

Executive Summary

Study Guide

What is an Executive Summary?

The Executive Summary is:

- found in many business and research reports, but also in business plans or proposals
- a summary of the whole report
- designed to give the reader all of the information about the report in summary format
- similar to an abstract, but is longer and has more depth

The Executive Summary appears near the beginning of the report but **must** be written last (once the main report has been finished).

It is usually about 5-10% of the total length of the report.

It should be written formally and contain industry terminology.

Position in report

The basic structure of a report is presented below. The Executive summary usually comes after the table of contents.

- Title
- Table of contents
- **Executive summary**
- Introduction
- Your key findings/information
- Conclusion
- Recommendations
- Reference list
- Appendices

See the Report Writing Study Guide at <https://tafesa.libguides.com/guides> for more information about creating reports.

Layout of Executive Summary

The Executive Summary can be made up of paragraphs and use bullet points where required. It usually has the following information:

- Aim or purpose of the report
- Define the problem/issue that has created the need for the report
- Methods of analysis (how the problem/issue was investigated)
- Key findings (appearing in the order that they appear in the report)
- Recommendations (can be bulleted)
- Limitations of the report (state the limitations of the report and the impact they could have)

Example:

Executive Summary

The number of tourism Academics worldwide has grown substantially, and in many countries, tourism is now well represented at Universities. At the same time, Universities face increasing pressure to demonstrate the positive impact that Government investment makes on society. Whilst the focus of this research is not on the role of Universities as such, it is noted that the increasing emphasis on performance measurement and management is reflective of a broader neoliberal governance approach.

Limitations

Evaluation systems, and the often related funding arrangements, drive how research is 'measured and evaluated', and as a result how Academics behave to secure their jobs and advance their career. Thus, whilst there seems to be increasing consensus that Academics need to 'make an impact', little is known about what that means in practical terms. The purpose of this study was therefore to gain a basic understanding of how tourism Academics around the world engage in knowledge transfer and how they interpret the notion of 'impact'. This involved seeking better understanding of the practices of tourism Academics such as research communication, stakeholder engagement and delivering an impact.

Problem,
Purpose

An online survey was sent out to key contacts (e.g. Heads of Departments) in the global tourism academy, and snowballed from there. The survey was open for 3 weeks between 26th of April and 16th of May 2016. A total of 189 Academics from 31 countries responded. Slightly more than half of the respondents were male (57%) compared to female (43%), and respondents were generally evenly spread across all stages of academic career.

Method

Tourism Academics were asked how they typically shared their research findings. Just over 40% of respondents reported that they 'always' share their findings with peers through publication in tourism journals, and 46% also publish in non-tourism journals. Other outlets (e.g. industry reports) are used less frequently. The choice of communication channel differs by country of employment and career stage, but not by gender.

Findings

The majority of tourism Academics frequently engage with other Academics; mainly from the tourism area. However, less than 10% reported that they 'always' engage with other stakeholder groups, for example local or national Government or international organisations. Amongst all stakeholder groups, tourism Academics were most likely to 'always' (12% of respondents) connect with small and medium sized companies to discuss research findings. In contrast, two thirds of tourism Academics responded that they either never or very rarely engaged with large tourism corporations. Further research should explore whether this is due to lack of opportunity, confidence or relevant knowledge. Again, engagement differed by country and career stage, but also for gender. Especially, male Academics seemed to engage more frequently with 'large players' than female Academics. Early-career researchers were less likely to engage externally. They may benefit from mentorship and incentives to become more involved in industry events and networks.

Findings

Timing and reasons for engagement are also important. Whilst stakeholders are likely to prefer to be involved at the early stages of research rather than upon completion, tourism Academics tend to communicate their findings once finished with their research. More effort is required to consult stakeholders early on and involve them actively in the research process. Participants in this research noted that they have to engage with stakeholders

Findings

because they are often part of the research (e.g. they participate in interviews or focus groups), and also because they provide possible access to funding.

Findings

When asked how to measure academic impact, participants were in broad agreement that citation metrics are an acceptable approach. This is not surprising, given that metrics such as the H-index are commonly used and institutionalised. Measuring industry impact is more challenging, and there was less agreement on what the best evaluation indicator might be. The inclusion of research findings in the policy making process was seen as a good measure of impact by almost all respondents. Research-informed teaching and research that assists product development were also seen as useful ways to assess impact. Quantifying these might be harder and narratives might be required to link research with an outcome. The number of patents was the least favoured indicator, although tourism Academics from Asia seemed to support this indicator.

Findings

When asked what impact means to Academics, it became clear that most respondents believed that research should be 'useful' to the 'real world' and 'make a difference'. The word 'change' was also mentioned frequently, in particular when respondents expressed desire that their research would change practices and behaviours for the better. It is difficult to measure 'better' and agreeing on normative outcomes might be challenging. As such, this research should be followed up by more in-depth research on how academics go about achieving an impact, why they do it (e.g. intrinsically or extrinsically motivated), and whether there are different types of academics that are more driven by being a change agent than others. Also, different University systems are likely to have an influence on behavioural patterns and norms and further work would be required to compare the effects of different evaluation and incentive schemes.

Recommendation

Recommendation

Reference:

Becken, S, Miller, G & Banhalimi-Zakar, Z 2016, *Making an impact – practices and views of tourism academics*, Griffith University, viewed 18 August 2020, <https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0033/18888/Research-Impact-Report-combined-Final.pdf>.