EDITOR'S NOTE
"FREEING THE LIONS":
TOURISM RESEARCH IN A CHANGING WORLD

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TOURISM: A SOCIAL PHENOMENON OR A BUSINESS FIELD?

In a rapidly evolving and uncertain world, recreation constitutes a vital counterweight against the insecurity, stress and conflicts following change. Although 'fun' is a serious issue and 'recreation' may not be optional, it would be misplaced to limit tourism within those two terms. Beyond the individual psychological micro-benefits, tourism is arguably a pervasive, global phenomenon with significant economic, socio-cultural and environmental macro impacts.

From a moral - and perhaps romantic - viewpoint, one may argue that travel and tourism is essential to personal development, and that it promotes humanism and contributes to world-peace. Yet, tourism, categorised somewhere between: a 'holiday' and a 'trip', an 'experience' and a 'commodity', a 'human right' and 'conspicuous consumption', is completely absent from formal primary and secondary school curricula and is not considered a competence / skill in the modern educational toolkit. From a 'less romantic' point of view the tourism sector holds enormous economic significance for many non-industrial economies; local,

regional and even national. According to the UNWTO[1], tourism accounts for 9% of the world's GDP and for 1 in every 11 jobs; while its business volume 'equals or even surpasses' that of oil exports, food products or automobiles. Oddly enough, despite its economic significance, for a number of countries (e.g. Germany – outgoing tourism, Greece – incoming tourism), often it plays a side-role in political decision-making and governance. For a number of established destinations, tourism has chaotically evolved instead of being strategically developed, competitively disabling entire destination regions, whilst enabling oligopolistic and to a certain degree exploitative structures in the source markets. Liedtke (2004) in his analysis of the high degree of concentration in the tourism sector, characterises the industry as a 'holiday cartel'.

The significance of the holiday sector and the ubiquity of the tourism phenomenon predestine this domain as a relevant, rich and dynamic field for scientific research.

"Science or research is always under pressure to deliver something which can be used immediately for society." [2]

Rolf Dieter Heuer

'LIFE IN THE ACADEMIC JUNGLE OF TOURISM': THE STATE AND STATUS OF TOURISM RESEARCH

Obtaining an overview of the research being undertaken in a diverse, dynamic and fragmented field such as tourism is arguably a challenging task. In this section, an attempt is made to summarise some of the corresponding main issues.

Identity and status: The 'what?' of tourism research

Over the last years, a number of scholars have critically discussed the nature, impact and status of tourism research.

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[1] Source: http://www2.unwto.org/content/why-tourism
[2] Source: http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/r/rolfdiete475434.html#Xzvvuzzc7IevakXa.99

Almost two decades ago, John Tribe rejected the notion that tourism constitutes (or can constitute) an academic discipline (Tribe, 1997). In the absence of unifying paradigms and the reliance on other disciplines for the interpretation of the tourism phenomenon, render tourism studies an 'interdisciplinary field' of scientific inquiry (ibid).

According to the above-mentioned author, the yearning for establishing tourism as an academic discipline is driven by a lack of 'academic self-confidence' (p.656) and should be abandoned. As the argument goes, tourism research, just like tourism, is characterised by diversity and messiness and this ought to be celebrated. The implied questions here are: "Where does this insecurity and lack of confidence originate from? And more importantly; is it justified?"

Relevance and impact: The 'so what?' of tourism research

Franklin & Crang (2001) reduce tourism research to a mere recording of the sector's growth which essentially results to fragmented and descriptive research. Page (2005) practically argues that 75% of tourism research has negligible impact and its absence would not significantly reduce the knowledge base on the subject. Moreover, 'knowledge exports' (i.e. citations of tourism research in non-tourism journals) to the wider, social-sciences community tend to be rather limited, indicating a certain degree of 'self-referentialism' (Wardle & Buckley, 2014) and 'intellectual inbreeding' (Xiao & Smith, 2008).

Validity and rigour: The 'how?' of tourism research

Even though historically positivism dominated tourism research, it has evolved to include more methodological and epistemological diversity (Xin et al, 2013). Yet a number of tourism scholars (e.g. Tribe 2006) have pointed towards a risk of standardisation – or 'MacDonaldization' – of tourism knowledge production. Others (e.g. Ren et al, 2010; Liburd, 2012; Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2013; Xin et al, 2013) discuss the 'standard methodo-

logical tookit' of tourism researchers and advocate the necessity for more inclusive and innovative approaches.

