

Bibliometric analysis on "tourism" and "competitiveness", from 2000 to 2023

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ABSTRACT

Tourist destinations are geographical areas characterised by a diverse set of natural, cultural and man-made attractions that motivate visitors to travel in search of unique experiences, leisure, relaxation or knowledge. These destinations comprise interdependent elements such as infrastructure, services, hospitality, safety and accessibility, which collectively shape the tourist experience and influence destination performance. A key determinant of destination competitiveness lies in the ability to attract, satisfy and retain tourists in a sustainable manner, thereby increasing market share over time. To examine this topic, the study employs a bibliometric approach focusing on the concept of tourist destination competitiveness, based on three indicators: authorship, year of publication and journal. The results indicate that destination competitiveness encompasses multiple conceptual and practical dimensions, highlighting its multidisciplinary nature. The analysis also reveals a significant growth and increasing analytical sophistication in scientific production on this subject, with the incorporation of diverse methodological approaches, including comparative quantitative studies across destinations and qualitative research centred on the perceptions of stakeholders and tourists. The originality of this study resides in its systematic and quantitative mapping of the scientific landscape of publications on tourist destination competitiveness between 2000 and 2023, offering a structured and up-to-date overview of academic contributions and identifying potential directions for future research in the tourism field.

Keywords: Tourism, Destination Competitiveness. Tourism Strategies, Bibliometrics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, tourism encompasses a multitude of processes, entities, and activities, which renders it a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is challenging to delineate in a logical or concrete manner. In this sense, the tourist destination is of significant importance for understanding tourism, which can be characterised as an intangible object with its own characteristics determined by its spatial-geographical location. These locations can become a place or a sociocultural institution within a specific historical context, with traditions, a way of life, and symbols that constitute its own identity. Furthermore, it is characterised by geo-economic dynamism, which is derived from both internal and external transformations. (Baggio, 2020; Emmendoerfer & Mediotte, 2022; Santos, 2021).

The competitiveness of a destination is determined by the effective aggregation and utilisation of resources, the efficiency of production, creation, and distribution, and the manner in which a destination promotes its products and services, thereby enhancing its competitiveness. The provision of tourist satisfaction, the maximisation of social benefits, and the improvement of living conditions for the local population are all means to the promotion of the economic development of the destination (Tuckova, 2020; Sul, Chi, and Han, 2020; Mazo et al., 2021).

The present study has been designed to analyse scientific research on tourism and destination competitiveness between 2000 and 2023 using bibliometric analysis and the Scopus database.

The relevance of this study is verified by an analysis of data collected and obtained from a single variable during a specific period of time, using the Scopus database.

The structure of the study is as follows: section 1, the introduction; section 2, the literature review on tourist destinations and destination competitiveness; section 3, the methodology used; section 4, the results and discussion; and finally, section 5, the conclusion with the respective final considerations and future contributions of the research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Tourist destinations

Tourism can be defined as an activity that is directly related to the tourist destination, to public and private organisations themselves, and to the impact it has on tourists. In this regard, destination managers who formulate advertising and promotional strategies must consider the characteristics of the tourist and their preferences, in a highly competitive and globalised market where investment in technology is becoming paramount, resulting in the development of novel, technologically advanced and competitive tourism products for enhanced diversification of supply, with the objective of satisfying tourists in the co-creation of expectations and experiences, while maintaining a high level of competitiveness in the consumer market. (Santos, 2017; Silva & Costa Júnior, 2020).

Tourism is characterised as an extremely competitive global industry, and tourist destinations as a whole seek to attract as many tourists as possible. To this end, they create infrastructure and management strategies to achieve this goal, despite some limitations inherent to their condition and territorial, climatic, and environmental dependence. These include their natural resources as immovable assets inseparable from the destination (Cunha, 2017; Stepanova et al., 2023).

In the context of tourist destinations, governance assumes particular significance in the exchange networks between public and private entities in their territorial interaction with destinations, within a dynamic process involving political actors in decision-making, reflection, and understanding of public policies and destination management, within economic development and territorial sustainability (De León Calderón & Guajardo Mendonza, 2021; Emmendoerfer et al., 2023).

The rapid rise of tourism brings a series of challenges for the destination itself, such as overcrowding, degradation of existing natural and heritage resources, and the negative impacts that this may have on the local population. In this sense, the sustainable development of the destination is fundamental for management focused on the preservation of the destination's cultural and natural resources, as well as for economic growth in the territory (Dunets et al. 2019; Baloch et al. 2023).

Digital technologies have the potential to play a pivotal role in the sustainable development of the destination, through the creation of novel management tools that enhance the visitor experience. These tools facilitate more effective and personalised marketing communications for diverse segments at a reduced cost, which could have a positive impact on the tourist destination. However,

it should be noted that there may be certain limitations to the implementation of sustainable technology in the destination, such as the inexperience and inadequate training of managers, a lack of understanding and resistance to change in established practices among managers, the local population, and the destination's visitors themselves (Neumannová, 2022; Purwanda and Achmad 2022; Polishchuk et al. 2023).

2.2 Competitiveness of tourist destinations

The objective of enhancing the competitiveness of tourist destinations is to augment the value of the tourism product through the provision of services and distribution mechanisms that are appealing to tourists. This approach is intended to counteract the tourists' tendency to favour alternative destinations or products, thereby rendering the destination more competitive and desirable. Contemporary studies address the interdependence between competitiveness and sustainability, the well-being of local communities, and social equity, considering a holistic understanding of tourism and its relevance for long-term inclusive growth (Berbekova & Uysal, 2021; Mazo et al., 2021; Dwyer, 2023a).

