

The ranking and rating of academics and journals in tourism research

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First, it should be noted that the comments below are purely personal, and do not represent the views of the journal. Second, this piece is written as an initial response to the paper by Jogaratnam, Chon, McLeary and Mena published in this issue, but also to that of Pechlaner, Zehrer, Matzler, and Abfalter (2004) that discussed journal rankings by researchers in the USA and elsewhere. That paper listed 22 journals, but did not make clear the rationalisation for the choice of journals. Third, I felt that in order to better understand the problems of ranking, I should perhaps experience some of those problems by attempting some rankings. That experience, as I describe below, clearly brought to me the problems and subjectivities that are involved and which are not always clear to those who read, or perhaps use, the rankings.

Finally, I come to this subject with an ambivalent frame of mind. In 1995, I noted in a piece published in *Tourism Management* (and written before I became editor of the journal) that generally academics had not appreciated the full extent of the changes being enforced in British universities by the then Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher (Ryan, 1995). The consequences of that period exist today, and to a large extent have been reinforced by successive governments both in Britain and in other parts of the English-speaking world. University education has, for a number of reasons been extolled and extended to the point that almost 40% of the young people between the ages of 18–30 now attend university in countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. This is a far cry from, say the 1960s, and indeed in 1950, there

were only 68,000 university students in Britain, (Halsey, 1961). University education has become a ‘mass consumer experience’ and in English-speaking countries such as those mentioned above and which previously had systems based on restrictive, competitive entry, the change has been painful and difficult for academics previously used to a more elitist system. In the USA, there has long been a different tradition; an arguably more egalitarian tradition in making access to universities more easily available to a wider group of people (with past notable exceptions based on ethnicity and income) but, in order to attain high levels of excellence, a more notably hierarchical system of ivy league and state universities. In the British tradition, while access was limited and competitive, once accepted, a student could be reasonably certain of uniformity of teaching and standards across all universities.

That tradition has increasingly become eroded in the face of the new consumerist mass system that prevails today. A key determinant in that process has been the understandable inability (if not reluctance) of governments to sustain funding resource per student over the decades with the consequence that spending per student has declined, salaries of academic staff have fallen behind those once considered their peers, and in some instances building maintenance has also suffered. Various responses have been tried, from ‘free for all’ systems where universities have been encouraged to ‘compete’ and recruit yet even more students to obtain additional revenues from student fees, to the current ‘financial saviour’ of the recruitment of overseas students who now account for growing proportions of student populations. As the institutions have grown in size, and as governments paradoxically seek more control as their proportion of total university funding

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is reduced, so increasingly scarce funds are absorbed by a growing managerialist/administrative group. The growth of this group has been remarkable and today it is not uncommon that academic staff form less than 50% of the total employed by a university.

Within this environment the need to measure, to assess ‘efficiencies’ and to direct monies in desired directions complements and reinforces the processes described. Also, for their part universities have sought to claim a distinctive role of research, that they are knowledge creators as well as disseminators. However, research is often expensive and uncertain as to outcomes; it is often simply curiosity driven and thus fits uneasily in a corporatist world concerned with financial and staffing efficiencies. Allied with the arguments that recipients of public funding should also be accountable and transparent in their stewardship, it is of little surprise that a perceived need arose for assessing research. In his companion piece to this paper, Page (2003) describes the cultural change that has taken place and follows up his article of 2003.

However, and here enters the ambivalency, while sharing many of Page’s views about the harm that such exercises do to the nature of research, namely a shift toward ‘milking’ research projects for publications, a tendency to produce material that makes little net contribution to knowledge other than perhaps reinforce some knowledge through repetition, a mistaking of market research reports for academic papers—to argue that *all* such research and *all* such researchers are tainted with the same brush all the time is perhaps too strong an argument. But if there is indeed, as I believe there is, still good research, good conceptualisation, key people who can and do contribute to the advancement of ideas and research, how then is a student or new staff member (who increasingly has known no other system than that which is current) to identify these contributions in a world that almost and often does overwhelm with information delivered at the touch of a keyboard button.