Indeed, scientific literature in tourism is focused on social science-centric (esp. Marketing and consumer behaviour), whilst a number of humanities disciplines and applied sciences are 'conspicuously absent from the literature' (Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2013: 141-142). In this respect it is not surprising that a vast number of published studies are often based on 're-purposed' surveys, recycling data collected for a publicly- or privately-funded market research projects. Another instance of 'repurposed data' may involve case studies utilising the data and experiences collected in such projects. This 'data-driven-hypotheses-creation' phenomenon may also be partly due to the difficulties tourism researchers face in collecting empirical data and funding research (Papathanassis et al. 2012).

'Researching in a lion's cage': Tourism challenges and implications for research

On the basis of the above-mentioned, one may assert that tourism research has been undergoing a kind of 'academic identity crisis' (Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2013). The debate regarding the epistemology of tourism is still as active as ever, while its methodological toolkit and relevance both leave a lot to be desired. To explore the reasons behind this, it may be pertinent to look beyond the abstract notions of 'ontology', 'epistemology', 'practical relevance' and 'scientific rigour'. A closer look at the actual actors of the field's knowledge creation and dissemination system is very illuminating.

Networks and publication possibilities: Thee "who? And where?" of tourism research

> *"Typically, researchers view themselves as 'lions in the jungle', untrammeled and individualist researchers/pioneers equipped to uncover*

the truth. But maybe instead researchers are lions in the circus, caged by role and constrained by structure."

<div style="text-align: right">Tribe (2006:360)</div>

A diverse and interdisciplinary field such as tourism offers a number of research niches' for academics. Examples include areas such as: eTourism, cruise tourism and even space tourism. In turn, pioneers in those specialised areas, build proprietary networks and publication venues, encouraging what John Tribe (2010) describes as 'tourism (academic) tribes'. Within those communities (tribes) the presence of influential / pioneer scholars, key conferences and dedicated journals, encourage convergence and arguably restrict individual research freedom. Within this context, Tribe (2010) asserts that: "*...divergence is maintained through cheap and hobby research*" (p.30)

To a certain degree, the evolvement of 'academic tribes' and 'invisible colleges' in tourism is presumably due to the publication restrictions and expectations facing tourism academics. The notion of 'publish or perish' extends has come to incorporate bibliometrics (e.g. Impact Factor) and rankings. In other words, even when a tourism researcher publishes frequently, they might fail to meet institutional performance requirements by not publishing in highly-ranked journals (Hall, 2012). Within this context, tourism researchers with a highly-specialised focus have a relatively low probability of success in the high-ranked, generalist tourism journals; and even less in non-tourism, social-science and / or management journals. Under conditions of limited access to high-ranked publication outlets and visible venues (i.e. conferences), the development of 'invisible colleges' is inevitable; contributing in this way to the pre-existing research fragmentation in the field.

"This observation highlights the distinction between the production of knowledge and the curriculum but results in somewhat of an identity crisis for many tourism academics who deliver a business-oriented curriculum while at the same time engaging in non-business, social science-focused research"

<div style="text-align: right">Benckendorff & Zehrer (2013: 141-142)</div>

Another factor worth-mentioning here is the institutional land-scape within which tourism research takes place. In a number of countries, the study of tourism is excluded from university-level institutions, forgoing the corresponding privileges, resources and status. Apart from inhibiting research funding, this also implies an operational character and application focus, which could be one of the reasons the attempts to establish a 'tourism science' have been unsuccessful (Derballey & Stock, 2012). Confining tour-ism education and research in the structures of business schools, hospitality colleges and polytechnics encourages managerialism (i.e. focus on practical business issues and problem-solving) and research fragmentation (Papathanassis & Beckmann, 2011; Xiao & Smith, 2008). Thus, it may not come as a surprise that many tourism academics seem be reluctant to label themselves as re-searchers; and even more as scientists.

Ideology and ethics: The "why?" of tourism research

Research aspiring to a 'detached' positivistic scientific para-digm and a tourism education driven by managerialism, raise the question of ethics and ideology in the tourism academia (Caton, 2012; Tribe, 2006). To return to Heuer's quote at the beginning of this paper, science is always under pressure to contribute to society and the well-being of people. This requires tourism sci-entists to adopt a more reflective approach to their research and its implications.

> *"As tourism scholars, we have some deep reflecting to do on what it is we are - and should be - fighting for."*
>
> Caton (2012: 1924)

> *"Tourism researchers must be prepared to 'speak truth to power'. But perhaps at the same time they should seek to speak truth of power and facilitate the speech of the powerless."*
>
> Tribe (2006: 377)

Given the advocated 'people-focus' of tourism and its importance for developing economies, adding scientific humanism (not populist activism) in the research equation may dent perceptions of academic neutrality, but may also provide relevance for tourism research beyond 'academic tribal' boundaries, whilst encouraging the convergence required to create a common identity in the tourism research community. Answering the 'why?' of tourism research provides an answer to the corresponding 'so what?' question (i.e. research relevance).

