

Bibliometric study about sustainable tourism product in Scopus database

Estudio bibliométrico sobre productos turísticos sostenibles en la base de datos Scopus

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability in the tourism sector, environmental conservation, and the benefit of local communities are some of the topics that currently arouse the greatest interest. The objective of this research is to map the scientific production on sustainable tourism products available in the Scopus database. The bibliometric method was used. The information was processed in the Biblioshiny application of the Bibliometrix package of RStudioCloud. Productivity and citation indicators were calculated by years, journals, authors, documents, institutions, and countries. Xavier Font as the most prolific and high-impact author, Sustainability (Switzerland) as the most productive journal, and Tourism Management as the most cited journal were relevant. China is the country with the largest number of publications on the subject. Finally, a content analysis of articles was carried out to identify as research trends the value of environmental certifications, the behavior of the customer segment with environmental priorities, and sustainability and community-based tourism entrepreneurship.

Keywords: bibliometric study, sustainable tourism product, sustainable tourism

RESUMEN

La sostenibilidad en el sector turístico, la conservación del medio ambiente y el beneficio de las comunidades locales, son algunos de los temas que mayor interés despiertan actualmente. El objetivo de la investigación consiste en mapear la producción científica sobre producto turístico sostenible disponible en la base de datos Scopus. Fue empleado el método bibliométrico. El procesamiento de la información se realizó en la aplicación Biblioshiny del paquete Bibliometrix de RStudioCloud. Se calcularon indicadores de productividad y citación por años, revistas, autores, documentos, instituciones y países. Resultaron relevantes Xavier Font como autor más prolífico y de mayor impacto, Sustainability (Switzerland) como revista más productiva y Tourism Management como revista más citada. China es el país con mayor cantidad de publicaciones sobre el tema. Finalmente, se realizó un análisis de contenido de artículos que permitió identificar como tendencias de investigación, el valor de las certificaciones ambientales, el comportamiento del segmento de clientes con prioridades ambientalistas y la sostenibilidad y emprendimiento turístico comunitario.

Palabras clave: estudio bibliométrico, producto turístico sostenible, turismo sostenible

INTRODUCTION

Today, people travel for much more diverse reasons than in the previous century. Like the rest of the socioeconomic sectors of any nation in the world, the tourism industry has been developing gradually, along with the needs of customers, who are increasingly demanding. Thus, it has become essential to evolve the tourism offer at the international level, creating new products that are of interest to visitors, and renewing the existing ones in order to adapt them to the new trends of the so-called "Smokeless Industry".

The above has brought with it a level of commitment on the part of tourism managers, a high degree of demand towards service providers, and the constant striving to maintain the high levels of quality that are currently required (Ambientum, 2017).

The evolution of tourism activity requires the development of tourism products that are beneficial for visitors, the local and national economy and the communities where the tourism activity is carried out. For this, these products must comply with certain particularities that allow them to last in time, being sustainable from the economic, environmental and sociocultural perspectives.

Even since the 20th Century, a clear transformation has been taking place in this sense, where hotel companies especially, no longer have as their only challenge the continuous acquisition of economic benefits, but rather aim to develop a business model of a sustainable nature, which associates profitability with environmental and socially responsible practices (Moure y Revilla, 2016).

This is in response to the growing environmental awareness of tourists, who increasingly consider it a necessity for the products and services they consume to be environmentally friendly. Gradually, what is known as green tourism, nature tourism or ecotourism, has been gaining ground on the international tourism scene and is the focus of attention of product and service developers. An important milestone in this regard was the 1992 Earth Summit, where scientists of various nationalities debated the relationship between the environment and trade (Moure y Revilla, 2016).

Today, environmental certifications and awards granted to tourist destinations and facilities for their outstanding

work in protecting the environment are real attractions that drive the purchase decision of a huge number of international clients. This situation, to the extent that it is handled consciously and responsibly, can bring with it a level of conservation of flora and fauna never seen before, through a hopeful projection of economic development of human beings combined with the protection of the planet where they live (Font, 2002).

