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## **The Impact of Tourism Knowledge: Google Scholar, citations and the opening up of academic space**

Tourism studies have recently been subject to increasing debate regarding journal and research rankings. This debate is reflective of broader concerns over the use of bibliometric tools for purposes for which they were not originally designed. Google Scholar is examined as a means of accessing the citation impact of tourism publications in comparison with Thomson Scientific [formerly Thomson Institute of Scientific Information (ISI)] databases. For pre-1990 publications the citation counts tended to be proportional. For papers published from 1990 on not only were the citation counts proportional the actual number of citations also tended to be very similar. The highest ranking tourism publications by citations are also provided.

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Issues surrounding the relative ‘impacts’ of tourism journals and authors has recently received considerable attention in tourism studies (e.g. Hall 2005; McKercher 2005; Page 2005; Ryan 2005) as well as in many other disciplines (e.g. Kodrzycki and Yu 2005; Meho & Spurgin 2005). Citation indices are one of the most widely recognized means of measuring the impact of scholarly communications (Borgman and Furner 2002) however tourism studies has a problem in evaluating citations in that there is no citation index which has been specifically designed to cover tourism and cognate areas such as hospitality, leisure and recreation. Arguably the most widely used index is the Thomson Scientific [formerly known as Thomson Institute of Scientific Information (ISI)] set of databases which covers over 8,600 journals on an annual basis. Of these the Science Citation Index (SCI), established in 1964, covers almost 6000 journals; the Social Science Index established in 1974, covers 1700 journals; and the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI), established in 1978, covers approximately 1100 journals. Although Tourism and related fields such as hospitality had over 80 refereed international journals as of 2003 (Hall et al. 2004) only two journals, *Annals of Tourism Research* and *Tourism Management*, both published by Elsevier, are indexed in Thomson Scientific (TS). Nevertheless, despite such limitations in the data TS ISI is ‘increasingly’ used (Paasi 2005) for purposes for which it was not originally intended including research rankings at the individual, department, university and even national level; assessment of research quality (as under the UK RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) or the New Zealand PBRF (Performance Based Research Fund) evaluations); human resource management and career advancement (Seglen 1997; Vincent and Ross 2000; Yeung 2002; Frank 2003; Tribe 2003; Walter et al. 2003; Sterk and Rabe, 2005). Even with respect to citation count data alone it is widely recognized in the bibliometric literature that there is a need to go beyond Thomson Scientific’s citation databases (e.g. see Meho & Spurgin 2005).

Nevertheless, as Yeung (2002: 2093) commented, the TS ISI databases are mined by ‘university administrators, research councils, and even government ministries for an unintended purpose – to evaluate the success (and failure) of particular researchers, departments, faculties, and institutions’ and are therefore much more than a bibliometric tool.

Given this situation it is therefore appropriate to not only raise broad questions regarding the appropriateness of utilizing such data, but also the potential to utilize citation alternatives. One of the most significant citation options that has become available to researchers is Google Scholar™(GS). GS is a beta project of Google, the well known search engine company. A beta project refers to a project that is still in development. However, since its release in 2004 GS has been rapidly embraced by students and the academic community because of both its ease of use and free access (Payne 2004; Quint 2004; Sullivan 2004). Arguably, one of the great attractions of GS is that it links to a wide range of scholarly literature including ‘peer-reviewed papers, theses, books, abstracts and articles, from academic publishers, professional societies, preprint repositories, universities and other scholarly organizations’ (What is Google Scholar, <http://scholar.google.com/scholar/about.html>).

According to the GS website (<http://scholar.google.com/scholar/help.html>), GS ‘covers peer-reviewed papers, theses, books, abstracts, and other scholarly literature from all broad areas of research. You'll find works from a wide variety of academic publishers and professional societies, as well as scholarly articles available across the web. Google Scholar may also include multiple versions of an article, possibly preliminary, which you may be able to access’. The rankings of material identified in a GS search are similar to those of a standard Google web

search with search results being ordered by 'relevance'. Typically in relation to the full text of the publication, the nature of the publication, and the number of citations the publication has received.