'Circus Cage vs. National Park': Towards an alternative tourism research architecture

Addressing the identity and status issues in tourism research, still leaves the previously mentioned challenges of rigour and validity unresolved. In other words, ideology and relevance alone does not guarantee publications, funding and / or data availability. Academics would still feel compelled to extend the length their publication lists and public funding will still require bibliometrics to measure and compare research performance.

> *"The greatest challenge to tourism scholars may be to stop playing the (publication) game altogether"*
>
> Hall (2011:26)

Exiting the 'publication game' altogether is a rather idealistic option, as the terms of employment and personal ambitions of tourism academics may both not permit it. Nevertheless, nowadays there are a number of possibilities worth exploring.

Tourism research 2.0 and the democratisation of knowledge dissemination: Some examples

Liburd (2012) transfers the Web 2.0 paradigm and the technological possibilities of collaborative work in to the tourism research domain and challenges the current knowledge-production practices (i.e. peer review), dissemination channels and science business models. According to the above-mentioned author an al-

ternative system could be more dynamic and openly accessible (in the form of Wikipedia) whilst including community assessment features (e.g. reader – ratings) instead of traditional peer reviews. The model proposed here would arguably democratise tourism knowledge production and consumption beyond the confines of 'invisible colleges' and 'A'-journals. The success criterion for scholars would be contribution (i.e. relevance and participation) as contrasted to recognition (i.e. rigour and citations).

Over the last years elements of such a model are becoming increasingly popular within the academic community. Established journals are offering open access possibilities. Some offer open access at an extra cost for authors, while others are available at no cost for both authors and readers; at least for the electronic version. An example of such a journal would be the European Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Recreation (EJTHR)[3].

Web 2.0-inspired peer-reviewing variations including community-assessments are also visible. An example would be the 'anonymous peer-crowd reviewing' process utilised to assess the papers submitted for the 3rd International Cruise Conference in Dubrovnik (Papathanassis et al, 2012, p. vi). The conference paper reviews were conducted online and included a requested an overall star-rating. Reviewers were free to choose which papers they wanted to assess, based on their own judgement and preference. Such an approach takes into account rigour (i.e. rating and review text), as well as relevance (i.e. number of reviews per paper).

'Inclusion' and 'egalitarianism'

Referring back to the 'lions in a cage' analogy, a cage does not only prevent escape, but also restricts entry. Various researchers have addressed the issue of 'inclusion' in tourism research, criticising the dominance of certain demographic and cultural groups within the research community (e.g. Becher & Trowler, 2001; Tribe, 2006; 2010). The adoption of a Web 2.0-enabled open access model of tourism research and the accompanying 'democra-

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[3] Source: http://www.ejthr.com/index.php

tisation' of knowledge production and consumption, would presumably lead to more inclusive community. Instead of Tribe's 'invisible colleges', one could refer to 'accessible, virtual colleges'. Research-diversity in terms of methodological approaches and research areas is inexorably related to the diversity of those who conduct it. The prospect of inclusion is not limited to gender and culture but also to academic background. Tourism research could also greatly benefit from the contributions of practitioners, students and even 'hobby-researchers', who are currently excluded due to the effort and process knowledge required to write and publish a research paper. In a web-enabled, open access, collaborative model of publishing, incomplete research contributions (no matter how small) can be easily incorporated.

Including, for example, undergraduate students in the research process could be beneficial for their education, whilst reducing the dependency on doctoral staff and funding; especially for underprivileged and /or underfunded institutions. Viewing and treating:

- Students as 'apprentice researchers' and not merely as 'convenient survey respondents', and
- Researchers as 'experienced students' and not as 'part-time teachers'
- offers a wide range of education possibilities (e.g. student conferences, research master programs); whilst promoting academic egalitarianism and fostering a positive atmosphere in higher education institutions (Papathanassis, 2013).

Concluding remark

Having painted a somewhat idealised picture, it is important to point out that 'changing the rules of the game' for tourism research ought to be seen as an evolutionary process. In other words, it is unlikely that vision expressed in the previous pages will materialise overnight. Rather, elements and aspects of the tourism 2.0 vision are gradually entering the academic landscape. Moreover, while addressing existing challenges it also creates new ones related to: institutional governance and funding, quality control, and content management. Researching in a 'circus cage' may be challenging, but doing so in the 'jungle' is also!

