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DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM RESEARCH

Abstract. *The relative short history of tourism research is characterised by an ongoing debate on whether tourism is in fact an independent academic field with its own disciplinary matrix and standardisation of knowledge. On the other hand, the evidence shows that the categorisation of journals in the tourism field (together with hospitality, leisure and sport) in the JCR and Scopus internationally recognised indexed databases is a de facto form of recognition of the scientific status of "tourism". Publishing activities of Slovenian authors are analysed in order to support the need for Slovenian bibliographical databases to follow this trend and introduce a new categorisation to the Cobiss and Sicris databases.*

Key words: *tourism, tourism studies, tourism research, indexing of publications, Cobiss, Scopus, JCR*

Introduction

The idea of tourism as a scientific discipline has been disputed by many authors for different reasons. Despite its importance in the economic sector, the steady growth and countless numbers of people working in the tourism industry, it is still unclear whether tourism should be treated as an independent scientific discipline or just an object of scientific interest. A great number of scientific journals is dedicated solely to tourism research, but the lack of grounded theory is still evident.

In scientific research, tourism has been approached by different disciplines using different theoretical backgrounds and methods. This could lead to the conclusion that tourism, lacking its own theory and method, is merely a research object. Further conclusions would devalue the very wide range of excellent scientific work conducted in the field and affect the credibility of scientific careers built on tourism research. As a consequence, not recognising tourism as a scientific discipline causes problems achieving scientific criteria in the processes of nominations to academic positions, granting research projects and fund raising.

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With this article, we address the theoretical and practical state of the art in the field of tourism studies. In the first part of this contribution we analyse the relevant literature on the subject – whether tourism is a scientific discipline or not. In the second part, we analyse how tourism studies are represented in journals covered by the two most prominent indexed databases, namely Thomson Reuter's JCR and Elsevier's SCOPUS. Third, we analyse how tourism and related studies have emerged in Slovenia.

The last part of the article provides an overview of papers presented at the TAD conference held in 2015.

Research related to tourism as a scientific discipline

The relative short history of tourism research is characterised by an ongoing debate on whether or not tourism is an independent academic field with its own disciplinary matrix and standardisation of knowledge (Darbellay & Stock, 2012; Echtner & Jamal, 1997; Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2004; Leiper, 2000; Tribe, 1997, 2006; Xiao & Smith, 2006). Tourism as a research object is approached from different academic disciplines, including economics, sociology, psychology, geography, political science, law, philosophy, anthropology and others (Tribe, 1997: 650; Goeldner & Richie, 2006: 25). While some authors believe that tourism has gained its scientific status over the past two decades (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007), others argue that tourism is only a research field or scientific object (Tribe, 1997, 2006; Darbellay & Stock, 2012).

A review of the literature on the debate shows different perspectives on the evolution of the body of knowledge in the tourism field. On one hand, we can follow the debate on the theory of science. Here efforts can be traced back to Hunziker and Krapf who pioneered *fremdenverkehrswissenschaft* in 1942, and authors such as Jovicic, Kaspar, Goeldner, Leiper and Jafari (Echtner & Jamal, 1997: 88). Jovicic argues that tourism is a complex phenomenon and cannot be adequately addressed from within any existing discipline. According to him, a distinct discipline, tourismology, is necessary in order to develop an integrated theory of tourism (Echtner & Jamal, 1997: 869). Similarly, Leiper believes that tourism is “a body of knowledge that has been organised to some extent, ideally in a formally systemic manner, in a way that helps teaching, learning and research” (Leiper, 2000: 806). He proposes the term “tourology” to be used to describe the discipline.

Following Hirst's model of forms of knowledge, Tribe (1997) argues that tourism cannot be a distinct discipline for several reasons. First, the concepts used in tourism research are based elsewhere and are only stretched or contextualised to encompass the tourist dimension (Tribe, 1997: 643). Second, tourism concepts do not form a distinctive network; they tend to be separate and atomised and do not provide for a way to analyse the world.

