

A review of research about the psychology of hospitality management in three leading hospitality journals

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ABSTRACT: This article reviewed research articles published in three leading hospitality journals — *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management* and *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*. Sixty published issues (20 issues per journal) with a total of 539 articles were reviewed. The key objective of this review was to identify articles which dealt with the psychology of hospitality management and to analyse key features of those articles. Findings of a content analysis show that approximately 40% of published articles dealt with psychological topics. The most frequently researched psychological issues were clustered into three main categories: customer behaviour, employee behaviour and managerial behaviour. For the analysed psychological articles, most were authored by two or three authors, mostly academics. The most common type of research approach was testing causal models. The majority of articles employed quantitative research designs and analyses. Key implications of this study include the call for stronger diversity in hospitality psychological research and methodological approaches, better linkages between research and practice, as well as the incorporation of hospitality psychology in hospitality management curricula.

KEYWORDS: employee behaviour, guest behaviour, hospitality research, managerial behaviour, psychology

Introduction

Hospitality research is important. Academic research actively develops knowledge and helps resolve practical and managerial challenges in the hospitality industry (Law et al., 2012). Researchers greatly aid industry decision-making by providing accurate empirical facts and findings, specialised knowledge, sound and scholarly investigative methods and a long-term, objective orientation towards management and staff development (Van Scotter & Culligan, 2003). As such, research published in leading high-impact hospitality research journals is of particular importance and value to the hospitality industry.

To successfully operate a hospitality business, it is critically important to understand the intricate relations between the behaviour of guests, employees and managers. That is why psychological topics represent an integral part of hospitality management curricula in the form of modules and units focusing explicitly or implicitly on topics such as leadership, organisational behaviour, ethics, human resource management, learning and development, sales and marketing, individual differences, personality and diversity management (Min et al., 2016).

Taking into account the importance of hospitality research and the relevance of applied psychology for hospitality management, we set out to examine how psychological research is represented in hospitality research journals. This

article reviews articles published in three leading hospitality journals to identify those who are researching psychological topics. Specifically, we focus on the *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* (CQ), the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (IJHM), and the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research* (JHTR). These three journals were chosen as they are generally considered to be high-quality and high-impact in the industry, both for researchers and practitioners (Van Scotter & Culligan, 2003; McKecher et al., 2006).

Background of the journals

Established in 1960, and with a five-year impact factor of 3.851, CQ is considered one of the leading journals in the field of hospitality research. CQ is edited by J. Bruce Tracey of the School of Hotel Administration, Cornell University in the USA. CQ publishes four issues per year. The stated range of topics that the journal publishes includes strategic management, human resources, marketing, finance, real estate, accounting, operational management, facilities and design, information systems and technology, communications, travel and tourism and general management.

IJHM has a five-year impact factor of 5.470 and its Editor-in-Chief is Manuel Rivera of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida, USA. Since 2007, the

journal has published eight issues per year. The stated range of topics that the journal publishes include human resources management, consumer behaviour and marketing, business forecasting and applied economics, operational management, strategic management, financial management, planning and design, information technology and e-commerce, training and development, technological developments and national and international legislation.

JHTR is edited by Chris Roberts of DePaul University, USA, and Linda J. Shea of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA. The journal has a five-year impact factor of 4.117 and currently publishes eight issues per year. In 2016, the journal published six issues and prior to that, the journal typically published four issues per year. The aim of this journal is to publish high-quality, refereed articles that advance the knowledge base of the hospitality and tourism field. The journal states on its website that it encourages the use of a variety of research methods — both quantitative and qualitative, and that the key evaluation criterion for acceptance is a "contribution" to the development of the field.

All three journals focus on original empirical research, but they do accept other types of items for consideration, such as research notes, industry viewpoints, business practice reviews and analyses.

Method

Twenty issues of each of the three chosen journals were reviewed. These issues were published from June 2018 and going backwards. Due to the fact that different journals published different numbers of issues per year, the timeframes covered for the three journals also differed (see Table 1). *CQ* published four issues per year. Therefore, the 20 issues reviewed represented research published in the previous five years. *IJHM* published eight issues per year, which meant the 20 issues represented approximately the previous two and half years for this journal. *JHTR* currently publishes eight issues per year. However, in 2016, the journal published six issues and prior to that, the journal typically published four issues per year. Due to the changes that occurred in the numbers of issues published in different years, the reviewed 20 issues covered most publications between 2015 and 2018 for *JHTR*. The reviewing process focused specifically on original research articles. Other published items (e.g. editorials, research notes, reviews, etc.) were not included in this review. In total, the 60 issues yielded 539 articles for analysis.

