journals are the most cited ones in comparison with free access journals?

Hirsh-index, as discussed in the main academic circles, gives some hint. Such an algorithm, which was formulated by Jorge Hirsch to measure the impact of an author in the community, rests on the combination of the number of publications and citations. H-Index says that any prolific author with many publications but lower citation-impact is ranked at the bottom in comparison with those pundits whose works have been widely cited. At some extent, this is correct - because H-index evaluates the penetration of certain works in the network - but at a closer look, H-index generates a double effect in the creativity and productivity that later affect the maturation of discipline. Though originally the index was created to evaluate the reputation of researchers,

some caveats were found. On one hand, authors move their resources - not to help or educate students - but to publish manuscripts which only can be placed in top-ranked journals, which oddly are paid for journals. This reproduces a climate of extreme individualism and distress which leads the researchers to unethical practices, as forcing students to cite their own works or the 'fragmentary authorship', well-studied by B. McKercher and Tung (2015). Meanwhile, the cooperation between departments or universities is subordinated not only to possibilities to publish in top-tiered journals but to a Darwinist competence for survival. On another, commercial publishers impose endogamy where their indexed journals are at the top, concentrating the major portion of resources [if not sales] while other independent sources are torn between disappearance and complacency. As a vicious circle, the information is commoditized, packaged and disseminated under the auspices of few commercial publishers whereas the creation of citation-factor lists restricts the entrance to other independent free access journals. This discussion helps reader to reconsider not only the function of prestige but in expanding the current understanding about objectivity. In a nutshell, the sense of prestige, which is culturally fabricated by these companies, corresponds with the number of citations instead of the quality of what is being published.

This essay was not an attack to any scholars, but only it is oriented to alert on the shaky terrain tourism faces when adopted citation factor as a criterion of quality and excellence in investigation.

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