Thus, perhaps then there might be a need for lists and rankings. Which, however, given the legal action that accompanied, in 2004, the release of the New Zealand rankings of research in its equivalent of the UK’s Research Assessment Exercise, namely the Performance Based Research Funding exercise, seems to imply that such rankings need care and clear assessment, or alternatively can only ever hope to be fuzzy and at best, incomplete guides to the status and competency of those institutions and individuals so listed. As an aside, it should be noted that in the New Zealand exercise, tourism was grouped with marketing. In that combined field, 8 out of 167 staff were assessed as being ‘grade A’, that is of top international standard (New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission, 2004). Of those 8, it appears that 4 were Professors in Tourism as far as can

be judged (officially individual rankings are confidential); which implies that tourism researchers would appear to rank well with these counterparts at least.

In a spirit of attempting to better assess what types of information exist, and to assess what use it might be, and mindful of common questions that have arisen in discussions on Trinet, the following lists were compiled:

- (a) list of ‘leading’ journals based on ‘hits’ derived from data released by CAB International from its leisuretourism.com site;
- (b) list of prolific academics derived from the same site from January 1990 to May 2004;
- (c) list of most cited articles derived from Elsevier’s Science Direct web site.

The rationale for selecting these sources is that they are among the largest databases pertaining to our research field and cover the majority, if not all, of the journals in our field of enquiry.

These lists are shown in Tables 1–3. The journal rankings are simply derived from CAB International’s practice of occasionally listing the top 10 journals based on frequency of hits in searches. So, the top journal for the month received 10 points, the second 9 points, and so on. The author listing is based on the frequency with which an author is listed for the period concerned. However, it does not take into account whether the author is the first, second or third listed author of an article.

So, just how useful are the lists?

Table 1 is not without interest and tends to confirm the impression that the ‘top three’ journals are *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Tourism Management*, and the *Journal of Travel Research*, which broadly confirms the findings of Pechlaner, Zeher, Matzer, and Abfalter (2004), and specifically confirms the ratings of their non-USA panel. Of the newer journals the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* seems to have secured a significant placing. However, the table is derived from a source which is used by scholars in not only tourism, but also leisure, recreation, hospitality, sports management and to a lesser extent, environmental sciences; so in that case the journal listing is derived from a scholastic community that is wider than simply tourism researchers, and therein may lay an imbalance. Second, it is based upon hits—that is upon searches by those with access to the internet. Third, there may be a simple reason as to why the ‘bigger’ journals have more hits—they are literally bigger in that they publish more pages than many of the other journals. *Annals* publishes about 1,000 pages and *Tourism Management* about 760 a year now! Fourth, those journals can argue that the tables under-estimate their importance because they take no account of the hits that accrues on their own web sites, such as Elsevier’s www.sciencedirect.com. It is possible

Table 1
The ranking of journals

	Oct 2002	Nov 2002	Jan 2003	Feb 2003	Mar 2003	Sep 2003	Dec 2003	Score
Annals of Tourism Research	10	10	10	10	9	10	0	59
Tourism Management	9	6	5	8	7	5	1	41
Journal of Travel Research	8	5	7	5	4	0	7	36
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	2	7	1	9	10	0	0	29
Leisure Studies	0	0	8	4	8	6	0	26
Journal of Leisure Research	0	8	6	0	6	2	0	22
Leisure Management	0	0	0	2	0	0	10	12
Leisure Sciences	1	0	9	0	0	0	0	10
Therapeutic Recreation Journal	0	0	0	0	2	8	0	10
Journal of Tourism Studies	3	3	0	0	0	4	0	10
Travel and Tourism Analyst	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
World Leisure Journal	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	9
Travel and Tourism Intelligence	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
Tourism Analysis	0	2	0	0	0	3	3	8
International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Administration			0	0	0	0	8	8
Tourism Recreation Research	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
International Journal of Tourism Research	0	0	0	0	5	0	2	7
Tourism Research	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Environmental Management	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	7
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	6
Journal of Park and Recreation Management		0	0	0	0	0	6	6
Tourism Culture and Communication	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Cornell Quarterley	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Journal of Physical Education	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
Tourism Economics	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	4
Anatolia	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Hospitality Review	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
Media, Culture and Society	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
Journal of Applied Recreation Research	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Sociology of Sport	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Tourism Analyst	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Leisure Manager	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Journal of Cultural Economics	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Information Technology and Tourism	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
European Journal of Physical Education	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1

