



## Examining the interlocking of tourism editorial boards

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### ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods study examines the membership composition and concentration of the top 20 tourism journal editorial boards over time. Support was found for the emergent phenomenon of “interlocking editorship” (Baccini & Barabesi, 2010) explaining the concentrated structural properties of tourism journal editorial boards. Overwhelmingly, the boards sampled at two time points were found to be highly concentrated and homogenous, dominated in the majority by males and professorial level appointments. Contextualising these findings, the views of senior journal editors were sought in a qualitative study. For this cohort, interlocking editorship was not viewed as a significant challenge to knowledge production relative to other more pressing issues. Stemming from this longitudinal investigation that evidences interlocking editorship as affecting the structural properties of tourism editorial boards, a research agenda is proposed to advance understanding of the role and composition of tourism editorial boards.

### 1. Introduction

As the study of tourism has advanced, the number of tourism journals has burgeoned considerably. The content of these provide a rich data source that has been thoroughly mined by scholars. Collectively, such studies have revealed that the disciplinary boundaries informing tourism research have expanded in breadth (Cheng et al., 2011; Crouch & Perdue, 2015); there is greater citing of sources from within the tourism field (Kim, Savage, Howey, & Van Hoof, 2009); co-authored papers are now the norm (McKercher & Tung, 2015; Zhao & Ritchie, 2007); and generational change is occurring amongst the most prolific authors in the field (McKercher & Tung, 2015). We also know that the number of tourism journals has grown exponentially (McKercher & Tung, 2015) and that a small number of journals are consistently rated as the most prestigious in the field (McKercher, Law, & Lam, 2006). Despite this proliferation, our knowledge of the operation of tourism journals is conversely rather limited. This is somewhat surprising given that the research published in academic journals has significant implications for the production of tourism knowledge that can inform policy, planning and management of experiences for tourists, communities, economies and environments.

Journal editorial boards are a key mechanism responsible for the “orchestration of science” (Braun, 2004, p. 24); yet, despite various calls for research on the roles and membership of these bodies (Benckendorff

& Zehrer, 2013; Cheng et al., 2011; Sanchez, Makkonen, & Williams, 2019; Zhao & Ritchie, 2007), Law et al. (2010, p. 455) noted the absence of “published articles on the academic leadership of editors, associate editors, and editorial board members”. Additionally, Ballantyne et al. (2009, p. 152) suggest that “further research might explore the roles played by editorial boards as gatekeepers and champions of particular research approaches and topics”. Nonetheless, whilst representing an important knowledge gap, this dearth of research is not sufficient justification alone for the study of tourism editorial boards. Rather, it is the important role editors and editorial board members play in shaping the research discourse that underpins the salience of investigating these boards. Zsindely et al. (1982, p. 58) contend that “journal editors occupy powerful strategic positions in the social hierarchy of their field”. Pan and Zhang (2014, p. 34) note this extends to the power to “set the standards for publication, determine research streams/topics desired for publishing, and identify important issues that warrant attention” and ultimately select “the type of research that gets published”. Law et al. (2010) highlight the importance of editorial board membership as a mark of academic standing, which may assist with academic appointment and promotion.

Researchers have studied “interlocking editorship” as a framework to investigate the structural properties of editorial boards (Baccini & Barabesi, 2010, 2011; Baccini, Barabesi, Khelifaoui, & Gingras, 2019; Cabanac, 2012), whereby editors sit on more than one editorial board, with

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the potential to further increase their perceived power base and influence over shaping research discourse. In proposing the framework, it was [Baccini and Barabesi \(2010\)](#) that the power of those with more than one editorial board membership would as an outcome lead to common elements in the editorial policies of the journals “interlocked” through these associations.

We acknowledge that different journals have different roles and requirements for editorial board members, with some relying solely on board members for all reviews, thus ensuring the editorial board has a significant effect on the review, reject and acceptance process. Others use both editorial board members and ad-hoc reviewers, where the overall influence of board members may be less significant. [Baccini and Barabesi \(2011\)](#) suggest that editorial boards continue to hold significant sway in shaping discipline-based research despite a move away from their traditional peer review role towards greater reliance on ad-hoc reviewers. Additionally, journals who rely on ad-hoc reviewers often advertise the composition of their editorial boards, thus implying that their editorial board is an important marker to potential authors and forms part of the journal's image and reputation aligned with [Goeldner's](#) contention (2005, p. 46) that “a journal is only as good as its editorial board”.

We set out to discern if there is evidence of interlocking editorship by examining the concentration of individuals on the top 20 tourism editorial boards. To our best knowledge, nobody has attempted this to date, which is a key gap in the scholarship of tourism knowledge literature. In doing so, the limited body of research examining the membership of tourism editorial boards is also extended by incorporating, in combination, a greater range of study variables than previously considered to illuminate the profile of these academic leaders. It is not the purpose of this paper to discern whether interlocking editorship is necessarily an issue that should concern us as an academy; rather, we simply seek to uncover evidence, or otherwise, of its existence. Additionally, comparing data collected at two points, we seek to examine longitudinal membership changes over time. In seeking the firsthand views of editors-in-chief, we aim to broadly contextualise what, if any, impacts interlocking editorship may have on editorial board appointment policies. Should interlocking editorship in the tourism academy be demonstrated, we argue that this may provide a starting point for a broader discussion as to how we wish to shape and structure the future of tourism knowledge production.

## 2. Literature review

Reflecting the power positions of editors and editorial board members, they have been recognised as acting as “scientific gatekeepers” in multiple disciplines, including tourism ([Baccini et al., 2019](#); [Ballantyne et al., 2009](#); [Braun, 2004](#); [Cabanac, 2012](#); [Nisonger, 2002](#); [Pan & Zhang, 2014](#); [Pritchard & Morgan, 2017](#); [Sanchez et al., 2019](#); [Zsindely et al., 1982](#)). They have also been highlighted as being “invisible colleges” ([Crane, 1967](#)), which form “a decisive factor in the self-organizing system of sciences” ([Braun & Dióspatonyi, 2005](#), p. 1551). In respect of tourism, [Tribe's \(2010, p. 28\)](#) conceptual analysis of the academy as comprising tribes, territories and networks, using the terminology of “obligatory passage points”, highlighted the gatekeeping role in academic networks of key journals and their editors, for which academics working within the field must recognise and reference for acceptance in the field. [Tribe \(2018\)](#) has also associated the work of editors to that of “curators” of tourism knowledge.

