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IMPACTS OF INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT WITH TOURISM RESEARCH

**ABSTRACT**

With mounting pressure for ‘high impact’ research outputs and the attainment of external funding, universities are increasingly engaging in industry match-funded doctoral research programs. Promoted as effective approaches for engaging in knowledge transfer, the challenges around such collaborative partnerships are scarcely discussed. E-mails, field journals and meeting logs over a two year period were analysed to examine the challenges faced by early career researchers involved in such programs. The findings illustrate the challenges inherent in the pursuit of increased levels of industry engagement and the inevitable social control over research. A reflexive account explores issues of access, the social control of research and emotional labour. The paper hopes to stimulate discussion on how to improve these relationships and their outcomes.

Keywords: gatekeepers; funded research; access; research barriers; industry engagement.

# INTRODUCTION

In a changing landscape of tourism research, increasing social and financial control of academic work, and unprecedented pressures to attract external income through industry knowledge transfer, universities are increasingly turning to industry- funded doctoral research programmes. At a time where an ever-increasing emphasis is placed on combining industry needs with academic rigour this paper discusses the problems that early career academics, in particular, face in this growing climate of industry engagement. This paper examines the *social control* of social research through industry-funded grants. At present, it is estimated that in the United Kingdom (UK) nearly 8% of research students are funded by industry grants (Hodsdon and Buckley, 2011), and this figure may well be higher given the increasing number of European Union and research council schemes which also require industry partnership (e.g. European Union/Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships (EU/KESS), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering (CASE) studentships). Added to this, is a cohort of international students studying in the UK, whose funding is often provided by industry partners in their home states (figures on this are currently not available).

Awareness of issues associated with industry-funded research is not new, and indeed the interaction between industry and the academy has been a part of policy-making in the US since the 1970s (Behrens and Gray, 2001). The mid-1970s saw work on the ‘social control of social research’ (Broadhead and Rist, 1976), although it appears little has changed since then, and there continues to be a dearth of literature relating to this inevitable, yet crucial, dimension of research. Recent pressures on increased commercialism, and the need to secure highly directed industry funding, present a number of challenges for the academy as a whole and can give rise to significant barriers which early career researchers must navigate. While some discussion has taken place on the influence these arrangements have on academic freedom and integrity (e.g. Nelson, 2009; Barendt, 2010), the pedagogical implications of such co-operations, however, particularly in respect of higher degree research students, is something which has largely been ignored. Strategies for increased commercialisation of research are, in part, responsible for the erosion of academic autonomy and ambition (Gibney, 2012; Gunkel, 2010) occurring in what are arguably the ‘formative years’ for many early-career academics. The social control of research raises questions about the emotional labour of early career academics and the importance of retaining students’ academic integrity when this, at times, seems to dissolve within commercial pragmatism and unrealistic expectations. Behrens and Gray (2001) note the importance of remaining cognisant of the unintended consequences of industry funded research which may have important policy implications.

The desire to blend academia and industry accentuates issues around access and associated barriers to conducting industry focused research, which often are largely ignored (Okumus, Altinay and Roper, 2007; Feldmann, Bell and Berger, 2003). Broadhead and Rist (1976) identify three main problems associated with externally funded research projects: (i) being given detailed specification of research problems congruent with the sponsor’s perspective; (ii) an emphasis upon positivistic styles of research; and (iii) the threat of withdrawing funding should the research divert into undesirable territories. Underlying each of these problems is the presumption that a degree of engagement is achieved with the sponsoring body, and the degree to which sponsoring partners engage with the execution of the research is a further area which has received little attention. The power and influence of industry gatekeepers on academic research is a topic which often languishes in the hidden pages of doctoral theses, and, while recognised, are rarely legitimised as being worthy of research and discussion in themselves. The ways in which gatekeepers exert power and influence upon the researcher (and at times the researched), has a significant impact on the social control and direction of research, as well as evoking feelings of marginalisation in the individual researcher from the resultant tensions between industry and the (perceived) ‘blue-skies research’ of the academy (Tribe, 2010).

The issue of access to research subjects is one which can make or break a research investigation, or at the very least have path-altering consequences. While the personal challenges we face as researchers have been discussed previously (e.g. Everett, 2010), an area that has received relatively little attention in the tourism arena to date is the issue of access. Access issues associated with researching marginalised groups and ethnic minorities are well documented (e.g. Altinay and Wang, 2009; Lugosi 2009; Cole, 2005; Miller, 2004), however research on negotiating access in a corporate industry environment is more limited (Feldman et al., 2003). Much of the discussion around access issues are provided by experienced researchers, and offer little assistance to early career academics. Challenges and hurdles are presented merely as tactical issues (Gummesson, 2000), and the onus is often placed on the researcher, rather than the researched. Outsiders are not always welcome when they are seeking to investigate what are perceived to be awkward or sensitive issues (Ofkumu et al., 2007), and even less so when the researcher enters the organisation at a level above the researched (Burgess, 1990). Tribe (2008) talks of a position of privilege that academics hold, attributable to their spatial and temporal situatedness which sustains their (powerful) position and authority. In the formative years of early-career academics however, and particularly for those engaged in industry-funded research, power is elusive and negotiations with gatekeepers over access to research participants reinforces this power(*less)* position of early-career researchers.

