

Wellness tourism. A bibliometric analysis of research published on Scopus

Turismo de bienestar. Un análisis bibliométrico de la investigación publicada en Scopus

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to identify the state of academic research on wellness tourism. Existing methodologies were analysed to conduct this research. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) methodology was used to select the data and the analysis was complemented with bibliometric indicators. This research identified 183 relevant articles related to wellness tourism. The review of the academic literature demonstrated that publications have increased over the last two decades. Tourism Recreational Research is the main source employed by scholars and Smith, M. is the research leader. Finally, the key words analysis evidence two main clusters in the research, tourist behaviour and motivations.

Conclusions: *This paper contributes to the existing literature on wellness tourism. Even more, it provides insights of the research clusters developed by academics and identifies the sources and academic leaders.*

Keywords: *wellness tourism, bibliometric analysis.*

RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene como objetivo identificar el estado de la investigación académica sobre el turismo de bienestar. Se analizaron las metodologías existentes para llevar a cabo esta investigación. Para la selección de los datos se utilizó la metodología Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) y se complementó el análisis con indicadores bibliométricos. Esta investigación identificó 183 artículos relevantes relacionados con el turismo de bienestar. La revisión de la literatura académica demostró que las publicaciones han aumentado en las últimas dos décadas. La investigación sobre turismo recreativo es la principal fuente empleada por los académicos y Smith, M. es el líder de la investigación. Finalmente, el análisis de palabras clave evidencia dos clusters principales en la investigación, el comportamiento turístico y las motivaciones.

Conclusiones: Este artículo contribuye a la literatura existente sobre el turismo de bienestar. Aún más, proporciona información sobre los grupos de investigación desarrollados por académicos e identifica las fuentes y los líderes académicos.

Palabras clave: Turismo de bienestar, análisis bibliométrico.

INTRODUCTION

Wellness tourism is the sum of all relationships and phenomena resulting a journey and residence of people whose main motive is to preserve and promote their physical, mental and psychological health and their social prosperity. These tourists prefer to visit hotels or specialized facilities that provides an adequate know how in individual care, requiring individual services that include physical fitness, beauty care, healthy nutrition, relaxation, meditation and mental activity, education and environmental sensitivity and social contacts (Huang & Xu, 2018; Magdalini & Paris, 2009). Wellness tourism approach is based in a preventive lifestyle rather than a curative one. It is a phenomenon to enhance personal well-being for people looking experiences to rejuvenate the body, mind and spirit (Hudson, Thal, Cárdenas, & Meng, 2017). Based on the previous statements it can be concluded that while there is abundant literature on this topic, it is scattered because the approaches that have been adopted to analyse wellness tourism. Even more, to the best knowledge of the authors, none of them have attempted to systematize the research published to the date using bibliometric indicators to identify research leaders on this field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rise of wellness idea in modern tourists can be attributed to two factors. First, international organizations like the World Health Organization have promulgated an integrate concept of wellbeing into its global health policy. Second, society has increased the human awareness of personal health, especially among educated people (Koncul, 2012). Pan et al. (2019) analysing the development of wellness tourism in China, identified four groups of tourism activities related to health preservation, sports and recovery, medical healing and aged nursing. Other scholars analyse wellness tourism motivations and its relationship with subjective well-being and lifestyle (Dillette, Douglas, & Andrzejewski, 2020; Pearce, Filep, & Ross, 2011; Suresh, Ravichandran, & Ganesan, 2011). Thus, wellness is pursued

