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PRISMA Statement and Thematic Analysis Framework in Hospitality and Tourism Research

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the application of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) checklists for advanced systematic reviews of literature and Thematic Analysis Framework (TAF) focusing on A-15 Point checklist for qualitative data analysis in hospitality and tourism research. There exists paucity of knowledge and extant literature work that are dedicated to highlight the application of PRISMA and TAF checklists. There are several studies that have presumably adopted PRISMA and TAF; however, most of these studies merely mentioned in their methodology section that these two checklists were adopted. This paper reviews previous studies that have adopted PRISMA and TAF in hospitality services, tourism and other related studies to identify the extent to which the two checklists have been applied. Findings show limited amount of literature work adopted the PRISMA checklists; and it appears most authors are not aware of the TAF. These findings contribute to the existing knowledge the necessity to apply PRISMA in systematic literature reviews and TAF checklists for qualitative data analysis. Practical implications include the need for the journal article editors, edited book chapter editors, conference scientific committee and peer-reviewers to be familiar with PRISMA and TAF checklists to enrich the quality of published academic papers in hospitality and tourism. Directions for future studies are discussed further.

Keywords: PRISMA, thematic analysis framework, hospitality and tourism research

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Introduction

This paper has been conceived to contribute to the quality of the academic literature review process in hospitality and tourism research. Specifically, this paper explores the application of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) checklists for advanced systematic reviews of literature (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The PRISMA Group, 2009); and Thematic Analysis Framework (TAF) checklists for data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in hospitality and tourism research. Over the years, a review of the literature has been developed by researchers to identify the existing scholarship territory (Weed, 2006). There are several studies that have conducted review of literature in hospitality and tourism as the basis for writing conceptual papers and have rolled out academic contributions.

However, there exists paucity of studies focusing on the types and quality of the systematic review of articles that are featured in hospitality and tourism (Pahlevan-Sharif, Mura, & Wijesinghe,
Similarly, there are limited studies assessing the quality of application of thematic analysis in hospitality and tourism research. This study reviews how PRISMA statement consisting of the PRISMA flow diagram (Moher, et al., 2009; Pahlevan, 2019), and Thematic Analysis framework consisting of six phases of thematic analysis, A-15 Point checklist, and thematic map (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In particular, this study reviews all papers that have adopted PRISMA and Thematic Analysis in hospitality and tourism research journals from 2006 until 2020. This is because PRISMA checklists were published in 2009 by Moher et al. (2009), and Thematic Analysis Framework (TAF) for A-15 Point checklist were published by Braun and Clarke (2006). Based on these reviews of extant studies that confirms there is a gap in knowledge in particular that limited academic literature in hospitality and tourism research have fully applied PRISMA and Thematic Analysis Framework for A 15 point checklists. The non-inclusion of PRISMA checklists in systematic literature reviews, and TAF for A 15-Point checklists in qualitative data analysis have undermined the quality of research papers published in hospitality and tourism journals, conference papers, and higher degree by research work. This study asks one main question: How does academic researchers have operationalised PRISMA Checklists, and Thematic Analysis A 15 Point checklists?

**Literature Review**

**Systematic Review**

The term ‘systematic’ refers to a research protocol that “helps protect objectivity by providing explicit descriptions of the steps” (Tranfield et al., 2003, p.215). Systematic reviews should include the specific research questions, the main coverage of the study, the research strategy and the inclusion and exclusion of criteria adopted for the reviews (Davies & Crombie, 1998). A systematic review of extant literature provides a detailed review of specific topic for research which has practical implications for the industry players and provide road map for future research (Wang, et al., 2016). Research in hospitality and tourism disciplines have increased in the last four decades in terms of publication opportunities in several academic journals (Gursory & Sandstrom 2016). There are different types of reviews of literature and data analysis. Grant and Booth (2009) identify 14 typologies of reviews of literature work, based on several methods adopted for searching, appraising, synthesising and analysing the items constituting the theoretical knowledge. These types of literature reviews are categorised into five typologies of reviews (Kim, Bai, Kim & Chon, 2018). These include (a) qualitative thematic review; (b) meta-analysis review; (c) critical and narrative review; (d) mixed methods review; and (e) quantitative systematic review.

