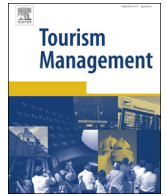




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## Development pattern, classification and evaluation of the tourism academic community in China in the last ten years: From the perspective of big data of articles of tourism academic journals<sup>☆</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

This paper reports findings from an analysis of 16,024 tourism academic papers published in the major social science journals of China as ranked by CSSCI, and CSCD for the period from 2003 to 2012. The paper ranks and evaluates journals and institutions related to tourism, and thus shows a comprehensive picture of the academic development in China's tourism academic research over the decade. The paper used a creative research method to discover the phenomenon and issues not previously identified by researchers and provides a sound foundation to further develop big data analytical methods in China.

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### 1. Research question

The decade from 2003 was a significant period of transformation for Chinese tourism development and research. By 2011 there were 1115 tertiary institutions approved by the Chinese Educational authorities to offer tourism education. This compares with 407 universities and institutes in 2002, a growth of approximately 10.6% per annum. At the same time the number of tour companies and hotels increased by 7.4% and 2.8% per annum. The numbers of staff involved in tourism teaching and academic research also dramatically increased. The China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) established the China Tourism Academy to

focus on tourism academic research within this period, thereby confirming the importance of research at a national level. Within 30 years of the reform economic system and tourism development, China's tourism research has stepped out from the shadow of research in other areas. Tourism research has started to provide a direction for industry development, and has gradually formed a group of people and teams engaged in inter- and cross-disciplinary research. The survival of any subject should have a group of academic specialists, and high level of academic journals, so forming an "academic community" that provides leadership. The formation and development of such a tourism academic community is the foundation for the sustainable development of tourism research.

To establish a country with a significant and growing tourism industry is a systemic process involving industries, management, professionals, and a society supported by an academic community's intelligence and techniques. Academic journals are an important part of academic communication, a linkage of authors and journals, and a barometer of the level of a subject's development. This paper analysed academic papers published in China's academic journals in the decade from 2003 to measure and assess the current development, structure, distribution, and categories of China's tourism academic community and its research.

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## 2. Literature view

Statistical analysis of an author's CV, topics, key words, and core discipline is an easy, effective, and frequently used method to identify the current situation, existing problems, and trends of a certain subject. In tourism research, many scholars have adopted this method for similar research, with many such articles being published in *Tourism Tribune*. For example, [Zhao \(2000\)](#) analysed the articles of *Tourism Tribune* from 1990 to 1999 to identify the authors' social-demographic profile and research interest. [Wu, Song, and Deng \(2001\)](#) analysed the trend of tourism research through articles published in *Tourism Tribune* from 1989 to 1999. [Cao and Hu \(2008\)](#) also analysed China's tourism research using *Tourism Tribune*. [Zeng \(2010\)](#) inquired into the development of tourism academic researches by performing the statistics of *Tourism Tribune* from 2000 to 2009. [Dong, Wu, and Zhong \(2011\)](#) analysed the key words of *Tourism Tribune* to discuss the development of tourism academic research. Many scholars also identified trends from international journals such as *Annals of Tourism Research*. For example, [Zhang \(2004\)](#) discussed the academic tourism research development through an analysis of that journal. [Wu \(2004\)](#) discussed the structure of other countries' tourism academic research. [Wu and Xing \(2005\)](#), [King, Li, and Wu \(2006\)](#) both analysed 30 years' articles from *Annals of Tourism Research* to identify a tourism academic discipline tree indicating the temporal and spatial characteristics of tourism studies. [Zhu and Liu \(2004\)](#) compared the difference and trend of Chinese and foreign tourism researches through the analysis of articles published in *Tourism Tribune* and *Annals of Tourism Research*.

Many researchers were using different relevant academic journal articles as the sample. For example, [Wang, Lu, and Liu \(2003\)](#) analysed 20 years tourism geography papers in *Geography Research*, *Geography Science* and *National Research Journal*. [Zhang and Cui \(2011\)](#) analysed China tourism academic research and prospect from 4 academic journals.

