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*Journal of Travel Research* 2004; 42; 328

DOI: 10.1177/0047287504263026

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# A Ranking of International Tourism and Hospitality Journals

HARALD PECHLANER, ANITA ZEHRER, KURT MATZLER, AND DAGMAR ABFALTER

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*Attempts to assess the quality of academic publications have been increasing lately. Due to the number of existing journals, it is hard to make a representative selection and to find criteria for determining quality. Hence, questions arise, including what sort of journals are more important in terms of reputation, readership frequency, and relevance to scientific research and practice. Recent studies on journal rankings have been carried out on the basis of both objective data (citation counts) and the quality perceptions of experts. This study attempts a rating of tourism and hospitality journals among the scientific community according to the journals' readership frequency, scientific and practical relevance, overall reputation, and the importance of being published in the journals to the academic career of the respondents.*

**Keywords:** *journal rating; tourism and hospitality*

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Academic journals are essential for creating and disseminating knowledge. Publishing in the top-tier journals is vital to academic career advancement, particularly at research universities. The issue of journal quality has moved from the object of spirited, friendly discussions to a critical factor in promotion, tenure, and merit pay increase decisions (Soteriou, Hadjinicolas, and Patsia 1999). Therefore, studies on journal quality ranking can be of help to numerous stakeholders such as researchers, faculty and librarians, practitioners, and journal editors.

In the past few years, examining and evaluating research output has become more and more important (Schlinghof and Backes-Gellner 2002; Pechlaner, Zehrer, and Abfalter 2002), leading to a wide range of methods being developed, discussed, criticized, revised, rejected, and used for the description and comparison of national, institutional, and individual research output (Backes-Gellner and Sadowski 1988). The number of articles in prestigious journals is a widely used indicator for the productivity of academic researchers.

## APPROACHES FOR EVALUATING SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS

It is generally agreed that journals differ in their quality. However, scholars disagree on the method and the degree of assessing publication quality (Backes-Gellner and Sadowski 1988). Most attempts to assess the journal quality have relied on two main methods: citation counts and expert opinion surveys. The first comprises studies based on objective data,

using citation indices. The second includes studies based on perceptual data, typically obtained through a survey of selected experts.

### Citation Counts

Counts of citations are considered important indicators of quality, of authors influence, and of the stature of journals in which the articles appeared (Garfield 1972). Citation analysis is based on the premise that authors cite papers they consider to be important to the development of their research. As a result, heavily cited articles are likely to have exerted a greater influence on the subject than less frequently cited publications (Culnan 1986; Sharplin and Mabry 1985).

The Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and its supplement, the Journal Citation Reports, published by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), is one of the most important journal rankings based on citation studies. Eugene Garfield (1995), the founder of ISI, believes that citations are an important indicator of how frequently current researchers are using the journal literature. By tabulating and aggregating citations, the Journal Citation Reports offers a unique perspective for journal evaluation and comparison (p. 5). The SSCI is a multidisciplinary index to journals, published proceedings, and monographic series in the social, behavioral, and related sciences.

In the context of citation analysis, a journal is important to the extent that it is cited by other journals. Journals that are cited frequently by other journals are a source of knowledge for others and play an important role in the diffusion of knowledge:

- “The primary strength of this approach is that it reserves judgment until other researchers have had the opportunity to evaluate the contribution of a given article. As such, journal evaluations may be more closely tied to actual value of articles published in the journal” (Parnell 1997, p. 71).

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*Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 42, May 2004, 328-332  
DOI: 10.1177/0047287504263026  
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- “Citations provide a relatively objective measure of one of the primary direct influences on a scholar’s research” (Tahai and Meyer 1998, p. 279).

Although citation analysis is accepted across many business disciplines, it does have certain limitations. Garfield (1996) himself cautions against using the journal’s impact factor as a surrogate for the evaluation of a particular article and, by extension, for evaluation of a given author’s performance. This is because a large number of unrelated factors can greatly influence a journal’s impact factor. For example, citation counts are heavily affected by the popularity of specific research topics and areas within an academic community.