Sustainable tourism products, in addition to their marked importance in the conservation of the environment, prove to be a great socioeconomic investment. Thus, those products that are able to overcome their commercial stagnation phase, constantly rejuvenate themselves, and continue to be liked by visitors and local people, are more profitable and enjoy a better image in the market. Evidently, the sustainability of products in all their facets contributes to their commercial success and good positioning (Ambientum, 2017).

sustainability in the tourism industry, has been the subject of study in several research studies. Thus, some precedent bibliometric analyses were found, among which we can mention the articles by Pisonero-Capote et ál. (2021), López-Bonilla et ál. (2020), or Díaz-Pompa et ál. (2017). In these investigations, specialized search engines and databases such as Dimensions, ScienceDirect, Scopus and Web of Science and software such as VOSviewer are used to perform the bibliographic mapping and elaborate output tables and graphs. Among the main results, there is evidence of a boom in the subject at the international level, with some specialized journals such as *Tourism Management* and *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* standing out.

Likewise, in the article by Niñerola et ál. (2019), the authors use the keywords "sustainability; sustainable tourism; ecotourism; tourism management; systematic literature review; bibliometric analysis" to perform a search in the Scopus database, taking into consideration the period 1987-2018. A total of 4647 articles related to sustainability in tourism were found. Some bibliometric indicators, such as citations, were used to identify the structure of the field. The use of VOSviewer software allowed the mapping of the main trends in the field. Among the main trends are the sustained growth of literary production on the subject, the high proliferation of authors, the positioning of the United States as the leading country in the subject in

terms of documents and citations, as well as the strategic approach with which sustainability is being addressed in tourism companies and destinations.

In the case of Luo et ál. (2020), the Journal of Sustainable Tourism is taken as a reference for the analysis of sustainability in tourism. The keywords used in the study were "sustainable tourism products; journal of sustainable tourism; bibliometric analysis; visualization analysis; CiteSpace". The authors collect data from 750 articles and reviews published between 2008 and 2018 in the journal, in Web of Science Core Collection. The use of CiteSpace software enabled collaborative analysis, co-citation analysis, and keyword co-occurrence analysis. Among the trends identified were the diversity in the development of sustainable tourism products, as well as the evolution and new emerging trends in research on sustainable tourism for professionals. In this research, although the topic of sustainability was directly related to "tourism product", only what was addressed in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism was taken into account.

As a novelty, the present bibliometric study focuses on articles published up to 2022 in the Scopus database, while the previous studies analyzed only take into account articles published up to 2018, which guarantees greater timeliness and validity. Likewise, the analysis includes the construct "tourism product", related to sustainability in a general sense. We also use software that was not used in the studies previously addressed, such as Biblioshiny from the Bibliometrix package of RStudioCloud.

Consequently, the objective of this research is to map the scientific production on sustainable tourism products available in the Scopus database.

METHODOLOGY

The bibliometric method was used. A search for the thematic descriptors "sustainable tourism product" OR ("sustainable tourism" AND "tourism product") OR ("sustainability" AND "tourism product") was performed on the title, abstract and keywords of scientific articles available in the Scopus database. The search was not restricted to a specific time period.

The Biblioshiny application from the Bibliometrix package of RStudioCloud was used for data processing. RStudio is an integrated development environment (IDE) for the

R programming language, dedicated to statistical computing and graphics. It includes a console, syntax editor supporting code execution, as well as tools for plotting, debugging and workspace management (Github). Bibliometrix is a package for the R statistical programming language for quantitative research in scientometrics and bibliometrics (Pritchard, 1969).

Productivity and citation indicators were analyzed. Among them, the annual productivity of the subject in Scopus, productivity and citation by authors, authors' affiliation, productivity and citation by journals and countries, and citation by documents.