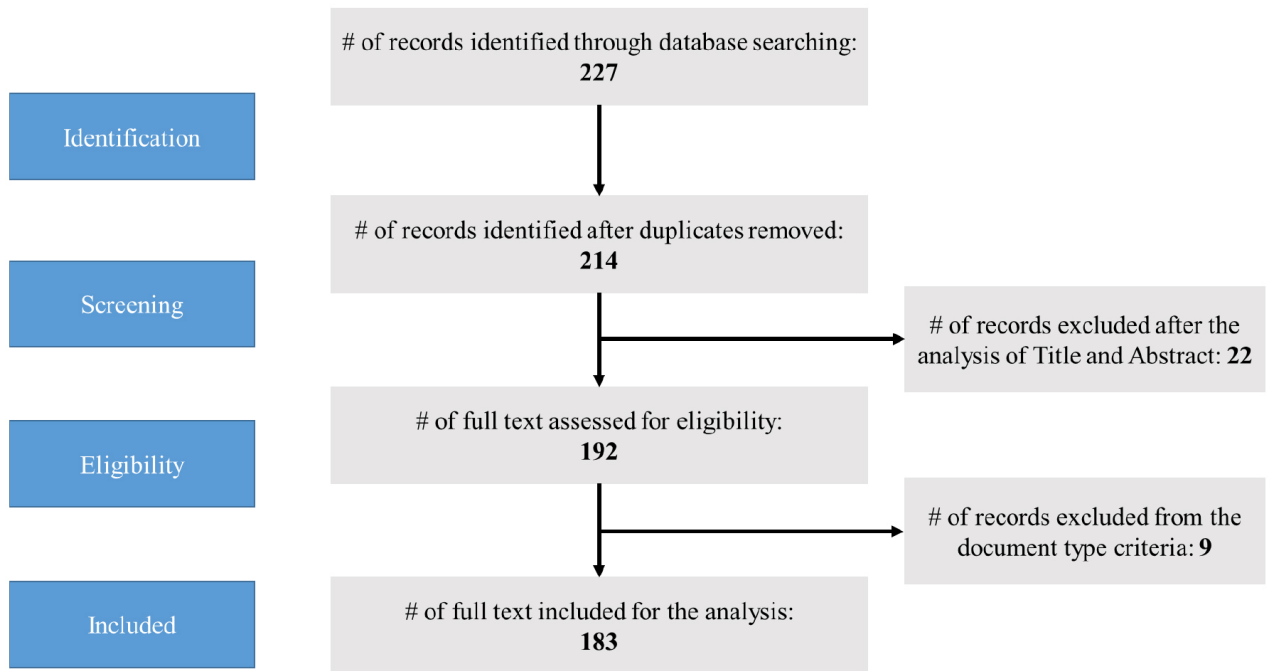
by healthy individuals and it is well engaged in modern society, evidenced in the increasing of medical and wellness industry (Han, Kiatkawsin, Jung, & Kim, 2018; Malyshev, Khodasevich, Maznichenko, & Romanov, 2016).

Lee, Han and Ko (2020) analysed the impact of travel on health by tourists who engaged in wellness activities. They concluded that activities developed outdoor have positive impacts on physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual health. Subathra, Senthil Kumar and Ramachandran (2019) studied the role of travel behaviour characteristic in selecting wellness activities and concluded that wellness tourists have different needs than other types of tourists. Their primary motivation looks to engage in activities that provide harmony and peacefulness. Even more, tourists engaging wellness activities look for the arrangement on the destination of holistic health care, that might include yoga, spa's treatment, fitness, weight loss, meditation, among others (Plianbangchang, 2018; K. Wang, Xu, & Huang, 2020). This variety of activities where tourists can engage constitute a reason of the heterogeneous segmentation that exists on wellness tourists (Damijanić, 2020). Other motivations are related to the destination itself and its infrastructure to provide a service that meets consumers' needs (Kim, Chiang, & Tang, 2017; Lim, Kim, & Lee, 2016).

METHODS

Several scholars have developed literature review in the past in topics related to tourism (Qian, Wei, & Law, 2018; Jianwei Qian, Law, Wei, & Wu, 2019; Smith, 2012; C.-H. Wang & Chen, 2014) using several bibliometric indicators as well as systematic review methods. To guarantee the quality of the data used for this review, following the approach suggested by (Reyes-Menendez, Saura, & Filipe, 2019), the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) was employed, as presented in figure 1.

Figure 1. Prisma methodology



The first step of the method was to retrieve the articles to include in the study (Table 1). To this end, a key word search was conducted on Scopus, one of the most relevant academic databases recognized in previous literature reviews and bibliometric studies (Morosan & Bowen, 2018; Nusair, Butt, & Nikhashemi, 2019; J Qian et al., 2018; Saha, Mani, & Goyal, 2020). Keywords were selected from terms commonly employed in the literature of the study construct. These key words were combined using the database operators to guarantee several output results. The inclusion criteria considered the presence of this keywords in the “Title, abstract or keywords” section. For this research only full-length published articles written in English were selected. Despite previous research only selected a 10 years’ time-frame (Morosan & Bowen, 2018), this paper analyses all the articles found in the databases. The total number of articles retrieved from this initial search was 227.