In the case of tourism and cognate study areas GS may provide an extremely important research tool given that it potentially has far wider coverage than Thomson Scientific as well as the advantage for many students of tourism in being free. However, questions must obviously be raised about the accuracy and comparability of such citation search mechanisms. As part of a broader evaluation of GS as a research tool the author sought to compare the results of GS searches with that of ISI. For pre-1990 publications the citation counts tended to be proportional. For papers published from 1990 on not only were the citation counts proportional the actual number of citations also tended to be very similar. In order to summarise some of the results of this research project Table 1 indicates the results of a search of journal tourism articles that have received 50 or more citations identified on GS compared with ISI citations (as at 17 November 2005). As Table 1 indicates the work of Richard Butler and Erik Cohen is dominant in terms of journal citations. Interestingly, further search indicated that tourism related books are far more highly cited on GS than journal articles or book chapters. Although 14 journal articles had been cited 50 or more times, some 44 books had been similarly cited (Table 2). Only one book chapter had been cited over 50 times on GS, this was Graburn and Nelson's chapter on 'Tourism: the sacred journey' in Valene Smith's *Host's and Guests* (1989) with 54 citations (as at 17 November 2005). Indeed, the impact of the book is remarkable with the chapters by Greenwood 'Culture by the pound: an anthropological perspective on tourism as cultural commoditization' and Nash 'Tourism as a form of imperialism' also being highly cited). Table 2 indicates the

citations for books on GS. Although not included here similar citation relationships were found between ISI and GS with books as they were with journal articles. Although for those interested in such things it can be noted that rankings were slightly different with MacCannell's book *The Tourist* being ranked first in ISI (2<sup>nd</sup> in GS), followed by works by Urry, Mathieson and Wall, and De Kadt respectively.

The proportionality of results between TS ISI and GS in tourism are similar to that observed in other recent studies. For example, Pauly and Stergiou (2005) performed citation counts across a wide range of disciplines using ISI and GS (mathematics, chemistry, physics, computing sciences, molecular biology, ecology, fisheries, oceanography, geosciences, economics and psychology) and argued that they led to essentially the same results in spite of the different methods for identifying citing sources. Given such results, it is therefore not surprising that GS is increasingly becoming a stop for many students of tourism, particularly as GS searches sources that are only available on the web whereas Thomson Scientific includes journals that are not yet available electronically. Perhaps more importantly, for many students, particularly in developing and transitional economies as well as those in less well endowed educational institutions in the developed countries, GS is free (Carbonneau 2006).

Unfortunately, however, both GS and TS are only as good as the capacity of authors to cite correctly in published material. GS does have value in that it will amalgamate different versions of the same publication in results but incorrect referencing can obviously still lead to problems, while self-citation arises in both GS and TS. As an aside this author would note that the citations of many key papers is often awful. For example, approximately 20% of citations to Butler's

(1980) paper on tourism area cycles of evolution are incorrectly cited, sometimes repeatedly so, perhaps leading to the impression that not only are many authors lazy in their referencing but may have not even read the original article at all!

GS is already gaining academic respectability in terms of it being included in the link management tools of the electronic versions of many prestigious journals, such as the *British Medical Journal*. Many universities as well as faculty are also beginning to use it as a means of identifying the impact of research and of particular publications not only for pure scholarly purposes but also as a means of justifying research performance for promotion purposes and for external evaluation of research quality (e.g. Fogler Library 2004). Significantly, the issue of the impact factor of journals under Thomson Scientific is increasingly being called into question. For example, the editors of *PLoS Medicine* have recently called for a better way to assess scientific literature given how limited the impact factor is. As the editors note ‘for a number that is so widely used and abused, it is surprising how few people understand how a journal’s impact factor is calculated, and, more importantly, just how limited it is a means of assessing the true impact of an individual publication in that journal’ (The PLoS Medicine Editors 2006: e291). For example, a journal’s 2005 impact factor was derived from citations in 2005 (in journals indexed by Thomson Scientific [formerly Thomson ISI]) to all articles published by Journal X in 2003-2004 divided by the number of articles deemed to be ‘citable’ by Thomson Scientific that were published in Journal X in 2003-2004. As The PLoS Medicine Editors (2006) highlighted the critical factor here is what Thomson Scientific deem as ‘citable’ with the fewer citable articles the lower the denominator and hence the higher the impact factor.