Before the full reviewing process started, one of the authors conducted a pilot analysis by reviewing two issues per journal independently. This was done to create a template for the subsequent full review and analysis of all included issues. The resulting template contained items that the reviewers would focus on when reviewing the 539 articles, including: whether or not the article dealt with a psychological topic; whether

the psychological issue was researched from the customer perspective, the employee perspective, or the managerial perspective; what the researched psychological topic was (topic was noted on the basis of two textbooks, one on organisational behaviour [Robbins & Judge, 2017] and the other on consumer psychology [Jansson-Boyd, 2010]); level of analysis (organisational level, team level, dyad, individual, or other); sector (hotel, restaurant, casino, spa, tourist destination, etc.); research definition (testing models, testing hypotheses, research questions); data type (cross-sectional survey single source, cross-sectional survey multiple sources, longitudinal survey single source, longitudinal survey multiple sources, on-site observation, interview, focus group, simulation, business or archival data); geographical location of data source (USA, Asia, Europe, Australia, Africa, etc.); data analysis methods (regression, descriptive analyses, SEM, factor analysis, *T*-test/ANOVA/MANOVA, cluster analysis, content analysis, other qualitative analyses, other quantitative analyses); number of authors (1, 2, 3, 4, 5+); and position of authors (professor, assistant professor, associate professor, bachelor's student, master's student, PhD student, post-doc researcher, lecturer/senior lecturer, author from the industry).

Results

Table 1 presents an overview of the reviewed volumes and issues. *IJHM* published the greatest number of articles in total and per issue ($\Sigma = 227$, $M = 13.85$), followed by *CQ* ($\Sigma = 151$, $M = 7.55$) and *JHTR* ($\Sigma = 111$, $M = 5.55$); in total 539 articles were reviewed. Of the 539 articles, 224 (42%) were found to be focused on psychological topics. All further analyses and findings relate to these 224 articles.

Psychological studies

In line with the outcomes of the pilot review that was conducted prior to the full review, the articles that were deemed to be dealing with psychological topics were further categorised into three main categories: those related to employee behaviour, customer/guest behaviour and managerial behaviour. To further review the key themes from the customer' perspective, the textbook *Consumer Psychology* (Jansson-Boyd, 2010) served as the basis for reviewing researched topics. Reviewing article abstracts and keywords revealed that the main topics included satisfaction, purchase decision-making, motivation, loyalty, trust, communication, emotions, complaining, norms vs behaviours, culture and discrimination.

The framework for the employee and managerial perspective was provided by Robbins and Judge (2017). A review of article keywords revealed that the main topics related to employee behaviour included: job satisfaction, employee engagement, job characteristics, motivation, emotional labour, stress and job security. The main topics related to managerial behaviour

TABLE 1: Overview of reviewed issues per journal

Journal details	<i>Cornell Hospitality Quarterly</i>	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research</i>
Five-year impact factor	3.851	5.470	4.117
Number of articles in the 20 reviewed issues	151	277	111
Average number of articles per issue	7.55	13.85	5.55
Twenty issues reviewed	Issue 54(3) to Issue 59(2)	Volume 51 to Volume 71	Issue 39(3) to Issue 42(4)

included: leadership behaviour and styles, leader traits, leader-member exchange, power, organisational culture, organisational branding, trust, emotional intelligence, managing diversity and organisational politics.

Authorship

As shown in Figure 1, most articles were authored by two or three individuals (37% were authored by three authors, 36% by two authors, 17% by four authors, 7% by one author, 4% by five or more authors). In terms of academic and/or professional positions, academics formed the majority of authors: 28% were professors, 32% assistant professors, 22% associate professors and 5% lecturers (Figure 2). Other types of positions that authors held include bachelor's and master's students as well as researchers from related fields such as hospitality consulting

firms or governmental agencies and bodies that deal with hospitality and tourism-related issues.

