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Perspectives

How can scholars from Latin America contribute to hospitality and tourism research globally?

Como acadêmicos da América Latina podem contribuir para a pesquisa em hospitalidade e turismo em âmbito global?

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Abstract

This study discusses how scholars from developing countries such as Latin America can contribute to the hospitality and tourism (H&T) research globally. The study provides specific recommendations to enhance their publishing journey and contribution to the H&T field. In doing so, it elucidates the concepts of research and the publication journey, explains different types of research contributions, explores challenges confronted by scholars, and offers recommendations for improvement.

Resumo

Este estudo discute como acadêmicos de países em desenvolvimento, como os países da América Latina, podem contribuir para a pesquisa em hospitalidade e turismo (H&T) em âmbito global. O estudo fornece recomendações específicas para melhorar as jornadas de publicação e a contribuição para o campo de H&T. Ao fazer isso, ele elucida os conceitos de pesquisa e de jornada de publicação, explica diferentes tipos de contribuição de pesquisa, explora desafios enfrentados por acadêmicos e oferece recomendações.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Scholars undertake theoretical research, empirical studies and case studies to develop new theories, test existing theories, explore new trends, challenges, and opportunities in the hospitality and tourism field. They aim to disseminate their research findings in high-ranked journals and contribute to the field. They also aim to build a partnership with researchers nationally and internationally to develop and complete research studies and further understanding of contemporary trends and challenges such as climate change, environmental challenges, social inclusion, AI, big data and virtual reality.

Scholars from Latin America can contribute to various areas of H&T research including ecotourism, community-based tourism, events, festivals, culinary tourism, innovative and digital tourism marketing, hospitality management, tourism economics, policy and regulation, just to name a few. Scholars from Brazil can make substantial

contributions in various ways to the H&T field, leveraging their exceptional prospects, regional expertise, and academic rigor. For example, there are research studies on cultural heritages with diverse ecosystems in Brazil including Amazon rainforest, Pantanal wetlands, and historical cities such as Salvador and Ouro Preto.

Scholars from Latin America such as Brazilian scholars may prefer publishing their research findings in their domestic national refereed journals. However, it would be ideal to see them also publishing their research findings in high ranked international journals. For example, Lahiri (2011) conducted an overview of Brazil-focused publications that appeared in leading business journals between 1990 and 2008. Lahiri (2011) identified 33 publications in leading journals such as Academy of Management and Organization Science. A search limited to Brazil as a country showed that between 1990 - July 2024, only 69 articles were published in the top 10 hospitality and tourism journals in the Scopus database. Scopus country ranking database indicates that Brazil's all time ranking from 1996-2023 in tourism subject area (including tourism, leisure, and hospitality management domains) is 23 in all regions (SLR, 2024). It would be good to see more publications by researchers from Brazil in top-tier H&T journals.

This current study, therefore, aims to assist authors, reviewers, editors and graduate students from Latin America in navigating their assessment, offering recommendations to enhance their publication journey and contribution to the H&T field. While scholars from Latin America may prioritize contributions to their local communities and regions, often choosing not to pursue publication in top-tier journals, this study is directed toward those with broader, international aspirations in the field. While both options are valid, understanding these differing motivations can clarify this article's intent.

2 WHAT IS RESEARCH AND THE PUBLICATION JOURNEY?

Academic research can be described as a systematic process of assessment of a chosen topic by reviewing, discovering, interpreting, revising, presenting and summarizing facts and offering conclusions and recommendations. This process normally involves collection, analysis and interpretation of data answering intended research questions by providing possible solutions and theoretical and practical implications. There are three main types of research including basic/fundamental research (i.e., to create new theories/concepts and expand our theoretical understanding e.g., investigating factors that motivate consumers to travel), applied research (i.e., to create practical solutions to problems e.g., creating an AI-based chatbot to help customers with their inquiries), and teaching-focused research (i.e., to enhance the effectiveness of teaching strategies and curriculum design e.g., assessing the effectiveness of student level of satisfaction with their given educational services) (Cohen, 1988; Patton, 2015; Shulman, 1986).