Because a journal's impact factor is derived from citations to all articles in a journal, this number cannot tell us anything about the quality of any specific article in that journal, nor of the quality of the work of any specific author. These points become particularly evident by understanding that a journal's impact factor can be substantially affected by the publication of review articles (which usually acquire more citations than research articles) or the publication of just a few very highly cited research papers. ... Moreover, a journal's impact factor says nothing at all about how well read and discussed the journal is outside the core scientific community or whether it influences ... policy (The PLoS Medicine Editors 2006: e291).

Unfortunately, Thomson Scientific does not make public its process for choosing 'citable' article types. According to The PLoS Medicine Editors (2006: e291).

During discussions with Thomson Scientific over which article types in *PLoS Medicine* the company deems as "citable," it became clear that the process of determining a journal's impact factor is unscientific and arbitrary. After one in-person meeting, a telephone conversation, and a flurry of e-mail exchanges, we came to realize that Thomson Scientific has no explicit process for deciding which articles other than original research articles it deems as citable. We conclude that science is currently rated by a process that is itself unscientific, subjective, and secretive.

Because impact factors are often used for purposes for which they were not originally intended there is also increased questioning of not only the legitimacy of impact factors and skewing the direction of research but also increasingly the potential for some journals to try and influence their rankings (Begley 2006). Indeed, some of the scientists and publishers interviewed by Begley raised the prospect that some journals try and be 'trendy' in order to increase their impact factor rather than publishing cutting-edge or perhaps more obscure research simply because it is less likely to be cited. Furthermore, Bollen et al. (2006) note that by merely counting the amount of citations and disregarding the prestige of the citing journals, the Thomson Scientific impact factor is a metric of popularity, not of prestige.

Importantly, the development of other online tools for citation counting such as GS and CrossRef may bring about change with respect to Thomson Scientific's generation of impact data. In

addition, new measures of scientific are also being adopted, such as the usage factor, which is being promoted by the United Kingdom Serials Group (<http://www.uksg.org>); the Y factor, a combination of both the impact factor and the weighted PageRank, an algorithm developed by Google, that provides a set of journal rankings that correspond to a general understanding of journal status (Bollen et al. 2006); and the *h*-index (Hirsch 2005) which is a measure that has received considerable attention (Cronin and Meho 2006). The *h*-index is defined as: ‘A scientist has index *h* if *h* of his/her  $N_p$  papers have at least *h* citations each, and the other ( $N_p - h$ ) papers have fewer than *h* citations each’, where  $N_p$  is the number of papers published over *n* years (Hirsch 2005: 16569). For Hirsch, the *h*-index is designed to capture the broad impact of a researcher’s work and suggested that a “successful scientist” will have an *h*-index of 20 after 20 years, an ‘outstanding scientist’ will have an *h*-index of 40 after 20 years, and a ‘truly unique’ individual—an *h*-index of 60 after 20 years. Nevertheless, he stressed that the values of *h* will be field dependent. A point evidenced in Cronin and Meho’s (2006) application of the *h*-index to Information Science in which the median *h*-index for their sample was 11, the highest 19 and the lowest 5. As Cronin and Meho (2006: 1275) commented, ‘as with all such reductionist measures of presumptive research quality, caution is required in both application and interpretation of the *h*-index’.