At its core, this paper explores issues of industry engagement and gatekeeper negotiations alongside academic autonomy, and the pedagogic implications of these in respect to researcher emotional labour. It offers critical insight on the nature of industry engagement within applied social tourism research by interrogating reflexive accounts of various stakeholder interactions and data generated during the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) process. Thinking is developed through the personal experiences of a doctoral student undertaking an industry match-funded PhD program. These issues are addressed by engaging with the so-called ‘reflexive turn’ of tourism studies (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson and Collins, 2005; Ateljevic, Pritchard and Morgan, 2007), and the purpose of the paper is to present an author-infused discussion of the three key issues of industry engagement, social control of research, and researcher emotional labour. Drawing on pertinent examples from field journals, e-mail correspondence and meeting logs to support personal reflection and first person accounts, the paper outlines the tensions between the aims of the funding company’s charitable arm and the priorities of the commercial side of the business. In particular, the reliance on industry funding has raised concerns over the direction of research; where the student finds herself with interviewees who are more concerned about adhering to the company line than expressing their own personal views; who are keen to devise and provide pre-prepared answers; and who have altered the nature of the data generation through (re)engineering the focus of the research project.

The paper firstly embarks on a discussion on industry engagement and the attempts we make as researchers to make relevant not only our findings, but also our research questions. This section seeks to explore the degree to which industry engages with academic research, and how we can improve such cooperation in the future. Secondly, the paper presents a discussion on the social control of research and its influence on the epistemological consideration of positionality, outlining how the (re)engineering of research pathways by industry partners influenced the researcher’s positionality. In particular, accounts of how the PhD candidate was treated and (mis)understood are presented and discussed in the context of how identity and affiliations impact on the responses of research participants. Finally, the paper turns to the emotional endurance of doctoral researchers, and the pedagogical implications of emotional labour on research outcomes. Mental strain and its contribution to the physicality of research is not unique to this particular project, but attempts are made here to champion where it should be given more credence as a barrier to research.

**INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT, REFLEXIVITY AND THE SOCIAL CONTROL OF RESEARCH**

Some issues related to industry-funded research projects have been previously addressed, in particular the influence such partnerships have on the social control of research. Often, such control comes in the form of compromises which ultimately dictate and shape methodological direction, and force us to consider alternative routes of enquiry and investigation (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2003). In doing so, our research positionality is brought into question, and affords us an opportunity to engage in reflexive practice. Reflexivity, according to Lincoln and Guba (2000:183), is “the process of reflecting critically on the self as a researcher”, and that reflexivity causes us to consider the dualities we face through the research process. The multitude of roles we bring to the research process can, according to Reinharz (1997), be categorized into three broad areas of research-based selves, brought selves and situationally created selves. She argues that each self comes into play in its own distinct way throughout the research process, each with its own unique voice. Often these ‘selves’ are enacted simultaneously, and as such the researcher can find themselves confronted with a ‘Jekyll and Hyde’ complex, pushing and pulling at neatly formed ideas and values. In the case of industry-funded research, it is often the agendas, goals and commercial ambitions of research partners which prompt us to call into question our research-based selves through the need to alter and adjust our methodological choices.

Qualitative research in particular was once characterised as the twin process of ‘writing up’ (field notes) and ‘writing down’ (narrative), and inherent in this are difficulties which emanate through this process. Richardson (2000) notes that writing is a stage of discovery, both of the subject and sometimes the problem, but also a stage for discovering the self – in all its manifestations. Problems, and arguably benefits, often associated with such postmodern inquiries including “more dynamic, problematic, open-ended and complex forms of writing and representation” (Lincoln and Guba, 2000:184) are seen as problems which do not affect neo-positivist researchers. It is rather simplistic to assume that this plurality of selves only manifests itself in researchers concerned with the likes of social construction, interpretivism and phenomenology. In the same way positivist researchers are criticized for not embracing multiple realities in research, the opposite criticism may be levelled at post-modern researchers who might assume that the researcher journey of a (neo)positivist inquirer is a smooth one. So, while the critical realist paradigm underpinning the research does not explicitly call for a process of critical self-reflection, it is not to say that (neo)positivist researchers should not, or cannot, embark on a journey of critical self-reflection.

This process, and the reconciliation of multiple selves, helps in verifying the validity of the research, as well as affirming the appropriateness of the research method with the research problem. It also affords the opportunity to not only situate ourselves in the research (Feighery, 2006), but situate others, including stakeholders and gatekeepers of research. Self-reflection at seemingly insignificant moments, where we work through minor methodological confrontations and obstacles, can influence the wider theoretical constructs and epistemological foundations of our research (Du Puis, 1999; Everett, 2010). Flemming & Fullagar (2007:239) suggest the process of auto-ethnography as a valuable point of departure whereby the researcher can “write themselves into the research and [also] make the reading-writing relations of knowledge production more transparent”. The overwhelming presence of ‘author-evacuated’ texts (Geertz, 1988:141), and often ‘participant-evacuated’ texts do little to acknowledge the intricacies or personal challenges faced when conducting research.

