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Tourism research in Chinese versus tourism research in English: Yet another perspective on forests and (or) trees

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For oral presentation consideration please!

Thematic categories: Forest and trees in tourism research; Trends in basic tourism research; Findings in measuring the results of tourism research.

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INTRODUCTION

This study relates and lends to discussions on tourism research in different cultural/linguistic communities, diffusion and disseminations of knowledge across languages, as well as the influences of research paradigm on tourism social sciences in different cultures. By looking at Chinese and English literature as instances, the study begins with a review discussion on the (theoretical) states-of-the-art of tourism research in both languages. Informed by published literature from 2000-2008 in the three most influential tourism research journals in mainland China (i.e., *Tourism Tribune*, *Tourism Science*, and *Tourism Forum*), the empirical part of the observation features a citation analysis of Chinese researchers referencing to “foreign” sources of knowledge in their production of tourism research.

LITERATURE

Citation analysis is noted as a useful tool in tracking dissemination, impacts and/or influences of knowledge across researchers, publications, and/or scientific communities. Very often, citation relationships are conceptualized as direct and, at times, asymmetric linkages between later documents and earlier ones (Garfield, 1979a, 1979b). Metaphorically, citations are referred to as “frozen footprints in the landscape of scholarly achievements”(Cronin, 1981, p.16). Studies on dissemination in social sciences have pointed to a recent state of Anglophone-centeredness in the diffusions of knowledge in various social sciences fields or disciplines. This study uses tourism research in both Chinese and English languages as instances, and attempts to examine whether such influences or diffusion patterns are also existent in this relatively young social scientific field.

Tourism is a multidisciplinary field of research and scholarship currently undertaken by researchers writing in almost all languages. Chinese and English are two major linguistic communities producing tourism research, and notably, the research literature in both languages has experienced phenomenal growth over the last decades.

This study attempts to look into the influences or impacts of English literature on the production of China tourism research, to report on the subject areas of the

“borrowed/foreign” sources, and to describe the changing patterns of Chinese tourism researchers using foreign sources of knowledge in their research publications.

METHODOLOGY

For the sake of implementation, “foreign” sources of knowledge in this study are defined as sources of reference published in a language other than Chinese and used by tourism researchers in China in their research and publications. This includes journal articles; authored books or monographs; chapters or titles appeared in edited collections; news reports, trade magazines and association bulletins; web-based sources; theses and dissertations; audio-visual productions; and translated texts.

A narrow definition of “China tourism research” is adopted in this study. The term is used to refer to a geographically as well as socio-linguistically charted community of tourism researchers who publish tourism research in Chinese. More specifically, they are tourism researchers who reside in mainland China and primarily read and write in Chinese. Regions such as Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and Singapore are not included in this scrutiny. Nor are expatriate Chinese tourism researchers working and writing beyond the greater Sino-phone community considered. With respect to citation data collection from the three journals—*Tourism Tribune*, *Tourism Science*, and *Tourism Forum*, this analysis covers the recent nine volume years from 2000 to 2008. Operationally, a census was conducted of all the reference entries in each full length article in the nine volume years.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As can be seen from Tables and Figures (omitted in this abstract), in accordance with the growth of tourism research literature in mainland China, the instances of citing foreign sources are also in a steady increase in the three journals.

Levels and extent of citing English sources are very high. On average, about 60% of the full length articles in the three journals have extensively cited foreign (particularly English) sources. Researchers publishing in *Tourism Tribune* have used English references most frequently compared to the other two journals.

In terms of *media types* of the cited foreign sources, journal articles are amongst the most frequently cited. For example, in 2000, 58% of the foreign sources cited in *Tourism Tribune*, *Tourism Science*, and *Tourism Forum* were from English journals;

by 2008, this proportion increased to 75%, which could be attributable to more online access of English journals in China's universities. Interestingly, monographs, authored books and edited collections have been of limited-to-low use, to the extent where a slightly declining pattern was recorded in recent years in the three journals.

In terms of *subject areas* of the cited sources, the top six tourism and hospitality journals published in English have been most cited (*Annals, JTR, TM, JHTR, IJHM, CHQ*). Other tourism and hospitality journals came out in the second place, followed by business and marketing journals. Next on the foreign journal citation list were periodicals from economics, recreation and leisure studies, geography, sociology and anthropology, environmental studies, ecology, and planning. The above subject area distributions of foreign journal citations are rather identical across the three Chinese tourism research journals.

As an echo to other similar studies, English is found to be the *dominant language of "foreign" sources*.

CONCLUSION

The study identified an increasing trend of Chinese tourism researchers citing "foreign" (particularly, English) sources in their research publications. While a number of limitations have to be acknowledged, results of this study lend to discussions on diffusion, dissemination and impacts of tourism research across language communities.

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