Research

Figure 3 shows how authors formulated their research. Among the psychological papers analysed, testing causal models appeared to be the most frequent research objective (65%), followed by testing hypotheses (23%). Only 11% of articles used research questions. It should be noted here that most articles dealing with causal models also included hypotheses. So, the 23% which dealt with hypothesis testing had only hypotheses and no models.

Consistent with the way that authors formulated their research objectives, a large number of studies utilised a quantitative approach involving survey data (Figure 4). Among the studies

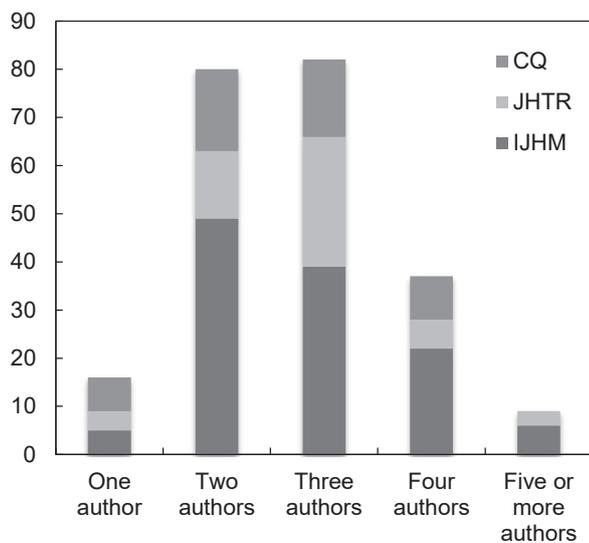


FIGURE 1: Number of authors

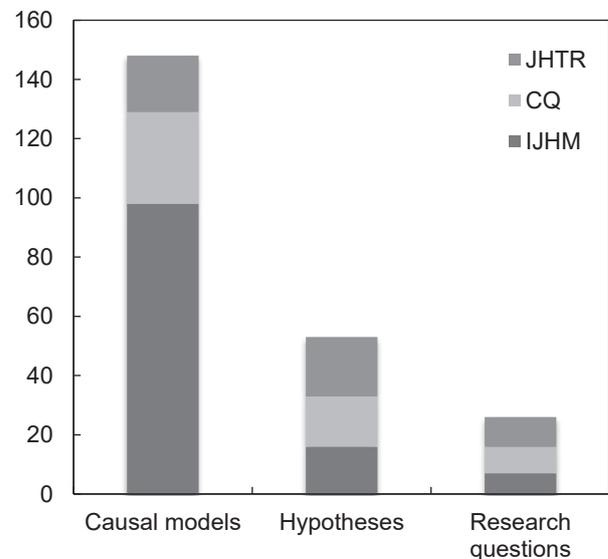


FIGURE 3: Research definitions

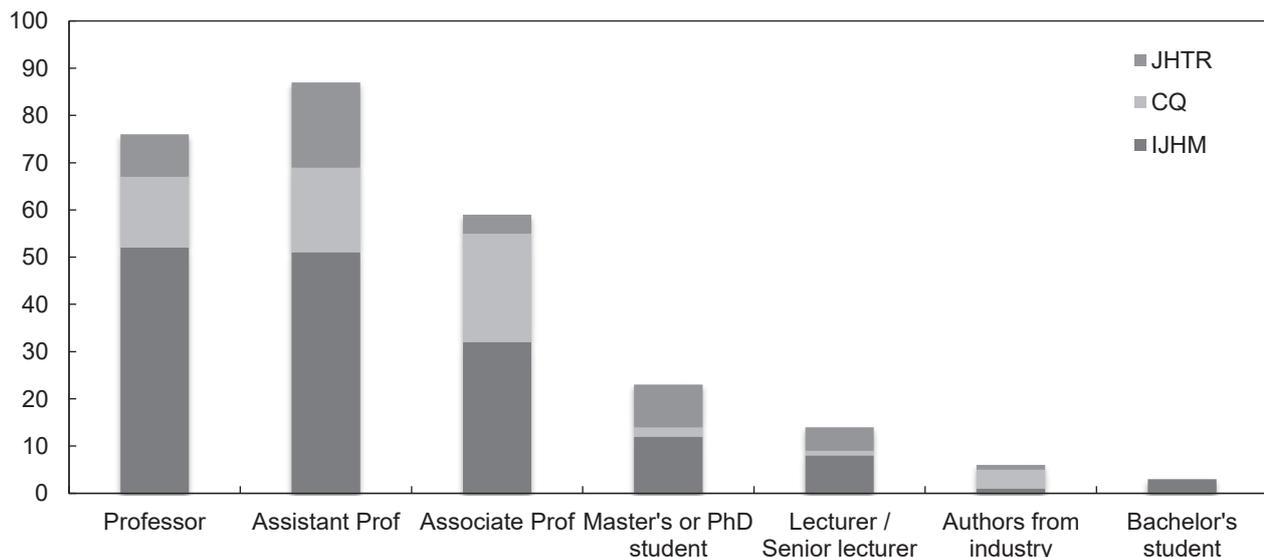


FIGURE 2: Position of authors

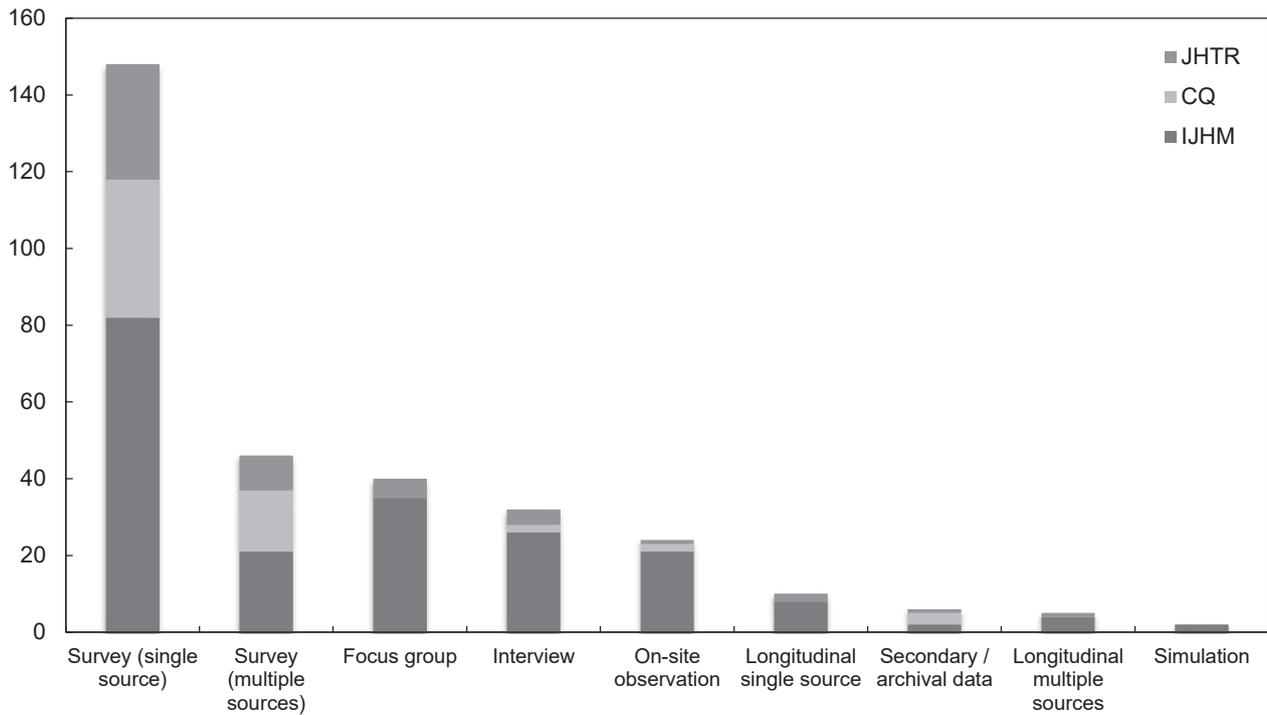


FIGURE 4: Types of data

which relied on cross-sectional surveys, the majority used single-source self-reports (76%), with only 24% using multiple-source surveys (i.e. dyads or teams). The consistency between research objectives and data usage is further shown by the types of data analytical methods performed by the authors (Figure 5). Regression analyses and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) count as the main data analytical approaches used to test

models and hypotheses. Associated with these analyses are descriptive analyses and factor analyses which were typically performed prior to testing hypotheses and models. Overall, 94% of the analysed articles used quantitative analytical approaches, while 6% were qualitative in nature (with the most common qualitative data collection instruments being interviewing and focus groups).