***2.1 Emotional Labour***

Emotional labour is a concept which first emerged from psychologists interested in the complex nature of human emotions (e.g. James, 1884), and is now frequently theorised and studied in fields such as organisational behaviour (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004), sociology (e.g. Hochschild, 1979) and education (e.g. Constanti and Gibbs, 2004). Generally, emotional labour is understood to be “the effort a person invests in expressing or coping with his or her emotions so as to achieve objectives pertaining to his or her work” (Nutov and Hazzan, 2008:2). As a concept, it is one which has been identified to exist broadly in lower-level occupations such as shop or clerical workers, service employees and flight attendants (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004). Strikingly though, the same authors note that research into its existence in higher level roles or within professional employees is non-existent. There is little empirical evidence providing in-depth understanding on the emotions of early career researchers (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn and Kemmer, 2001), although there is recognition of the emotional labour involved in the research process, both implicitly (e.g. Kleinman & Copp, 1993; Everett, 2010) and explicitly (e.g. Adams, 1998; Chesney, 2001). Only Nutov and Hazzan (2008) have written about the implications of emotional labour on early career researchers, particularly PhD students, and the effect on their formative years as academics.

The researcher journey is one that can result in “loneliness, powerlessness and confusion, and, quite possibly, some suffering at the hands of those being studied’’ (Lee 1993:120). The 17th century philosopher Descartes lauded the disassociation between cognition and emotion through his infamous quote “I think, therefore I am”, and in doing so, encouraged researchers to remain objective and disconnected from the research topic so as to reveal the truth. In general, there is support for researchers to make note of moods, feelings, doubts and worries within field journals and diaries as a means of identifying and acknowledging the self as an ethnographer (Kleinman & Copp, 1993; Lutterell, 2000; Jarzabkowski, 2001). Jarzabkowski (2001) calls for further explicit recognition of emotional labour in research as it may prove beneficial for analysing both the research(er) experience and in constructing representations of the data collected. While it is not the intention of this paper to discuss the intricacies of psychological wellbeing and mental illness within doctoral students (although clearly a topic worthy of investigation), it instead aims to identify factors which, through industry-funded research projects, can contribute to emotional labour within early career researchers.

***2.2 Study Area***

Before presenting the findings, it is useful to provide an overview of the PhD research project to place this paper in its wider context. The broader doctoral research project aims to explore the influence of consumer values with respect to ethical consumption in luxury hotels. More specifically, it examines the types and levels of consumer value that customers place on sustainability within the context of luxury hotels and looks at how these value dimensions act as drivers of brand loyalty. As constituent parts of ethical consumption, elements of socio-cultural, financial, and environmental sustainability are examined to discover whether or not luxury consumers are willing to pay a premium price for sustainable business practices. It also examines the extent to which a group of so-called ‘global-elites’, a population responsible for unattainable and unsustainable levels of consumption (Elliott and Urry, 2009), value ethical consumption practices, including aspects around sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility. Despite the recent recession, the economic growth of recent decades has created this group of so-called ‘Global-Elites’ (CeMoRe, 2010). Small in number, but high in net worth and influence, they are influential in the creation of, and desire for consumption, often portrayed as luxury, privilege, prestige, and 'class'. Much of the recent growth in the tourism industry has been at the top end, where there has been an unprecedented rise in demand for the luxury hotel sector over the past decade (Keissling, Balekjian and Oehmichen, 2009).

Consumption acts a vehicle for consumers to make statements about themselves (Atwal and Williams, 2008), and nowhere is this more true than for the Global-Elite, who seemingly have no desire to curb current tourism activities (Elliott & Urry, 2009). In line with this growth, there has been an increased interest in the study of ethical consumption and sustainability in tourism (e.g. Novelli, 2005; Sharpley, 2006; Lansing & Vries, 2006; Yeoman et al., 2006; Weeden, 2002). Despite these interests, and assertions that sustainability can become in *vogue* (Bendell & Kleanthous, 2007), the larger PhD project posits that while current transitions around tourism continue towards further unsustainability (Cohen, 2010), and indeed while growth continues to remain an objective of general macro-economic sustainability (Dale, 2012, presentation), the use of ethical consumption as a genuine avenue for increasing sustainability in the luxury hotel sector is questionable. It argues that by reducing the uncertainty related to the degree to which consumers (Global-Elites) value ethical consumption, luxury hotels will be able to assess the suitability of marketing and communicating such strategies to their customers. Furthermore, deeper insights into these apparently incompatible spaces and places for ethical consumption will be obtained.

***2.3 Study Methods***

The main aim of the broader doctoral research project could only be achieved by adopting a multiplicity of methods and approaches. For real understanding of the complexities of the topic, as well as to achieve industrial agency from the findings, no one method would suffice. The critical realist tradition renders the need for triangulation to capture different, but related layers of reality (Downward and Mearman, 2004), and the research employed an initial phase of semi-structured in-depth interviews, and a second quantitative phase using on-line questionnaires. So, while the emphasis of this discussion is not on the research itself, it focuses on the methodological challenges of, and barriers to, conducting industry-funded research.

