

# Editorial

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Since the turn of the 21st century, research output in tourism and hospitality has increased tremendously (Mulet-Forteza et al. 2019). Simultaneously, there has been an increased interest in qualitative tourism and hospitality research (McGinley et al. 2020; Wilson et al. 2020), as an interpretive frame for the understanding of the tourism phenomenon. As a result, there was a need to create an international scientific tourism and hospitality journal focusing solely upon qualitative research. The *Journal of Qualitative Research in Tourism (JQRT)*, published by Edward Elgar Publishing, has been established in order to be dedicated exclusively to the qualitative interpretation and analysis of tourism and hospitality. The journal aims to mark an important milestone as the first ever journal on the very important area of qualitative research in tourism and hospitality.

The purpose of this editorial is fourfold: first, to explain the need for a new journal on qualitative research in tourism and hospitality; second, to set the scene by which the journal was conceived and the context in which it aims to operate; third, to introduce the journal's objectives and its inaugural issue; and, fourth, to acknowledge the contributions of authors, reviewers, members of the scientific committee and the publisher to the launching of the first issue and to make a call for engagement and collaboration to all interested parties.

## RATIONALE FOR LAUNCHING A NEW JOURNAL

In the age of information abundance, the initiative of starting a new, academic journal requires some explanation and justification. Qualitative research methods are not newcomers to the fields of hospitality and tourism. Nevertheless, qualitative research in tourism and hospitality occurred relatively late compared to the wider social sciences (Wilson et al. 2020). In fact, tourism scholars' publications utilizing qualitative approaches have been apparent since the 1970s (Dann et al. 1988). The early studies were dominated by ethnographic research approaches and the study of human behavior, and aimed to explore ideas and that would provide an understanding of the tourism phenomenon (McKercher 2018). Therefore, most pioneering early papers greatly contributed to the creation and development of a multi-disciplinary tourism social science (Nash 2007) and were qualitative, written particularly by anthropologists, sociologists and geographers (see for example the studies of Cohen 1971; 1984; 1988; Dann/Cohen 1991; Graburn 1983; MacCannell 1976; Nash/Smith 1991; Smith 1989; Urry 1990).

Nowadays, the increased interest in in-depth tourism and hospitality studies produced from qualitative work has encouraged tourism and hospitality researchers to adopt several qualitative approaches of research. For instance, a review of the state of contemporary qualitative tourism research between 2007 and 2017 by Wilson et al. (2020: 801), which used a list of 51 tourism journals, found that qualitative, interpretive and non-positivist approaches appear to be increasingly employed by

tourism scholars. From a hospitality perspective, Sharma/Altinay in a call for papers back in 2010, entitled ‘How can we address contemporary hospitality research issues through qualitative research?’, stated that ‘the use of qualitative research methodologies in advancing hospitality knowledge is an increasing trend.’ In a similar vein, a more recent study by McGinley et al. (2020), which explored the current state of research published primarily in the top five hospitality journals between 2014 and 2019, identified an ascending trend in the number of qualitative papers.

Despite the increasing research interest on qualitative research and the more than 340 journal titles in the field of tourism and hospitality (McKercher 2018), it is surprising that up to now there has not been any specific tourism/hospitality journal dedicated exclusively toward qualitative research and the presentation and discussion of qualitative research methods and techniques. While qualitative researchers in cognate fields can identify which journals to send their qualitative research to – for example, journals specializing in the fields of education, health, justice and criminology, bioethics, marketing, psychology, sports, social work, sociology, ethnography, accounting, and management – this is not the case in tourism and hospitality, which is disappointing. As a consequence, Riley/Love (2000: 168) highlighted that ‘of the many journals assessing the state of tourism research, none have addressed qualitative research specifically.’ While Riley/Love (2000) identified this gap 20 years ago, up until now this gap still exists.