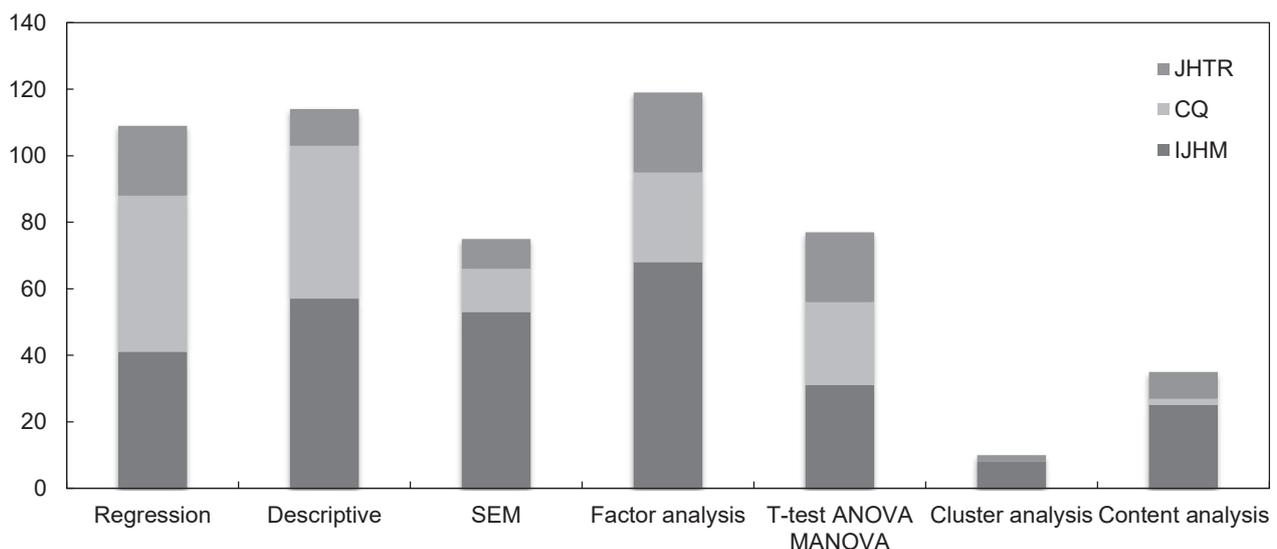


FIGURE 5: Data analytical methods

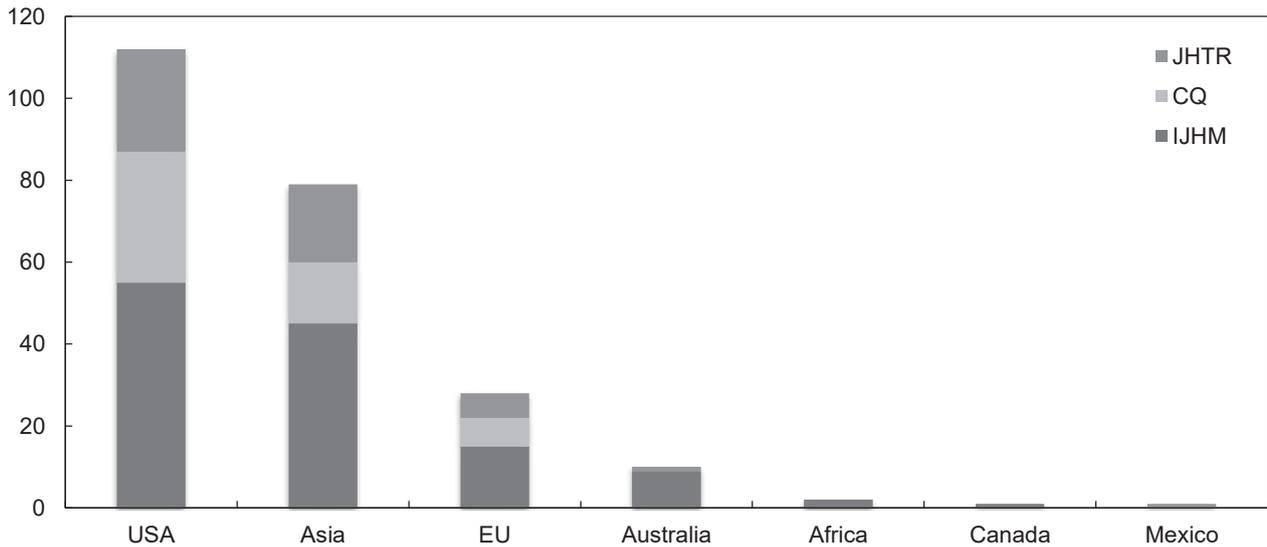


FIGURE 6: Geographical source of data (country and/or region)