With the development of digital databases and academic literature resources such as CNKI, VIO, Wanfangdata, and CDDB, the process of literature collection became more efficient and convenient. [Liu and Yuan \(2007\)](#) discussed the development of China's tourism discipline development through the analysis of CSSCI papers. [Lian, Yu, Zong, and Yuan \(2013\)](#) analysed the knowledge map based on CSSCI journals from 2000 to 2010. [Feng, Shi, and Liu \(2011\)](#) identified the process and characteristics of tourism research development in China based on the statistics of domestic journals and papers. [Zhang, Zhong, and Zhang \(2009\)](#) analysed the global tourism research trend through the analysis of SCIE, SSCI, and A & HCI from 1998 to 2007. [Sun, Wei, and Zhang \(2013\)](#) discussed the international impact on Chinese tourism research based on an analysis of SSCI articles from 2001 to 2012. Similarly, [Liu \(2008\)](#) identified academic trends as reflected in NSFC and NPOPSS full tourism foundation databases. [Zhu, Xiang, and Wang \(2011\)](#) discussed the phenomenon of "de-tourism" in tourism research based on the analysis of tourism projects sponsored by the NSFC and NSSFC.

Apart from that, [Zhang and Lu \(2003\)](#) analysed doctoral and master's thesis in tourism, [Chen \(2004\)](#) discussed the tourism development through the discipline of doctoral dissertation on tourism studies. [Chen \(2006\)](#) also analysed the difference between PhD dissertations between China and North America. [Tang \(2013\)](#) analysed the topic and direction of doctoral dissertation in China in the ten years leading to 2012. In general, there is a significant correlation between academic value and the academic status of the journal. Most scholars are themselves evaluated on the basis of the standing of the academic journals in which they publish. [Lan and](#)

[Zhang \(2013\)](#) assessed the influence and impact of China's tourism research journals. [Zhang \(2009\)](#) checked 160 international tourism journals, including 132 English language journals, 27 other languages, and analysed the editors, employers, and the publishers for the main 35 English language tourism journals. Additionally, he classified 20 academic journals by the topics of material published, and discussed the differences of tourism research between foreign countries and China.

In other countries, [Sheldon \(1991\)](#), [Jogaratham, Chon, Mc Cleary, Mena, and Yoo \(2005\)](#) analysed academic institutes' contribution in *Annals of Tourism Research* and *Tourism Management* from 1980 to 1989, and 1992 to 2001 respectively. [Ryan \(2005\)](#) ranked 35 tourism, hospitality and recreation academic journals in terms of the click rate. [Mckercher, Law, and Lam \(2006\)](#) analysed the assessment methods of tourism and hospitality academic journals. In recent years, one influential article was that of [Park, Phillips, Canter, and Abbott \(2011\)](#) that analysed "hospitality and tourism research rankings by author, university, and country using six major journals: the first decade of the new millennium" in the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*. The results aroused the attention of international scholars.

As discussed above, these articles have value in providing a direction and consultation in the periods concerned and detailed certain aspects of the structure and basic characteristics of academic research development. However, because of the comprehensive, interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary of tourism, it has not developed as an independent subject. As the sub-branch of other subjects, it lacks a "mother subject". In tertiary education, tourism is subjected to Management, while in many system of publishing, tourism is classified under Geography. For example, in China, *Tourism Tribune* is in the same category as *Human Geography* and *Economic Geography*. In library systems, tourism is classified under economics. Because of this character, there are many limitations in the sample size and sample space in tourism research. The biggest sample size of the above mentioned articles was 3000 articles (in a time span of ten years, that is, less than 300 articles per year); and some research has drawn on only a sample of a few hundreds of articles and were confined to small numbers of journals. In fact, the distribution of tourism papers is similar as to the pattern of Long Tail theory. It is hard to draw conclusion from several tourism journals or relevant subject journals which could not have a comprehensive understanding or indeed be objective about the tourism academic community's contribution and the development of the subject.

Even in the case of [Park et al. \(2011\)](#), the global tourism academic structure was analysed from the selection of just six tourism academic journals, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, *Tourism Management*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, and *Journal of Travel Research* (2834 papers in ten years, 283.4 paper per year) which could not cover the overall academic development of the subject. Currently, there are 35 tourism academic journals included in SSCI journals, but Park et al. only selected three of them. Some journals, such as *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *Tourism Geographies*, and *Tourism Economics* were not selected by [Park et al.](#), and needless to say some tourism articles were published in main stream academic journals in the subjects of geography, management, economics, sociology, psychology, and ecology. For example, the British scholar, [Butler \(1980\)](#) published a well-known article about the destination life cycle in *Canadian Geographer*, which is non-tourism academic journal of little influence. Another famous Israeli social tourism scholar, [Cohen](#), published many influential papers in main stream sociology journals, such as *Annual Review of Sociology*, *Sociology*, and *Social Research*.

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