Finally, tourism does not provide expressions or statements which are particular to tourism studies, and does not provide any truth criteria (Tribe, 1997: 643–644, 2006). In addition, Darbellay & Stock (Darbellay & Stock, 2012) conclude that all research on tourism as a research subject has failed to prove the paradigmatic and disciplinary autonomy of the tourism field. Tackling the theory of tourism within the framework of an interdisciplinary approach, they state that interdisciplinary work requires mediation space for the interaction of knowledge, linkage of different disciplinary bodies of knowledge and hybridisation of concepts and practices (Darbellay & Stock, 2012: 453–454). Since none of these features can be realised in the field of tourism research, Darabellay and Stock suggest that tourism as a body of knowledge be organised as an episteme where the “touristic dimension of society”, not tourism as an autonomous system, lies at the core of interdisciplinary approaches (Darabellay & Stock, 2012: 455).

On the other hand, there is a bulk of literature reporting on research done in the field of tourism, thus defining the scope and depth of tourism research. Researchers like Zhao (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007), Ballantyne (Ballantyne, Packer, & Axelsen, 2009), Xiao (Xiao & Smith, 2006) and Tribe (Tribe & Xiao, 2011) report on the evolution of the tourism body of knowledge. Research on the production of one of the highest-ranking scientific journals on tourism, the *Annals of Tourism Research*, in the period 1973–2003 shows that the well-established disciplines in the social sciences have made the biggest contributions to tourism research. According to the titles of published articles, 16 subject areas have contributed to tourism research; of these, the major ones are tourism (22%), sociology/anthropology (16%), marketing/business/management (13%), research/methodology (10%), planning/development (7%), geography/environment (7%), economy/economics (6%) and leisure/recreation/parks (6%) (Xiao & Smith, 2005: 274). More specifically, research on the content of the 12 highest-ranking journals in the tourism field identified 21 of the most frequently published topic areas; tourist/visitor studies, tourism planning, destination, marketing, cultural tourism, economic issues, tourism impacts, tourism trends, tourism research and issues, hospitality, ecotourism, sustainable development, special events, transport, management, human resources management, environment interpretation, tourism policy, tourism education and training, business tourism and sport and leisure (Ballantyne et al., 2009: 150). More recent research on contributions appearing in the 2009 and 2010 volumes of *Annals of Tourism Research* categorised the following subsections: reflections on tourism research and knowledge production; development, impact and community; authenticity and tourist experience; typologies of tourists; destinations and attractions; motivations, behaviour and decision-making; culture, heritage and cultural change; representation, identity and image; and other subjects (Tribe & Xiao, 2011). According to Tribe

& Xiao (2011: 22), new subjects emerging in the field of tourism research encompass discourse, humour, power, slavery, stamps, politics of representation, sociology of knowledge, and virtual tourism, to name just a few.

Looking at tourism research from the authors' standpoint exposes some other considerations. The development of tourism research and its positioning as an independent discipline is also a subject of individual academic interest and trends. For example, in his defensive article on the autonomy of tourism as a discipline Leiper argues that the responsibility for developing the tourism discipline rests heavily on editors' policies. Since some journals advocate distinct disciplines, researchers who employ diverse disciplines are discouraged from submitting their manuscripts. Another argument is revealed by Franklin and Crang (Franklin & Crang, 2001) who suggest that an academic boom of the subject would not only boost its quantitative expansion but also the tendency to use a template, repeating and reinforcing a specific approach. This is also one of the reasons that Franklin and Crang (2001) indicated the need for a new academic journal in the field of tourism studies, which was in fact established in 2001. In the editorial, the editors noted that the journal "should be fertile ground for testing and developing social theory" (Franklin and Crang, 2001: 18).

In the following section, we analyse the visibility of tourism-related research in internationally recognised and indexed databases.

Tourism studies in international indexed databases

One of the most objectively and internationally recognised systems of indexing excellent scientific journals is the Journal Citation Index (JCR) provided by Thomson Reuters.

