40 years tourism research: Some methodological issues to think about

Josef A. Mazanec

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Purpose

Drawing attention to a sample of discussion points inspired by reoccurring methodological problems in submitted manuscripts and published tourism research papers.
Sharing convictions …


• Focus on the micro levels
• Management as the subject
• Consumer research with real customers
• Becoming innovators via borrowing from the Big Brothers
• Adverse effects and social responsibility
• Standards and levels of teaching set by industry and society requirements
The Big Picture?

European Tourism Manifesto Alliance, “Tourism Manifesto, Exit Strategy, Preparing to restart Travel and Tourism”, under the chairmanship of the ETC, [https://tourismmanifesto.eu/](https://tourismmanifesto.eu/) 23rd February 2021

OECD, Tourism Committee of the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, “Preparing the Tourism Workforce for the Digital Future – Draft report”, 3rd March 2021
Methodology

Figure 1. Theory and Method in Tourism Research

Roots

“Tourist satisfaction with a destination area is a nebulous concept, one that is generally as under-researched as it is inadequately operationalized. Many travel researchers and practitioners who use it daily would probably find it difficult to define. Their likely confusion may be due to ignorance of consumer satisfaction in general.”

Worth considering in model building

• Multivariate ≠ accumulated bivariate relationships
  \[ y = f(v, w, x, z) \neq y = f_1(v), \ y = f_2(w), \ y = f_3(x), \ y = f_4(z) \]

• Tautological and exuberant theoretical constructs

• Model fitting: Exploratory vs. inferential studies

• Unobserved heterogeneity

• Equivalent models

• Conclusive validation and replication
The Structural Equation Modeling Hype

Source. Mazanec et al. (2010)
Special comments on SEM applications

• Richard Bagozzi’s ‘Causal Models’ (1980)
• The original promise: theory + measurement
• Bad habits or issues to care about
  • Two steps: Separating measurement sub-models and structural relationships
  • Tinkering with model specification leads to adapting theory to data
  • Reflective and formative indicators
  • Ignoring nonlinearity
  • Being unaware of equivalent models
  • Avoiding the causality issue
• Alternatives to covariance-based SEM
Reflective vs. formative indicators

- **Destination Image**
  - R1
  - Rn

- **Destination Competitiveness**
  - F1
  - Fn
Example: Nonlinearity in satisfaction factors

Source: Mazanec (2007)
Equivalent models

Source: MacCallum et al. (1993)
Inferred Causation Example: Six identities of marketing

FIGURE 1. Assumed causal structure (starting model)

FIGURE 2. Causal pattern

Source: Franke and Mazanec (2006)
Figure 3: Model validation (Sisi Museum hold-out sample) (Bauer-Krösbacher and Mazanec, in print)

Modul University Vienna
Example: PLSPM in Tourism Competitiveness Research

Source: Mazanec and Ring (2011)
Example: Qualitative Comparison Analysis of Tipping Behavior

Table 2
Truth table for high national prevalence of tipping: Cultural configurations with at least one nation

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<th>M</th>
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Source: Ferguson, Megehee, and Woodside (2017)
Is QCA superior to regression?

”Conclusion

This article has compared QCA to regression analysis in terms of three of the major assumptions required to make causal inferences. For two of the assumptions, concerning the correct form of the relationship and the presumption that association is causation, QCA has proved to be essentially as problematic as regression analysis. For the other category of assumptions, about missing variables, QCA turned out to be even weaker than regression analysis—requiring either more restrictive or mutually inconsistent assumptions.” (p. 24)


Thank you for your attention!