Moving beyond these descriptors, to date the limited investigations of tourism editorial boards have primarily focused on understanding the membership composition of these boards in terms of geographic location and gender profile. [Law et al. \(2010\)](#), for example, examined their membership from a regional and host institution perspective. They found that the United States represented the lion's share of regional and national editors, associate editors and editorial board members, although the greatest number of chief editors were employed in Asia

(notably Hong Kong Polytechnic University) and the United Kingdom (notably Bournemouth University). Comparing their findings to previous studies of institutional contributions to tourism journals (e.g., [Jogaratham, Chon, McCleary, Mena, & Yoo, 2005](#); [Zhao & Ritchie, 2007](#)), the authors suggest “there is a strong correlation between academic leadership in research journals and research output” (p. 470), a finding noted in an earlier study by [Mason and Cameron \(2006\)](#). Whilst not referencing the phenomenon of interlocking editorship, [Law et al. \(2010\)](#) do suggest that their findings may have been influenced as “often a small group of well-known scholars serve as editors or EB (editorial board) members for multiple journals” (p. 474).

Recent research attention focused on gender and the tourism academy has highlighted editorial board memberships as an indicator of the gendered status of academic leadership. [Munar et al. \(2015\)](#) studied the gender profile of the boards of 189 tourism and hospitality journals in addition to those of the top 20 ranked tourism journals (according to Google Scholar). Across all three categories of positions (editors or similar, associate editors or similar, and honorary editor positions) and both levels of analysis (all journals compared to the top 20), the overwhelming majority (in excess of 70%) of these positions were held by men. [Pritchard and Morgan \(2017\)](#) likewise found that 77% of the 677 editorial board positions on the 12 top-ranked tourism journals were held by males. Comparing their findings to an earlier study by [Aitchison \(2001\)](#), the authors suggest that “the overall gender imbalance across tourism's leading journals has remained since statistics were first collected 20 years ago” ([Pritchard & Morgan, 2017](#), p. 38).

These themes resonate in editorial board studies conducted in other disciplines. The international composition of editorial boards has been a focus of research attention – “international” defined as containing members from at least five countries ([Zsindely et al., 1982](#)). In a study of 252 science editorial boards, [Braun \(2004\)](#) found a correlation between the nationality of an editor and the number of papers published in the studied journal by scientists of the same nationality. More recently, a study by [Cummings and Hoebink \(2017\)](#) of the editorial board memberships of 10 journals in the development field, found that only 9% of positions were held by academics from developing countries. [Cummings and Hoebink \(2017\)](#) go on to suggest that from the perspectives of equity and diversity, this marginalisation is highly problematic.

Studies of gender representation on editorial boards are not confined to the tourism field. [Metz and Harzing \(2012\)](#) examined the editorial board composition of 57 management journals over the period 1989–2009 and noted increases in women's representation on editorial boards across these 20 years. However, for all but one management field (Human Resource Management/Organisational Behaviour), these increases came off a small base of representation with women comprising less than 30% of the board memberships studied. [Metz and Harzing \(2012\)](#) also noted greater representation of women on the editorial boards of lower ranked journals. In a related study, [Metz, Harzing, and Zyphur \(2016\)](#) examined whether particular characteristics of journal editors (gender, age and academic performance) affected gender representation on editorial boards. Examining the profile of female editors in the sample (15% of all editors), analysis revealed a positive relationship between female editors and the number of females on editorial boards and that better performing editors (based on the number of their publications) were also associated with more females on editorial boards. [Pan and Zhang's \(2014\)](#) study likewise found that of 42 marketing editorial boards, those with female editors had a higher ratio of women editorial board members and that the incidence of female editors was associated with the percentage of journal articles authored or co-authored by female researchers.

Interestingly, studies have called into question whether editorial board members are appointed based on their research standing. A study by [Mason and Cameron \(2006\)](#) of 24 hospitality journals and the 396 refereed papers they published in 2002 found that editorial board membership did not correlate with having an above average research output based on the sample of articles examined. [Braun \(2004\)](#) also

found that editors-in-chief had fewer citations on average than other authors in their respective journals, leading him to query “if not their research eminence then what else might be the source of the authority of these scientists?” (p. 109). Furthermore, [Braun \(2004\)](#) found a strong correlation between the mean citation frequency of whole editorial boards and their respective journal impact factor. This contrasts with an earlier study by [Nisonger \(2002\)](#) of the editorial boards of 153 business, political science and genetics journals, which found no correlation between editorial board and citation data.

In an interesting study, [Siler, Lee, and Bero \(2015\)](#) examined the effectiveness of scientific gatekeeping in three leading medical journals. Comparing initially accepted and rejected papers to the journals in 2003 and 2004 on the basis of article citation data, their results indicated that while editors (and reviewers) generally made good decisions, initially rejected manuscripts, which went on subsequently to be published in other prestigious journals, were more highly cited than manuscripts that progressed and were accepted in the journal to which they were originally submitted. [Siler et al. \(2015, p. 364\)](#) conclude that these results imply that “scientific gatekeeping may have problems with dealing with exceptional or unconventional submissions”. In one of the few qualitative investigations of the practice of tourism editorial boards to date, [Sanchez et al. \(2019\)](#) interviewed 26 editors and editorial board members in relation to how leading tourism journals handled original submissions. Whilst acknowledging some potential biases (i.e., works that contradict the referee’s own research), it was considered that overall the peer review process worked well to identify and support original works, which is positive for knowledge production in the academy.

### 2.1. Interlocking editorship

Whilst the body of work discussed in the preceding section is important for illuminating the structural properties of editorial boards, these studies for the most part are not guided by overarching theories or frameworks. A framework that has been relatively recently proposed to examine the structural properties of editorial board networks is that of interlocking editorship. First proposed in a scientometric study by [Baccini and Barabesi \(2010\)](#), it draws from the organisational literature on interlocking directorship, whereby “interlocks” are created when “a person affiliated with one organization sits on the board of directors of another organization” ([Mizruchi, 1996, p. 271](#)), creating an interfirm tie in the process, which exerts influence on firm behaviour ([Davies, 1991](#)).