GS is therefore just one, albeit significant, element in a significant reconsideration of bibliometric assessment beyond the simplistic application of Thomson Scientific. However, in terms of how bibliometric data is used it is important to note, as Pauly and Stergiou (2005: 34) observe, that ‘free access to these data provided by GS offers an avenue for more transparency in tenure reviews, funding and other science policy issues, as it allows citation counts, and analyses

based thereon, to be performed and duplicated by anyone.’ Given the ease of access to material by GS it is also likely that GS will further drive demands for greater open access to scientific research whether in terms of access to knowledge or even with respect to increasing the citation of papers (Perneger 2004), although this may also lead to new pressures in terms of the relative quality of such publications. However, arguably this is little different from the issues faced in examining the relative quality of research published in existing journals and books in terms of providing the reader with information regarding the reviewing process.

Google Scholar therefore appears to have great potential in ‘opening up’ tourism research as well as in examining the development of tourism knowledge. As Yale University librarians Bauer and Bakkalbasi (2005) note, ‘Perhaps no one resource may now be considered sufficient in researching the citation count of an article or an author’ (see also Giustini 2005a, 2005b; Giustini and Barsky 2005; Henderson 2005 for similar observations and comparisons with respect to medical research). Quite possibly it will also lead to the development of new ‘league tables’ of citation impact for individual publications, journals, and scholars. Indeed, the tables provided in this paper are part of a larger project that examines tourism scholarship through use of GS data and which will likely produce such tables on a regular basis for comparative purposes. However, it should be clearly stressed that GS, like all tools, has advantages and disadvantages. As Hamaker and Spry (2005: 70) noted in their review of GS ‘first, remember anything we write about Google Scholar will likely be obsolete before it is published’. Indeed, the citation counts are continually being updated therefore making it essential that the date of access is considered in any comparative account of citation impacts or rankings.

In terms of ease of access and cost GS is extremely valuable. In terms of coverage pre-1990s GS is not as comprehensive as ISI although coverage is likely to improve over time. In addition, more detailed information about what is included as scholarly publications may also be useful for understanding the overall scope and quality of the database. In its present form ISI provides more immediate information on impact factors and other quantitative bibliometric indicators but these can, in principle, also be calculated with GS. Nevertheless, it is also vital that researchers actually understand what the impact of publications really means. As Pless (2005) answered in response to the question of do scientific publications change anything?: ‘The "simple" answer is it all depends on who you want to influence, what you want to change, and by how much. It may also depend on how optimistic or lucky you are. But the best answer is that it is surprisingly difficult to be certain one way or the other’ (Pless 2005: 193). Most significantly, the capacity to maximize the value of search engines for scholarly research will depend, as always, on the researcher asking the right questions.

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Table 1: Tourism related journal articles identified on Google Scholar that have received 50 or more citations compared with ISI citations (as at 17 November 2005)

GS Rank	Author(s)	Title	Journal	Publication Date	No. of Citations	No. ISI Citations
1	Butler, R.W.	The concept of a tourist area cycle of evolution: implications for management of resources	The Canadian Geographer	1980	223	198
2	Cohen, E.	Toward a sociology of international tourism	Social Research	1972	98	149
3	Cohen, E.	Authenticity and commoditization in tourism	Annals of Tourism Research	1988	93	133
4	Cohen, E.	A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences	Sociology	1979	84	154
5	MacCannell, D.	Staged authenticity	American Journal of Sociology	1973	77	143
6	Britton, S.	Tourism, capital and place	Environment and Planning D: Society and Space	1991	68	75
7	Witt, S. & Witt, C.	Forecasting tourism demand	International Journal of Forecasting	1995	57	34
8	Butler, R.W.	Tourism, environment, and sustainable development	Environmental Conservation	1991	56	28
9	Crick, M.	Representations of international tourism in the social sciences	Annual Review of Anthropology	1989	55	73
10	Britton, S.G.	The political economy of tourism in the Third World	Annals of Tourism Research	1982	54	64
11	Sinclair, M.T.	Tourism and economic development: A survey	Journal of Development Studies	1998	54	7
12	Buhalis, D.	Strategic use of information technologies in the tourism industry	Tourism Management	1998	51	15
13	Dann, G.	Anomie, ego-enhancement and tourism	Annals of Tourism Research	1977	51	44
14	Jamal, T. & Getz, D.	Collaboration theory and community tourism planning	Annals of Tourism Research	1995	50	24