JCR presents quantitative data that supports a systematic, objective review of the world's leading journals. Using a combination of impact and influence metrics, and millions of cited and citing journal data points that comprise the complete journal citation network of Web of Science, JCR provides the context to understand a journal's true place in the world of scholarly literature. (Reuters, 2016)

In past decades another indexing system has been developed, Elsevier's SCOPUS and its metrics "Source normalised impact per paper" (SNIP). It has been recognised by many authorities, including the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS), as an equally appropriate database for the social sciences as the JCR is in general (ARRS, 2014). SNIP values are published twice a year by Leiden University's Centre for Science & Technology Studies (CWTS) in cooperation with Elsevier. It includes records with citation impact data

(impact factor data) for scientific publications covered by the Scopus database from 1999 onwards (Cobiss1). Thus, regarding the previous debate on the issue, we can argue that the categorisation of journals in the field of tourism (together with hospitality, leisure and sport) in internationally recognised indexed databases is a *de facto* form of recognition of the scientific status of the young and still developing discipline of 'tourism'. As already mentioned, both the JCR and Scopus indexes are also officially recognised by the Slovenian Research Agency and used as a measure for nomination (habilitation) processes and the distribution of funds (ARRS, 2014).

In the following section, we give a detailed analysis of tourism studies in Slovenia.

Tourism studies in Slovenia

We will present the state of the art of tourism studies in Slovenia through an analysis of data available in the Cobiss database. It is used as a relevant source of bibliographical information in Slovenia. Cobiss is an online bibliographical database/catalogue that is a result of shared cataloguing of Slovenian libraries that participate in the Cobiss.si system (Cobiss1). It also contains records of all works for the needs of Slovenian authors' bibliographies. The Cobiss database was developed and is still serviced by the Institute of Information Sciences (IZUM).

According to JCR (based on data from IZUM), 43 journals are indexed in JCR database for "hospitality, leisure, tourism and sport" (category "MW") for 2014 and 72 are indexed in SCOPUS for "tourism, leisure and hospitality management" (category 1409) for the same year (IZUM1, 2016). Among 19 journals published in Slovenia and indexed in JCR in 2014 (last accessible information), no journal would be categorised under Social Science Edition (SSE) for "hospitality, leisure, tourism and sport" (IZUM1). Moreover, in the SCOPUS database there are 45 journals published in Slovenia, yet not a single journal would be categorised under "tourism, leisure and hospitality management". However, there are 12 scientific journals published in Slovenia categorised for the social sciences in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) database and 38 journals in the SCOPUS database which are also categorised for the social sciences and thus also represent publishing opportunities for tourism-related topics (IZUM2, 2016).

There are another 130 journals and newspapers (category "serials") categorised for "tourism" that are still being published in Slovenia (IZUM2). These include statistical booklets, advertising newspapers, yearbooks and supplements to daily newspapers, and also scientific journals. Since 1937, when the first original scientific article with "tourism" as a key word was published in Slovenia, 310 original scientific articles have been published in

Slovenia, in more than 40 different scientific journals (all journals indexed in JCR, SNIP or either of them) (IZUM2). The first original scientific article related to tourism was written by the prominent Slovenian geographer Anton Melik and includes the key words “social geography”, “tourist geography”, “spa tourism” and others (IZUM2). Only nine scientific articles were published before 1993. But scientific journals are only a small part of the scholarly and professional literature in the field of tourism.

Analysis of the Cobiss database

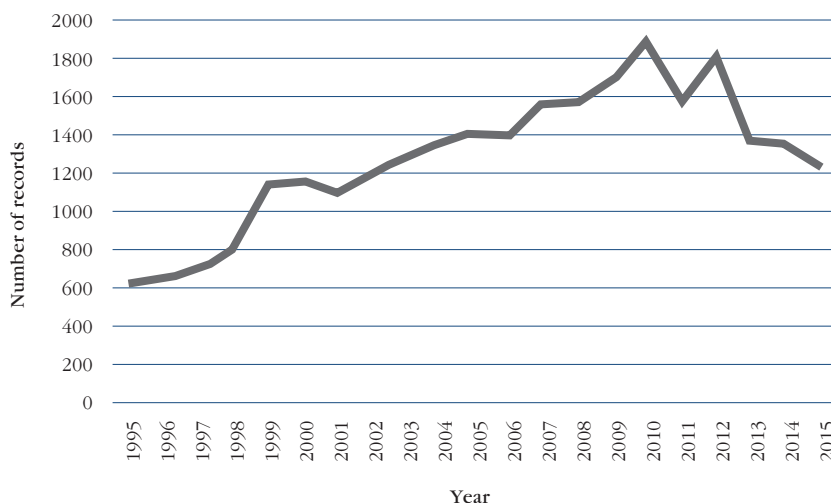
The data in the Cobiss database were analysed by searching the frequency of records under certain characteristics of literature units and with certain added key words. The results are presented in a historical perspective and in comparison with other relevant data from the cited databases.