As a consequence, much of the seminal work in tourism initiated through qualitative research has been published in non-tourism journals or edited books. In fact, the vast majority of tourism journals publish only a few articles, if any, with a qualitative component. Arendt et al. (2012: 830) state that manuscripts submitted to most tourism journals ‘may be rejected outright or reviewers may not understand qualitative research and reject the manuscript due to small sample size or non-random sampling techniques.’ For this reason, the same authors propose, as the best strategy for getting qualitative research published, to target journals accepting qualitative work.

While there has been a movement towards qualitative and critical research approaches in the fields of tourism and hospitality – for instance, the study of Wilson et al. (2020) found that the number of qualitative tourism studies has increased over the last decade – a number of academics have become disgruntled that current top journals in the field tend toward publishing quantitative research only. In addition, since the top tourism and hospitality journals are hugely over-subscribed, authors usually encounter long delays from submission to publication. Given this deficiency, most published articles risk becoming outdated before their readers read them and the dissemination of scholarship becomes slower, both of which provide a significant burden on the academic careers of the individual scholars. *JQRT* will provide a much quicker publication time-frame; in the case of this inaugural issue, less than six months from first submission to publication.

To overcome the various deficits of the existing journals, *JQRT* seeks to act as a premier venue for current research and documentation in tourism and hospitality by taking the lead in the area of qualitative research. The journal aims to be essential reading for both academics wanting an overview of the current state of the art of qualitative methods in tourism and hospitality and for practitioners seeking knowledge of excellent examples of applied qualitative empirical work. Thus, the proposed journal will encourage the use of qualitative research as a tool of inquiry by publishing qualitative work from researchers and practitioners within the tourism and hospitality domains and enabling a free flow of information and integrating the

community of tourism and hospitality researchers into the wider community of qualitative researchers.

To sum up, I was driven to launch *JQRT* due to a noticeable lack of a tourism and/or hospitality journal devoted solely to qualitative research. I believe that *JQRT* comes at the right time and with the right purpose. In practice, what makes the journal different from the plethora of tourism and hospitality journals includes: (a) it focuses exclusively on excellence in qualitative research and on providing an outlet for high-quality qualitative research across the tourism and hospitality domains; (b) it demonstrates the significance of qualitative research on everyday tourism and hospitality practice; (c) it highlights the diverse range of subject areas to which qualitative research can contribute; and (d) it contributes to adapting qualitative research methods from other fields to tourism and hospitality.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE JOURNAL

The journal is interested in theoretical, empirical, and methodological studies conducted using qualitative methods, as well as in contributions dealing with qualitative research and methods encouraging innovative ways of thinking and researching. *JQRT* adopts a multi-disciplinary perspective with inputs from such varied fields and specializations within tourism and hospitality such as: psychology, sociology, anthropology, ethnography, geography, education, psychology, leisure, recreation, and cultural studies. It welcomes research stemming from qualitative techniques covering a spectrum of methods located within a wide range of epistemological perspectives such as interviewing, participant observation, ethnography, historical analysis, grounded theory, content analysis, text analysis, semiotics, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, deconstructivism, hermeneutics, phenomenology, phenomenography, narrative studies, visual analysis, storytelling, and other qualitative orientations within the social sciences that do not rely primarily on numerical data.

I would like to take the opportunity, in this first inaugural issue, to describe what the journal aims to achieve and what makes it unique. As indicated by our official aims and scope statement on the journal's website, *JQRT* aims to further the frontiers of knowledge and understanding of tourism and hospitality research and its applications by providing an inter-disciplinary forum for qualitative researchers through which they can share their work with others and discuss issues of research practice with particular pertinence to qualitative approaches. The journal will be a valuable source for those interested in either tourism and hospitality research or qualitative methodology, having five main objectives:

- To provide a forum for a meaningful discussion about the development and the status of qualitative research into the tourism phenomenon.
- To offer a holistic account of qualitative research in tourism and hospitality by breaking new ground in the dichotomy of the theory and practice of qualitative research across the tourism and hospitality domains.
- To offer outstanding contributions of the philosophies underpinning qualitative research in an analytical and practical way that will enhance tourism and hospitality knowledge.
- To develop and nurture methods in qualitative research.
- To encourage the use of unique or underused qualitative research instruments.