In the hospitality and tourism literature, several studies have been conducted using systematic reviews of research which identified topics of interest (McKercher & Tung 2015; Kandampullly et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2018). In hospitality and tourism research, review studies are conducted with the aim of understanding the changes and development of an academic field of study to provide researchers with findings of the evolution of a disciple and identify any trends (Cheng, et al., 2011). While a number of review studies have been conducted and published in hospitality and tourism journals on a diverse and wide range of academic interest, no systematic overview of the trajectory and effect on such review studies have been made available (Kim et al., 2016). According to Liberati et al. (2009), systematic reviews are differentiated from other types of reviews in terms of methodical procedures adopted in the synthesis of findings that ensure unbiased searches with a high degree of efficiency and quality.
**PRISMA Checklists**

PRISMA checklists has been in existence for medical research under a different name called Quality of Reporting of Meta-analyses (QUOROM) Statement since 1996. It was developed to address the suboptimal reporting of meta-analyses (Moher, et al., 2009). This was renamed as Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) in 2009. The main reason for replacing the initial name from QUOROM to PRISMA was the need to include both systematic and meta-analyses (Moher, et al., 2009). Based on this update, definitions for systematic reviews and meta-analyses were adopted from the work of Green and Higgins (2005).

For example, a systematic review is a review of a clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant research, and to collect and analyze data from the studies that are included in the review. On the other hand, meta-analysis refers to the use of statistical techniques in a systematic review to integrate the results of included studies (Green & Higgins, 2005).

PRISMA is a protocol developed to conduct systematic reviews consisting of a four-phase or stage flow diagram (refer to Figure 1), and a 27-item checklist (refer to Table 1). These checklists were developed in the medical field by a group of 29 scholars including review authors, methodologists, clinicians, medical editors and a consumer. PRISMA was adopted at a three-day meeting held in Ottawa, Canada, in June 2005 (Moher et al., 2009). The choice of PRISMA over other protocols is due to the recognition of its comprehensiveness, its applications in several academic disciplines across the world beyond the medical fields, and PRISMA potential to increase consistency of literature reviews among the researchers (Liberati et al., 2009). In addition, the adoption of PRISMA is aimed at instilling accuracy and transparency of academic literature review. The current study focuses on the PRISMA checklists protocol and to highlight the paucity of its application in hospitality and tourism research.

**Thematic Analysis A-15 Point Checklist**

Thematic Analysis Framework (TAF) is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). When data is analysed by theme, it is called thematic analysis; this type of analysis is considered to be inductive, that is, themes emerge from the data are not imposed (deductive) by the author. As a result the data collection and analysis take place at the same time (Ahmad & Usop, 2011). Thematic analysis also interprets different aspects of the study (Boyatzis, 1998). It also allows data to be organised and described in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes from the study become the categories for analysis by the researcher (Fereday & Muicohrane, 2006). The question is what counts as a theme in qualitative data analysis? A theme captures and integrates something important about the data in relation to the research question and there is no hard-and-fast rules of what proportion or volume of data collected by a researcher needs to display evidence to be considered as a theme in qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

More importantly, thematic analysis was used as a “constructionist (interpretivist) method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences within society” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.81) are perceived. Braun and Clarke (2006) developed the thematic analysis framework including six phases of TAF, thematic map, and A-1 Point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis. Many published papers which have adopted TAF are silent on the application
of the A-15 Point checklist and thematic map. To the best of the author’s knowledge existing literature merely mentioned that the six-phases of TAF were adopted without elaborating on how these six phases were adopted in the study. Hence, this paper is conceived to draw the attention of researchers, methodologists, reviewers and editors the importance of a fully adopted Thematic Analysis framework specially the 15 Point checklist in hospitality and tourism research.