therefore that hits depend upon simply numbers of articles published and accessibility via web sites. While there may be truth in this, I suspect other factors also possess importance such as the main focus of the journals and the editorial reputations and policies of editors. The ‘three main’ journals are long established, are generally ‘catholic’ in their concerns, while newer journals tend to be more specific as to either discipline or geography.

Table 2 arguably presents little surprise in one sense from those who use refereed journals as their source of information for literature reviews, but from another perspective, does it really represent the influence of individual scholars? It fails, for example, to really capture the importance and influence of a scholar like Jafar Jafari, who not only edits *Annals*, but was one of the founding members of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism. Other examples would include Dick Butler, known not only for his destination life cycle

theory, but also adaptation of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum to tourism. To my mind it certainly significantly underplays the influence of a colleague such as Michael Hall, whose main work lies in books that offer not only a synthesis of existing knowledge, but extend that synthesis into an antithesis not often publishable in journals. Indeed, again from a personal perspective, I am coming to the conclusion that often books represent a better means of establishing new paradigms because they offer opportunities to be conceptual in thought, to be thinking outside of conventional patterns and be challenging in ways not always acceptable to referees of journals bound by positivistic paradigms.

It is my impression that many authors, based particularly in the USA, are bound to a positivistic empiricism that tends to quantitative-based research that often draws upon a restricted literature. In part, this is because of a pattern of doctoral degrees that contain,

Table 2
Publications by author, January 1990 to May 2004

Name	ATR	JTR	TM	JTTM	JoST	JTS	TRR	Asia	TE	IJTR	JVM	TA	Vis	Ana	CIT	Tzag	Total	Others	G. Total
Crompton, John L.	13	17	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	59	92
Ryan, Chris	7	1	16	4	7	0	3	1	5	4	2	0	0	0	1	0	51	7	58
O'Leary, Joseph	1	4	3	7	1	9	1	3	0	0	2	5	1	0	0	0	46	7	53
Uysal, Muzzaffer	4	8	4	5	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	2	0	1	32	16	48
Morrison, Alastair	0	3	5	7	1	9	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	42	3	45
Law, Rob	1	2	6	13	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	9	38
Ross, Glen	2	2	4	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	4	1	0	1	23	15	38
Witt, Stephen	8	8	8	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	6	35
Oppermann, Martin	7	5	4	3	0	2	5	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	31	3	34
Baum, Tom	2	2	6	0	0	0	2	2	2	4	0	0	0	2	2	0	24	9	33
Fesenmaier, Daniel	4	15	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	28	4	32
Pizam, Abraham	4	8	6	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	8	28
Ritchie, J. R. Brent	1	6	4	2	2	2	2	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	25	2	27
Moscardo, Gianna	2	1	0	1	2	7	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	23	4	27
Faulkner, Bill	2	5	7	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	2	22	4	26
Pearce, Douglas	4	5	6	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	24	1	25
McKercher, Bob	3	4	6	2	3	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	1	24
Pearce, Philip	3	3	1	1	3	3	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	22	2	24
Butler, Richard W	2	2	3	0	1	2	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	19	5	24
Getz, Donald	3	1	4	1	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	20	3	23
Hall, Colin Michael	0	2	1	2	2	1	6	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	20	2	22
Prideaux, Bruce	0	1	7	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	6	0	0	0	1	0	20	1	21
Wall, Geoffrey	3	0	6	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	20	0	20
Page, Stephen	2	1	8	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	18	1	19
Perdue, Richard	2	10	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	16	3	19
Sonmez, Sevil	3	7	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	17	2	19
Hobson, Perry	0	3	5	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	16	3	19
Cooper, Chris	1	1	5	1	2	1	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	17	1	18
Crouch, Geoffrey	2	5	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	15	2	17
Baloglu, Seyhmus	1	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	12	5	17
Qu, Hailin	0	0	4	7	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	5	17
Prentice, Richard	5	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	2	16
Bramwell, Bill	4	1	5	0	3	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	16
Morley, Clive	3	3	1	0	0	2	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	16
Wanhill, Stephen	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	6	16
Milman, Ady	2	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	12	2	14
McCleary, Ken	2	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	6	14
Shaw, Robin	0	4	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	13	1	14
Weaver, David	3	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	5	14
Hsu, Cathy	2	4	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	2	13
Roehl, Wesley	0	5	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	3	13
Smeral, Egon	3	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	2	13
Hope/Witt, Christine	1	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	4	13
Seaton, Tony	0	1	3	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	12
Dann, Graham	4	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	7	4	11
Seongseop Kim	3	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	10
Williams, Peter	1	5	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	10
Hollinshead, Keith	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	6	4	10
Littrell, Mary Ann	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	9
Mak, James	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	1	8
Jafari, Jafar	0	1	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	8
Riley, Roger	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	7	0	7
Total Publications	132	192	187	88	43	50	39	30	29	24	28	21	16	12	13	10	964	235	1199