Altogether, the Cobiss database includes 27,512 bibliographical records with “tourism” as a key word and published in Slovenia. This figure represents only 0.6% of all records in the Cobiss database. If we use the word “tourism” as a subject term, the number of records is even smaller and drops to 22,453, representing 0.47% of all records. The oldest record dates back to 1924 and is a tourist guide for one-day trip around Ljubljana entitled “Po pogorju polhograjskem in okoli Krima: enodnevni izlet”, written by Robert Kermauner. Tourism literature was rare – in the next 40 years there are only 12 records in the Cobiss database with the key word “tourism” and published in Slovenia. After 1976, perhaps related to the economic and societal changes in former socialist Yugoslavia, the literature on tourism was on the rise. Already in 1977, the Cobiss database holds 75 records in one year (key word “tourism” and published in Slovenia). Almost 99% of all records in the database were published in the last 20 years (IZUM2). Since 2010, the number of records with the key word “tourism” and published in Slovenia has been rapidly decreasing (see Graph 1), with the exception of 2012. In 2015, the number of records published in Slovenia and with the key word “tourism” is 1,236, representing just 65% of the figure recorded at the highest point in 2010 (IZUM2). A similar drop is also obvious in the statistics of original scientific articles. This might be partly associated with the fact that not all records are updated and put in the database. The vast majority of original scientific articles published in Slovenia and having the key word “tourism” were published in the last 10 years (IZUM2).

The largest increase in publishing literature with “tourism” as the key word is recorded in 1999 (an almost 43% increase) and the biggest drop in 2013 (a 23% decrease). It is interesting to point out that in 1999, when we note the biggest rise in tourism literature, there was not even a single original scientific article published with the presented criteria.

The Cobiss database unfortunately does not allow for a separate search on publishing by Slovenian authors abroad. This definitely represents a significant part of the literature on tourism since the criteria for academic excellence, habilitation and the distribution of national funds encourage researchers and authors to publish abroad. IZUM unfortunately does not hold any specific records of the extent to which Slovenian authors are successful internationally in the categories “hospitality, leisure, tourism and sport” for JCR-indexed journals and “tourism, leisure and hospitality management” for SCOPUS-indexed journals, as it does for some other disciplines.

Graph 1: NUMBER OF RECORDS PUBLISHED IN SLOVENIA WITH THE KEY WORD “TOURISM” (date of search February 10th, 2016).



Source: Cobiss database (IZUM2).

The first diploma on the subject of tourism was written in 1964 and to date (search date 10 February 2016) there are 6,061 records of diplomas with the added key word “tourism”. This figure represents 2.3% of all diplomas published in Slovenia since 1958 (the oldest diploma record in the Cobiss database). Twelve years later, the first master degree with the key word “tourism” was published and, since then, only 382 master degrees with that key word have been recorded. Interestingly, the first doctoral dissertation with the key word “tourism” was already recorded in 1965 and until the present day (search date 10 February 2016) 41 of such dissertations have been published (IZUM2).

If we look at the structure of the literature (with the key word “tourism” and published in Slovenia), the majority of records represent articles and

parts of monographs (14,697), and another large share are monographs (10,883). The rest are newspapers and journals, maps, tourist guides (more than 460), videos etc. (IZUM2). When associating “tourism” with other key words, which would help us define the content of published literature more narrowly, some interesting information emerges. With the help of a focus group we determined a range of additional key words most commonly associated with the term “tourism”. The results of the search in the Cobiss database are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: COMBINATION OF KEY WORDS AND NUMBER OF RECORDS
(PUBLISHED IN SLOVENIA) (date of search February 10th, 2016)

