Hospitality and Tourism Journal Editors’ Opinions on Article Submission and Acceptance

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ABSTRACT

This study examined hospitality and tourism journal editors’ attitudes on the number and quantity of submissions as well as acceptance rates of their publications. Using survey data collected from hospitality and tourism journal editors all over the world, the study investigated basic demographic information about journals, journal editors, number of submissions and acceptance rates. Findings from this study suggest practical implications for improving journal article quality and the findings will be of value to professors and in Hospitality and Tourism Management programs.

Keywords: journal editor’s opinion, article submission rates on the journal, article acceptance rates on the journal

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism industry has changed significantly worldwide over the last 20 years in ways such as size, globalization, economic importance, technology and sophistication. The need for trained professionals in the hospitality and tourism industry has led to a corresponding growth in hospitality and tourism education. In the 1960s there were less than 30 Universities offering Bachelors’ degree four programs in hospitality and tourism the United States and an amount equal to that worldwide. Today there are over 300 universities offering degree programs in the United States and the number worldwide has grown substantially. The growth in such programs has created a corresponding need for faculty to teach in these programs. To meet this need many of the top schools have added masters and even Ph.D. programs in hospitality and tourism. In the early years of hospitality education at the university level, most programs and their faculty struggled for academic credibility and respect among their peers. Such programs were seen more as technically oriented with little orientation toward research. The majority of faculty came from industry and did not hold doctorates. To attain tenure, faculty could publish in industry trade journals because there were very few academic journals in the field of hospitality and tourism management. The process toward academic respectability is not entirely over. Today, the majority of faculty in hospitality and tourism programs holds doctorates and are actively involved in conducting research. The huge growth in hospitality and tourism programs worldwide along with the corresponding growth in faculty in these programs has created a need for large numbers of faculty to publish, primarily in order to seek tenure.
Indirectly this has led to an increase in hospitality and tourism journals. The purpose of this study is to examine hospitality and tourism journal editors’ attitudes on the number and quantity of submissions and acceptance to their publications. Specific objectives include:

1. To ascertain basic demographic information about journals such as years in print (the period that journals had been existence) and number of issues per year
2. To understand some basic demographic information about hospitality and tourism journal editors
3. To determine number of submissions and acceptance rates

**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The role of the editor in most journals is usually highly correlated to the success and rankings of that journal. The higher the rankings, the greater the impact of the journal, the more prestige the journal has thus leading to higher quality submissions. The editor sets the tone for how and where manuscripts are solicited, who serves on the review board, and the overall review process. This in turn can lead to higher or lower percentages of acceptance or rejection of submissions. Journal editors are often bound by certain other constraints such as the number of issues per year that the journal is published and the number of total pages that the publishing company will allow per volume (Perdue, Meng, & Courtney, 2009). A common formula for impact factor captures three main qualities of a journal. One, the relevance of the journal to researchers in an active field of inquiry, two, the ability of editors to discriminate between submissions of the highest quality and third, the lag time between submission and publications (Tobin, 2003). The majority of universities advocate a reward system based on journal impact factors.

Journal editors and reviewers most frequently make their own individual assessments of article quality. Journal editor’s opinions on the quality of a submission are often within their own personal judgment of what constitutes acceptable standards for their journal and by nature can often be subjective. On top of these issues, there is no reason to think that any group of referees will interpret or weigh characteristics in the same way for the same paper or that one editor will weigh them uniformly between different papers. Additional measures of quality relate to such things as (Beed & Beed, 1996):

- An author's facility with the use of the language of the paper including grammar and syntax, rhetorical ability and style
- The logical structure of the paper
- The increment the paper contributes to the advancement of knowledge
- Its potential interest to the profession overall or to a segment of it
- The author's familiarity with the subject

Freda and Kearney (2005) found most editors see reviewers as advisors about manuscripts and not as decision makers. Additionally they found that less than one-third of editors said that their decisions had to agree with most reviewers. Fifty five percent of editors said they have made a decision about a manuscript which was contrary to all reviewers. In one model used by the Journal of Tourism Research in which the editor’s decision is based on a
combination of three reviews, the editors’ decision agreed with the reviewers’ recommendations 70% of the time (Perdue et al., 2009). Additional considerations would include the needs of the journal for that particular topic as well as backlog of accepted manuscripts (Freda, Kearney, Bagg, Broome, & Dougherty, 2009). There is little known about how journal reviewers are trained to do peer reviews and what support they receive from editors of professional journals. Some editors provide extensive informational and instructional materials along with packets of what they consider a good review (Kearney & Freda, 2005). To attain tenure or promotion, it is a generally accepted practice that researchers publish their findings for the benefit of fellow researchers, policy makers and professionals in their field. It is an important consideration in deciding where to publish based on the level of credibility attached to the journal (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002).