This paper, however, focuses primarily on the role of the PhD student as a research coordinator, and discusses encounters with interviewees, industry and academic stakeholders regarding the power, and sometimes gender, imbalances that emanated. Data for this paper were collected over a two year period from October 2009 to October 2011. Throughout the course of the PhD, the researcher kept a field journal where observations, comments and personal thoughts and feelings about the research were recorded. In addition to this, e-mail correspondence between the researcher and various stakeholders (both industry and academic) were also compiled, as well regular online logs of supervision meetings with the researcher’s director of studies. These sources provide a rich and insightful lens through which the success of industry-funded research can be examined, providing both pragmatic research-related implications, as well as pedagogical considerations for the supervision and development of PhD research students.

The analysis of the data used coding to generate categories and themes from the data, involving two steps of open coding (the identification of concepts in the data, and examining their properties and dimensionality); and, axial coding (the process of relating categories to subcategories, where categories are linked to their properties and dimensions) (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This resulted in a conceptual model (Figure 1) and from this an initial structure for analysis was developed. The conceptual model depicts the influence of industry engagement on the social control of research, and how both this, and the resultant emotional labour influence researcher positionality. There is a general call for greater critical reflection in tourism research (Tribe, Xiao and Chambers, 2012) and this paper contributes to addressing this. Indeed, while other disciplines, namely geography and politics, have made some inroads to problematising issues of researching ‘the elite’ (e.g. Herod, 1999; Sabot, 1999; Morris, 2009; Rice, 2010), research in the tourism arena is scant, and in particular the pedagogical implications of such challenges are unrecognised. The data were analysed for moments of critical self-reflection related to the areas of industry engagement and researcher positionality, and how these influenced, and were affected *by* the social control of research. In turn the impact this had upon the degree of emotional labour invested in the research was examined through the analysis of field notes and meeting notes. It is recognised that the input of emotional labour may indeed change the positionality of the researcher, particularly where ‘intimidation’ of the researcher occurred, demoting their relative status vis à vis the researched.

*Figure 1 about here.*

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of influences of industry engagement with research

**FINDINGS**

***3.1 Industry Engagement***

At the crux of this paper, is the fundamental issue of stakeholder engagement with industry-funded doctoral research. The barriers faced whilst conducting this research are not unique to this project, but perhaps reflect a number of aspects which demand greater attention and consideration. Although this project gained the support of the external funding partner through their awarding of a scholarship, their willingness to participate in, and actively engage in the research process did not materialise, and questions remain over whether (and how) industry needs, and rigorous academic tourism research can be compatible, or whether they are destined to remain immiscible partners. The discussion that follows focuses on a number of issues that arose from the data analysis which include gaining access to industry, the involvement and participation of industry with research and the use of alternative research methodologies.

***3.1.1 Access to Industry.*** Given that the funding body had agreed to sponsor the doctoral research (and the aforementioned topic specifically), it was assumed that the issue of access would be largely unproblematic. However, in the absence of a representative from the charitable arm of the funding body, gaining access to relevant staff in the commercial arm of the funding body proved challenging. Strategies for gaining access to research subjects at an institutional level as well as an individual level tend to have full disclosure implicit in their execution (Shenton and Hayter, 2004), though the experience of this fieldwork raises questions around the effectiveness of this strategy. Pragmatic questions such as whether interviewees should be given a ‘full and accurate’ or abridged interview guide; or whether a realistic or more appealing shorter timeframe for the interview be given are often cast aside as less important decisions. However, the impact these have on gaining access to an organisation and the data generated are unquestionably significant.

Attempting to reconcile tactics to gain access, with considerations of academic rigour and integrity is rarely a happy marriage, especially when faced with a direct lack of support from the commercial arm of the funding body. In no uncertain terms, the doctoral researcher was told that “...we are definitely not prepared to allow you any communication with our customers... and any extra requests would bring overkill and be counter-productive to our promotional efforts” (Correspondence with hotel company Chief Executive Officer, June, 2010). Problems also arose around the ongoing commitment to the research and the associated logistical arrangements that were necessary to conduct the interviews. On occasions, managers had accepted the request for interviews, but subsequent attempts to make arrangements were met with non-committal responses, and even cancellation of meetings when international travel arrangements had been made. It could be argued that this series of events was due to a lack of trust and/or apprehension regarding the research topic, however the intervention from a gatekeeper (the hotel manager’s Personal Assistant) at this point was believed to be the real cause of this behaviour.

*“We apologise for the inconvenience with scheduling the interviews, as you are probably aware this is a holiday period and some General Managers might not be available for interviews. Nevertheless our Corporate Communications office will be in touch to assist with your research and set up as many interviews as possible”*

(Excerpt from e-mail received from hotel manager’s Personal Assistant, 16th November, 2010)

*“I was under the impression that these dates had been agreed upon as a suitable time for me to visit from our correspondence back in September, so I do apologise if I have arrived at an inconvenient time*. *Perhaps I could call into your office today or tomorrow for a brief chat so we can make other arrangements?*”

(Excerpt from my e-mail to same hotel manager’s Personal Assistant, 18th November, 2010)

The role and influence of gatekeepers in controlling access to research participants is not widely published on, even though Broadhead and Rist had noted in1976 that strategies for managing the pressures of gatekeepers were poorly developed. Attempts at recruiting other organisations for this project (to supplement the commercial arm of the PhD’s sponsor) resulted in a multi-layering of gatekeepers. Figure 2 is illustrative of the emergence of gatekeepers in this project, and the stages at which interference occurred (represented by lightning bolts).