To test for interlocking editorship, [Baccini and Barabesi \(2010\)](#) conducted a network analysis of all members sitting on the boards of 742 economics journals. Of the 21,525 positions available, these were occupied by 15,921 people, with the average number of editorial board positions 1.35 per person. [Baccini and Barabesi \(2010\)](#) conclude their sample represented a compact network, with 90% of the journals directly or indirectly interlocked via their editorial board memberships. In a follow up study of 61 information and library science journals, [Baccini and Barabesi \(2011\)](#) found the network generated by interlocking editorship to be less compact with 1.14 the mean number of editorial roles per member. These authors go on to conjecture that a possible reason for this less concentrated network was “the relative youthfulness” of the field compared to older disciplines such as economics, the focus of their prior study ([Baccini & Barabesi, 2011, p. 390](#)). [Cabanac \(2012\)](#) in his study of the editorial boards of 77 information science journals also found evidence of interlocking editorship. The 2846 editorial board members sampled on average sat on 1.18 editorial boards and were in the majority male (85%).

Given evidence of the phenomenon in other disciplines, it is appropriate to extend study of interlocking editorship to the tourism field, for which research on discipline-based editorial boards remains at a nascent stage. In doing so, the current investigation examines the composition and concentration of top-tier tourism journal editorial boards to discern if there is evidence of interlocking editorship (i.e., individuals holding multiple editorial board roles). As noted previously, the paper focuses

solely on the existence, or otherwise, of such a phenomenon. However, where there is potential for these structural properties to exert potential positive and negative effects on our field, for example, in relation to diversity and inclusion and gender balance, the paper will tentatively highlight and call for these to be a focus of future research.

## 3. Method

A mixed-method approach was used to explore tourism editorial board composition and concentration. This comprised an initial quantitative phase involving collection of secondary data on tourism journals and their editorial boards from a sample of the leading tourism journals, followed by qualitative interviews with editors-in-chief and/or co-editors representing those journals sampled. This approach was taken to enable greater insight and contextualisation of the quantitative findings, allowing for the views of editors to be captured on the phenomenon of interlocking editorship.

### 3.1. Quantitative study

#### 3.1.1. Sample

The top 20 ranked tourism journals were sampled from the Scimago Journal Rank (SJR) 2016 list and the earlier 2014 SJR list. Based on these samples, data was collected in 2018 (based on SJR 2016) and 2016 (based on SJR 2014) (these SJR lists being the most recent at the time of the study). This repeated cross-sectional longitudinal design ([Steel, 2011](#)) allowed for analysis of changes in editorial board memberships over time, insights not gleaned from previous cross-sectional studies. A preliminary list of journals was obtained using the Scimago subject category of “Tourism, Leisure & Hospitality Management”. This list was reduced by selecting only those with “Tourism” in their titles. For example, top-tier journals including the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* and *Journal of Vacation Marketing* were excluded on this basis. “Hospitality” however appears jointly in the titles of some journals sampled. Following [Cheng et al.’s \(2011\)](#) method, a check was made to ensure that these journals all prominently stipulated tourism as a key focus in their mission statements.

Between the 2018 and 2016 datasets, there were 24 journals in total due to changes in ranking resulting in eight journals appearing only once. 16 journals appeared in both datasets and these were used as the basis for the longitudinal analysis described below. The selection of these journals yielded a sufficient sample size for analysis purposes, akin to [Munar et al.’s \(2015\)](#) top 20 analysis. In addition, as tourism continues to be dominated by a small number of prestigious journals ([McKercher et al., 2006](#)), this sample was representative of the most influential journals in the field.

To populate data on all editors of these sampled boards (hereafter referred to as editor data), their names were collected from journal websites. Following, searches were conducted of the institutional website each member was principally affiliated with to obtain their profile data. Data on secondary institutional affiliations, such as in the case of additional adjunct or honorary positions, were not collected.

#### 3.1.2. Measures

**Journal data:** A journal dataset was created that included data on journal ranking (based on the Scimago journal ranking and the Australian Business Deans Council [ABDC] Journal Quality List 2013), journal h-index (sourced from the SJR data), decade of original publication and editorial board size. Additionally, each journal website was searched for evidence of an editorial board policy, which might be expected to guide editorial appointment and tenure processes in a transparent manner.

**Editor data:** An editor dataset was created that included data on editor gender and institutional affiliation. Data were also sourced on editorial role, level of academic seniority (determined by position titles) and location, with this data subsequently recoded for analysis purposes (see [Table 1](#)). Relative to the literature on tourism editorial boards, the

**Table 1**  
Raw and recoded variables.

	Recoded variables	Raw variables		
Academic level	Lecturer level	Assistant Lecturer		
		Associate Lecturer		
		Lecturer		
	Professorial level	Senior Lecturer		
		Assistant Professor		
		Associate Professor		
Editorial board role	Others	Professor		
		Eminent Professor		
		Non-identifiable profiles		
Location	Senior editorial board roles	Editor		
		Editor-in-chief		
		Associate editor		
		Book reviews editor		
		Geographical area editor		
		Managing editor		
		Consulting editor		
		Editorial advisory board member		
		Special advisor		
		Location	Editorial board member	Editorial board member
				Canada
				USA
				Austria
Belgium				
Bulgaria				
Croatia				
Denmark				
Finland				
France				
Germany				
Greece				
Iceland				
Location	Europe	Italy		
		Norway		
		Portugal		
		Spain		
		Slovenia		
		Sweden		
		Switzerland		
		The Netherlands		
		UK		
		Location	Asia	China
				Dubai
				Hong Kong
				India
Israel				
Japan				
Lebanon				
Macau				
Malaysia				
Mauritius				
Oman				
Saudi Arabia				
Singapore				
South Korea				
Location	Australasia	Taiwan		
		Thailand		
		The Philippines		
		Turkey		
		United Arab Emirates		
		Australia		
		Fiji		
		New Zealand		
		Location	Africa	Botswana
				Ghana
				Nigeria
		Location	South America	South Africa
				Argentina
Brazil				
Ecuador				
		Mexico		

inclusion of the seniority variable is new and allows for this to be studied in combination with previously studied variables (Law et al., 2010; Munar et al., 2015; Pritchard & Morgan, 2007, 2017).