Table 1. Research criteria

Databases	Scopus
Keywords	Wellness, wellness tourism, wellness tourist
Search within	Topic (Title, Abstract and Keywords)
Document Type	All
Publication year	1900-present
Language	All
Research Area	All

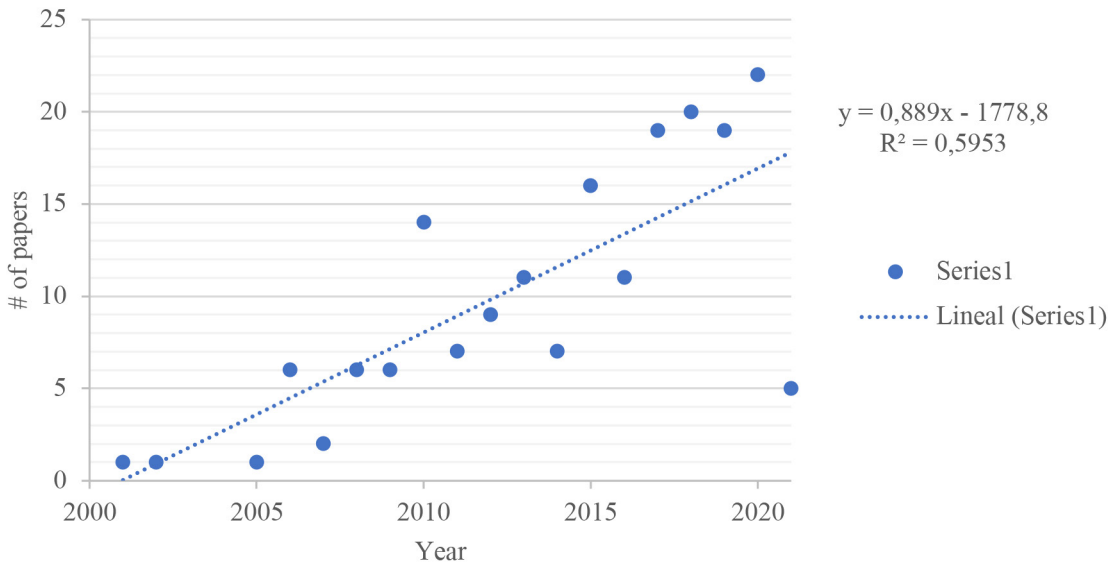
The second step of the PRISMA methodology is to remove duplicate articles retrieved from the search. Using EndNote Reference Manager, a search for duplicate files was conducted to exclude them from the dataset, obtaining a final output of 214 articles. Thirdly, while the selection process considered the presence of the keywords in the mentioned sections, through the full reading of titles and abstracts were found articles that were not related to the industry or to the purpose of this study, even when they included some of the selected keywords. A total of 22 articles were excluded from the research, obtaining a final sample of 192 articles. The last step included a full text analysis of the article, to select the final sample to include in the systematic review. When reading the articles in depth, 9 papers did not match with the inclusion criteria for the research or were inadequate for it, because led to inconclusive results or were not in the scope of this investigation. Hence, a final list of 183 articles were selected for the analysis.

Following previous scholars' suggestions, a bibliometric analysis was developed to describe the evolution and tendencies on this research field. The bibliometric indicators selected were Total articles, Citation analysis, Prolific authors, Geographical distribution and Co-occurrence key words, based on similar research conducted by scholars in the past (Qian et al., 2018; Jianwei Qian et al., 2019; Smith, 2012; C.-H. Wang & Chen, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of 183 documents published evidence the increasing interest by academic community on wellness tourism (Figure 2). The pioneer paper of Mueller & Kaufmann (2001) published on the Journal of Vacation Marketing has been followed by several contributions to this research field over the last two decades.

Figure 2. Academic documents per publication year



The distribution by five-year periods evidence the significant increasing in the publication of research results (Table 2). A segmentation by five-year periods showed that only 1.64% was published in P1, 18.60% in P2, 27.32% in P3, 49.18% in P4 and 3.26% in P5.

