

## TOURISM RESEARCH IN TOURISM AND NON-TOURISM JOURNALS: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH OUTPUT OF CATALAN UNIVERSITIES

*José Antonio Corral Marfil*

Universidad de Vic  
jacorralmarfil@gmail.com

*Gemma Cànoves Valiente*

Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona  
gemma.canoves@uab.es

The objectives of this study are to analyse tourism research in Catalonia and explore the differences between research published in journals of tourism and journals of other fields. We aim to describe this scientific production: how much, who, what, where and how the research was carried out. From a political standpoint, the results help assess the fit between knowledge created by universities and knowledge required by the tourism sector, for example, setting research agendas or encouraging transfer of knowledge. From the academic point of view, the interest of the study is that we analyse research from various angles (topics, regions, disciplines, authors, etc.) and we cover research in both journals of tourism and journals of other fields.

The content and development of tourism research has generated considerable interest within the international scientific community. Various qualitative studies have reviewed the literature in specific areas of research. Furthermore, bibliometric studies have quantitatively analysed tourism journals. Tsang and Hsu (2011) classified these studies into three types: (1) those that compare the contribution of authors and institutions in rankings, (2) those that examine the methods and techniques used in tourism research, and (3) «profile analyses», summarising the literature, the topics covered and the places of publication.

Almost all studies deal exclusively with tourism journals. But there are reasons to believe that much of the literature is published in journals of other fields. The main reason is, until recently, lack of tourism journals and, especially, of internationally renowned tourism publications (Benckendorff, 2009, Chang and McAleer, 2012). In Spain the situation is even more stark. As Sancho says (2006, p. 57): «the lack of journals on tourism that are recognised as reliable gauges of research activity means that tourism research is dispersed over a range of journals in different disciplines.»

We conducted a bibliometric study of tourism research in Catalonia. The study involved collecting and analysing tourism articles published in scientific journals during the period 2000-2010, signed by at least one author from the twelve Catalan universities. The search strategy was based on two lists of tourism terms. We added some new terms to the lists of terms used by González-Albo et al. (2009), terms such as *excursio\**, *aloja\** and *peregrin\**. The advantage of using lists of search terms is that the search may include results from journals in fields other than tourism and is therefore more complete. But it is more complex and laborious because articles need to be identified as dealing with tourism or otherwise. Usually bibliometric studies are limited to a selection of tourism journals. This strategy simplifies the search: all articles in tourism publications are by definition about tourism. However, this does not allow the detection of tourism articles in journals of other fields. In the following paragraphs we discuss the results of our analysis of research production, grouped around five questions: how much, who, what, where and how the research was carried out.

In relation to «how much», tourism research in Catalonia has increased over the past decade. In both quantity and quality. In quantity, in terms of growth in annual production. And in quality, because of the large increase in the number of articles published in JCR and Scopus indexed journals. These results are similar to those obtained by Albacete and Fuentes (2010) and González-Albo et al. (2009) for the whole of Spain.

Accounting for the causes of research is beyond the scope of this study, but we can speculate about the reasons for the improvement. Part of the increased output in tourism research may be accounted for by the overall growth in research production in Spain and Catalonia over the last decade (Roig and Pinter, 2012). The overall increase in production, especially of articles in indexed journals, appears to result from the evaluation and accreditation criteria introduced by Spanish Organic Law 6/2001 on Universities.

However, González-Albo et al. (2009) showed that the growth of research on tourism is even higher than overall growth in research. Causes of increased tourism research in Spain could include the continued growth of tourism in Spain and worldwide, the growth of international tourism research and the creation of undergraduate, master's and doctoral studies programmes (Ceballos et al. 2010). These factors appear to have contributed to overcoming the precarious situation of Spanish tourism research traditionally (Pulido, 2006).

As for «who», our study analyses authors and centres. The results show that there are a few researchers that are very prolific, along with a large number of researchers who have published very little. This is exactly the pattern predicted by the Lotka Bibliometric Law on the distribution of productivity among scientists in a given field (Barrios et al., 2008). It appears that the data complies with this law approximately.