## CONTENTS OF THE INAUGURAL ISSUE

When starting this new journal, it was especially worrisome what sort of quality the submissions would be, since most authors prefer to submit their work to first-rank journals instead of an absolutely new journal that has no track record. Fortunately, these worries did not materialize. Indeed, it was encouraging to receive such diverse and high-quality papers. For this open-access inaugural issue, we received many more submissions of publication quality than would fit into this single issue. A select set of these papers will appear in our second issue. I believe that the open-access papers included in this first issue stand on a par with the best-quality publications in the field.

This editorial introduces five original manuscripts and two research notes from authors who have undertaken some brilliant research, which is expected to contribute greatly to the academic community. All papers provide in-depth, novel and timely insights into tourism and hospitality research, and highlight a broad range of research. The scope of the papers ranges from more methodological to more theoretical discussions investigating important and current topics of interest. In addition, in the course of publishing, *JQRT* will offer two issues per year initially with the aim of growing to four issues per year in the future, each comprising around five articles, research notes and book reviews.

## A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE JOURNAL

In order for *JQRT* to be an international forum for sharing the best ideas, I would like to encourage researchers from different countries to consider *JQRT* as a venue for presenting their research. It is expected that *JQRT* will help researchers in the field of qualitative research in tourism and hospitality to keep up with the science. I hope that this journal will play a major role in the development of the tourism and hospitality domains and that it will contribute to the diffusion of scientific knowledge among scholars.

I consider it a great honor to be Editor-in-Chief of *JQRT* and I will do my best to face all challenges that confront the journal. While, in the early stages of tourism research, most scholars (for example, Erik Cohen) aimed at seminal publications that contributed to steering sociological, ethnographic and anthropological tourism studies (Cohen 2013: 104), nowadays academic publishing aims at journals included in approved lists and SCI numbers (McKercher 2018: 1237). Despite the inevitable push towards obtaining an impact factor, the aim of *JQRT* will be that all published papers will be indexed in major search engines, indices, and databases to increase their visibility/searchability and recognition in the wider scientific community. The other side of the coin will be to ensure that papers published in *JQRT* will be easily accessible to a relevant readership whilst maintaining the highest quality and rigor of the peer-review process.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CALL FOR ENGAGEMENT

The birth of a new journal comes from a long process and the editorial board took all the necessary steps to make it a high-caliber scientific publication by maintaining the quality, integrity, and content of the publication. In doing so, the editorial board plays an important role in the process of the journal's publishing. It consists of editorial

board members who are experts in the journal's field, selected from an international pool of candidates because of their high academic standing.

I sincerely hope that you enjoy reading this open-access inaugural issue as well as the future issues and you will be engaged in the journal in various roles, as authors, reviewers, members of the editorial board, and guest editors of special issues. I would like to thank all authors and reviewers for their tremendous efforts in producing these high-quality articles, as well as everyone who has worked diligently behind the scenes to bring this inaugural issue to fruition, especially the editorial board (in particular the Research Notes Editor Charles Arcodia and the Book Reviews Editor Stella Kladou) as well as the entire staff in the Elgar production office.

Finally, I look forward to a long and successful partnership with authors and readers; especially in the first years of the journal, they will be characterized by a fair amount of experimentation. In practice, there are likely to be both successes and mistakes along the way. I am eager to hear your suggestions and feedback. Please feel free to write to me at k.andriotis@mdx.ac.uk about any such matters.

Thank you all for your trust and support. Indeed, it is a real honor to serve as the founding editor of the *Journal of Qualitative Research in Tourism*.

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