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My Attitudes and Beliefs about Different Types of Research

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Abstract

[Excerpt] In this issue's "From the Editor," I describe a new review policy and process for both authors and reviewers. Authors should find that this new policy and process provides them with faster editorial decisions, higher quality feedback, and greater clarity about required revisions, as well as greater freedom to disagree with reviewers and to write the papers they (the authors) want. Reviewers should find that this new policy and process saves them from having to review obviously flawed papers and from having to review different versions of the same paper over and over again.

Keywords

Cornell, editorial, publishing, article submission, peer review

Disciplines

Hospitality Administration and Management | Scholarly Publishing

Comments

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When my editorship of *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* (*CQ*) was first announced at the 2015 ICHRIE Conference, one of the most common questions people asked me was what kinds of research I liked and disliked. I assume the questioners sought this information to guide decisions about which of their research projects to target at *CQ* and which to send elsewhere. The politically correct and fortunately truthful answer is that I am a catholic methodologist and like good research of all types. However, that answer is overly simplistic and glosses over attitudes and beliefs that undoubtedly color my perceptions of what types of research and papers provide the biggest opportunities to make a contribution. We all bring predispositions to the tasks we undertake, and I think *CQ* authors and readers have a right to know what research-related predispositions I bring to the editorship of this journal, so I will try to describe them in this “From the Editor.”

CQ is devoted to the dissemination of knowledge that improves hospitality management. I believe that improvement of hospitality management can be best achieved through knowledge of the causal processes affecting various industry players—i.e., consumers, frontline employees, managers, owners, firms, and policy makers. Thus, under my editorship, *CQ* will be focused on advancing our knowledge of causal relationships and the processes underlying those relationships. Such knowledge can be advanced through both the development of theory and empirical tests of theory. Thus, conceptual papers that develop theory, empirical papers that test theory, review papers that summarize existing tests of theory, and methodological papers that improve theory testing are all welcome.

To me, theories are just ideas about causal relationships and the processes underlying them. They can be formally presented propositions about causal relationships among highly abstract constructs, but they do not have to take this form. They can also be simple, plain-language explanations for causal relationships between concrete variables. Broader and more abstract theory is potentially more widely applicable and useful than narrower and more concrete theory, but both types of theory can have important implications for hospitality management and both are welcome at *CQ*.

Since *CQ* publishes articles focused on causal relationships to improve hospitality management, I do not see a clear distinction between theoretical and applied research. Every *CQ* paper should address causal relationships and processes that have important implications for hospitality

management, so all *CQ* submissions should be both theoretical and applied.

As little more than ideas about possibilities, theory-development papers without accompanying quantitative tests generally need to present rich, complex, and novel ideas about important causal relationships to justify their publication. They should also be grounded in literature reviews or qualitative studies that provide some support for the plausibility of the ideas being advanced. As the last sentence implies, I am open to qualitative research. However, I believe that qualitative research provides extremely weak evidence about causal relationships, so qualitative papers need to be positioned as theory-development contributions rather than theory-testing contributions if I am to accept them for publication in *CQ*. [Note: I am also open to simulation and quantitative-modeling papers that combine realistic assumptions with rigorous computational or mathematical analyses to develop ideas about complex causal effects that would otherwise be difficult to identify.]

Although I am open to purely theoretical papers, I also tend to believe that knowledge of causal relationships and processes is advanced most by empirical testing. Thus, I prefer empirical papers, especially those using quantitative data that support, strong, valid causal inferences. This means that I like papers reporting on experiments (including simulations), quasi-experiments, analyses of panel data, analyses of time-series data, and analyses of quantitative cross-sectional data in roughly that order. My least favorite type of research is purely descriptive research (including descriptions of people’s beliefs about causal relationships), and I am unlikely to ever accept a purely descriptive paper for publication in *CQ*, because I perceive the value of such research as too limited to warrant scarce journal space and reader attention.

These are the research-related attitudes and beliefs that I bring to the editorship of *CQ*. I hope that making these predispositions explicit will help authors of new papers make better decisions about whether or not to target *CQ* and will help authors of submitted manuscripts to better understand the editorial decisions they receive from me. Let me close by saying that readers who find my views expressed here to be ignorant or wrong are welcome to write me in an attempt to educate me. I think (and certainly hope) that I remain open-minded and willing to learn.

Michael Lynn