## Surveys

Expert opinion surveys are the other common method for verifying journal rankings. Expert surveys attempt to assign value to journals based on the collective perceptions of those highly familiar with the publications. It is generally assumed that the expert opinion approach produces reliable and valid results, as people highly familiar with the publications rate their quality. However, perception-based rankings also have their shortcomings. Participants often tend to rate particular journals higher when they have published an article in those journals. Heischmidt and Gordon (1993, p. 155) found that “respondents who published in the top three marketing journals were far more reserved about their evaluation of many journals than were respondents who had not published in those top journals.” In addition, the selection of the journal list included in the survey is crucial. If participants are not familiar with the journals on the list, the ranking is likely to be biased. This can lead to a serious problem with several journals getting a lower score as they are relevant to only a limited number of the participants. Hawkins, Ritter, and Walter (1973) found that economists even claimed knowledge of journals that did not exist. Stated preference studies depend heavily on perceptions concerning publication acceptance rates. Finally, expert surveys tend to limit the study population to only those that are actively publishing in the journals, frequently omitting practitioner views. “A further complication of using the survey method in tourism and hospitality arises in the identification of experts; researchers in the field are not always affiliated with tourism and hospitality schools or departments” (Sheldon 1990, p. 43).

While there are advantages and disadvantages of both kinds of studies, both methods are interrelated, and it should not be surprising that they correlate positively (Franke, Edlund, and Oster 1990). Mason, Steagall, and Fabritius (1997) found a high correlation measuring quality of academic journals using a perception-based ranking and citation-based rankings. “The two measures of journal quality may use different time horizons, in that perceptions of journal quality tend to have a long memory, while the citation analyses can show recent changes in journal quality. . . . On the other hand, citation analysis examines which journals provide significant inputs to current developments, thus focusing more on recent research than to stated preferential studies (Tahai and Meyer 1998, p. 282). Hence, it seems that both methods, although having several shortcomings (Matzler et al. 2001), produce similar results.

This article reports the results of a Web-based international survey of English tourism and hospitality journals

adhering to a double-blind review. The study is conducted on the basis of selected criteria and includes respondents from the European, American, and Asian-Pacific areas. The purpose of the assessment is to inform scholars of the relative importance of these journals, their quality, their reputation, their relevance to science and practice, and their impacts on academic careers.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used the survey research method in the form of a standardized questionnaire sent to 1,054 members of the scientific community in tourism and hospitality. Specifically, the purposes of the study were to

1. rate tourism and hospitality journals according to their readership frequency, their scientific and academic relevance, their reputation, and their impact on the authors’ academic careers;
2. find international differences in the responses concerning the different variables;
3. measure the impact of a journal’s practical and scientific relevance on the overall journal reputation;
4. measure the impact of journal reputation on readership frequency and the importance of being published within a journal for the academic career.

The journals included in this survey were selected in two steps. First, journals listed in the Accredited Journal Coverage List of the Emerald Reviews 400 (formerly Anbar International Management Database; ANBAR 2002) in the field of hospitality and tourism were identified. Second, in a preparatory study, 30 participants from different fields of research and geographical regions were randomly chosen and asked to add or delete journals to identify the most important ones. The final questionnaire listed 22 tourism- and hospitality-related journals.

The final questionnaire was then sent to the 1,054 members of the Travel and Tourism Research Association and the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism. Seven-point Likert-type scales were used to measure expert opinion on the journal attributes.

## RESULTS

After two reminders, a total of 142 forms were returned. Thus, the response rate achieved was 15.3%. Most of the respondents declared several areas of work, including tourism (85%), marketing (52%), management (37%), and hospitality (25%). Other working fields included cultural heritage, promotion, geography, teaching, environmental science, market research, communication, service quality, information technology, and many more (see Table 1).

Concerning their country of residence, researchers from a total of 40 countries responded to the questionnaire, with the biggest portion coming from the United States (40%), the United Kingdom (11%), and Canada (8%). Of the respondents, 31.6% were full professors; another 33% were associate or assistant professors. Other respondents worked as researchers (14%), consultants (11%), or lecturers (10%).

**TABLE 1**  
**DEMOGRAPHICS**

	<i>n</i>	%
Areas of work		
Tourism	102	85.0
Marketing	62	51.7
Management	44	36.7
Hospitality	30	25.0
Leisure and recreation	23	19.2
Economics	23	19.2
Anthropology	13	10.8
Organization	13	10.8
Transportation	6	5.0
Other	100	83.3
Country of residence		
United States	48	40
United Kingdom	13	10.8
Canada	9	7.5
Australia	5	4.2
Croatia	5	4.2
Hong Kong	4	3.3
Sweden	3	2.5
Other	33	27.5
Profession		
Full professor	31	31.6
Associate professor	16	16.3
Assistant professor	16	16.3
Lecturer	10	10.2
Researcher	14	14.3
Consultant	11	11.2

The majority of respondents (69%) were between 40 and 60 years old; 7% of respondents were younger than 30 years, and 5% were older than 60 years. Two-thirds of the respondents were male (69%).