Geographical and industrial background

Figure 6 shows the geographical regions where data were collected. The United States (48%), Asia (34%) and the European Union (12%) represent the top three regions where research data were collected. In terms of specific sectors of the hospitality and tourism industries, hotels (37%), restaurants (30%) and tourists in general (14%) were the main sources of research data (Figure 7).

Discussion and implications

The findings of this review show that psychological research accounted for almost half of all published research papers in the

60 issues that were reviewed, highlighting the importance of psychological research in hospitality. Our findings further show that hospitality psychological research is typically conducted in three main areas: studies focusing on customer/guest behaviour, employee behaviour and managerial behaviour. These are in line with published textbooks focusing on consumer behaviour, human resources and management and leadership (e.g. Crouch et al., 2004; Berger & Brownell, 2009). In terms of authorship and research characteristics, our findings show that most studies were authored by multiple academics (typically two or three, mostly professors, assistant and/or associate professors and lecturers), dealt with testing models and/or hypotheses, utilised

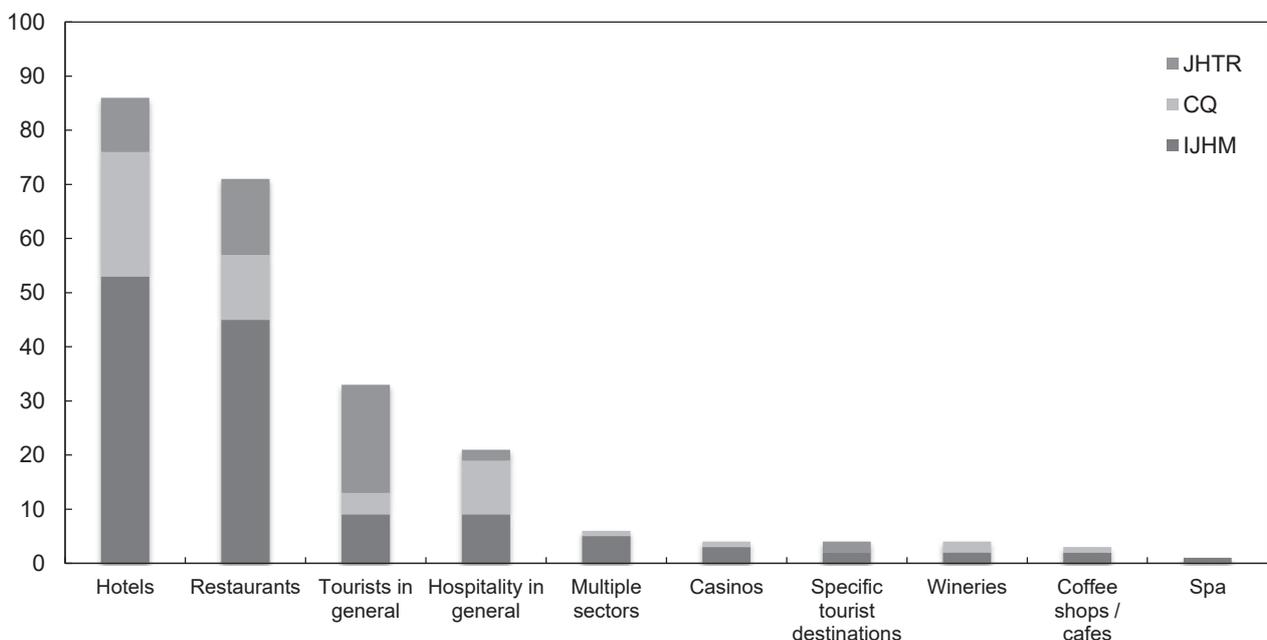


FIGURE 7: Sectors from which data were collected

quantitative data and analytical methods and were conducted in the US, Asia and Europe.