Longitudinal data: The editor variables of gender, academic seniority and location were aggregated at journal level to create a proportional percentage for each journal that appeared in both the 2016 and 2014 SJR lists. This data was used to compare the composition of tourism editorial board memberships over time.

### 3.2. Analysis

Frequency analysis was conducted to discern the profile of the journals and editorial board members sampled based on the study variables. Chi-square tests for independence were performed on the separate journal and editor datasets. The chi-square test was chosen due to the nominal nature of the variables. Only those tests with Pearson statistics ( $p$ -values) of  $<0.05$  and a minimum expected cell count of 5 were accepted as statistically significant (Coakes, 2012). These are underlined and in bold in Tables 5, 6 and 7 below.

These tests were in part conducted with the aim of confirming the results of previous studies, for example, the greater representation of males on editorial boards (Munar et al., 2015). Additionally, they were conducted to reveal associations untested in relation to the tourism academy but noted relative to other disciplines, for example, the association between journal quality (higher quality) and editorial board geographic diversity (less diversity) (Cabanac, 2012). Finally, they were conducted to reveal associations that the researchers considered had intuitive appeal, for example, the ABDC journal rankings (as a proxy for journal quality) and academic seniority, with a view to discerning if higher ranked journals had a greater representation of professorial appointments.

### 3.3. Limitations

The limitations of the quantitative study include, but are not limited to, the inability to verify the generalisability of the findings due to the lack of an accurate profile of the tourism academic population. Additionally, the sampled journals are English-language publications, therefore the findings may not apply to the editorial boards of non-English language tourism journals.

There was an implicit assumption made that the information on journal webpages reflected current board membership at the time. The range of detail provided varied considerably. Most editorial boards provided members' full names, with a limited number also stating their institutional affiliation. This affiliation was useful for verifying that the correct institutional profile was being used to supplement information collected from journals. However, where journals provided limited information about their editorial boards, accurate data collection was hampered. In some cases, journals provided last names and initials, but did not provide affiliations. Gathering additional data were still practicable for editorial board members with unique last names, as these could be cross-referenced with their areas of research. However, for those with more common surnames, the lack of affiliation and/or full first names prevented accurate identification. Overall, the impact of this missing data was minor with only 2% (2016 SJR) and 3% (2014 SJR) of the sample incomplete, affecting the variable totals noted in Tables 3 and 4 below.

It must be acknowledged that whilst this longitudinal data represents a novel methodological contribution to the extant tourism editorial board studies, the profiles of the journals sampled and editorial board members will likely have changed since the data was collected. However, the study will continue to have relevance based on persistent patterns in editorial board memberships in tourism (Aitchison, 2001; Pritchard & Morgan, 2017). Collectively, these limitations are common to the studies cited in the literature review (Law et al., 2010; Munar et al., 2015; Pritchard & Morgan, 2017).

3.4. Qualitative study

Informed by the quantitative findings, editors-in-chief and co-editors of the 2016 SJR sample (n = 35) were invited via email to be interviewed to discuss the editorial board appointment policies and procedures of their journals, as well as their views on the phenomenon of interlocking editorship, its potential impacts and their journal's strategies in response to these impacts. These interview questions are included in Appendix A. After a further follow-up to all those invited to participate, only three editors-in-chief and/or co-editors agreed to be interviewed in person or via Skype in late 2018. The interviews took between 30 and 60 min to complete and the informants comprised professors of both genders. To protect informant confidentiality, no information that would identify participants is used in reporting their views. The small respondent number is a limitation of this study phase; however, in reflecting the views of a select cohort of editors-in-chief and co-editors that oversee knowledge production in the leading tourism journals and also noting the dearth of qualitative studies capturing their voice (Sanchez et al., 2019), we consider their views to be influential and important to report.

4. Quantitative results

The results will firstly be discussed in relation to the journal data based primarily on the 2016 SJR (as the most recent data available, collected in 2018), followed by examination of the composition and concentration of the sample editorial boards. A longitudinal comparison will also be made between the 2014 SJR editor data (collected in 2016) with a view to highlighting any significant changes in editorial board composition for the 16 journals common to both samples.

4.1. Journal level: Journal and editorial board composition

Of the 20 journals sampled from the 2016 SJR list, editorial board sizes ranged from 15 to 126, with a median size of 45 (see Table 2). As an indicator of journal impact, h-indices ranged from 14 to 143 (median = 37). A gender split for each journal revealed that the *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sports and Tourism Education* had the lowest representation of female editorial board members (16%), whilst *Tourism Management Perspectives* had the highest (57%). Examining the seniority profile, 80%

of members were at professorial level for all but three journals. None of the journals at the time of the study openly advertised an editorial board appointment policy on their home website. Two editorials, however, were published in 2018 explaining editors-in-chief's criteria for selecting new editorial board members; these were for the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* and *Tourism Management Perspectives* (Higham & Miller, 2018; Khoo-Lattimore, 2018).

Separate chi-square tests revealed there were no significant differences between the top 20 journals sampled on the basis of journal rankings, editorial board size, gender composition and seniority, and decade of origin (recoded as pre-1990s, 1990s and post-1990s). The results at journal level indicate that the journals and their editorial boards were comparable based on these characteristics.

4.2. Editor level: Editorial board concentration and composition

Based on the 2016 SJR sample, there were 1134 editorial board positions, representing the total membership of the 20 journals, up from 1039 positions in the 2014 SJR sample. Table 3 details the descriptive profile of the total sample (i.e., the total number of available editorial

Table 3  
Overview of variables by total sample.

Total number of editorial board positions	SJR 2014		SJR 2016	
	N = 1039		N = 1134	
	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Male	712	71%	766	69%
Female	297	29%	349	31%
Academic level				
Professorial	853	86%	970	86%
Lecturer	109	11%	140	12%
Other	35	4%	24	2%
Location				
North America	347	33%	346	31%
Europe	310	30%	348	31%
Asia	180	17%	196	17%
Australasia	186	18%	191	17%
Africa	12	1%	34	3%
South America	3	0.3%	9	1%

Table 2  
List of journals sampled in 2016 SJR.