Combination of key words	Number of records
Tourism	27512
Spa tourism	670
Green tourism	100
Sustainable tourism	556
Seaside tourism	19
Tourism, marketing	1085
Tourism, hotel	1053
Tourism, management	1036
Tourism, geography	1128
Tourism, hospitality	4024
Tourism, sport	961
Tourism, heritage	1441
Tourism, leisure	655
Tourism, transport	662
Health tourism	57
Tourism, culinary	420

Table 1 presents only a selection of the key words that were put in the search engine. Most records were found when using the combination of key words “tourism” and “hospitality” (Slo. “gostinstvo”). Other combinations with top results are “tourism” and “heritage”, “tourism” and “geography”, “tourism” and “management”, “tourism” and “hotel”, and “tourism” and “marketing”. We can assume that the ratio of combinations with the key word gives us some information about what is the most popular research field for authors publishing in Slovenia. It is interesting to point out that the categories of tourism which represent a great share of Slovenian GDP in tourism, such as spa tourism, are poorly represented and that strategically important categories, such as hiking and biking, also do not account for many records (164 and 82 records, respectively). Also of note, Cobiss holds just a single record on a doctoral dissertation with the key word “spa

tourism” and that dissertation is only on the history of tourism at the Austrian seaside in the time of Austrian and Austro-Hungarian Empire (IZUM2), despite the fact that 32% of all nights spent in Slovenia happened in spa resorts (Spirit, 2014). Another strategically important category, health tourism, is very poorly represented as well, as evident from Table 1 (IZUM2).

Although records in the Cobiss database allow for some quantitative analysis, the data used have many limitations and do not represent accurate information on the publishing of tourism literature in Slovenia. As mentioned, no data are collected on the production of literature on tourism in foreign journals and monographs, which is the priority of Slovenian scientists and researchers. Nevertheless, analysis of the available databases yielded some results. We found that of the 10 most successful Slovenian researchers in social science in the field of economics (“02 ekonomija”) and the subfield economic studies (“01 ekonomske vede”), three researchers conduct their main research in the field of tourism studies, another researcher has published an article in one of the highest-ranking tourism science journals and two more have published at least one article in the field of tourism studies (IZUM3, 2016). And, by combining the Cobiss and Sicris databases, we were able to acquire even more information on successful publications of Slovenian scientists. When searching among the 598 records in Cobiss with the key word “tourism”, we combined authors with more than five records in the search and their scientific performance as assessed by the Sicris database. Out of 20 selected cases, 15 researchers scored more than 340 points in the Sicris/ARRS calculation (IZUM1, 2016; IZUM3, 2016). Next to top researchers in the field of tourism, such as Mihalič T., Knežević Cvelbar L., Bojnec Š., Gomezelj Omerzu D., Konečnik Ruzzier M., Cigale D. and Knežević M., there are several researchers who also do their research in the field of tourism and successfully publish their work with other key words, not necessarily “tourism”. All such publishing was not a subject of this analysis.

Moreover, the records in the database are subject to subjective classification when the data are being entered and similar units can be categorised in different ways. However, with this analysis we were able to conclude that Slovenian production of tourism literature is on the rise and slowly keeping up with international scientific production in the tourism field. This increase is evident in the last 15 years and is expected to continue since there are two public universities with a faculty for tourism and a number of private faculties, which altogether enrol students in 22 different study programmes in the field of tourism (Ministry of Education, 2016). Since the tourism sector is an important part of the Slovenian economy, representing a more than 12% share of GDP (Slovenian Press Agency; WTTC, 2014), the prioritisation of research in the field may be expected.

TAD Conference

A conference in the field of tourism research was held in November 2015, entitled "Tourism and Development: Sustainability Recap". The core idea of the conference was to rethink and recapitulate sustainability in the management of heritage and human resources in tourism (TAD, 2015). The articles discussed below were selected as the best submissions to the conference and cover the most important and challenging contemporary issues in tourism related to sustainability.

In her paper, Aydin and Alvarez argue that, although guidelines for sustainable tourism exist, there is a lack of research that discusses the sustainability of destinations as perceived by tourists. Her study aimed to explore sustainability from a demand-based perspective and to determine which attributes of a destination are most mentioned by tourists in their reviews. Based on sustainability attributes defined from the literature and in-depth interviews with travel experts, the study analyses comments posted in the TripAdvisor website for Cusco, a mainstream cultural destination in Peru. The findings show that tourists mainly evaluate the sustainability of the destination in connection with those aspects that are more likely to affect their own experiences.