Writing academic papers requires a structured process. Each author or research team might have a different approach on their publication journey (Ahlstrom, 2017). There are sections for writing each article that may require more attention during this journey. Obviously, authors need to find or develop an initial idea before starting to write a paper. This initial research idea requires a good understanding of the literature and ongoing research areas in the H&T field e.g., digital transformation or environmental management. It is also important to select the right journal to submit a paper. The initial research idea should fit the targeted journal's aim and vision. Authors should also develop their paper based on the author's guidelines provided in each journal.

An introduction section in an academic article offers a roadmap providing an overview of the topic, its importance and the gap in the field. It is expected to capture the editor's, reviewers' and readers' attention and present the overall objectives of the study. The introduction section should reflect on the insights from the literature review, findings and discussion sections. Grant and Pollock (2011, p. 873) state that "... first impressions matter. Although it is typically the shortest section of an article, the introduction (i.e., the opening few pages, before the literature review) determines whether or not readers will continue reading".

Following the introduction section, writing a high-quality critical literature review is a key for publication in any journal, particularly those that highly ranked in the H&T field such as Tourism Management, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, Annals of Tourism Research and International Journal of Hospitality Management. The literature review section should offer a comprehensive and critical review of the existing research and scholarly works in relation to the research topic. It should demonstrate the researchers' synthesis of the current state of knowledge, refer and critique of the key theories, concepts, methodologies and research findings by previous studies in this specific area. The literature review section can be organized thematically or chronologically. It is expected authors to cite some relevant seminal and recent papers from the targeted journals as well as from other top-tier journals in the field to demonstrate their engagement with the journal's scholarly conversation. Review studies (e.g., Law et al., 2024a; Sharma et al., 2023a; Shin et al., 2023) can be useful for researchers to view the

evolution of research and research trends in terms of topics, methods, authors, institutions and countries in a particular research area. The literature review section can offer a theoretical model/framework and hypotheses or propositions. This indicates that the authors aim to build on and contribute to the journal's established line of argument (Kraus et al., 2022) and set up the theoretical perspective adopted by the study.

Defining and developing the methodology in a research paper plays a crucial role in its publication journey. The methodology should be linked to the main purpose and research questions, with authors providing a thorough explanation of their chosen research design, data analysis methods, data collection procedures, software usage, and other relevant details. Regardless of whether the paper employs qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method approaches, the methodology section must comprehensively articulate these aspects (Taheri & Okumus, 2024). The results section should clearly and systematically present the study results/findings. Tables and figures can be used to present the study results. The discussion section synthesizes the results with existing knowledge, assesses the impact of the results, and outlines the main implications for the research community.

Before submitting a paper to any high ranked journal, authors can ask several specific questions. They include (1) what the research question and aims are, (2) what research gap this current paper aims to fill, (3) how the method section can be designed, strengthened and better presented, (4) if an additional data collection or analysis can be added, (5) if study results are correct, presented well, and sustain the conclusions to respond the research questions; (6) if discussion section can be further strengthened; (7) how the theoretical and practical implications can be better explained and (8) how the study's limitations and future research areas can be better presented. There are several common reasons for the rejection including (1) limited or no contribution; (2) dated citations; (3) no critical engagement with the literature (annotated bibliography rather than a critical literature review); (4) too context specific conceptual development; (5) poor expression with many grammatical errors, (6) possible salami publication, and (7) plagiarism or auto plagiarism. It is highly suggested that before submitting a paper to a highly ranked H&T journal, the authors should cross-check their paper by following the above issues. It is also highly suggested that the authors should not submit the first version of their paper as each paper requires many rounds of edits and revisions.