Rank	Journal name	SJR	Decade of origin	Board size	ABDC Ranking	h-index	Editor Gender (% Female)		Editor Seniority (% Professorial)	
							2014	2016	2014	2016
1	Tourism Management	3027	1980	35	A*	143	23%	21%	97%	94%
2	Journal of Travel Research	2820	1960	126	A*	103	36%	37%	85%	83%
3	Annals of Tourism Research	2262	1970	104	A*	132	33%	33%	91%	93%
4	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research	2150	1970	114	A	50	31%	35%	82%	85%
5	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	1543	1990	50	A*	76	39%	38%	83%	86%
6	Current Issues in Tourism	1474	1990	39	A	50	18%	18%	87%	92%
7	International Journal of Tourism Research	1315	1990	37	A	37	25%	28%	83%	92%
8	Tourism Geographies	1202	1990	48	A	45	33%	33%	77%	85%
9	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	949	2000	62	B	21	45%	36%	87%	81%
10	Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	940	1990	51	A	52	20%	22%	87%	92%
11	Tourism Management Perspectives	842	2010	35	B	21	20%	57%	100%	66%
12	Tourism Economics	665	1990	96	A	46	16%	19%	90%	76%
13	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	636	1990	48	B	24	38%	34%	98%	92%
14	Tourist Studies	603	2000	40	B	36	22%	28%	90%	93%
15	Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change	572	2000	42	C	19	N/A	33%	N/A	83%
16	Journal of China Tourism Research	572	2000	90	B	14	N/A	27%	N/A	89%
17	Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sports and Tourism Education	571	1990	30	C	17	N/A	16%	N/A	73%
18	Journal of Ecotourism	563	2000	38	B	28	30%	29%	74%	84%
19	Tourism Planning and Development	553	2000	31	B	21	39%	39%	86%	81%
20	Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism	528	2000	15	B	32	N/A	53%	N/A	93%

board positions).

Membership of these boards was overwhelming male (69%) and spanned the six geographic regions studied. As Table 3 suggests, Europe and North American membership was most highly represented (31% each), the latter result echoing Law et al.'s (2010) findings. Asia and Australasia were similarly represented, comprising 14% of the sample each. Cumulatively, members from Africa and South America comprised a total of 4% of editorial board memberships. Within the total sample, 24 editorial board members' position titles could not be ascertained and so they were excluded from further analysis. Of those whose academic job titles could be identified, the clear majority were employed at professorial levels, with only 12% of the sample employed at lecturer level.

Examining the profile data of boards at an individual level (accounting for the number of editorial board positions held by individuals), in relation to the 2016 SJR sample, more than half the positions were interlocked by 205 individuals serving on multiple boards (610 positions or 54%). The remainder (524 positions or 46% of 1134) were held by members sitting on one journal editorial board only. As such, within the total sample, there were 729 individuals holding 1134 editorial board positions. The proportions were similar for the 2014 SJR sample, with 57% of the sample (590 individuals) on more than one journal editorial board.

As Table 4 highlights (inspecting data on both the individual positions relative to the total population and number of editorial board positions held by individuals), there were 100 individuals (14%) holding 400 (35%) of the total editorial board positions. Those with multiple editorial board positions held between 2 and 9 positions, a range that was skewed towards the lower end, with a median of 2, which was the same as the 2014 SJR. From the sample of 729 unique individuals serving on editorial boards, the gender of 18 individuals could not be conclusively identified. Of those who could, 35% were female and 65% were male.

Across both the total sample and individual level data for the 2016 SJR and 2014 SJR samples (Tables 3 and 4), the editorial board profile in terms of gender and academic level remained fairly static with males and professorial levels dominating. While as noted earlier, an accurate profile of the tourism academic population could not be obtained, a proxy comparison was drawn in reference to the membership of an academic association, the Council for Australasian Tourism and

**Table 4**  
Overview of variables by individuals.

	SJR 2014		SJR 2016	
	n	%	n	%
Individual positions relative to the total population				
1	449	43%	524	46%
2	220	21%	210	19%
3+	370	36%	400	35%
	<b>1039</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1134</b>	<b>100%</b>
No. of editorial board positions held by individuals				
1	449	70%	524	72%
2	110	17%	105	14%
3+	87	13%	100	14%
	<b>646</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>100%</b>
Gender				
Male	411	66%	463	65%
Female	208	34%	248	35%
Academic level				
Professorial	490	80%	585	81%
Lecturer	91	15%	120	17%
Other	30	5%	16	2%
Location				
North America	225	35%	226	31%
Europe	203	31%	242	34%
Asia	104	16%	112	16%
Australasia	101	16%	112	16%
Africa	10	2%	21	3%
South America	3	1%	8	1%

Hospitality Education (CAUTHE). Based in Australia and New Zealand (and thereby precluding geographical inferences in relation to the sample data), as a point of comparison to the 2016 SJR sample (for which data was collected in 2018), the 2018 CAUTHE membership comprised 151 individuals, and was in the majority female (55%) and employed at lecturer level (63%). This proxy data therefore does not reflect the dominant patterns in the sample data.

As a sub-sample of editorial board roles in the 2016 SJR sample, there were 35 editors-in-chief leading the 20 journals, allowing for co-editorship. The majority held full professor appointments (66%). Most of them were based in institutions within Europe (46%), with 26% working in Australasia, and 14% based in Asia and North America respectively. The number of editors-in-chief in Asia increased from 2 (7%) to 5 (14%) across the samples. In the 2016 sample, 10 females held editor-in-chief or co-editor roles (29% of such positions). This is in sharp contrast to the 2014 sample, for which four females (13%) held these senior roles. This demonstrates substantial progress towards achieving gender balance amongst those holding senior editorial board roles over a relatively short period of time.