Key: Ana, Anatolia; Asia, Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research; ATR, Annals of Tourism Management; CIT, Current Issues in Tourism; IJTR, International Journal of Tourism Research; JoST, Journal of Sustainable Tourism; JTR, Journal of Travel Research; JTS, Journal of Tourism Studies; JTTM, Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing; JVM, Journal of Vacation Marketing; TA, Tourism Analysis; TCC, Tourism Culture and Communication; TE, Tourism Economics; TM, Tourism Management; TRR, Tourism Recreation Research; Tzag, Tourism Zagreb; and Vis, Visions in Leisure and Business.

Table 3
Most hit articles—*Annals of Tourism Research*, 2001

Dr. A. Papatheodorou	Why people travel to different places	
Dr. J.P. Taylor	Authenticity and sincerity in tourism	Full length article
Dr. G. Griffin	Tourist perception of environmental impact	Full length article
Dr. B. Garrod	Managing heritage tourism	Full length article
Dr. L. Murphy	Exploring social interactions of backpackers	Full length article
Prof. C. Goossens	Tourism information and pleasure motivation	Full length article
Dr. P. Mason	Residents' attitudes to proposed tourism development	Full length article
Dr. K. Lindberg	Tourism development. Assessing social gains and losses	Full length article
Dr. K. Greenidge	Forecasting tourism demand: An STM approach	Full length article
Dr. C.C. Lee	Predicting tourist attachment to destinations	Short communication
Dr. L. Johnston	(Other) bodies and tourism studies	Full length article
Mr. R. Loon	Ecotourism ventures. Rags or riches?	Full length article
Dr. D. Buhalis	Tourism and cyberspace	Conference
Dr. D.A. Baker	Quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions	Full length article
Dr. C. Ryan	The gaze, spectacle and ecotourism	Full length article
Mr. R.E. Mitchell	Community integration: Island tourism in Peru	Full length article
Dr. A. Collins	Thinking economically about sustainable tourism	Discussion
Dr. L. Campbell	Ecotourism in rural developing communities	Full length article
Dr. K.G. Debbage	Tourism 2000	Conference
Dr. S.K. Nepal	Tourism in protected areas: The Nepalese Himalaya	Full length article
Prof. R. Buckley	Book review: Ecotourism: An introduction	Book review
Dr. C. Halewood	Viking heritage tourism. Authenticity and commodification	Full length article
Dr. M.J. Walpole	Local economic impacts of dragon tourism in Indonesia	Full length article
Dr. S.W. Litvin	Consumer attitude and behavior	Short communication
Dr. M. Kousis	Tourism and the environment: A social movements perspective	Full length article
Dr. M. Kneafsey	Culture economy, Rural tourism and social relations	Full length article
Prof. E. Herold	Female tourists and beach boys. Romance or sex tourism	Full length article
Dr. R.W. Riley	The state of qualitative tourism research	Full length article
Dr. J. Williams	Community issues and resident opinions of tourism	Full length article
Prof. R. Buckley	Book review: Sustainable tourism: A marketing perspective	Book review
Dr. P. Brunt	Host perceptions of sociocultural impacts	Full length article
Dr. J. Aramberri	The host should get lost. Paradigm in the tourism theory	Discussion
Dr. C. Ryan	Tourists and strippers: Liminal theater	Full length article
Dr. A.M. Williams	From collective provision to commodification of tourism?	Full length article
Dr. D. Pearce	An integrative framework for urban tourism research	Full length article
Dr. C.A. Joseph	Mediated resistance. Tourism and the host community	Full length article
Dr. V.L. Smith	Space tourism	Conference
Dr. M.P. Velikova	How sustainable is sustainable tourism?	Discussion
Dr. S.L.J. Smith	Measurement of tourism's economic impacts	Conference