In addition, to analyze the impact of the authors, we calculated the h-index, which allows us to know the scientific impact of individual researchers within the scientific community. This index was created by Jorge E. Hirsch in 2005 to evaluate scientific production in the field of Physics, but it can be generalized. For its calculation, the articles are ordered in descending order according to the number of citations. Once ordered, the number of citations is checked to ensure that the number of citations is greater than or equal to the number of order of the article and the list is descended until finding one that is lower than the number of order. Finally, the number of citations of the article whose number of citations is lower than the order number is taken

(Joshi, 2014).

Similarly, the co-occurrence of keywords was analyzed. This technique is used for text analysis and makes it possible to determine the frequency with which two thematic descriptors appear together in the same document. For this reason, it is very useful when identifying patterns or thematic lines in bibliometric studies. (Eck y Waltman, 2018)

Finally, a content analysis was carried out through a complete reading of 20 articles, including the most cited, in order to determine the trends and gaps in this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSION

Annual productivity

In the graph of productivity behavior by years of articles related to sustainable tourism products (Figure 1), there is a marked trend towards an increase in the number of articles published. This increase in productivity goes hand in hand

Figure 1. Annual productivity



with the growing interest of the scientific community and tourism process managers in environmental protection.

Thus, between 2015 and 2022, a high productivity of articles on the subject is evidenced. In 2021, the number of 18 articles published in Scopus was reached. This is due, among other causes, to the conditions in which the world found itself, trying to overcome the crisis caused by Covid-19. These circumstances enhanced the role of science and scientific research to resist and find new solutions, especially in the tourism sector, which would be one of the most affected. Furthermore, the UNWTO would name 2021 as the year of unity, resilience and determination, and would call for tourism to become increasingly inclusive, innovative and sustainable. It also set goals towards a more environmentally friendly future, working with key partners to reduce waste and plastic consumption across the sector (OMT, 2021).

Productivity by authors and impact

As for productivity by authors, there is no evidence of a systematization of the subject by authors in this database. All the authors present a low productivity, with Xavier Font being the most productive, with 3 registered publications. This distinguished professor at the University of Surrey, United Kingdom, has excelled in various subjects related to different areas of sustainability, such as sustainable marketing, corporate social responsibility, sustainable management of the supply chain, etc. He is currently considered to be the most prolific academic on the subject of sustainable tourism certification. He has developed various creative methods of sustainable tourism production and consumption for the tourism and hospitality industries. He has also conducted over 150 courses for more than 3,000 companies

on how to market and communicate sustainability, commissioned by the UNWTO, the European Commission, national tourism boards, among other institutions. He is also co-editor of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism (Font).

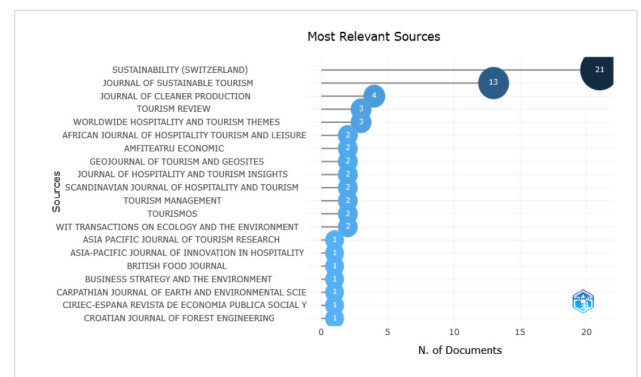
On the other hand, the authors Baros Z and Pulido Fernández JI have two publications each. The rest of the authors have only published once on the subject in Scopus.

Regarding the impact of his publications, Xavier Font achieved an h-index of 3, suggesting that each of his 3 articles has achieved at least 3 citations. Pulido Fernández JI has an h-index of 2.