Table 2. Trends in publications and citations over periods

Period	Years	Papers	Citations	Mean
1	2001-2005	3	494	164.67
2	2006-2010	34	2081	61.21
3	2011-2015	50	1736	34.72
4	2016-2020	90	889	9.88
5	2021	6	2	0.33

Articles are the main type of academic document, representing 77.60% of the total, followed by book chapters (10.38%) and conference papers (6.56%). English (97.27%) is the most employed language on this database, although it exists six papers written in Polish, Russian, Chinese and Italian.

CITATION ANALYSIS

The impact of an article is represented by the number of citations. However, there is a delay between the moment

where the document is published and when it starts to be cited (Strandberg, Nath, Hemmatdar, & Jahwash, 2018). Additionally, citations are cumulative over time, which partially explains why the documents published in 2010 and 2013 received the highest citation frequency (Figure 3). From the 183 documents, 131 have received at least one citation. Of these, 67 documents are on the range of 1-9 citations over the analysed period (Table 3). The citation analysis shows that Mueller H. and Kaufmann E.L. have the highest absolute number of citations, and also lead the average citation indicator (Table 4).

Figure 3. Number of citations over time

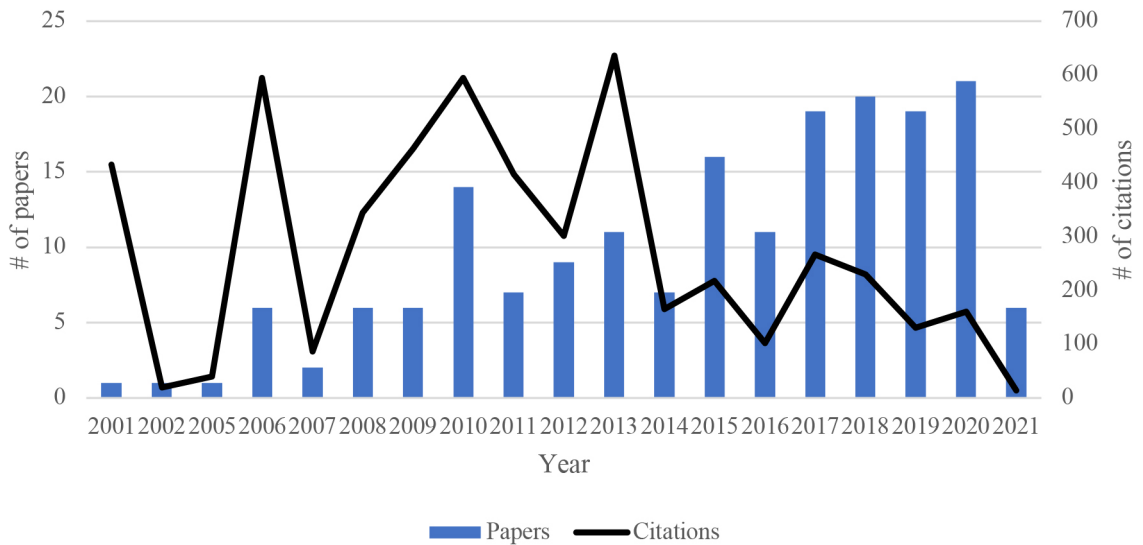


Table 3. Number of citations by time periods

Total of citations	N=183	2000-2005	2006-2010	2011-2015	2016-2020	2021-2025
0	52	1	4	3	39	5
1 - 9	67	1	9	16	40	1
10 - 19	31	1	7	14	9	0
21 - 29	10	0	2	6	2	0
31 - 39	5	0	1	3	1	0
40 - 49	6	0	5	0	1	0
50 or more	12	1	7	4	0	0