Čič et al. report on developing requisitely holistic development methods to improve employee performance, as applied to the tourism and hospitality industry. Skilled employees are valuable organisational resources and important drivers of business quality in this industry. Employing human potential and boosting its value with a requisitely holistic approach to employee development by using requisitely holistic development methods (coaching, mentoring, sponsorship, and intergenerational cooperation etc.) helps organisations create sustainable development commitments and programmes enabling and motivating employees to perform to their highest potential. The authors suggest a socially responsible innovative model supporting employees' good performance, entailing the use of requisitely holistic development methods for their psychological well-being and which can be applied to the tourism and hospitality industry.

Gorenak, following his previous research on careers (Gorenak, 2015), is in this article questioning the development of sustainable careers in the tourism sector. The objective was to determine the attitude to sustainable development of the careers of tourist guides as seen from the perspective of tourist agencies as employers of tour guides. A survey was conducted among representatives of tourist agencies. The research showed that the economic pillar of sustainable development is perceived to be the most important one, followed by the environmental pillar and the social pillar as the least important. His argument rests on the premise that, in order to

achieve the truly sustainable development of such careers, the focus must be on the social pillar of development.

Ružić et al. propose a new method for measuring HRM performance based on fuzzy logic principles, where the Mamdani Fuzzy Inference System (MFIS) as a measurement tool is used with the intention to provide a contextual approach (hotel industry) and in which a score for HRM indicators is calculated for each activity. A survey of HR managers was conducted for this article and an expert group was included to create rules for evaluating HRM performances. Research shows that four models in which domain, functions and membership rules are set for each HRM activity could be used as a template for measuring HRM performance in middle-sized hotel companies.

These articles form part of the scientific production presented at the conference and are now published in Slovenia. They are proof of the high quality in the field of tourism research that has been evident in Slovenian research for quite some time, dating back to the early 20th century.

Yet we could argue that the production and publication of tourism literature in Slovenia started much earlier, with Janez Vajkard Valvasor's *Slava vojvodine Kranjske* (Eng. *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*) in 1689 and, since then, it has been trying to keep up with the international scientific community. It is unfair to expect Slovenian scientists to be able to cover all scientific approaches to tourism and thus offer a representative look at the state of the art of international tourism research. The absence of a strategic endorsement of the research field is evident in national economic and scientific policy and in the lack of available national research funds for this field. On the other hand, only a short glimpse at the publishing activities of Slovenian scientists reveals that the majority of research done in the field is approached from economics and the strategically important topics are only poorly represented.

Conclusion

This short analysis has brought only some outlines of the production of published texts in the field of tourism.

First, we analysed tourism as a scientific discipline and the fact that scholars still cannot agree on whether tourism is an independent scientific discipline or just a research field. Evidence from both sides of the debate was presented.

Second, the theoretical findings were confronted with the de facto situation. We checked the visibility of tourism-related journals and articles in JCR and SCOPUS. There is a gap between the theoretical dispute on the issue and the practical outcomes, which supports evidence that tourism is an independent scientific discipline.

Third, a detailed analysis of tourism-related studies in the Slovenian research database Cobiss was presented and comments were made on the situation in tourism research in Slovenia.

Finally, an overview was given of the best papers presented at the Tourism and Development conference held in Terme Čatež in 2015.

The results of our study show there is a need for the organised data collection and systematic measurement of tourism-related studies in the Cobiss database. The Cobiss database, together with Sicris, is still not collecting relevant information on tourism research among Slovenian scientists in comparison to the Scopus and JCR databases, which both categorise tourism and hospitality as an independent scientific discipline. In order to obtain more representative information on Slovenian scientific publishing in the field of tourism at home and abroad, data should be collected and put into use for nomination procedures, fund applications and fund raising.

Our contribution is significant in the field because it clearly indicates that tourism studies are *de facto* recognised in the international database indexing services despite the ongoing (academic) debate on whether tourism is in fact a scientific discipline. The importance of tourism is, after all, visible through the many conferences dedicated to specific and general topics of tourism, not to mention its enormous impact on the local, national and global economy.

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