### 4.3. Total sample results

Chi-square tests were run to test for differences in the composition of tourism editorial board memberships based on: journal decade of origin and journal ranking and editor data: editor gender, editorial board role, editor location and academic level. The 2016 SJR total sample was firstly analysed ( $n = 1134$ ) recognising that although individuals may be mentioned more than once in the dataset, this represented the totality of these boards' positions. The results of these chi-square tests are shown in Table 5.

Reading across the table, the single significant result was related to the gender and academic level of senior editorial staff and editorial board members,  $X^2(1, n = 1115) = 24.83, p = .00$ . An overwhelming portion of male editorial board members were found to be at the professorial stage of their career (90%), with only 10% at lecturer level. This contrasts with the distribution of academic levels amongst female editorial board members, although those at professorial level were still in the majority (78%).

Testing revealed significant relationships between the journal (decade of origin and ABDC ranking) and certain editor data (gender and academic standing). Using decade of origin and ABDC rankings as proxies for accepted standing and journal quality, both variables produced significant test results in relation to gender (refer to Table 6). Regardless of journals' origin decade,  $X^2(2, n = 1115) = 8.36, p = .02$ , or their ABDC ranking,  $X^2(3, n = 1115) = 8.18, p = .04$ , there were far more males than females on the samples' journal editorial boards. The proportion of editorial board members at professorial level were also high (84% and above),  $X^2(4, n = 1115) = 13.28, p = .01$ , regardless of the decade in which journals were established. In other words, regardless of journal ranking or how established a journal was in the field, the dominant pattern of membership in terms of male and professorial appointments persisted.

**Table 5**  
Chi-square tests conducted on the total sample.

Variable B	Editrole	Location	Acadlevel
Variable A			
Gender	$p = .11$	$p = .55$	$p = .00$
Editrole		$p = .25$	$p = .00^*$
Location			$p = .00^*$

\* results with  $p < .05$  but minimum expected cell count  $< 5$  and therefore not statistically significant.

**Table 6**  
Chi-square tests conducted on journal and editor data.

	Gender	Editrole	Location	Acadlevel
Origin decade	0.015	0.000*	0.000*	0.010
ABDC rank	0.042	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*

\* results with  $p < .05$  but minimum expected cell count  $<5$  and therefore not statistically significant.

4.4. Individuals results

The unique records of each individual academic listed in the 2016 SJR editor dataset were analysed ( $n = 729$ ). The results of separate tests conducted based on editor gender, location, academic level and number of editorial board memberships are detailed in Table 7.

The individual level analysis supports the pattern of male editorial board members outnumbering female editorial board members, as evidenced in the total sample results. A significant association was found between gender and academic level,  $X^2(1, n = 695) = 11.62, p = .00$ . Eighty-six percent of male editorial board members were at professorial levels, with only 14% at lecturer level; this pattern was present but to a lesser degree amongst female editorial board members, with 24% at lecturer level.

In terms of those who were on more than one editorial board, 93% of those interlocked were at professorial level,  $X^2(1, n = 705) = 19.27, p = .00$ , which is reflective of their dominance in the total sample as well. This is likely indicative of the time required to establish an academic's reputation. The same pattern was seen in the proportions of those with single editorial board appointments but to a lesser degree, with approximately 79% of single appointments at professorial level. As earlier reported in Table 4, there were 100 individuals holding 35% of all editorial board positions. Of this extreme cohort, 97% of individuals were at professorial level and 75% were male.

4.5. Longitudinal results

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests were conducted to determine if there were significant changes in the composition of editorial board memberships between the 2016 SJR and 2014 SJR samples (proportions shown in Table 2). Sixteen journals appeared in both datasets and tests were run to determine if their composition in relation to gender, academic level and geographic location distribution were significantly different. None of the tests conducted returned significant results, indicating maintenance of the status quo overall.

5. Qualitative results

In light of the quantitative findings and the dearth of extant research exploring the views of editors on the composition and operation of editorial boards, editors-in-chief and co-editors of the 2016 SJR sample were invited to be interviewed to discuss their editorial board appointment practices. Only three of the 35 editors-in-chief/co-editors agreed to participate and there was consensus across all three in regard to their recruitment priorities for their respective journal editorial

**Table 7**  
Chi-square tests conducted on the individual sample.

Variable B Variable A	Location	Acadlevel	On >1 editorial board	EBMvRest
Gender	$p = .66$	$p = .00$	$p = .37$	$p = .51$
Location		$p = .00^*$	$p = .22$	$p = .07$
Academic level			$p = .00$	$p = .16$
On >1 editorial board				$p = .01$

\* results with  $p < .05$  but minimum expected cell count  $<5$  and therefore not statistically significant.

boards. Primarily, the interviewees considered the quality and reputation of potential and current editorial board members as topic experts and reviewers. This quality and reputation was determined based on individuals' publication history with the journal, the way they reflected the journal's values and their depth of expertise within particular knowledge domains and/or methodologies.

In addition to quality and reputation, interviewees preferred to appoint to their editorial board those who were deemed to have a proven track record as reviewers. Characteristics of active and constructive reviewers described by the interviewees included those who were generous, competent and had high standards. Reliability, in particular, was highly sought after, as responsiveness to review invitations and timely reviews were viewed as integral to the publication process.

Specifically in regard to the phenomenon of interlocking editorship and its implications for the performance of editorial boards, interviewees had differing opinions as to whether it was problematic. All agreed that any potential concerns regarding interlocking editorship were much less pressing than other journal-related issues. Their stated priority in forming editorial boards was to focus on those who fulfilled the expertise and reviewer characteristics mentioned above. This included ensuring the presence of experienced and well-known researchers to broadly aid the ranking exercises that journals are subjected to, which as part of their remit as senior editors, the respondents had keen oversight for. In quantifying the commitments of editorial board membership, an interviewee observed that the minimum of five reviews per year typically required of editorial board members would be untenable if an individual sat on a large number of journal editorial boards. As such, they were confident that if reviewers were not performing, it would lead to individuals being relieved from some of their positions consequently. This was further supported by a view echoed by all three interviewees – that tourism is a small academy, a broad field of study encompassing multidisciplinary perspectives, and that not too many academics have expertise in all; characteristics that present challenges to the pool of prospective candidates they could consider appointing to their editorial boards.