to a large part, taught papers and in consequence a more time constrained research period than their European counterparts—under such conditions it is much easier to complete within a semester research based upon a survey than the more ethnographic research pattern that requires long periods of immersion within a specific social regime. However, by the same token, it needs to be said that often the statistical skills of scholars who have undertaken doctoral studies in the USA tend to be high, and often higher than those based elsewhere. But even this observation suffers from the specific. For example, Stephen Witt has published not only in the tourism literature, but in the highest ranking economic journals, while non-USA based scholars such as Stephen Wanhill and Egon Smeral among others rank highly in statistical and econometric technical skills.

So, while [Table 2](#) possesses an interest, it too suffers from many caveats. Indeed, assessment of an individual

scholar may well tend upon another's individual research interests. The table also confirms McKercher's point made in an accompanying piece that the 'top scholars' account for but a small proportion of the total amount of work being published in the journals. Therefore 'reputation' must be recognising other aspects such as books, work for governmental and other bodies, doctoral supervision and other contributions to the academic field such as administrative capacities as heads of department or research leadership roles.

[Table 3](#) represents a listing from the Elsevier site of 'most hit' articles for *Annals of Tourism Research* for 2001. It seems to me that a clear lesson from this is that authors should think carefully about the titles of their articles to ensure that they include 'trigger words' that will attract those (especially students with arguably lesser search skills) to 'hit' their work, thereby potentially obtaining higher rates of citation.

1. Conclusions

What conclusions might one draw from this exercise? There are positive aspects to be gained. First, the field of tourism research is alive, dynamic and egalitarian in the sense that if it has its ‘names’, the total of their research output is but a small proportion of the total. Given the quantity of the research, then it can be argued that ‘reputation’ is based upon abilities to conceptualise and create research design as rigorous as that in any other discipline; and Table 2 also shows that several comparatively young scholars are also listed. On the negative side, though I have a feeling that university- and government-based research assessment exercises do lead to what I term ‘games playing’ by academics, particularly perhaps younger academics who are seeking career advancement. The multiplicity of journals has meant that it has been relatively easy for researchers to gain publications of technically skilled quantitative based pieces, often but not wholly of a market research nature; but which actually offer little in terms of new conceptualisation or are able to articulate any significant addition to the literature. I am concerned about econometric-based pieces where researchers gain more than one publication simply on the premise of either subjecting the data sets to more than one technique and publishing the results separately, or by with-holding some variables to be introduced in a later paper as one potential contributor to *Tourism Management* confessed—arguing that this was the way ‘economists did research’. It therefore behoves us, in appointment committees, to actually look at the publications being submitted by candidates and not simply to be impressed

by the length of any list of publications. I also believe that we do no service to candidates or to the field of enquiry if we encourage doctoral candidates to get as many publications as is possible from their thesis; that is ‘to milk’ their thesis for quantity as distinct from aiming for perhaps two good-quality articles. In saying these things, I am aware these are not problems unique to tourism, but are common in many of the social sciences. As referees, we must act with integrity. And as for the lists, well, they have a role, but the bases of the lists must be made clear, and for the most part they are indicative only and often tend to reflect more the concerns of the list compiler than an inherent quality of that which is being measured! In a sense, lists themselves must be subjected to tests of credibility, much as any dataset must if it is to serve a use.

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