



TOURISM RESEARCH 2.0

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Abstract: Are we on the verge of a paradigm shift in the production and consumption of knowledge in tourism research? Offering an original contribution to the epistemology of tourism this article outlines an emerging form of intellectual property right referred to as *copyleft* and a new paradigm of “tourism research 2.0” is identified. These new forms and norms of knowledge are enabled by Web 2.0 technology and based on a pluralist epistemology. Ownership, quality control, and the dissemination of tourism knowledge under this new paradigm are critically evaluated. It is argued that these changing epistemological norms and forms of knowledge present significant opportunities and challenges for the development and dissemination of tourism research. **Keywords:** tourism research, epistemology, web 2.0, *copyleft*, paradigm. © 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

This article contributes to the epistemology of tourism by considering how Web 2.0 may advance new, complementary norms and forms of knowledge in tourism research. Web 2.0 refers to the principles and practice of facilitating information sharing and social interaction by users generating, altering and uploading web-based content (O’Reilly, 2005) whereas its predecessor, Web 1.0 limits users to the passive viewing and download of largely copyrighted information. Copyright is widely accepted for protecting the rights of the original creator by providing control of distribution, reproduction, adaptation, and translation of digital and broadcast rights. By contrast, working jointly with others or together in an endeavor to achieve a common objective under Web 2.0 conditions, the reciprocal relations are replicated in the *copyleft* movement. *Copyleft* is a play on the word copyright to describe the licensing practice of removing or modifying copyright restrictions when legally distributing copies and adapted versions of the work of others, requiring that the same freedoms be preserved in future versions (Berry, 2008).

Representing a new form and norm of knowledge, the rationale for this paper is the enhanced distributive capacity of tourism research by

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Web 2.0 practices of bottom-up, interactive and open collaboration in online content generation (Benkler, 2006; Tapscott & Williams, 2006). While easily dismissed as untrustworthy due to “the ignorance of the crowds” (Carr, 2007) and unawareness of academic standards, the closed-system tendencies of knowledge production in tourism research are in need of critical inquiry. Referred to as ‘tourism research 2.0’ the propensities to engage in research are no longer largely generated by internal stimuli; nor are research activities validated through responses from the relatively closed circle of international scholarship (Birch, 1988). Also attempting to overcome the limited role of research journals in knowledge transfer (Cooper, 2006; Frechtling, 2004; Howey, Savage, Verbeeten, & Hoof, 1999; Xaio & Smith, 2007) this article considers how open publication based on *copyleft* principles has the potential to create new and richer streams of knowledge. As a complementing form of knowledge it will be argued that we may be on the verge of a paradigm shift in the current production and consumption of knowledge in tourism research. More recently, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2008, 2011) and the Swedish Research Council (2009) have actively pushed for making publicly funded research results accessible and ‘giving knowledge for free’, in the words of the OECD (2008). Further substantiating the significance of this article, there is a need to cultivate critical awareness of the changing knowledge monopolies and the new norms of openness in scientific knowledge development in order to direct future research in tourism.

The aim of this article is twofold. First, the epistemic question of tourism knowledge, validity and ownership will be opened by applying these criteria to knowledge production under Web 2.0 conditions. Second, copyrighted knowledge is contrasted against the so-called *copyleft* paradigm, which more openly invites knowledge reuse by copying, remixing and transformation with limited acknowledgement of the original authors. By bringing together these two strands of inquiry as different but complementary ways of knowing, issues of ownership, quality control, and the transformation of scientific tourism knowledge in different contexts will be critically discussed. It will be argued that the changing epistemological norms offered by Web 2.0 and the *copyleft* movement are of growing significance and may herald fundamental challenges and changes in the future development and dissemination of tourism research.

The structure of this paper is as follows. First, the current paradigm of valid tourism knowledge will be explored as a form and norm of knowledge, in which peer review occupies a central position. Next, the analysis turns to tourism research 2.0 and the transformation from closed, controlled and copyrighted research and dialogical forms of reconstruction. Third, concerns over openness in the ownership and production of knowledge that may bring an erosion of confidence in the rigor of research are addressed by a critical discussion of validity and quality mechanisms in tourism research 2.0. Drawing on Boisot’s (1998) notion of a “pluralist epistemology”, it will be concluded that the inherent aspects of openness and degrees of freedom in tourism

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