*Figure 2 about here.*

Figure 2: Temporal interceptions of gatekeepers in research process

Gatekeepers were evident at a number of levels, both in a temporal sense and in their level of seniority within the organisation. Some gatekeepers emerged early on in the research, and came from a very senior position within the organisation. In other instances, even where direct and personal contact had been made with the company Chief Executive Officer [Mr Smith below], the gatekeeper [Mr Jones below] came in the form of a personal assistant, and other lower level managers (the names of those quoted have been changed for anonymity and confidentiality). The interference of gatekeepers abetted feelings of frustration and desperation.

*“My emotional rollercoaster was just beginning – now completely incensed and exasperated with the situation, it took me a moment to realise that in fact my ‘direct’ avenue for contacting Mr Smith had been intercepted –infiltrated by the dreaded gatekeepers. My impression was that he had intercepted my e-mail whilst Mr Smith was otherwise engaged, and I wouldn’t be surprised if Mr Jones also had the ability to delete, as well as respond to Mr Smith’s e-mails; Mr Smith would be none the wiser about the trials and tribulations I was enduring.”*

(Personal field notes, 18th November, 2010)

***3.1.2 Participation from Industry.*** While the lone student is responsible for the development, coordination and execution of the project, it is still burdensome when confronted with obstacles to industry engagement, given our world-changing, impact-focused lives as academics. The aim of this research project being, in part, to explore the propensity of luxury hotels to adopt ethical and sustainable business practices, was one which was met with some trepidation from hotel managers. Emphasising the importance and significance of the research, as well as the degree of anonymity and confidentiality with which it would be carried out, to those who were to be interviewed was a difficult and intricate process. In particular, problems arose where managers of the for-profit organisation valued their time too highly and in the absence of a head-office directive to cooperate, many chose not to participate. From an initial e-mail sent from within the commercial arm to all thirteen hotel general managers within that chain, only one response was received. Upon a further follow-up e-mail being sent, one further response was received. So while the organisation as a whole had agreed to the premise of its general managers being interviewed, the absence of any firm head-office directive on engagement with the research meant managers were free to participate, or not.

*“Any feedback or response he gets from this, he will then pass on to me and we can arrange the interview from that point….unfortunately, there didn’t seem to be a lot of commitment to offering input into the direction of the research (which obviously has positives and negatives) but I guess this may develop in time…”*

(Email correspondence to supervisor, 6th November, 2009)

Again, when access had been obtained to a second luxury hotel company directly via the Chief Executive Officer, the absence of any head-office directive to participate meant there was little incentive for hotel managers to do so. Although this particular hotel company did not have a vested financial interest in the research, the offer of furnishing them with a report of aggregated results from all participating organisations did not appear to be enough of an incentive to engage fully and meaningfully.

*“On behalf of Ms Paul the General Manager of this hotel, I would like to thank you for choosing this hotel for your research project. Unfortunately this hotel will not be participating this time. We take this opportunity to wish you all success in the project.”*

(Email correspondence from hotel manager, 15th November, 2010)

Ironically, even though the funding body *did* have a vested financial interest, this was *still* not incentive enough to engage meaningfully, and in turn raises questions about the motives behind their funding of projects of this kind.

*“Purpose of meeting was primarily to encourage the participation of the hotel company in the research project, and emphasise the need for more engagement from the sponsoring body. Notes from the meeting were as follows:*

* *He didn't acknowledge/agree that sustainability was a concern, and was unconvinced by the need for concern in this area;*
* *He believed that sustainability was a nuisance/hassle for business;*
* *He felt that sustainability/ethical consumption was something that needed to be consumer driven (rather than supply driven), and that the hotel would not be a leader in the hotel industry in this respect;*
* *He did not believe that sustainability was something that their guests do, our would (ever) demand;*
* *remained uncommitted in relation to me interviewing the managers identified in the business proposal;*
* *remained very hesitant about surveying guests, even though strategies to minimise impact of guest experience were outlined in the business proposal.”*

(Excerpt from research supervision log, 30th March, 2011)

Although the external funding partner was willing to fund research into Corporate Social Responsibility and ethical consumption in luxury hotels, and while increasing pressures are placed on businesses in all industries to engage in more Corporate Social Responsibility activities, it could be suggested that funding arrangements such as this are implemented simply as a veneer for community engagement. Whether (and how) industry needs, and rigorous academic tourism research can be compatible, remains to be seen.

***3.1.3 Alternative Methodologies.*** Issues of industry engagement force us to consider whether or not there is scope for alternative methodologies which raise awareness of the personal challenges faced by doctoral students. There is a tradition and expectation that, in the tidy and systematic research methods texts we are presented with, methods selection is to be guided by our methodological, epistemological and ontological standpoints (Crotty, 1998). By affording greater credence to the pragmatic issues outlined earlier, it may be wiser to adopt a more reflexive approach to our research. Indeed, it is deemed important in the context of industry-funded research to engage in research which is mutually beneficial and useful to both parties (Cole, 2005). As most researchers are well aware, no matter how perfectly a planned a piece of research may be, its execution in the field rarely goes to plan (Ritchie, Burns & Palmer, 2005).