These findings have some potential implications for hospitality professionals, researchers, and educators. From the perspective of authors and scholars, conducting psychological research in the context of hospitality represents a fruitful avenue for publication in respected journals. This is evidenced by the fact that almost half of all published papers in these 60 issues dealt with psychological topics. Given the wide range of themes and subjects from the three perspectives (guest, employee, managerial), there are ample opportunities to conduct interesting and important psychological research in hospitality. For publication in leading hospitality research journals, the general pattern of findings from this review shows that quantitative research studies represent the mainstream, and the testing of causal models and relationships appear to be a key focus.

Second, there is the potential need for academics and practitioners to collaborate more in research and publication efforts. Few studies in the reviewed issues were written and published by practitioners from the industry. The overwhelming majority of authors were from academic institutions. The gap between scholars and managers which exists in the field of general management (Shapiro et al., 2007) also appears to be present when it comes to hospitality management and research. More collaborative and continuous joint research efforts between academic institutes and practitioners from the industry could strengthen the two-way transmission of knowledge between scholars and educators, on the one hand, and practitioners and managers, on the other.

Third, the findings of this review suggest that a wider range of methodological research approaches may serve to strengthen hospitality psychological research. As shown in Figure 4, survey design is the predominant methodological approach used in the studies reviewed. Experimental studies, mixed-method studies and studies collecting empirical data using other instruments (e.g. photographic and video data, data from wearable devices such as Fitbit) may serve to diversify hospitality psychological research and make this specific field more interesting and appealing to readers.

Finally, for hospitality educators and curriculum developers, the psychology of hospitality management represents a core subject for hospitality management courses and programmes. Hospitality psychology can be incorporated into the curriculum in different ways. The various psychological perspectives (employee perspective, managerial and organisational perspective, consumer perspective) could be taught independently as different blocks or modules. Alternatively, they could also be taught in an integrated manner, including these different perspectives in one large unit, allowing links to be drawn between, for example, personnel (i.e., staff) psychology with consumer experiences (e.g. how employee empowerment influences guest satisfaction [Wang & Chen, 2017]).

Potential limitations and future research

The findings of this review study should be viewed in light of two potential limitations. First, as our review focused on only three hospitality research journals, the results of the review may not generalise to the entire field of hospitality research. It should be noted, however, that the three journals that we focused on

are generally considered as leading, top-tier hospitality journals by researchers and academics in hospitality management. The fact remains that a wider range of hospitality journals should be reviewed by future researchers to paint a broader picture regarding psychological research published in hospitality journals.

The second potential limitation relates to our focus on psychological research and the exclusion of other topics in this review. The findings of this review study relating to article features, types of data and research definitions, authorship patterns and so forth refer specifically to the articles that were identified to be psychological. Our findings do not apply to all other articles focusing on other important topics published in the issues of the journals analysed. Future review studies may seek to be more inclusive and extensive in terms of scope and research topics.

Conclusions

This article reviewed research articles published in three leading hospitality journals. The research topics of the 224 psychology-related articles were categorised into three main themes: customer/guest behaviour, employee behaviour and managerial behaviour. Articles dealing with customer behaviour included topics such as customer satisfaction, purchase decision-making, motivation, loyalty, trust, communication, emotions, complaining, norms vs behaviours, culture and discrimination. Articles dealing with employee behaviour focused on job satisfaction, employee engagement, job characteristics, motivation, emotional labour, stress and job security. The studies on managerial behaviour covered issues such as leadership behaviour and styles, leader traits, leader-member exchange, power, organisational culture, organisational branding, trust, emotional intelligence, managing diversity and organisational politics.

Most studies were authored by two or three authors, with the majority of authors being academics. The most common type of research definition was testing causal models. A majority of articles used quantitative survey data. Fewer articles used qualitative data, in which cases, data were most likely collected through interviewing and focus groups. Most articles relied on data collected from hotels and restaurants in the US and Asia.

These results highlight the relevance and importance of psychological research in hospitality management and research overall, and provide potential directions for hospitality educators, researchers and practitioners in future research efforts to enhance hospitality research and to strengthen the two-way transmission of knowledge between hospitality researchers and managers.

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