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Rebuttal to: Zhang et al. “Research development, current hotspots, and future directions of water research based on MODIS images: a critical review with a bibliometric analysis,” vol. 24, pp. 15226–15239

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Zhang et al. (2017) recently published in the *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* a paper entitled “Research development, current hotspots, and future directions of water research based on MODIS images: a critical review with a bibliometric analysis.” In the “Materials and methods” section, the authors mentioned that the “Document information included author(s), source (journal title), language, country, document type, author keywords, institution, and subject category. Full records were downloaded into Microsoft Excel 2013 to reveal the patterns of water research using MODIS imagery in terms of the following aspects: variation characteristics of total publication output, document type and language of publications, distribution of output in subject categories and journals, publication outputs by country and institution, international collaborations by authors and institutions, current hotspots of water research, and future directions” without any appropriate reference. In fact, Ho’s group firstly proposed the original ideal and the use of Microsoft Excel to treat data (Li and Ho 2008). In last decade, this concept and method have been widely applied in a number of research topics (Ho et al. 2010; Ho 2014a; Ho et al. 2016).

In the “Publication patterns: subject categories and journals” section, the authors stated “Table 3 shows the SCI category of the journal, the position of the journal in its category, the impact factors (IFs), and the ranks of the top 20 journals” without any appropriate reference. The comparison in the Table has been presented in earlier years (Chiu and Ho 2005; Fu et al. 2010).

In the “Publication performance: countries, institutions, and authors” section, the authors noticed that “The number of total, single-country, internationally collaborative, first authored, and corresponding authored articles, together with the percentage of inter-institutionally collaborative articles, is exhibited in Table 4” without any appropriate reference. In point of fact, in last decade, Ho’s group has reported the idea to compare all bibliometric indicators in the Table (Ho et al. 2010; Li et al. 2011).

In the “Research hotspots: author keywords” section, the authors noticed that “We present the 20 most frequently used keywords in this field within each 5-year interval to guarantee a reasonable time span and minimize year to year fluctuations over 2001–2015 in Table 5, after excluding MODIS and remote sensing” without any appropriate reference. In order to find out research focus of a research field, Ho’s group proposed the concept on examining the distribution of words in article titles, abstracts, author keywords, and *KeyWords Plus* at different time periods in order to evaluate trends in research topics (Li et al. 2009; Zhang et al. 2010). They also proposed word cluster analysis to find the research hotspots of research field (Mao et al. 2010). Furthermore, similar rebuttals have also been published in *Environmental Earth Sciences* (Ho 2016a), *Scientometrics* (Ho 2016b), and *Journal of Cleaner Production* (Fu and Ho 2017).

I agree that citing an original paper respects the authors who presented a novel idea in research and that it also allows the reader to find and read the original work in detail for themselves (Ho 2014b). It has been pointed that even the original paper was published in 100 years ago, the authors still prefer citing the original paper in their publications (Ho 2015). Typical isotherms, such as Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) (Brunauer et al. 1938), Langmuir (Langmuir 1918), and Freundlich (Freundlich 1906), have witnessed increased trends in citations especially in the last two decades (Fu and Ho 2014; Ho and Kahn 2014).

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However, when, as in this case, a scientific publication duplicates a previously published idea, text, equation, or figure without any acknowledgement, this is frequently regarded as a sign of possible plagiarism (Hunter 1994; Noè and Batten 2006). In my view, Zhang et al. (2017) should have cited the original papers in their paper, as well as many more recent papers, and thereby provided greater accuracy and information about both the idea and the methods that they employed.

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