*“Progress in recruiting hotel companies to participate in second phase of research is proving difficult. In addition to contacts previously discussed, the possibility of purchasing a market research database was also discussed. This was effectively labelled a "Plan C" option if nothing materialises from other avenues.”*

(Excerpt from research supervision log, 4th May, 2011)

The reality in the field, often forces us to revise and adapt our original methodological frameworks and intentions (Everett 2010). Although informed by a clear epistemological and methodological rationale, being faced with unexpected situations and poor levels of stakeholder engagement meant the researcher was compelled to revise some early methodological intentions. This iterative process of revision and reflection meant that compromise and pragmatism had to work alongside pre-planned and tested data generation techniques; and sometimes the acceptability of the approach had to be favoured over its appropriateness. In addition to issues of academic rigour, the adoption of alternative methods also highlights the encroaching social control of research and the possible impingement on academic integrity and autonomy.

***3.2 Social control***

In seeking to understand how social forces shape doctoral research projects, it is clear that one of the most disabling elements of engaging with industry lies in the social control of research. The social control of research in this project manifested itself in three key areas: the impact of social control on positionality, research design and academic autonomy.

***3.2.1 Impact of Social Control on Positionality.*** Underpinned by a critical realist, mixed-methods framework, the research has afforded numerous, and somewhat unexpected opportunities, to reflect on the adequacy of the research design, the dimensionality and susceptibilities of positionality, and ultimately the suitability of the research strategy. At the outset, it is important to contextualise this research by outlining here the researcher’s own positionality. The importance of acknowledging positionality is evidenced by the inevitable influence it has over our own choices – it is the way in which we personally encounter research, and the way our personal biographies inform our investigative persona (Everett, 2010). In doing so, we refer to the broader social context in which we exist, and create an awareness of the social ‘situatedness’ of ourselves, influenced by elements such as our gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, class and age (Jennings, 2001), and as such provides a foundation on which subsequent research(er) decisions are based.

In Bordieu’s (2010) seminal work *Distinction*, he talks of the class factions within society which are perpetuated by the development not only of social and economic capital, but also of cultural capital, and possibly the most prominent issue when conducting a research project on luxury hotels, is the issue of class. As part of the greater middle-class of Western society, the PhD researcher often felt that her position on the social ladder was viewed as somewhat inferior to those being recruited (i.e. hotel managers of luxury hotels); a curious position when it was not even the Global-Elites themselves that she was trying to gain access to, merely the people who serve them! Like their guests, these managers are people who are rich in network capital and move in corporate and social circles quite distinct from our own (Personal field notes, October, 2010). This was felt most acutely when conducting research in the United Arab Emirates, where the conspicuous and unreservedly ostentatious displays of wealth and status made the researcher feel most inferior, she recalls:

*“A highly intricate and complicated socio-cultural environment exists where the exceedingly multi-cultural population has distinct vocations and positions on the social ladder. Every action undertaken in this country is done so with symbol and status in mind, with the ultimate goal being to exert superiority over the socio-cultural group beneath your own. It is not unreasonable then to assume that the only effective way in which to engage this particular group of managers is to afford them some element of prestige or status. An impossible task for a student researcher...”*

(Personal field notes, 18th November, 2010)

At times, and somewhat even more surprising, was that passing comments from academic colleagues revealed that they somehow saw the researcher as occupying an elevated position in comparison to them, simply because of the research topic.

Evidence of the influence of gender in research is abundant, and it is certainly true in this case that gender influenced this research. Some authors talk of being in a privileged position because of their gender (Everett, 2010) and gaining positive experiences because of it. In this instance however, the methodological dichotomy of polarizing the researcher and the researched onto a ‘powerful/powerless’ continuum, based on aspects such as nationality, generation, age and reciprocity (Thapar-Björkert and Henry, 2004), held resonance with this experience. Gender in this instance was certainly a contributing factor to my somewhat powerless position in the male-dominated industry of hotel management. Ordinarily, it is recognised that the privileged position researchers hold in relation to the dissemination of research findings affords them a position of power (Thapar-Björkert and Henry, 2004), and ultimately this degree of power still remains, however factors in addition to gender (e.g. age, nationality, social class and status), all led to feelings of frustration and angst.

“*A transition was occurring now, from feeling powerless and disheartened to angry and infuriated. It was these feelings that acted as the catalyst for me to adopt a more assertive stance”*

(Personal field notes, 18th November, 2010)

It was clear that in an interview setting, as well as at the recruitment stage, the researcher’s gender, age and to some extent nationality influenced the responses provided by interviewees, as well as the degree of power which they exercised over the process. In fact, Denscombe (1998, p. 208) notes that such aspects are almost impossible to disguise, and as such influence the way interviewees are likely to respond. A growing number of authors are acknowledging the importance of the social lens through which we gaze (e.g. Everett, 2010), but in addition to this, we must also remain cognisant of the lens through which our research subjects view us and our research.