Productivity and citation by journals

According to the analysis of the results obtained in the Scopus database, the journal with the highest number of publications on sustainable tourism products was Sustainability (Switzerland), with 21 articles published. Sustainability is an international, open access, interdisciplinary journal that generally addresses issues related to environmental, cultural, economic and social sustainability. It provides an advanced forum for studies related to sustainability and sustainable development, which is published fortnightly. Its main international affiliates include the Canadian Consortium for Urban Transit Research and Innovation (CUTRIC) and the International Council for Research and Innovation in Building and Construction (CIB) (Sustainability). The Journal of Sustainable Tourism also has medium productivity, with 13 publications; the rest of the journals have low productivity (less than 5 articles). Figure 2 shows the most productive journals.

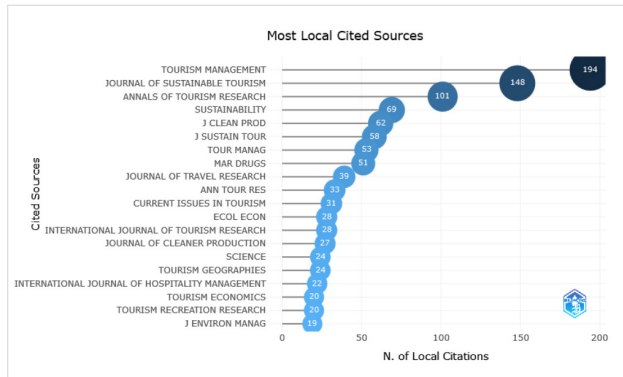
Figure 2. Productivity per journal



On the other hand, the most cited journals are Tourism Management with 194 citations, Journal of Sustainable Tourism (148 citations) and Annals of Tourism Research (101 citations). Figure 3 shows the 20 most cited journals.

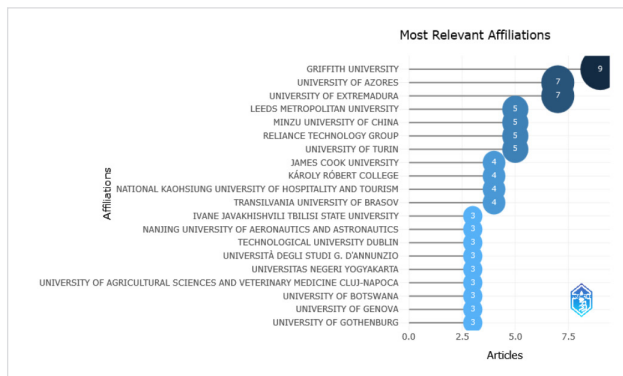
Authors' affiliation

Figure 3. Citation per journal



Griffith University was the affiliation with the highest number of authors, with a total of 9, followed closely by the University of Azores (Portugal) and the University of Extremadura (Spain), with 7 authors each. Griffith University is a leading Australian research university. It is located in Queensland, and is home to six campuses across the region. It has achieved excellent educational outcomes for its students, to whom it offers more than 200 degree programs and around 120 clubs and societies. The prestigious university was ranked second among institutions globally by the Times Higher Education University Rankings 2022, and 201st globally by QS World University Rankings 2023 (University). Figure 4 shows the results of this indicator.

Figure 4. Productivity per affiliation



Productivity and citation by country

Table 1 shows the countries with the highest production on the subject. China stands out in first place with 33 articles published. It is followed by Spain, the United States and Australia, with 29, 28 and 27 articles, respectively. As for the

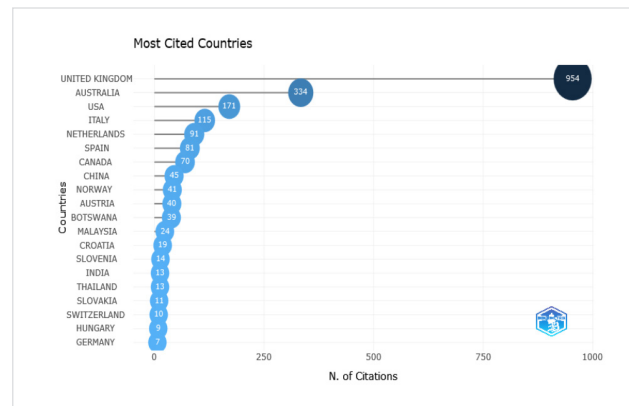
Table 1. Productivity per country

Country	Publication
CHINA	33
SPAIN	29
USA	28
AUSTRALIA	27
ITALY	24
PORTUGAL	22
CROATIA	18
UK	17
NORWAY	12
ROMANIA	11