Table 4. Top 10 most cited documents

Authors	Year	Cited by	Number of years	Average	Rank based on average
Mueller H., Kaufmann E.L.	2001	216	20	10.80	1
Smith M., Puczko L.	2008	111	13	8.54	4
Erfurt-Cooper P., Cooper M.	2009	102	12	8.50	5
Smith M., Kelly C.	2006	100	15	6.67	9
Mak A.H.N., Wong K.K.F., Chang R.C.Y.	2009	97	12	8.08	6
Voigt C., Brown G., Howat G.	2011	93	10	9.30	2
Chen K.-H., Liu H.-H., Chang F.-H.	2013	70	8	8.75	3
Lehto X.Y., Brown S., Chen Y., Morrison A.M.	2006	67	15	4.47	10
Lehto X.Y.	2013	64	8	8.00	7
Loureiro S.M.C., Almeida M., Rita P.	2013	63	8	7.88	8

There are 107 sources where academics have published their results. The journal *Tourism Recreation Research* is the main source employed with nine articles, followed by *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing* and *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* with seven articles each (Table 5). Since 2016, there is a significant increase of the research in this field, with 96 documents published, for a Price Index of 0.5246.

Table 5. Main sources of publication

Source Title	2016-2021	Total
Tourism Recreation Research	1	9
Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	6	7
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	5	7
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	0	7
International Journal of Tourism Research	2	5
African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure	4	4
Tourism Review	2	4
Tourismos	1	4
Health and Wellness Tourism	0	4
The Geography of Tourism of Central and Eastern European Countries: Second Edition	3	3
Tourism Management	3	3
Current Issues in Tourism	2	3
Sustainability (Switzerland)	2	3
Tourism Planning and Development	2	3
International Journal of Hospitality Management	1	3

PROLIFIC AUTHORS

The citation analysis identified 366 authors, being Smith, M. the most prolific authors with four documents published and 236 citations. While Kelly, C. and Voigt, C. are also leaders regarding the citations of their papers, Chang, F.H., Chen, K.H. and Lee, T.J. have the biggest productivity of published documents in absolute terms (Table 6). The adjusted numbers for co-authorships shows that Smith, M. (3.00) and Kelly C. (2.50) stand among the other authors. Papers published by multiple authors tend to contain significant content in order to get published. On the other hand, documents published by a single author come from more experienced researchers (Strandberg et al., 2018). Five authors have accumulated over 100 citations of their documents. Smith M. also stands in the number of citations on one article with 111, concluding that not only produces several research papers but it is also recognized as influential by the academic community. Results confirm that to be on the top of the citing list highly depends on getting an influential paper that cumulates most of the citations (Strandberg et al., 2018). Thus, seven authors received more than 50% of their total citations on their top published document.

Table 6. Top ten authors with more documents and citations

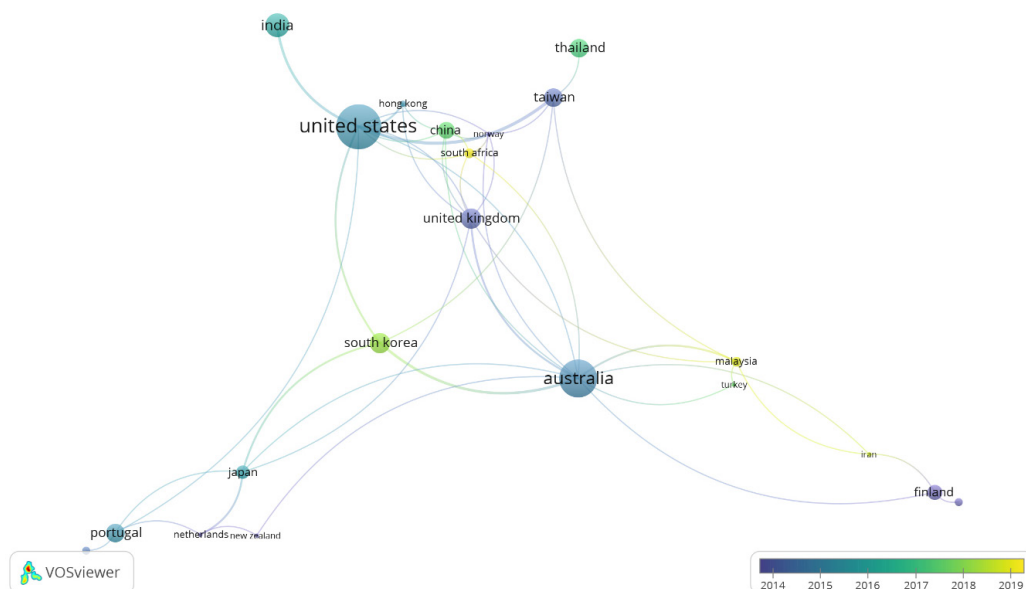
Authors	Institution	Total documents published	Adjusted number of documents*	Rank adjusted #	Citations	# of citations for top document	% for top document of total citations
Smith M.	University of Greenwich, UK	4	3.00	1	236	111	47.03
Chang F.-H.	Tzu Hui Institute of Technology, Taiwan	4	1.33	5	110	70	63.64
Chen K.-H.	National Kaohsiung University of Applied Sciences, Taiwan	4	1.33	5	110	70	63.64
Lee T.J.	Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan	4	1.33	8	41	21	51.22
Kelly C.	University of Greenwich, UK	3	2.50	2	159	100	62.89
Voigt C.	University of South Australia, Australia	3	1.00	10	154	93	60.39
Konu H.	University of Eastern Finland, Finland	3	1.33	7	81	42	51.85
Medina-Muñoz D.R.	University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain	3	1.50	3	59	25	42.37
Medina-Muñoz R.D.	University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain	3	1.50	3	59	25	42.37
Hudson S.	University of South Carolina, United States	3	1.25	9	37	28	75.68