Overall, the existence or otherwise of interlocking editorship was not a high priority for the three editors-in-chief and/or co-editors who agreed to be interviewed. Their concerns lay primarily in the operational aspects of editorial boards, supporting the fulfilment of their key duties as editors-in-chief and/or co-editors.

6. Discussion

This mixed-method investigation addresses calls in the tourism literature for research investigating the role and membership of tourism editorial boards (Ballantyne et al., 2009; Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2013).

The study found evidence of interlocking editorship. From the total sample and individual level results, over time the membership of the top 20 tourism editorial boards was highly concentrated, with the majority of members holding two or more editorial positions. At the extreme, the 2016 SJR sample evidenced that a well-connected cohort of 100 interlocked individuals held 35% of all available positions. Indeed, the median of two editorial board roles per editor was higher than the average membership of the editorial boards of economic (1.35), information and library science (1.14) and information science journals (1.18), respectively reported by Baccini and Barabesi (2010, 2011) and Cabanac (2012).

A shortcoming of this study is that its design cannot confirm the reasons for this level of concentration. It is likely that the membership of the editorial boards sampled represent the pioneers of the tourism field (Tribe, 2010). Together with the smaller number of top-tier tourism journals (McKercher et al., 2006) compared to the established disciplines studied in the works of Baccini and Barabesi (2010) and Cabanac (2012), these may represent some of the underpinning reasons for the concentration of tourism editorial board memberships. A counter view, however, is Baccini and Barabesi's (2011) contention that discipline

youth may be associated with a less compact network of interlocking editorships. On the available evidence, this supposition does not apply to tourism's top 20 journals.

The study confirmed over time the homogeneous composition of tourism editorial board memberships in terms of gender, academic seniority and geographic location, patterns that persisted across all journals sampled, regardless of a journal's ranking, size of its editorial board, gender composition and decade of origin. The findings provide further evidence for the contention of Munar et al. (2015) and Pritchard and Morgan (2017) that there is a gender imbalance in the leadership of tourism's top-tier journals. Thirty-five percent of editorial board members in the 2016 SJR individual sample were female and significant differences were noted in the total sample based on gender and academic standing. This is potentially concerning given studies in other disciplines have linked female representation in senior editor roles with a greater incidence of females publishing in journals (Pan & Zhang, 2014) and greater female representation on editorial boards (Metz et al., 2016). Research is urgently needed to assess if female senior editors in the tourism field have a similarly positive impact on other females being invited onto editorial boards and being published in their respective journals. Relatedly, Pritchard and Morgan (2017) suggest that academic leadership roles, when male-dominated, can lead to the employment of masculine norms to understand social phenomena, research paradigms that preference the experiences of males and also particular research topics. These contentions are yet to be proven in respect to the dominance of males in general and senior professorial males occupying tourism editorial board positions.

Senior editor-in-chief appointments in the tourism academy (for example, Professor Sara Dolnicar, *Annals of Tourism Research* and Associate Professor Catheryn Khoo, *Tourism Management Perspectives*) are reflected in the changes witnessed in the 2016 SJR resulting in female representation at editor-in-chief/co-editor level rising to 34%. Senior female editorial leadership is now on par with the proportion of female editorial board members in the 2016 SJR total sample. Whilst this increased representation offers greater scope to progress the lines of enquiry mentioned above, progress remains to be made in achieving gender balance on tourism editorial boards particularly as our results revealed that of the majority (57%) of the total sample who held multiple editorial board memberships, 75% of this cohort were male. Noting that there were further senior female appointments (e.g., Professor Cathy Hsu, Editor-in-Chief, *Tourism Management*) not captured in our study, we revisited the top 20 journals in the 2016 SJR sample in March 2021 to review the composition of editorial leadership in relation to gender. This latest data indicated that female representation at editor-in-chief/co-editor level had risen to 36%, with the caveat that the total number of editors-in-chief/co-editors ( $n = 33$ ) had fallen. This suggests further progress has been made since 2018.

A further homogenous factor across all journals sampled, irrespective of editor gender or the number of editorial board roles, was that professorial appointments dominated editorial boards. This is to be expected given such appointments are viewed as a measure of academic reputation (Law et al., 2010), an intangible that takes time to accrue. This may be a positive for journals as the reputation of editorial boards may attract quality submissions (Goeldner, 2005) and assure authors that their papers are being assessed by experienced academics. This may raise questions however if, as Tribe (2010, p. 28) suggests, "gatekeepers...may block the paths of younger or 'third world' academics". Future studies comparing the citation rates of editors and non-editors could confirm whether tourism editors are appointed on the basis of their research performance relative to opportunity, given the mixed evidence pertaining to these links (Braun, 2004; Mason & Cameron, 2006).

Across the total sample of tourism journals, representation from African and South American members was low. These results may reflect recognition of the Eurocentric, colonial nature of knowledge and knowledge production in tourism (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015;

Pritchard & Morgan, 2017; Wijesinghe, Mura, & Culala, 2019), which assiduously works to privilege the views of the West. Research is required to investigate the effects of this reduced representation, particularly as studies outside the tourism field have correlated the nationality of a journal editor with the increased incidence of papers published by researchers of the same nationality (Braun, 2004).

From the qualitative insights garnered from the interviews with editors-in-chief and co-editors, it is appropriate to conclude that the expertise and reliability of reviewers was of more immediate concern to the journal editors than any potential interlocking effects that their selection of editorial board members may have on knowledge production in the tourism academy. Additionally, they were convinced that the self-organizing system of editorial boards would weed out members not fulfilling their editorial duties irrespective of number of memberships. Given this study is the first of its kind to examine the concentration of these boards, it could be argued that in the absence of widespread awareness in the academy of the extent of interlocking editorship affecting the leading tourism journals, it is perhaps unsurprising that this was a lesser topical consideration for the senior editorial informants. However, given the robust quantitative evidence gathered over time by this study, illustrating that a relatively small cohort of interlocked individuals sit on multiple editorial boards, this evidence may provide a basis for future discussion on whether this self-regulating system is the most efficient, effective, fair and transparent way to allocate editorial board memberships.