Asian giant, its high productivity could be due to the strong growth of tourism in that nation, as well as to the series of initiatives that the Chinese government has been taking for several years to promote sustainable tourism. This has generated a high level of interest among the country's academics and its population in general in environmental conservation and the development of ecotourism. (Twenery, 2014).

In terms of citation by country (Figure 5), the top positions are held by the United Kingdom, with a total of 954 citations; Australia in second place, with 334 citations; and in third place, the United States with 171 citations.

Figure 5. Citation per country

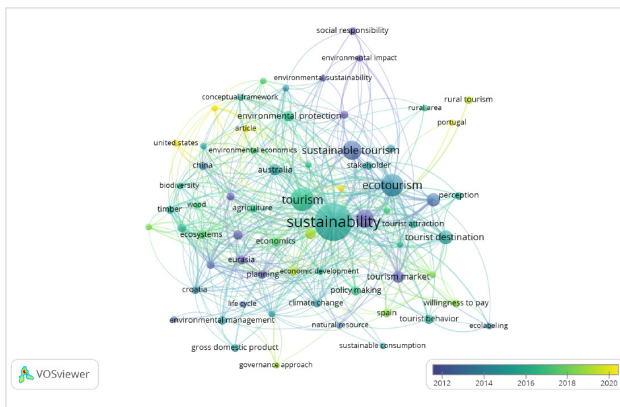


Keyword co-occurrence

For the analysis of keyword co-occurrence, the VOSviewer software was used. Thus, a cut-off of 3 co-occurrences was applied to the 948 total keywords, obtaining 73 keywords for the analysis. Subsequently, a thesaurus was performed, with the intention of refining the results and avoiding undue repetition of words, resulting in 66 keywords for the mapping.

Figure 6 shows the evolution of the topic over time. In 2012, research on the subject addressed elements such as environmental management, the tourism market and social responsibility. Subsequently, topics such as agriculture, climate change, or sustainability in general were studied. More recently, research has addressed some topics of great interest, such as rural tourism, economic development and cultural heritage.

Figure 6. Keyword co-occurrence



Cited documents

Regarding local citations, only 10 articles have been cited, with a range of 1 to 6 citations. The most cited article at the local level was "Environmental certification in tourism and hospitality: advances, process and perspectives", by the aforementioned professor Xavier Font, being cited on 6 occasions according to the analysis performed. This article aimed to lead to the recognition of the value of environmental certifications, as well as the review of this process in a wide range of public agencies. Thus, through an in-depth review of the specialized literature on the subject, it was determined that mergers, alliances and collaborations are the most likely method to create stronger

sustainable brands. Likewise, it was concluded that the support of local governments is essential for the development of more effective eco-labels and projects. On the other hand, as future lines of research, it was suggested that current certification programs should carry out feasibility studies and forecasts on what changes they should present in terms of their criteria, evaluation, verification and certification, in order to comply with international criteria. Figure 7 shows the citation by documents.

Identification of trends, gaps and future lines of research

In order to identify trends, gaps and future lines of research, 20 articles resulting from the Scopus search were analyzed, including those with citations at the local level. That said, and as a result of the content analysis, it was possible to determine three fundamental thematic lines that encompass the articles in question: 1. Value of environmental certifications, 2. Behavior of the customer segment with environmental priorities, and 3.

The first thematic line identified alludes to the current importance of environmental certifications for tourism companies, as well as their positive impact on their promotion and marketing process. The second line is based on the existence of a real, profitable and relatively accessible market segment, which has environmental protection as a priority, in addition to the enjoyment of their trip. As for the third line defined, it addresses those case studies of urban and rural communities that are committed to the development of sustainable tourism in all senses.