**Methods**

The current study was a review of selected hospitality and tourism literature published since 2006 that have adopted the 15-Point checklist criteria for good thematic analysis and PRISMA checklist protocol since 2009. Similarly, literature work in hospitality and tourism that have included thematic map since 2006 and PRISMA flow diagram have been considered since 2009. For the purpose of this study, the databases explored are Scopus, Science Direct, Pro Quest, web of science, Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) journal quality list were searched for PRISMA checklist and the 15 Point checklist criteria for thematic analysis. ABDC was chosen because it was more comprehensive than other journal rankings (Mura & Pahlevan-Sharif, 2015). ABDC contains 66 journals in the following categories: 5 A*, 11 A, 22 B, and 28 C journals (Pahlevan-Sharif et al., 2021).

**Sample**

This study has selected the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) checklists for advanced reviews and the PRISMA flow diagram. In addition, the thematic analysis checklist and thematic map are the samples to ascertain their use in hospitality and tourism research. Papers that have their titles, abstract, and keywords scoped towards or mentioned PRISMA and TAF are considered relevant in this study. However, systematic reviews of literature and other types of reviews are not taken into consideration due to the specific purpose of this study. Table 1, Figure 1, Table 2, Table 3, and Figure 2 are the samples that have been adopted.

**Table 1. Six Phases of Thematic Analysis**

| Phase                      | Description of the process                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Familiarising oneself  | Transcribing data (if necessary); reading and reading the data; noting down initial ideas.                                                                 |
| with the data              | Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set; collating data relevant to each code.                        |
| 2. Generating initial      | Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all                                                                                                                                                                    |
| codes                      | Checking that the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.            |
| 3. Searching for themes   | Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.          |
| 4. Reviewing themes       | The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis. |
| 5. Defining and naming    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| themes                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 6. Producing the report   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

*Source. Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006)*
| Section/Topic                  | Number | PRISMA Checklist Item                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| TITLE                         | 1      | Identify the report as a systematic review, meta-analysis or both.                     |
| ABSTRACT                      | 2      | Provide a structured summary including, as applicable; objectives; data sources; study eligibility criteria, participants, and interventions. |
| INTRODUCTION                  | 3      | Describe the rational for the review in the context of what is already known          |
|                               | 4      | Provide an explicit statement of questions being addressed with reference to participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes, and study design (PICOS). |
| METHODS                       | 5      | Indicate if a review protocol exists, if and where it can be accessed                 |
| Protocol and registration     | 6      | Specify study characteristics (e.g., PICOS, length of follow-up) and characteristics (e.g., years considered, language, publication status) used as criteria for eligibility, giving rationale. |
| Eligibility Report            | 7      | Describe all information sources (e.g., databases with dates of coverage, contact with study authors to identify additional studies) in the search and date last searched. |
| Information sources           | 8      | Present full electronic search strategy for at least one database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated. |
| Search                        | 9      | State the process for selecting studies (i.e., screening, eligibility, included in systematic review, and, if applicable, included in the meta-analysis). |
| Study selection               | 10     | Describe method of data extraction from reports (e.g., piloted forms, independently, in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators. |
| Data collection process       | 11     | List and define all variables for which data were sought (e.g., PICOS, funding sources) and any assumptions and simplifications made. |
| Risk of bias in               | 12     | Describe methods used for assessing risk of bias of individual studies including specification of whether this was done at the study or outcome |
| Summary measures              | 13     | State the principal summary measures e.g. risk ratio, difference in means.            |
| Synthesis of results          | 14     | Describe the methods of handling data and combining results of studies, if done, including measures of consistency (e.g. I2) for each meta-analysis. |
| Risk of bias across           | 15     | Specify any assessment of risk of bias that may affect the cumulative evidence (e.g., publication bias, selective reporting within studies). |
| Additional analyses           | 16     | Describe methods of additional analyses (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression), if done, indicating which were pre-specified. |
| RESULTS                       | 17     | Give numbers of studies screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally with a flow diagram. |
| Study selection               | 18     | For each study, present characteristics for which data were extract extracted (e.g., study size, PICOS, follow-up period) and provide the citations. |
| Risk of bias with studies     | 19     | Present data on risk of bias of each study and, if available, any outcome-level assessment (see item 12). |
| Results of individual studies | 20     | For all outcomes considered (benefits or harms), present, for each study: (a) simple summary data for each intervention group and (b) effect estimates and confidence intervals, ideally with a forest plot. |
| Synthesis of results          | 21     | Present results of each meta-analysis done, including confidence intervals and measures of consistency. |
| Risk of bias across studies   | 22     | Present results of any assessment of risk of bias across studies (see item 15).         |
| Additional analysis           | 23     | Give results of additional analyses, if done (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression [see Item 16]). |
| DISCUSSION                    | 24     | Summarize the main findings including the strength of evidence for each main outcome; consider their relevance to key groups (e.g., health care providers, users, and policy makers). |
| Summary of evidence           | 25     | Discuss limitations at study and outcome level (e.g., risk of bias), and at review level (e.g., incomplete retrieval of identified research, reporting bias). |
| Limitations                   | 26     | Provide a general interpretation of the results in the context of other evidence, and implications for future research. |
| Conclusions                   | 27     | Describe sources of funding for the systematic review and other support (e.g., supply of data); role of funders for the systematic review. |