### International Differences

It is to be expected that journal ratings differ in different countries. These differences can be explained by differences in the scope of the journal, the preferred methodology (nomothetic or idiographic), the regional focus of some of the journals, and so forth.

Table 2 gives an overview on the differences between the mean values and the rankings of all variables among American scholars and scholars from other countries. As expected, some significant differences were found.

In the United States, the *Journal of Travel Research* is rated highest on all measures. The *Annals of Tourism Research* is rated second, followed by *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*. Outside the United States, the *Annals of Tourism Research* is consistently rated highest, followed by *Tourism Management*, and the *Journal of Travel Research*. Hence, it has to be concluded that journal rankings are highly sensitive to the geographical background of the scholars (Theoharakis and Hirst 2002). While the data do show geographical differences, it is also clear that the primary tourism research journals are the *Annals of Tourism Research*, the *Journal of Travel Research*, and *Tourism Management*.

### Antecedents of Journal Reputation

Multiple regression analysis was used to assess the combined predictive influence of both scientific relevance and practical relevance on journal reputation, separately for the U.S. and non-U.S. scholars. In both cases, the multiple regression testing yielded an *F* value that is significant at a level  $p = .000$ . The results indicated that both variables, scientific and practical relevance, have a significant positive impact on the overall reputation of a journal and can explain 53% of the variance in journal reputation outside the United States and 72% in the United States. In both cases, the practical relevance of the journal has a higher impact on its overall reputation (see Table 3).

### Consequences of Journal Reputation

To measure the consequences of the overall reputation of a journal on readership frequency and on the importance of being published in a certain journal for the scholar's career, regression analyses were conducted. The impact of being published in the journals on the authors' academic career and readership frequency was found to be clearly influenced by the overall journal reputation (see Tables 4 and 5). It is interesting to note that the impact of overall journal reputation on the importance of being published in the respective journal to the author's career and readership frequency is higher for scholars in the United States than for scholars outside the United States.

## DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

In this article, based on an e-mail survey, a ranking of 22 tourism and hospitality journals was presented. They were measured on practical relevance, scientific relevance, overall reputation, readership frequency, and the importance for a scholar's career. The top 3 journals could clearly be identified: *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Travel Research*, and *Tourism Management*. However, journal rankings are sensitive to the country of origin of the scholar. Whereas in the United States, the *Journal of Travel Research* is ranked first, the *Annals of Tourism Research* is considered number one outside the United States. Therefore, attempts to measure quality and quantity of research output should consider international differences in the perceived importance of the journals.

It is interesting to note that practical relevance has a higher impact on overall journal reputation than does scientific relevance. Hence, it can be concluded that tourism and hospitality research is a discipline highly devoted to solving practical problems.

Both within and outside the United States, overall journal reputation has a strong impact on readership frequency and the importance of being published in the respective journals. Publications in the top journals, however, seem to be more important for the career of a scholar in the United States than outside the United States.

Surveys, as have been discussed in this article, have advantages and disadvantages. This study has two major shortcomings. First, only 22 journals could be included, and second, the response rate—although acceptable—is relatively low. The limitation to 22 journals was necessary as the