***3.2.2 The Impact of Social Control on Research Design.*** Lashley (2011) has argued that the emergence of social control on research design has arisen from diminishing levels of value the industry place on educational collaboration on research and a general lack of importance attached to, or understanding of, research by industry. Tourism and its allied industries in particular, are characterised by a transient and largely unskilled workforce. For example, Lashley (2011) notes seven out of eight hospitality managers hold no qualification above school level, and consequently, they place little value on collaboration for educational or research purposes.

Furthermore, the number and influence of gatekeepers in the research design for the doctoral project has had an impact. The initial design took theoretical cues from the work of Eliott & Urry (2009), and focused on the super-rich Global-Elites, a group whom the funding partner served through their chain of exclusive luxury hotels. Cleverly though, through their, and other luxury hotel chains’, non-participation in the research project, the methodological design of the research was re-engineered. Rather than the focus of the research being on luxury hotels and the value Global-Elites place on sustainable business practices, the focus was shifted to interpreting the values of the mass-luxury market and assessing their value constructs as brand loyalty drivers.At the crux of such alterations, is the issue of academic freedom and autonomy. Behrens and Gray (2001:196) note that “applied” research is where there is the greatest potential to influence the perceived extent of academic freedom, but that “the burden-of-proof should be on those who believe that industrial support....will distort or corrupt our educational institutions and their core values”. This lack of engagement and participation from industry is indicative of the types of influences such industry collaborations have on academic freedom and autonomy. Similarly, when industry bodies did engage, recruitment was generally only achieved if the research instruments could be altered or manipulated. Lengthy amounts of correspondence were sent backwards and forwards between various gatekeepers, tweaking and adjusting survey questions, altering the layout, and some cases including additional questions which they felt to be relevant to the research.

*Insert Figure 3 about here*

Figure 3: E-mail correspondence from hotel employee, 8th August, 2011

Questions are raised as to whether or not it is possible to create a truly autonomous position from which to undertake rigorous industry-funded research, whilst remaining within a sound epistemological, methodological and importantly, ethical framework.

***3.3 Emotional Labour***

The physicality of conducting research is something which has not gone unrecognised, although the influential role this has on the research outcomes is often relegated to the sidelines, and curiously deemed to be somehow less important than the results themselves. The physical practice of research is found by many to be a tiresome, exhausting and lonely experience (Everett, 2010), and a far cry from the uncomplicated and orderly processes we are guided by in the majority of academic methods texts. Seldom is the mental welfare of researchers taken into consideration, and how well they are equipped to deal not only with the physical downsides such as fatigue and environmental constraints, but also the emotional and psychological challenges including rejection and the constant need to justify and validate research ideas to various stake holders.

*“Discussion at the meeting centred around the fact that a negative response from the Chief Executive Officer* [after having met with him] *should be pre-empted, in the form of her sending a follow-up e-mail before the expiration of the advised two-week period. It was suggested that an e-mail containing a market/competitor analysis be included highlighting the investments and financial rewards being realised by similar hotels. In addition to this, case studies should be presented to the Chief Executive Officer further demonstrating the action that is already being taken in the luxury hotel sector in relation to sustainability and ethical consumption.”*

(Meeting notes, 30th March, 2011)

Meetings with the student’s supervisory team prompted the formulation of a persuasive business-type proposal to be presented to the Chief Executive Officer of the commercial arm of the funding body (meeting notes, 15th March, 2011). Early bouts of optimism and hope were experienced, and the aforementioned expectation of involvement from the funding body was being counted on.

The concept of ‘Emotional Endurance’ should go beyond navigating the physical challenges facing researchers, and must acknowledge the mental and psychological challenges we face relative to the contextualised locale of our research.

*“The idea of approaching one more hotel or one more manager for participation in the research is growing less and less appealing every day. The constant rejections, barriers and hurdles thrown up by all the gatekeepers are enough to make me throw in the towel. This is certainly an emotional journey that I fear is far from over.”*

(Personal field notes, 2011)

In some ways, this can be paralleled to the work of Cliff and Ryan (2002) who talk of the gatekeeper role adopted by travel agents when tourists contact travel agents. In the same way travel agents “identify and open the portals to the far-off-land” (pg. 93), key industry actors have closed doors to those at the geographic core of society. While the service encounters between tourists and travel agents form the basis of how consumers will judge the business (Cliff and Ryan, 2002), these same ‘moments of truth’ are experienced in industry-focused researchers, where interactions (or lack thereof) are pivotal in determining whether to continue with the same approach, or if a change of tact is needed. The impact this has on the emotional endurance of researchers is obvious, but the influence these kinds of barriers place on the autonomy of the research direction, and academic integrity of the research are less so.

**CONCLUSION**

This paper has discussed the problems associated with externally funded doctoral research and has raised awareness of the difficulties which exist in relation to industry access and gatekeeper negotiations. It has also examined issues of academic autonomy and the pedagogic implications of emotional ‘research’ labour on early career academics. These issues have attracted little attention to date, but the ramifications on both the development of tourism research and academic scholars are hugely significant. The possibilities for pursuing research which explores the input and development of gatekeeper access strategies; researcher emotional labour; and the impacts of industry funding on academic autonomy are extensive. At a time where government funding of higher education institutions is being drastically reduced, the importance of demonstrating the value of our research to industry, whether it be practical or theoretical, is vital.