## 7. Conclusion

In finding evidence of interlocking editorship amongst the leading tourism journals in the field, the results support studies from other disciplines (Baccini & Barabesi, 2010, 2011) that have highlighted the phenomenon as affecting the structural properties of editorial boards. The findings allow us to begin a broader discussion as to whether having the same academics sitting on multiple editorial boards is positive or problematic for knowledge production in the tourism academy. Positive perhaps if these appointments are transparently made on a merit basis so that authors can be reassured that editorial board members, whether conducting the reviews themselves or assigning ad-hoc reviewers, have the track record relative to experience to do so. It would also not be problematic if these patterns replicate the broader population of tourism academics. Data from the CAUTHE membership, used here as a proxy for the wider tourism academic population, suggests that the concentration of male and professorial appointments is potentially unrepresentative in this respect, indicative of a lack of diversity. As evidenced by the longitudinal analysis, the continued status quo of a group of homogenous gatekeepers opens up the possibility for potential exclusionary practices such as placing priorities on narrow topics of interest, particular paradigms and preferred methods. These, and other outcomes yet to be identified, extend Baccini and Barabesi's (2010, 2011) contention that interlocking editorship merely could lead to common elements in the editorial policies of interlocked journals. However, future research is needed to investigate these outcomes, both positive and negative.

We believe it is timely for a clarion call to ring out in the tourism academy. This research has confirmed and extended previous limited findings on tourism editorial board composition, and, in a first, has examined the concentration of individual board members on the top 20 editorial boards; thus providing evidence for the interlocking editorship of tourism editorial boards. The positive changes noted in relation to the gender profile of senior editorial positions is a welcome step forward. We argue that it is time for a more reflective approach amongst the academy towards the structural issues raised in this paper and their implications for impacting knowledge production. Editors-in-chief have the relative power to make editorial board appointments that attenuate or reduce the dominant patterns in relation to gender, seniority and geography. Beyond these measurable attributes, editors-in-chief – in their capacities as leaders of knowledge production and dissemination –



can also seek to openly communicate values that guide the review practices of editorial boards, encouraging greater breadth in forms of knowledge production.

At the time of the latter quantitative round in 2018, only three of the top 20 tourism journals furnished information on their editorial board appointment processes in an open manner. We acknowledge that these boards may have had guiding policies in place; however, these were not transparently communicated to the broader academy. As such, whether viewed as gatekeepers, “invisible colleges” (Crane, 1967) or obligatory passage points (Tribe, 2010), for those individuals interlocked by serving on multiple editorial boards, by design alone they operate in an opaque manner to shape tourism discourse within the academy, with their existence until now undocumented. We would argue that senior editors and the broader tourism academy should address this lack of transparency to ensure that editorial boards revitalise their membership periodically in pursuit of advancing scientific knowledge. This may already be occurring but there is dearth of studies as to how editorial boards and the peer review process works in practice (Sanchez et al., 2019) to evidence that this is occurring.

Set terms for journal editor roles and open appointment processes that are merit-based could be more widely instituted and communicated going forward. These appointments could assess performance relative to opportunity, thereby paving the way for excellent candidates to be recruited across varying academic levels. Interlocked editorial board members should be encouraged to openly report their multiple board memberships, particularly where potential conflicts of interest might arise. For example, in instances when original works challenge extant ways of thinking or refute the research contributions of peer reviewers (Sanchez et al., 2019). It is pleasing to see progress with some journals now openly calling for expressions of interest to join editorial boards (for example, Tourism Planning & Development, 2018).

The exploratory evidence from the senior tourism editors interviewed suggested that interlocking editorship was having limited impact on the knowledge production processes of their respective journals. Nonetheless, now identified as inherent in the structural properties of tourism's leading journal editorial boards, research is urgently needed to investigate the potential positive and negative consequences of interlocking editorship in respect of editorial board behaviours and performance. In addition to conducting further qualitative investigations with senior editors to probe the impact of interlocking editorship on a wider scale, research attention should focus on the role of publishers in swaying editorial appointments. This would allow for a fuller understanding of the market factors influencing the composition and concentration of tourism editorial boards. Additionally, editorial board members, including those interlocked, could also be interviewed to understand their stories, the processes by which they are invited onto boards and their editorial practices, providing further avenues to encourage transparency in recruitment. Finally, it is recommended that the quantitative study conducted herein is replicated to track and report over time on progress towards greater member diversity on tourism editorial boards. These and other lines of enquiry suggest that the study of tourism journal editorial boards will be a rich vein of research on the scholarship of tourism knowledge for some considerable time to come.

#### Acknowledgement

J Mair is an interlocked editor as defined for the purposes of the current study.

#### Appendix A. Interview schedule

1. How long have you held the role of Editor-in-Chief (or Chief Editor) for [journal name]?
2. How long is the term of an Editor-in-Chief (or Chief Editor) for your journal?

3. What is the structure of your editorial board (e.g., editor-in-chief, associate editors, regional editors, etc.)?
4. How long does an individual generally serve as an editorial board member for your journal?
5. Does your journal have an editorial board appointment policy? If yes, to what extent does the policy guide appointments? Is this policy published on your journal website?
6. Is there a formal process for individuals to apply if they wish to join your editorial board?
7. Is there a limit to how long an editorial board member can remain on your editorial board?
8. What are your criteria for shortlisting individuals to join your editorial board?
9. To what extent, if any, does your publisher affect editorial board appointments?
10. Do you actively monitor editorial board member performance (e.g., number of reviews completed, quality of reviews)?
11. If members are not performing to your expectations, do you have a process for exiting them from your editorial board?
12. Approximately, what percentage of reviews for the journal are done by editorial board members versus ad-hoc reviewers?
13. How important is it for you to have ‘big names’ on the editorial board (i.e., eminent people in the field/area/discipline)?
14. Do you think the composition of your editorial board (including editors and associate/deputy editors) influences authors to submit their work to your journal?
15. In your opinion, what is the key value of the editorial board?
16. Do you feel that there are any issues associated with a small number of individuals being members of a large number of editorial boards?

PROMPT: potentially influencing the type of papers that are accepted in your journal (e.g., particular topic areas, methodologies, paradigms, worldviews, etc)?

17. To what extent are issues of member diversity and succession planning important in respect of your editorial board?

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