*Sole authorship equals one point, dual authorship half a point, three authors a third of a point, and so on (Strandberg et al., 2018)

The geographical distribution of the authors' institutions evidence that United States (26) and Australia (22) are the countries with leading institutions researching wellness

tourism. However, the latest studies have been conducted from institutions of China, Thailand, South Korea and Malaysia (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Geographical distribution

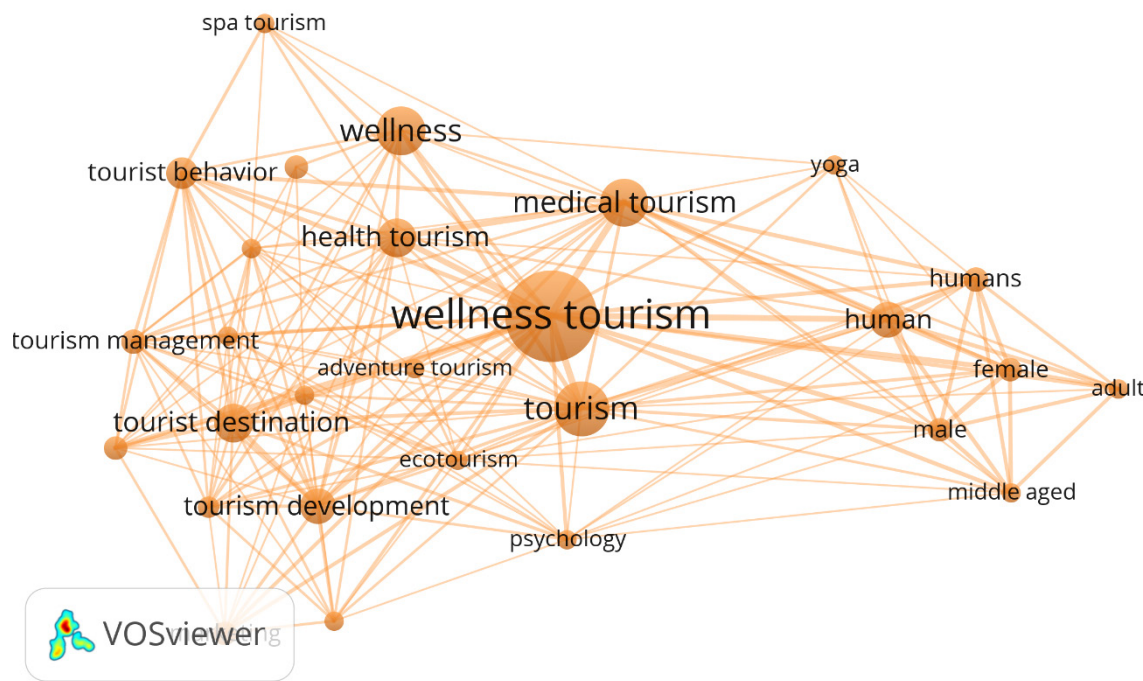


CO-OCCURRENCE KEYWORDS

The co-occurrence analysis was conducted on 951 keywords, considering those employed at least five times by academics. The output of 44 keywords was analysed employing a clustering analysis using the association strength method. Thus, two main clusters emerged from the literature. The first one, tourist behaviour, is formed by five grouping variables (Figure 5). Research from this cluster studies tourist behaviour around wellness tourism such as spa and yoga. Other types of tourism are identi-