3 WHAT IS RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION?

Research contribution is widely spoken and recognized, yet accurately defining it remains vague to many (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Nicholson et al., 2018; Rynes, 2002). Each paper can solely and communally contribute to the field, including practical, theoretical, empirical, contextual, methodological, conceptual, and philosophical contributions. For example, theorical contribution "adds, embellishes or creates something beyond what is already known' (Ladik & Stewart, 2008, p. 157). It also endeavors to "advancing knowledge in a way that is deemed to have utility or usefulness for some purpose" (Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 11). Practical implication is about developing practical solutions and evidence-based recommendations to real-world problems and policymakers. "Practical implications are often included only as 'afterthoughts' in papers as a token closing paragraph" (Nicholson et al., 2018, p. 207). Nowadays, it is often suggested that articles should have societal implications (Pereira-Moliner & Molina-Azorín, 2024) showing how a particular study's findings can help with solving specific problems and/or improving the quality of life of a society or societies.

The concept of 'contribution' is inherently ambiguous, often complicating doctoral evaluations and publication decisions. Whether you are a research student, academic mentor, author, or reviewer, finding clear criteria for what constitutes a meaningful contribution is challenging. The offered guidance is often scattered and incomplete, and it seems that no thorough, cross-disciplinary review or analysis has been conducted to clarify this concept (Nicholson et al., 2018). Nicholson et al. (2018) categorize five main types of contribution:

1. Incremental: A contribution founded on incremental originality relies on the conventional method of identifying gaps in existing literature.
2. Revelatory: Contribution emerges when theory uncovers what was previously unseen, unknown, or unimagined (Corley & Gioia, 2011).
3. Replicatory: A replication of a previously published empirical study focused on determining whether consistent results can be gained when the study is repeated (Hubbard & Armstrong, 1994).

- Exact or statistical replication refers to the process of utilizing the same methods to establish the same correlations between the same variables, employing identical procedures but with a different sample drawn from the same population (Nicholson et al., 2018).
- Close or scientific replication requires that the sample frames are generally representative of the questions being assessed (Nicholson et al., 2018).

4. Consolidatory: To describe literature review papers that synthesize existing scholarly world in a field, contributing to the advancement of knowledge. These are often known as state-of-the-art papers (Nicholson et al., 2018).
5. Differentiated context: Involves intentionally crafting a study to test the applicability of results from previous research by replicating the study is a new setting - such as different industry, country, culture, or environment - distinct from the original research context (Nicholson et al., 2018).

Researchers should consider the broader impacts of their innovations, aiming to extract insights that endure and can be applied across diverse contents (Piccoli & Wagner, 2003). Moreover, the independence of academic research, free from the direct competitive pressures of the business world, typically ensures that its results remain objective and unbiased (Piccoli & Wagner, 2003). However, this is often not a simple process, and involves several challenges and motivations from the academic world, particularly pressure on junior academies such as career advancement (publish or perish), reputation building (high competition), knowledge dissemination (quality vs. quantity), funding acquisition, professional networking, imposter syndrome, and institutional expectations (Becker & Lukka, 2023; Miller et al., 2011).

