



European Journal of Tourism Research: 15 years of research community service

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Abstract

This editorial presents some of the key changes in the European Journal of Tourism Research in the period 2018-2022. In particular, the journal changed its publishing model and became a Platinum open-access journal, the journal's scope was amended to focus on European tourism, an online submission system was introduced, and the editorial team was expanded. The paper also presents the editorial philosophy of the co-editors and their vision of how the journal is and should be managed.

Keywords: European Journal of Tourism Research, anniversary, editorial

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1. Introduction

In 2023, the European Journal of Tourism Research (EJTR) celebrates 15 years since the publication of its first issue in February 2008. This is an appropriate occasion to reflect on the development of the journal and the recent changes in its strategy.

Founded in 2006, the EJTR is now one of the established academic journals in the field of tourism and hospitality. The previous editorial on the occasion of the 10th anniversary (Ivanov, 2018) presented the history of the journal and some key metrics (e.g. submissions and acceptance rates by type of manuscript) related to the first ten years of the journal. A detailed bibliometric review of publications in the EJTR was published recently in Soliman et al. (2021) while the editor's experience with the journal's chatbot was elaborated in Ivanov (2020). Therefore, this editorial will skip the historical facts and the review of publications and will focus on the core changes in the journal since 2018 when the previous editorial was published.

2. The Big Bang

The period since 2018 is characterised by several important changes in the EJTR that can be summarised only as "The Big Bang".

2.1. Publishing model

The most important change in the journal's strategy was in the journal's publishing model. The EJTR started as a subscription journal. While initially it worked as a business model, in time it became evident that it was unsustainable. That is why on 1st June 2019 the EJTR was transformed from a subscription to a Platinum open-access journal under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 (CC BY 4.0) license. There are no charges for authors and no charges for readers. All costs for publishing and for the maintenance of the website are covered by the journal's owner, Varna University of Management, Bulgaria. Financial support was received also from the Bulgarian National Science Fund in 2021 and 2022. The Platinum open access means that there are no article processing charges to serve as financial barriers for authors to publish in the journal. The EJTR is a real open-access journal that supports the open access movement in publishing. As a result, the readership of the journal skyrocketed – in 2022 alone the pdf files of the articles were downloaded over 125000 times from the journal's website!

2.2. Journal's scope

The second change relates to the *scope* of the journal. The focus of the EJTR has always been tourism in Europe. During the years we have published excellent and very interesting empirical papers that had a non-European focus. This was good for attracting submissions, but was not good for the long-term image of the journal because there was some discrepancy between the title of the journal and the scope of some of the published papers. That is why, starting from 1st December 2019, all empirical papers submitted to the EJTR must have some European context or have some important implications for European tourism. This means that the empirical study should be entirely focused on Europe, partially focused (i.e. international comparative studies in which at least one of the countries is European), or if the empirical context is completely outside Europe the findings must have some important implications for European tourism (e.g. the preferences of Chinese tourists and what European tourist companies need to do to address them). Such requirements do not apply to review papers, conceptual papers, book reviews, and doctoral dissertation summaries. The change in the geographic scope of the journal was necessary to align its content to its intended focus.

2.3. Journal's website

On 13th July 2020 the new website of the EJTR was launched. It included an online submission system based on OJS 3 platform. This platform was chosen because it fitted perfectly the Platinum open-access publishing model of the journal – it is a free platform just as the EJTR. The outcome was a much more user-friendly website, online submission of manuscripts (rather than by email) and a more streamlined and easy editorial process. The outcome was a significant decrease in the time necessary to process submissions which benefitted the authors.

2.4. Editorial team

The fourth change refers to the editorial team of the journal. Until 2018, the EJTR received less than 200 submissions which was manageable by a single editor. From 2019 onward, the number of submissions increased to over 400. This required a radical reorganisation of the editorial process in the journal to facilitate its timeliness and correctness and decentralisation of the editorial decisions. On 16th September 2020 Giacomo Del Chiappa (University of Sassari, Italy) became the Managing Editor of the journal and on 1st January 2022 he joined Stanislav Ivanov (Varna University of Management, Bulgaria) as Co-Editor. In addition, 9 Associate editors were appointed to manage the review process of submissions: Basak Denizci (Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, P. R. C.), Berta Ferrer-Rosell (University of Lleida, Spain), Martina G. Gallarza (University of Valencia, Spain), Estela Mariné Roig (University of Lleida, Spain), Marko Perić (University of Rijeka, Croatia), Jessica Mei Pung (University of Otago, New Zealand), Faruk Seyitoğlu (Mardin Artuklu University, Turkey), Alicia Orea-Giner (Rey Juan Carlos University, Spain) and Faizan Ali (University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, U. S. A.). Moreover, the Advisory and Editorial boards were expanded to 62 leading experts in different fields in tourism and hospitality coming from over 20 countries. The changes in the editorial team added new impetus to the journal.