Four of the twelve universities are the most active in tourism research: the University of Girona (UdG), the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), the University of Barcelona (UB) and the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV). Taking into account the relative size of these universities, the smallest, the UdG and the URV, are the most productive and specialised in tourism research in the Catalan university system. Vargas (2011) established a correlation between tourism research in each Spanish autonomous region and the level of tourism there. The UdG and URV are in regions where tourism is very important. Furthermore, they are universities that have invested in tourism studies.

They have created faculties of tourism, research groups and institutes, technology parks, and master's and doctoral studies programmes in tourism.

In reference to «what», the topics that have most attracted the interest of Catalan researchers have been heritage tourism, tourism policy, and economic and social aspects of tourism. Comparatively, there have been fewer studies on tourist services, and almost nothing on legal, educational, sports and recreational aspects of tourism.

Tian et al. (2011) studied the issues researched in four tourism journals between 2000 and 2010. They found that the four most popular topics were tourist psychology and behaviour, theory and research development, image and marketing of tourist destinations, and sociological and cultural issues. At the other extreme, the five least studied fields were the geography of tourism, tourist transport, tourism education and training, gambling, and park and recreation management. With such different classifications it is difficult to compare results. However, in general, there appear to be similarities, except perhaps for the «theory and research development» item.

As for «where», Catalonia as a whole and its coast were the most researched areas. The results suggest that the most important tourist areas were those that received most attention (Costa Brava, Costa Dorada). However, the city of Barcelona, which is the main tourist destination in Catalonia, in comparison did not receive much attention from researchers in Catalan universities. Perhaps, in addition to the importance of tourism in a region, other factors influence how much a geographical area is studied. Some possible causes of this, the discussion of which go beyond the scope of this study, include the number of specialist researchers, their proximity to the area, the need for knowledge, the resources devoted to research, etc.

As for «how», among the scientific disciplines of Spanish journal articles in general there was a clear predominance of geography, but there was also frequent use of economics. Meanwhile, educational, sociological, legal and anthropological approaches were used to a lesser extent. And hardly any other disciplines. Almost half of the articles involved two or more disciplines. These results provide quantitative evidence of the multidisciplinary nature of tourism research.

Here we review the results of our journal survey and the contrast between tourism journals and journals of other fields.

According to Bradford's Bibliometric Law, a third of all the literature in a particular field is published in a small number of journals (Barrios et al., 2008). To retrieve another third of the literature, you need to consult a much larger number of journals. Data from this study are approximately in line with Bradford's Bibliometric Law. Much of the production was dispersed among many journals, each publishing rather few articles. A further large proportion of the literature was concentrated in just a few core journals, with many articles each.

This core was formed mainly by tourism journals, but also includes some non-tourism journals, especially geographical journals. Overall, 60% of tourism studies were published in journals of other fields. That is to say, non-tourism journals contributed more to the dissemination of knowledge of tourism than specialist tourism journals. Over the course of the decade, the contribution of non-tourism journals declined slightly. This was probably because of the emergence of new Spanish tourism journals in recent years.

The great contribution of journals in other fields to tourism research introduces an element of doubt about how representative most bibliometric studies are, as they based exclusively on tourism journals. If such an important part of the literature is published in non-tourism journals, the data from these studies does not include much of the relevant scientific production.

Regarding the nationality of journals, Catalan researchers published mostly in Spanish journals, but published significantly more in foreign journals over the course of the decade. There was more international production in tourism journals than in journals in other fields. Moreover, non-tourism journals were of a somewhat higher category than tourism journals, both Spanish and foreign.

As for the disciplines of the journals, the most frequent were economics and geography. However, journals of other disciplines accounted as a whole for over half the production. In all, there was diversity both in the disciplines of journals and also in the disciplines of articles. Finally, in terms of topics, tourism journals focused more on the economics of tourism, while non-tourism journals tended to focus more on heritage tourism.