The articles that deal with the value of environmental certifications refer to their status in the tourism and hospitality industry (Font, 2002), as well as to hospitality strategies related to green certification (Borges Tiago et ál., 2016). In this research, a thorough review of the literature related to eco-tourism is carried out, showing the need for the correct use of eco-labels, the importance of alliances and mergers to create strong and sustainable tourism brands, and the importance of the use of eco-labels in the creation of sustainable tourism brands (Font, 2002), and the tendency of tourists to value the "green efforts" of companies in the sector, according to their different "intensities" (Borges Tiago et ál., 2016).

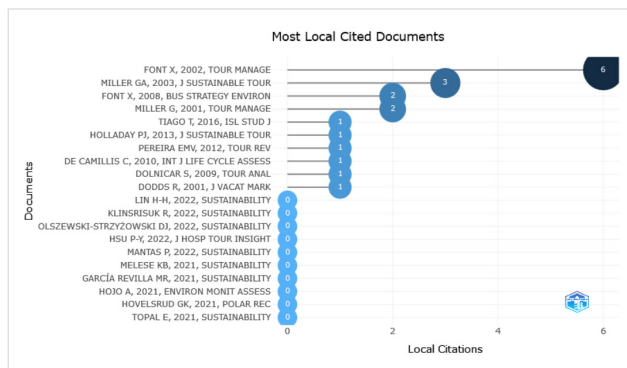
The main gaps and possible lines of research they propose are aimed at the necessary crossovers between the envi-

ronmental and political agendas (Font, 2002), and to the generalization and deepening of studies related to the various "shades of green" in tourism (Borges Tiago et ál., 2016).

On the other hand, the articles that address the behavior of the customer segment with environmental priorities study the way visitors think and act in correspondence with their cognitions about environmental care (Miller, 2003), (Miller, 2001), (Pereira et ál., 2012); the existence and economic profitability of this well-defined customer segment (Dolnicar y Long, 2009); as well as the actions undertaken by the

for the application of the instruments (Miller, 2003), (Pereira et ál., 2012), (Hsu et ál., 2020). With regard to future lines of research, it is proposed to expand studies on the attitudes of environmental consumers and their degree of commitment to the environment (Miller, 2003), (Miller, 2001), (Pereira et ál., 2012), (Dolnicar y Long, 2009), (Hsu et ál., 2020); and recommend actions to be taken by tourism entities to generalize the sustainable trends analyzed (Olszewski-Strzyżowski, 2022), (Hsu et ál., 2020), (Mantas et ál., 2021).

Figure 7. Cited documents



various tourism entities to manage the service and attention of this segment (Olszewski-Strzyżowski, 2022), (Hsu et ál., 2020), (Mantas et ál., 2021).

In this thematic line, a review of the specialized literature on ecotourism is applied, the opinions of experts on the subject are consulted, and selected case studies are analyzed. Thus, among the main results obtained are the demonstration that consumers are already making decisions based on the environmental, social and economic quality of the products. (Miller, 2003), (Pereira et ál., 2012), (Dolnicar y Long, 2009); the importance of the effectiveness and efficiency with which environmental product information reaches the end customers (Miller, 2003), (Miller, 2001); and how vital it is for tourism businesses to work together and rely on technological advances to develop market sustainability and improve the end consumer experience (Olszewski-Strzyżowski, 2022), (Hsu et ál., 2020), (Mantas et ál., 2021).

The main research gaps address the limitations of representativeness of the samples and populations selected

With regard to the articles related to the sustainable tourism entrepreneurship of the communities, they deal with topics such as the evaluation of the capacities of these settlements for tourism development (Powell y Holladay, 2013), (Lin, 2022), (Hojo et ál., 2021), (Hovelsrud et ál., 2021); the new alternatives to carry out ecotourism in these communities (Dodds y Joppe, 2001), (Garcia-Revilla y Moure, 2021), (Topal et ál., 2021); and their situation after the effects of Covid-19 (Lin, 2022), (Klinsrisuk y Pechdin, 2022).