Additionally there are huge differences in acceptance rates ranging from 5% to 90% depending on how old the journal is and on the journals’ reputation (Henson, 1993). Each journal has its own style and idiosyncrasies about layout and presentation and potential authors need to adhere to the directions. If a paper is not in accordance with specific journal guidelines, it is likely to be returned unread because few editors will want to forward it to reviewers (Akyol, 2008). If a paper is rejected it is wise for the writer to evaluate the comments and decide how the paper should be revised and possibly resubmitted to another appropriate journal. The review process can be a long and excruciating process especially for people early in their academic careers. The length of time that the entire process takes assuming the paper is accepted frequently takes from 6 months to 18 months on average. An important aspect in the overall process has to do with the timeliness with which an author revises and resubmits a manuscript (Perdue et al., 2009). The goal of the editor is to fill issues of the journal with the level of quality that is desired. Sometimes proper grammar can be an issue for people where English is a second language. Editors and reviewers do not consider it part of their job to rewrite a paper into proper English. Furthermore, if a paper has many problems grammatically it will irritate reviewers that they even bothered with it (Paul, 2005).

**METHODOLOGY**

A questionnaire was designed based on a thorough review of the literature related to journal editors and the review process. In order to help insure a higher response rate, the number of questions was limited to twelve. The questions were divided into two categories. Part 1 was related to demographic information related about the journal and editor. Part 2 was related to questions on the number of submission and acceptance rate. Questions were objective and scaled with specific responses requested as opposed to being open-ended. A list of hospitality journals was compiled from the literature and through a search of various databases as well as asking 20 hospitality and tourism faculty at a major university to identify journals in the field of hospitality and tourism management. The total number of journals and their editors included in this research was 83. These journals were first and second tier journals in the field and all had an editor and editorial review board. A questionnaire was sent by means of a Qualtrics online survey since journal editors came from around the world and editors are accustomed to answering large amounts of email. The surveys were administrated from late February to early April 2010. Eighty-three email surveys were distributed and thirty-nine journal editors responded yielding a response rate of 47%.
RESULTS

Information about the editors and journals

In relation to the number of years that the editors had held their positions, four of them (10%) reported less than 2 years, twelve of them (31%) reported that they had been editor from 2 to 5 years, sixteen of them (41%) reported they had been editor for 5 to 10 years and seven of the editors (18%) reported that they had been the editor of their journal for more than 10 years.

Editors were asked how many years that their journals had been in existence. None of the journals were less than 2 years old. Four of the journals (10%) were 3 to 5 years old and 10 of the journals (29%) were from 6 to 10 years old. However the largest number of journals 25 (64%) had been in existence for more than 10 years.

Editors were also asked how many issues per year their journal was published. Only four of the editors (10%) reported that their journal came out twice a year while 5 (13%) reported that their journal was published 3 times a year. The largest group of editors 24 (62%) reported that their journal was published quarterly. The remainder of the editors 6 (16%) reported that their journal was published 5 or more times a year.

Information about the quantity of submissions and acceptance rates

Editors were asked about changes in the number of submissions over the last 5 years. Twenty-one of the editors (55%) reported that there was a large increase in the number of submission while eleven of the editors (29%) reported that the number of submissions had increased only slightly. Only five of the editors (13%) reported that the number of submissions to their journals had stayed the same. Only one of the editors (3%) reported a slight decrease in the number submissions and no editors reported a large decrease in submissions.

In reference to the percentage of submissions that make it to publication, eight of the editors (21%) noted that less than 20% of submissions were published. Eleven of the editors (29%) reported that 20 to 30% of submissions were accepted and fifteen editors (39%) reported acceptance rates of 30 to 40%. Lastly, four of the editors (11%) noted that they had acceptance rates of more than 40%. The average number of revisions that each accepted article went through was two according to 28 (76%) of the editors.

CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The number of hospitality and tourism programs offering four-year degrees has nearly tripled over the last 30 years. When hospitality education was in its early years it was often considered more of a vocational program with very few of the professors holding doctorate degrees of any kind. There were a limited number of academic journals in the field of hospitality and tourism and very often professors published in industry related journals to get tenure. As the number of programs and professors has increased so has the academic reputation of these programs. Today it is impossible for a professor to get a tenure track position without a Ph.D. Professors in hospitality and tourism programs are now required to meet the same publication
standards as professors in other disciplines. Research in areas related to hospitality and tourism has been greatly expanded thus creating a need to disseminate the research. This has led to the proliferation in new journals as witnessed by the fact that 36% of the journal editors surveyed said that there journals were less than 10 years old. In addition, seventy-eight percent of total hospitality journals are published either 4 or more time a year. Therefore, professors have many opportunities to publish, however competition has also increased because 83% of journal editors reported that submissions to their journals have increased slightly or a great deal. All of these numbers indicate that hospitality and tourism research is being published by more journals more times a year. Journal editors also reported that many of their submissions were coming from Ph.D. students or Ph.D. students and their professors.

The results of this research will be of value to HTM programs offering Ph.D. programs. At one time hospitality and tourism education valued professors with industry experience. While that is still true to a degree, it is their ability to conduct publishable research that is most highly valued. Therefore, Ph.D. programs will need to stress research skills even more than in the past as well as how to get published. A large percentage of journal articles include statistical analysis, which Ph.D. programs normally include in their programs of study. Editors report that they are willing to evaluate qualitative research however, most of what is submitted and accepted is more quantitative in nature.

REFERENCES