fied as related to wellness tourism such as adventure and ecotourism. Even more, it was also identified the role of infrastructure as important on these studies, especially related to the tourism development and its relation with the public health infrastructure, as part of the destination management. Scholars analysed the impact of the destination components and its marketing strategies on different market segments, especially among adults and middle-aged tourists.

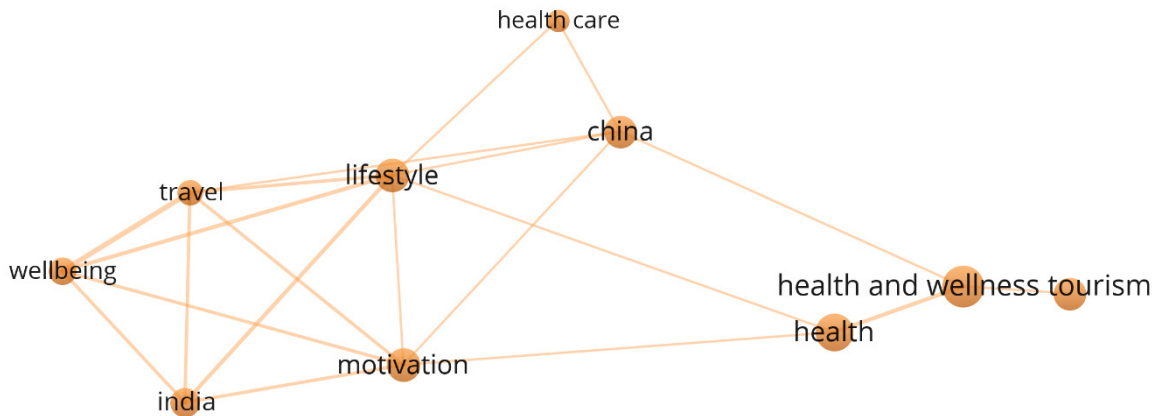
Figure 5. Cluster 1 Tourist behaviour



The second cluster analyses the main motivations related to wellness tourism (Figure 6). Thus, health care and well-being centre the relationships on this cluster, as part of a lifestyle of this type of tourists. Furthermore, this cluster

research analyses the motivations of travel to Asian countries like China and India, where this type of tourism is very popular. Table 7 summarizes the grouping variables and its thematic descriptors.

Figure 6. Cluster 2 Motivations



CONCLUSIONS

This paper offers an overview of the “state of issue” related to existing literature of wellness tourism. Scholars have studied this research field for over two decades providing several contributions. It could be argued that research related to wellness tourism will increase in the short term as a result of consumer needs in the post pandemic tourism. Similar to previous studies, it was found that the most cited papers have been published at least five years ago, due to the gap that exist between the moment the paper is published and when it start to be cited by peers (Strandberg et al., 2018). Regarding the source of publication, Tourism Recreational Research is the most employed by academics, although it has published only one paper over the last five years. Even more, only one source, Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, is among the top five academic sources of Scimago ranking on Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management. Smith, M. emerges as the most prolific author by absolute published documents, as well as citations received; and institutions from United States and Australia lead this research field. Finally, the key words analysis evidence that there are two main clusters that group the

research conducted by academics on wellness tourism. The first group focus on analysing this type of tourism from the tourist behaviour perspective and from a destination management perspective. Thus, it has been analysed the supporting elements that guarantee the engagement of tourists in these activities and also the socio-demographic characteristics of this type of consumers. The second group, studies the main motivations related to wellness tourism engagement such as health, life style and well-being. Despite the rigorous methodology followed to systematize the literature published on wellness tourism, this study is not extent of limitations. Data was collected only from Scopus database, and complementary studies from other sources like the Web of Science could provide a more comprehensive analysis.

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