**Source.** Adopted from Moher, et al. (2009); Pati and Lorusso (2018); Pahlevan-Sharif et al. (2019).
Figure 1. The PRISMA Flow Diagram

Table 3: A 15-Point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis

| Process (Stages) | Point | Criteria |
|------------------|-------|----------|
| Transcription    | 1     | The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for ‘accuracy’. |
|                  | 2     | Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process. |
|                  | 3     | Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive. |
|                  | 4     | All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated. |
|                  | 5     | Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set. |
|                  | 6     | Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive. |
| Coding           | 7     | Data have been analysed interpreted, made sense of - rather than just paraphrased or described. |
|                  | 8     | Analysis and data match each other - the extracts illustrate the analytic claims. |
|                  | 9     | Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic. |
|                  | 10    | A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided. |
| Analysis         | 11    | Overall 11 Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over lightly. |
| Overall          |       | 12 The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated. |
|                  |       | 13 There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent. |
| Written report   | 14    | 14 The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of analysis. |
|                  | 15    | 15 The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not ‘emerge’. |

Source: Braun & Clarke (2006)

A thematic map of findings is important on each of the research questions. This is consistent with phase four of the thematic analysis on ‘reviewing themes and generating a thematic map’ of the analysis as presented in Figure 2 (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
Findings

Application of PRISMA Checklists and Thematic Analysis A-15 Point Checklist

As previously mentioned, notable databases hosting hospitality and tourism papers were explored using the key words for this study. These key words include Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) checklists, PRISMA, thematic framework, six stages of thematic analysis, systematic reviews, 15-Point checklist criteria for good thematic analysis, and a thematic map. Findings show that there are several studies that have applied systematic reviews of literature using the following literature reviews typologies (Kim et al., 2018; Khoo-Lattimore, Pati & Lorusso, 2018; Mura & Yung, 2017). These include qualitative thematic review, meta-analysis review, critical and narrative review, mixed methods review, and quantitative systematic review. Likewise, thematic analysis has been widely used in hospitality and tourism research.