ABOUT THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

This Special Issue of the EJTHR can be considered as an illustration the Liburd's (2012) metaphor of Web 2.0 paradigm in the tourism research domain. In partnership with two Polish universities (the University School of Physical Education in Poznan and the University of Economy in Bydgoszcz) the EJTHR promoted the 2nd International Conference of Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation in Poznan (19th - 21st May, 2014)[4]. This Special Issue is fully dedicated to this important event.

According to the Scientific Committee of the Conference the 7 best papers were selected for publication in the current issues of the European Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation (Volume 5, Number 2, July, 2014). These best papers are the following:

- *«Internationalization of tourism management in Polish cities: Strategies, marketing and structures»*, by Piotr Zmyślony (Poznan University of Economics, Poland)
- *«Turning satisfied into loyal: the case of Lithuanian tourists»*, by Lina Pilelienė and Viktorija Grigaliūnaitė, from Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania
- *«Tourism jobs and subjective well-being at work: A cross-national analysis»*, by Marlena A. Bednarska, from Poznan University of Economics, Poland.
- *«The Compliance of Tourism Education with Industry needs in Latvia»*, by Agita Donina and Ineta Luka, from Turiba University, Latvia.
- *«Examining the importance of culture, gender and individual differences in customers»*, by A. Scott Rood, Grand Valley State University, USA, and Joanna Dziadkowiec, from Cracow University of Economics, Poland.
- *«The Development of Pubs Service Quality Scale (PSQS)»*, by Chih-Hung Pai, from Taoyuan Innovation Institute of Technology, Taiwan, and Ta-Kuang Hsu, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan.

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[4] Since 2012 and biennually, the EJTHR organizes in different European countries a scientific conference, aiming to support the dissemination of research outputs of young researchers, especially those who are engaged in doctoral programs of tourism scientific areas. The 1st International Conference promoted by EJTHR took place in the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain, on 20-21 June, 2012.

- «*The role of social embeddedness in tourist region cooperation*», by Katarzyna Czernek, from Katowice University of Economics, Poland.

Apart from a monograph that will include a significant number of papers presented at the Poznan Conference, the 19 articles included in this Special Issue cover a wide range of subjects, from huge relevance for understanding the state-of-art of the research in tourism in Europe, although it also includes contributions from authors from other continents. Despite the natural predominance of the Polish authors, this Special Issue presents works of 16 researchers from 16 nationalities. Concerning the thematic scope, as shown in the content page and in the table below, all the selected articles are focused on different themes, and most of them are case studies.

Table 1: Main attributes of the selected papers included in this Special Issue

Keywords	Filiation and Country
regional policy, tourism economy, tourism policy, EU funds	University of Szczecin, Poland
sustainability, responsibility, ethics, entrepreneurship, collaboration	UiT - The Arctic University of Norway
accessible tourism, disability, special needs, innovations	Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland
competitiveness of destinations, models of competitiveness, management, marketing, partnerships in tourism, visioning	University of Matej Bel, Slovakia
network organization, network strategy, network innovation, relational capabilities	Warsaw School of Economics, Poland
tourism, regional, Harkány, hotel, strategy	Pécs University, Hungary
second home tourism, destination qulity, Alanya	Akdeniz University, Turkey
destination image, image attributes, package holiday services, product quality perception	Warsaw School of Economics, Poland
consumer behavior, destination marketing, DMO benchmarking	Singidunum University, Serbia

(cont.)

Keywords	Filiation and Country
domestic tourism, Poland, Czech Republic	Katowice School of Economics and Silesian University of Technology in Gliwice, Poland
lodging, hotels, crowdsourcing, open innovation, maintenance, product defects	University of Central Florida, USA; Hotel Asset Management for Cii Hotels & Resorts, South Africa; Katowice University of Economics, Poland
multiculturalism, cultural diversity, Lesser Poland	Pedagogical University in Cracow, Poland
tourism service, tourism industry, tourism business, processes innovation, innovation categories, qualitative research	Vilnius University, Lithuania
seasonality of tourism demand, effective tourism demand, organized tourism	Poznań Academy of Physical Education and University of Life Sciences in Poznan, Poland
career, career development, factors of career development, models of career	National Research University, Russia
tourism, cultural tourism, tour guide, São Cristóvão/SE/Brazil	Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Sergipe, Brazil
tourism education, tourism curriculum, skills, competencies, employability	Turiba University, Latvia
Wine festival, Tourism	Szent István University, Hungary
Health tourism, Medical tourism, Elective medical tourism, Greece, Chalkidiki, Thessaloniki	Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly and Papanikolaou Hospital & Phsychitric Hospital of Thessaloniki, Greece

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Tribe, J. (1997). The indiscipline of tourism. Annals of Tourism Research, 24(3):638-657

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