In these investigations, various methods were used to collect and analyze information, including the review of specialized literature on the various forms of ecotourism (such as wine tourism and apitourism), and the application of surveys and interviews with local people and the main managers of the tourism entities involved.

The main findings were the fundamental role of cooperation between the various actors in the supply chain (Font et ál., 2008); the importance of governance, investments in infrastructure, and product diversification for sustainable local development (Powell y Holladay, 2013), (Dodds y Joppe, 2001), (Lin, 2022), (Klinsrisuk y Pechdin, 2022), (Kassegn y Heiyo, 2021), (Hojo et ál., 2021), (Hovelsrud et ál., 2021); as well as the relevance of the new emerging modalities of ecotourism (Garcia-Revilla y Moure, 2021), (Topal et ál., 2021).

The gaps proposed to give way to new research are focused on issues such as the generalization and deepening of the instruments applied, evaluating other case studies (Powell y Holladay, 2013), (Lin, 2022), (Garcia-Revilla y Moure, 2021), (Hojo et ál., 2021); and the need for the collaboration of local governments, putting research results into practice (Klinsrisuk y Pechdin, 2022), (Kassegn y Heiyo, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

The article offers an overview of the behavior of research related to sustainable tourism products available in the Scopus database. It presents a valuable compilation of information for researchers and tourism managers, as well as for future studies on the subject. The growing interest in the topic was noted, due to the marked tendency to increase annual productivity shown by the research. Likewise, some thematic lines frequently addressed in studies related to sustainable tourism products were identified, such as the value of certifications, the behavior of the segment of clients with environmental priorities, and sustainability and community-based tourism entrepreneurship.

As for the most productive authors, there was little evidence of repetition and a lack of follow-up on the subject, the most prolific author being Professor Xavier Font, with 3 published articles and an h-index of 3. The affiliation with the highest number of authors was Griffith University, with a total of 9. The University of Azores (Portugal) and the University of Extremadura (Spain) followed with 7 authors each. The most productive countries with the highest number of citations were China and the United Kingdom, respectively. The calculation of these indicators can be very useful for future collaborations, as well as for the selection of countries for projects and academic scholarships.

The most cited article at the local level was "Certificación ambiental en turismo y hostelería: avances, proceso y perspectivas" by (Font, 2002). As a noteworthy fact, it belongs to the aforementioned professor Xavier Font, and was cited on 6 occasions according to the analysis carried out. The identification of the most cited articles is useful for the preparation of theoretical frameworks for future research on the subject.

One element interpreted as positive for the development of the topic in question is that the journal with the highest number of citations was *Tourism Management*, with 194 citations. This journal is internationally renowned and its publications set the standard in various areas of the tourism sector. *Sustainability (Switzerland)* was the journal with the highest number of publications on sustainable tourism products, with 21 articles published.

Overall, research on sustainable tourism products has increased in recent decades, reflecting a growing interest

in environmental and social sustainability in the tourism industry. Most studies focus on specific tourism destinations or on assessing the sustainability of existing tourism products, with only a few addressing the creation of new products and the implementation of novel ideas and sustainable alternatives. In addition, the main areas of research include the measurement of sustainability, the management of sustainable tourism destinations and the participation of local communities in the development of sustainable tourism products. (Jamal y Getz, 1995) (Weaver, 2006).

Researchers are encouraged to focus on the design of new sustainable tourism products, rather than simply assessing the sustainability of existing ones. More studies are needed on social sustainability in the tourism industry, including the involvement of local communities and the creation of sustainable jobs. Also, all tourism industry managers should take action to measure and improve the sustainability of their products and services, and consider including environmental protection and the welfare of local communities in their marketing strategies.

The main limitation of the present study is that the search was only conducted in the Scopus database; future studies may use other academic databases.

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