Most of the studies that adopted thematic analysis complied with the six stages of thematic analysis (Kirillova, Fu, Xiaoxiao, Lehto, Cai, 2014; Campelo, Aitken, Thyne, & Gnoth, 2014). Although recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), the 15-Point checklist criteria are hardly mentioned in published papers. Similarly, PRISMA and flow diagram are made mention by fewer studies (Pahlevan-Sharif et al., 2019; Hadian et al., 2019). In addition, thematic map in qualitative data analysis are never presented in the analysis of data of several studies. In this study, based on the author’s personal experience in conducting qualitative research, suggestion is provided in Table 4 regarding the application of the 15-Point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis.
Implications and Conclusions

Theoretical Implications

As earlier highlighted, the aim of the PRISMA statement as conceived in this study, is to help authors improve the reporting of systematic reviews and meta-analyses in hospitality and tourism related research. Added to this is to also ensure all the components of thematic analysis framework namely, A-15 Point checklist, six stages of thematic analysis, and thematic map are reported in published papers. This paper has identified that PRISMA application in systematic reviews of literature in the hospitality and tourism scholarship is yet to be fully explored by the academic researchers. This paper is an eye opener of the opportunity available to the academic community to engage in meaningful and cutting edge research specifically on the review of extant literature. Thematic analysis framework will strengthen the quality of the final outcome of a research paper when these criteria are adopted in relevant studies.

Practical Implications

This study has implications for practice because it is a clarion call for the double-blind reviewers, associate editors, managing editors and editor s-in-chief of academic journals and edited book authors. A thorough application of PRISMA statement 27-checklist and flow diagram, and components of thematic analysis framework such as the six stages, the 15-Point checklist, and thematic map will increase the quality of academic journal publications.

Table 4. Suggested Application of A-15 Point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis

| Process (Stages) | Point | Criteria (Application) |
|------------------|-------|------------------------|
| Transcription    | 1     | Data have been transcribed to appropriate level of detail and checked against digital audio tapes for accuracy in case of doubt. |
|                  | 2     | Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process which was demonstrated on M-excel in form of a data grid. |
|                  | 3     | Themes emerged in this study have been generated from thorough coding process, and are inclusive and comprehensive. |
|                  | 4     | Relevant extracts generated in this study for each theme have been combined or collated using data grid. |
|                  | 5     | Themes emerged from each construct have been checked thorough and confirmed with the original data. |
|                  | 6     | Themes are internally logical, consistent with distinctive features. |
| Coding           | 7     | The data analysis process was very thorough, explained and provided relevant answers to the research questions. |
|                  | 8     | The findings from the original data match each other based on the interview extracts. |
|                  | 9     | The data analysis provides convincing and well-organised findings from the data which reflects the main aims of the research. |
|                  | 10    | This study produces a good balance between analytic narrative using quotes from the data extracts and tables/figures where necessary. |
| Analysis         | 11    | The researcher devoted enough time to complete all the six phases (stages) of the thematic analysis in without rushing a single phase. |
| Overall          |       |                        |
| Written report   | 12    | The process of analysis, assumptions and specific approach to thematic analysis is well explained to the readers of this thesis. |
|                  | 13    | The method reported to analyse this study was thematic analysis, and it was actually used. Therefore, the reported analyses are consistent. |
|                  | 14    | Interpretative paradigm was adopted in this study; therefore the language and concepts used in writing the findings are consistent with epistemological position of the analysis and presentation. |
|                  | 15    | The researcher is positioned as being in and with the study context to elicit detailed information from the selected respondents. Therefore themes do not just ‘emerge’ but are brought up through the sharing of experiences by the participants in this study. |

Limitations and Future Research

The main data sources for this paper is the review of literature within hospitality and tourism research in relation to PRISMA statement. Besides, journal articles featuring Thematic Analysis
Framework that have applied A-15 Point checklist of criteria for good Thematic Analysis were reviewed. Therefore, future research should explore empirical data that have used or can adopt PRISMA in the literature review section. Further investigation is needed to ascertain if papers published before 2006 has similar paucity of adopting the main components of TAF. In conclusion, this paper has contributed to academic scholarship in hospitality and tourism research. Notably, this paper has explored the extent to which Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) checklists for advanced systematic reviews of literature and Thematic Analysis Framework featuring A-15 Point checklists criteria for qualitative data analysis in hospitality and tourism research have been applied by academic researchers.

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