The key issue in this paper is the deficient level of value placed on research by industry. Frequently, it seems that we are stumbling at the first hurdle, where obtaining access to industry, even while superficial support is apparent, is problematic. As a field which is legitimised as a credible area of study, and is increasing in sophistication and depth (Tribe, Xia and Chambers, 2012), the academy must avoid adopting the role of mere suppliers to industry (Lashley, 2011). Whilst Lashley’s (2011) work refers more specifically to educational curriculum design and development, the characteristics and barriers he points to are equally as valid when attempts are made to engage with industry in a research and knowledge generation capacity. This position of subordination has allowed for the (self)-elevation of employer views to exclusive heights, and subsequently, a perception has arisen which holds that education provision should be concerned with meeting the needs of industry; a position which over the past two and a half decades has achieved little in terms of improving skill shortages and hard-to-fill vacancies (Gleeson and Keep, 2004). The perceived importance placed on industry views is ironic given that firstly, management personnel within the hospitality industry are largely under-educated (see Lashley, 2011); and secondly, that “employer communities are [therefore] frequently constrained by employer perceptions that do not value educators or education” (pg. 133). The key question raised here is whether or not industry actually wants to engage in research of the academy? If we are to not only gain access to industry, but forge pathways for meaningful participation, we must work to improve the value they place on our work.

One way of doing this may lie in the use of alternative methodologies. It was evident from this study that collaboration with industry (or lack thereof) resulted in frequent and deliberate changes to the research strategy and instruments. Ritchie, Burnes and Palmer (2005) advocate that researchers should adopt a more pragmatic approach to research, and recognise that, like following a complex recipe, theory and practice do not always coincide. Of course, this paper does not advocate ‘sloppy’ or poorly planned research, but suggests that when attempting to engage with industry partners, we must, as much as possible, view research problems and questions from their perspective whilst still maintaining our own academic autonomy. The importance of sound epistemological and methodological knowledge is, in our view, unquestionable but what might be suggested is that, when engaging with industry, our decisions on appropriate methods and research instruments evolve from a more pragmatic standpoint, and involve collaborative decisions and consultation in the research development and design phases. If we are to continue the ‘sustainability transition’ we must “identify[*ication of*], and [the] combat[*ing* *of*], an array of counter forces, including the ideological values of potent and powerful cultures, conservative elements within tourism, mono- disciplinary science, and linear tools and methods” (Farrell and Twining-Ward, 2005:119). Above all, what is required is a unity between industry and the academy to build on what has already been learned, and at all costs avoid “fragmentation, disunities and vulnerable management” (Farrell and Twining-Ward, 2005:119) which will endanger progress of the tourism research agenda more generally, particularly when early career researchers are faced with obstacles and have their confidence diminished by inappropriate and unnecessary approaches and barriers.

Through recognising the practical challenges embedded in industry-funded research, we are well placed, and perhaps honour-bound to pay heed to the pedagogical implications of such arrangements, particularly in the form of emotional labour. It is not enough to simply recognise the physical, mental and emotional challenges that early career researchers face and treat them as a rite of passage into the academy. These aspects provide important points for learning and reflection, and by engaging in the auto-ethnographic approaches suggested by Flemming & Fullagar (2007) we may perhaps present one method by which both pedagogical and methodological advances are made both in the tourism arena, but also the broader social science discipline and beyond. For, as we have noted in this research, recognition of researcher ‘entanglement’ (Ateljevic, et al., 2005) should not be viewed exclusively as the domain of post-positivist researchers.

Of particular note to the findings presented here is the context in which the research is set. A potential limitation may be seen in the unique set of circumstances of the project, where the researcher was attempting to reach a group of society who operate with varying degrees of ‘detached engagement’ (Elliott & Urry, 2009) and are centred at the so-called geographic core of society. Indeed this backdrop presents some unique challenges, though we do not see these as being any more or less unique than those researching in less developed contexts. Most research settings are challenging, but in the interest of knowledge generation and in building intellectual capacity within the academy, it is the responsibility and duty of established scholars to protect the academic integrity of new researchers and their emotional welfare. We must not ignore these aspects of research and the impact they have on projects, which are rarely a clinical and straight-forward process (even in the natural sciences).

Finally, the canon of tourism knowledge is incomplete and is punctuated by conspicuous silences and absences in research, usually held to be of those in powerless or underprivileged positions as “permission to narrate may be denied to peripheral groups” (Tribe, 2008:376). In the case of this project, and perhaps others involving industry partners, permission to narrate is purposefully denied *by* core groups in acts of self-preservation. It is right that we turn our focus to those who hold powerful positions, and whose position at the geographic core of society has afforded them the ability to (purposefully) elude research attention. Henceforth, this paper holds that we must make much bigger in-roads to creating a more fulfilling research co-operative, for both industry and researchers, which heralds the way for a mutually beneficial and sustainable long-term research agenda between industry and the academy.

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