Table 2: Tourism books and monographs on Google Scholar that have received 50 or more citations (as at 17 November, 2005)

Rank	Author(s)	Title	Publication date*	No. of GS citations
1	Urry, J.	The Tourist Gaze (2 eds: 1 <sup>st</sup> ed, 266; 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed, 253 citations)	1990	519
2	MacCannell, D.	The Tourist: a new theory of the leisure class	1999	342
3	Mathieson, A. & Wall, G.	Tourism: Economic, physical, and social impacts	1987	185
4	Gunn, C.A. & Var, T.	Tourism Planning (4 eds)	1988	174
5	Murphy, P.	Tourism: a community approach	1985	151
6	Inskeep, E.	Tourism Planning	1991	134
7	Poon, A.	Tourism, Technology, and Competitive Strategies	1993	134
8	Mowforth, M. & Munt, I.	Tourism and Sustainability	1998	125
9	Kotler, P. et al.	Marketing Places	1993	124
10	Pearce, D.G.	Tourist Development	1989	122
11	Ceballos-Lascurain, H.	Tourism, Ecotourism, and Protected areas	1996	120
12	MacCannell, D.	Empty Meeting Grounds	1992	96
13	De Kadt, E.	Tourism: Passport to development?	1979	91
14	Hall, C.M.	Tourism and Politics	1994	90
15	Kotler, P. et al.	Marketing for hospitality and tourism	2003	87
16	Mill, R.C.	The Tourism System	2002	86
16	Werthner, H. & Klein, S.	Information Technology and Tourism	1999	86
18	Smith, V.	Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism	1989	85

19	Shaw, G. & Williams, A.M.	Critical Issues in Tourism	2002	83
20	Krippendorf, J.	The Holiday makers	1987	81
21	Cooper, C.P. et al.	Tourism: Principles and Practice	2005	80
22	Sheldon, P.J.	Tourism Information Technology	1997	76
23	McIntosh, R.W. et al.	Tourism: Principles, Practices, Philosophies	1995	74
24	Middleton, V. & Clarke, J.	Marketing in Travel and Tourism	1988	73
25	Getz, D.	Festivals, Special Events, and Tourism	1991	71
26	Judd, D. & Fainstein, S.	The Tourist City	1999	66
27	Pearce, P.L.	The Social Psychology of Tourist Behaviour	1982	65
28	Getz, D.	Event Management & Event Tourism	1997	64
29	Pearce, D.G.	Tourism Today: A geographical analysis	1987	63
30	Ashworth, G.J. & Tunbridge, J.E.	The Tourist-Historic City	1994	61
30	Hall, C.M.	Hallmark Tourist Events	1992	61
32	Lindberg, K.	Policies for Maximizing Nature Tourism's Ecological and Economic Benefits	1991	60
33	Hall, C.M. & Jenkins, J.	Tourism and Public Policy	1995	58
33	Page, S.	Urban Tourism	1995	58
35	Lea, J.P.	Tourism and Development in the Third World	1988	56
36	Sinclair, M.T. & Stabler, M.	Economics of Tourism	1997	56
37	Bull, A.	The Economics of Travel and Tourism	1991	55
38	Hall, C.M. & Page, S.	The Geography of Tourism and Recreation	1999	54

38	Law, C.M.	Urban Tourism: Attracting visitors to large cities	1993	54
40	Holloway, J.C.	The Business of Tourism	1983	53
41	Hunter, C. & Green, H.	Tourism and the Environment	1995	52
42	Harrison, D.	Tourism and the Less Developed Countries	1992	50
42	Morgan, N. & Pritchard, A.	Tourism Promotion and Power	1998	50
42	Moutinho, L.	Consumer behaviour in tourism	1985	50

\* Note: where there are multiple editions of books Google Scholar tends to provide the date of either the most recent edition or the most cited where there is different publication details provided then GS will list separately. Multiple editions of the same book were amalgamated for the purpose of this table.