3. Our editorial philosophy

The EJTR is a welcoming journal. We see our editorial roles as gate openers rather than gatekeepers. This is also proved by our decision to significantly involve and represent early career researchers in our Editorial Board and group of Associate Editors. However, this does not mean that the journal's gates are wide open. In fact, in 2022 the acceptance rate was only 6%; it was comparable to the top journals in economics, business and management, and it was lower than the publicly announced acceptance rates of other journals in tourism and hospitality. The main reasons for (desk)rejection of submissions include:

- ✓ the manuscript is out of the scope of the journal – i.e. it does not have a European focus or significant implications for the European tourism industry.
- ✓ the manuscript is descriptive and lacks an effective structure and logical flow.
- ✓ the manuscript does not have (sufficient) theoretical contribution and policy/managerial relevancy;
- ✓ unethical practices (e.g., plagiarism, etc).

As Co-Editors-in-Chief we fully believe that authors of each single manuscript deserve due attention from the EJTR; this explains why we are really committed in providing constructive and structured comments even when papers are desk-rejected. We fully believe that is an ethical way to reciprocate authors for the time they invested in preparing their manuscripts and for trusting the EJTR. We also humbly believe that this practice is helpful to them to further improve the quality of their research; the several thanking e-mails we receive every year as responses to our (desk-)rejection emails are reassuring our idea.

In the EJTR we have zero-tolerance policy towards unethical practices such as plagiarism, data fabrication, manipulation of figures/table/results, cherry-picking of results to be reported in the manuscript, etc. Each publication is checked for plagiarism twice - before being sent to the reviewers and after acceptance before publishing. Several submissions are desk-rejected every year due to plagiarism.

Two of the most important journal metrics include the Impact Factor and CiteScore. Both metrics are calculated on the basis of journal citations. EJTR's CiteScore grew from 1.6 in 2018 to 2.7 in 2021, and the CiteScoreTracker 2022 in January 2023 is 3.2. We, as editors, strongly believe that the EJTR's metrics should grow organically. We oppose the artificial boosting of citation which are sometimes observed in practice. For example, some of the editorial practices we consider as unethical include:

- ✓ Editors require new submissions to have a certain number of citations to journal's articles (disguised as requiring authors to discuss previously published papers in the journal),
- ✓ The editors provide previous articles in the journal that the authors must cite;
- ✓ The editors cite extensively the articles in the journals they edit in their own publications;
- ✓ The editors require (or recommend to) authors of manuscripts submitted to other journals to cite numerous articles from the journals they edit;
- ✓ The editors publish research papers in the journals they edit with the intention that the papers will attract numerous citations. This may be coupled with excessive citation of articles from the same journal.

During every meeting with the Associate Editors, we stress that not citing articles from the EJTR is not a reason for rejection of a manuscript, and citing many articles from the EJTR is not a reason for acceptance. Of course, during the review process, we gently remind authors to check previous issues of the EJTR but still, citations to EJTR papers is not a criterion for acceptance or rejection of submissions to the journal. We understand that our strong commitment to ethics has a negative impact on the journal's metrics in the short term, but the citations game is not the one we want to play. Our ethical-based editorial philosophy includes at least two other important points. First, all our Associate Editors are asked to carefully check whether invited reviewers are generating a sense of obligation when asking authors to cite some of their (co)authored papers. Of course, our Associate Editors and reviewers can gently recommend authors to read and eventually use pertinent papers but still, citing the suggested papers should not be per sé a criterion for acceptance or rejection of submitted manuscripts. Second, the Co-Editors-in-chief cannot publish papers in the journal except for editorials.

4. Concluding remarks

The European Journal of Tourism Research is now a mature academic journal. It grew from a small niche journal with 20+ submissions per year to a well-established journal with 400+ submissions. Its main aim is continuing to publish state-of-the-art research related to the most important trends and issues in travel, tourism and hospitality in a European context that can contribute to theory building and to generate impacts for the industry and society.

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