TABLE 2  
GEOGRAPHICAL DIFFERENCES

Rank	Journal	Frequency	Scientific Relevance	Practical Relevance	Reputation	Career
United States						
1	<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	4.43	5.02	4.16	5.22	4.28
2	<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	3.56*	4.56*	3.30*	4.87*	4.23*
3	<i>Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly</i>	2.44	3.62	4.02	4.05	3.21
4	<i>Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing</i>	2.80	3.59	3.14	3.09	3.38
5	<i>Journal of Leisure Research</i>	2.63	3.22	2.56	3.73	3.44
6	<i>Tourism Management</i>	2.48*	3.28*	3.07*	3.11*	3.33*
7	<i>Journal of Hospitality &amp; Tourism Research</i>	2.58	3.32	2.53	3.07	3.21
8	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	2.04*	3.07	2.72*	2.89	2.84
9	<i>Tourism Analysis</i>	2.21	3.11	2.55	2.64	3.00
10	<i>Journal of Tourism Studies</i>	1.66*	5.02	1.91*	2.05*	2.23*
11	<i>Journal of Sustainable Tourism</i>	1.77*	2.98*	2.49*	2.41*	2.49*
12	<i>Journal of Hospitality &amp; Leisure Marketing</i>	1.88	2.45	2.14*	2.25	2.58
13	<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	1.40	2.53	2.14	2.05	2.49
14	<i>Journal of Hospitality &amp; Tourism Education</i>	1.85	2.41	2.28	1.80	2.23
15	<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing</i>	1.57*	2.39	2.14*	2.00	2.21
16	<i>Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research</i>	1.58	2.53	1.91*	2.07	1.88
17	<i>Tourism Recreation Research</i>	1.63	2.23*	2.10	1.45*	2.27
18	<i>Information Technology &amp; Tourism</i>	1.67	2.13	2.02	1.80	1.88
19	<i>Journal of Restaurant and Foodservice Marketing</i>	1.35	2.32	2.07	1.89	1.86
20	<i>Tourism Economic</i>	1.48	2.30*	1.74*	1.82*	1.88*
21	<i>Tourism Review (formerly Tourist Review)</i>	1.19*	2.12*	1.86*	1.45*	1.63*
22	<i>Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal</i>	1.02	1.98	1.60	1.48	1.67
Other countries						
1	<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	4.75*	6.06*	4.40*	6.21*	5.80*
2	<i>Tourism Management</i>	4.16*	5.39*	5.10*	5.43*	5.27*
3	<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	4.12	5.15	4.64	5.24	4.98
4	<i>Journal of Sustainable Tourism</i>	2.87*	4.48*	4.02*	3.85*	3.94*
5	<i>Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing</i>	2.94	4.08	4.05	3.86	3.72
6	<i>Journal of Tourism Studies</i>	2.62*	5.15	3.16*	3.34*	3.32*
7	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	2.87*	3.84	3.95*	3.68	3.19
8	<i>Journal of Hospitality &amp; Tourism Research</i>	2.93	4.05	3.46	3.13	3.69
9	<i>Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly</i>	2.35	3.33	4.57	4.16	2.78
10	<i>Tourism Analysis</i>	2.49	3.87	3.35	3.55	3.79
11	<i>Tourism Review (formerly Tourist Review)</i>	2.87*	3.86*	3.36*	3.27*	3.42*
12	<i>Tourism Economic</i>	2.25	3.85*	3.40*	3.54*	3.21*
13	<i>Tourism Recreation Research</i>	2.18	3.41*	3.06	3.27*	3.15
14	<i>Journal of Leisure Research</i>	2.35	3.51	2.95	3.42	2.97
15	<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing</i>	2.23*	2.97	3.52*	2.86	2.78
16	<i>Journal of Hospitality &amp; Leisure Marketing</i>	2.12	3.15	3.17*	2.67	2.78
17	<i>Journal of Hospitality &amp; Tourism Education</i>	1.96	3.00	3.46	2.61	2.67
18	<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	1.81	2.95	3.05	2.47	2.29
19	<i>Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research</i>	1.96	2.83	2.76*	2.31	2.33
20	<i>Information Technology &amp; Tourism</i>	1.38	2.70	3.11	2.26	1.95
21	<i>Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal</i>	1.47	2.55	2.21	2.05	2.47
22	<i>Journal of Restaurant and Foodservice Marketing</i>	1.07	1.95	2.64	2.00	1.56

\* $p < .05$ .

survey outline would have become far too long, which would have further lowered the response rate. Given the high level of access and frequent use of e-mail as a communication

medium, it was felt that this approach had the advantage of being relatively time efficient for respondents and also offered a level of novelty that may encourage responses.

**TABLE 3**  
**ANTECEDENTS OF JOURNAL REPUTATION**

	Standardized Regression Coefficient	Significance
United States <sup>a</sup>		
Scientific relevance	.316	.000
Practical relevance	.578	.000
Non-United States <sup>b</sup>		
Scientific relevance	.377	.000
Practical relevance	.430	.000

a.  $R^2 = .724$ .

b.  $R^2 = .532$ .

**TABLE 4**  
**CONSEQUENCES OF JOURNAL  
REPUTATION, UNITED STATES**

Dependent Variable	$R^2$	Regression Coefficient	Significance
Readership frequency	.598	.773	.000
Impact on academic career	.693	.832	.000

**TABLE 5**  
**CONSEQUENCES OF JOURNAL REPUTATION,  
NON-UNITED STATES**

Dependent Variable	$R^2$	Regression Coefficient	Significance
Readership frequency	.415	.644	.000
Impact on academic career	.516	.718	.000

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