4 POTENTIAL CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHOLARS FROM LATIN AMERICA AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Submissions from developing countries, such as Latin America, and Brazil in particular, may tend to concentrate on replicating research that has already been conducted in other parts of the world. While replication research is important for verifying and confirming results across different contexts and nations, they are from time to time viewed as less innovative and less valuable than original research. This perception can lead to their rejection by top-tier journals looking for novel contributions to the field. It is important to focus on current and important research topics. For example, several current and important research topics in H&T include artificial intelligence (Gursoy & Cai, 2024; Law et al., 2024), experience management (Agapito & Sigala, 2024; Bilgihan et al., 2024; Veloso & Gomez-Suarez, 2023), customer value co-creation, (Carvalho & Alves, 2023), leadership (Guchait et al., 2023), sustainability (Khan et al., 2024), customer satisfaction, service quality and failure (Akarsu et al., 2023), talent management (Joos et al., 2023; Liu-Lastres, Karatepe & Okumus, 2024), diversity and inclusion (Madera et al., 2023), crisis management and resilience building (Aydogan et al., 2024; Ghazi et al., 2024), entrepreneurship, innovation and competitive advantage (Elgarhy & Abou-Shouk, 2023), virtual reality (VR) (Malodia et al., 2024), digital sharing economy (Kromidha et al., 2023), marketer–traveler interaction and traveler–traveler interaction (Cheung et al., 2023), e-sport (Thompson et al., 2022), destination social responsibility and destination well-being (Agapito et al., 2023; Dwyer, 2023), healthy aging (Badham et al., 2024), and climate change (Sharma et al., 2023b).

Researchers in developing countries might not have knowledge and access to advanced research tools, technologies, or methodologies such as big data analytics, machine learning and AI, VR and augmented reality (AR), advanced survey techniques (e.g., mobile surveys with real-time data collection and analysis), netnography, mixed-methods, sentiment analysis, and network analysis (e.g., Kromidha et al., 2023; Li et al., 2023; Taheri & Okumus, 2024). This can impact on studies that do not meet the rigorous methodological standards and principles projected by leading journals in the field. Advanced statistical techniques, experimental designs, big data analysis, and access to high-quality data can be critical for acceptance in high-ranked publications.

Research projects from Latin America such as Brazil may sometimes focus more on empirical results without adequate theoretical support and consequently inadequately address their contributions and implications. High-ranked journals frequently seek research that advances theoretical contribution and understanding or offers appropriate and useful practical contributions that may influence policy or practice on a broader scale in the H&T field. Employing outdated references or using many citations from domestic journals not published in English and not included in recognized international databases, such as Scopus or Web of Science, can give the impression that the research is not instructed in the most recent and contemporary understanding of the H&T field. This also may undermine the study's relevance and significance and its perceived contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Poor writing

and language issues are common barriers for some of the papers written by researchers from non-English speaking countries. Papers with grammatical errors, typos, and poor structure can be difficult to follow and understand, decreasing the likelihood of acceptance in the established high-ranked journals.

In summary, several recommendations can be provided. First, scholars from Latin America can work with scholars from other countries as well as from other disciplines to bring diverse views and access to advanced methodologies, and hopefully improve the overall quality of the research project. Second, they may invest more time in improving the quality of writing and language skills. They may seek advice from professional editing services or perhaps collaborating with native English speakers. Third, they should explain how their results advance existing theories, potentially contribute with new insights and awareness and offer solutions to real-world problems. Fourth, it is important to ensure that references are current and relevant, but also determine how their work builds on contemporary research. Fifth, it is vital to be specific about the unique contextual contribution of Latin America. Particularly, describing how the research project contributes specific insights relevant to the local context, and how these insights can inform broader theories or practices, can make the research more compelling in the H&T field. Finally, prior to submission - getting feedback from peers or friendly reviews - particularly those with experience in publishing in high-ranked journals may be invaluable.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Publishing research and actively contributing to the research field are necessary for continually advancing knowledge, sustainability, technology, and societal welfare in the H&T field. Researchers make varied contributions, spanning theoretical, practical, contextual, and methodological domains. Each contribution is crucial in tackling complex challenges and enhancing our comprehension of the world. This paper provides several specific insights. Firstly, the paper can be helpful for authors and doctoral students in terms of understanding publication journey and their research contribution to the H&T field globally. Secondly, reviewers, journal editors, graduate committee members and faculty advisors/supervisors can use this paper for their thoughtful assessment of academic work in the H&T field, particularly in Latin America such as Brazil. Finally, the paper offers some suggestions and tips on publication journey and offers some recommendations for scholars from developing countries and Latin America that are also helpful to scholars worldwide.

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