As Almeida and Almeida (2023, p. 4) assert, "a region's capabilities and competitive advantages are strengthened through regional public policies and strategies that value cultural diversity, innovation, and cooperation between different local actors."

In this context, in an increasingly competitive world where the growth of the global tourism market, changing market shares, and new trends in tourism require greater attention and investment on the part of tourist destinations to be more competitive. This scenario has resulted in heightened competition between tourist destinations, thereby necessitating the development of more appealing tourism products. The incorporation of innovations within territorial boundaries that serve to enhance the experience and interaction with tourists is gaining momentum, thus leading to an increase in satisfaction and a greater preference for the destination, as well as a commitment to the sustainable development of existing resources and the improvement of the quality of life of residents (Lee et al., 2020; Zeng et al., 2022).

In this context, it is important to emphasise the synergy that must exist between the main actors in the tourism sector and responsible governance. This is governance that is aligned with policies that prioritise social responsibility alongside economic development, allowing for an improvement in the quality of life of local populations. A growth strategy oriented towards sustainability enhances competitiveness for a balanced and demanding approach to environmental management and

resource optimisation within a balanced development of tourism expansion. The enhancement of destination development is contingent upon competitiveness, which in turn facilitates a direct contribution to the improvement of the quality of life of residents through access to education, health, and social cohesion. This, in turn, is the result of sustainable tourism growth (Berbekova & Uysal, 2021; Dwyer, 2023a; Dwyer, 2024).

It is imperative that competitiveness is understood as a dynamic structure that takes into account the tourist experience and consumption in order to shape consumer behaviour. This, in turn, will serve to strengthen competitiveness and supremacy in the existing global market. The concept of attachment to a specific destination has been demonstrated to exert a significant influence on the tourist's memory of the location, thereby positively impacting their subsequent behaviour, the strength of their intention to return, and their inclination to recommend the destination to individuals within their social network (Fu et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2023).

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach employed was bibliometric, utilizing the PRISMA protocol, which was based on studies conducted in bibliographic databases. The analysis focused on the variable "destination competitiveness," which was based on a set of three indicators: author, year of publication, and journal.

The initial Scopus database search, without the application of any filters, yielded a total of 685 documents. The subsequent phase of analysis focused on the reduction of the sample size to 546 articles, a process that entailed the implementation of filters that encompassed the temporal parameters from 2000 to 2023 and the categorization of document types as articles. For the purpose of registration, the reference of one of the initial studies identified on the variable under study dates from 1999, addressing the topic of competitiveness as a tool for evaluating tourism (Faulkner et al., 1999). (see Tab. 1).

Table I. First studies on the variable

Variable Investigated	Search Without Filter	Filter Applied	Theme of Study (Author, Year)
Destination competitiveness	685 documents	546 articles	Using competitiveness as a tool for evaluating tourism (Faulkner et al., 1999).

Source. Authors

4. RESULTS

The results are presented from two perspectives: by indicators (author, year of publication, source/journal) of the variable investigated in this study.

4.1 Temporal production

A thorough examination of the available data set revealed a consistent upward trend from 2010 onwards, with the exception of 2016 and 2018, when there was a notable interruption. However, scientific productivity demonstrated a resumption in subsequent years, indicating a recovery and subsequent growth trajectory (see Fig. 1).

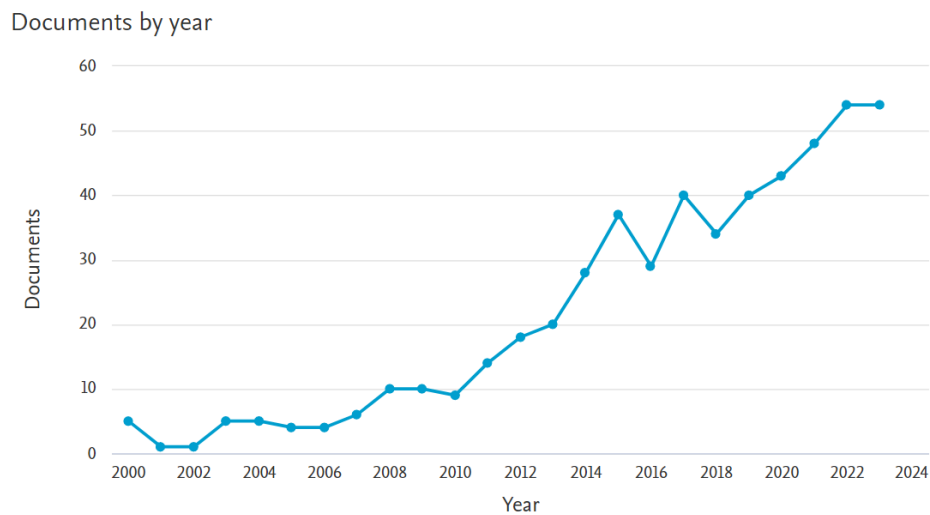


Figure 1.Year indicator

Source. Scopus (2023)

4.2 Influential authors

Among the authors demonstrating the highest productivity in the study of this variable, Dwyer, L. (15 publications), Lo, M.C. (12), and Kozak, M. (8) are particularly noteworthy. A thorough examination of the available data reveals the crucial role these researchers play in the theoretical and empirical development of the field of competitiveness. Their contributions are instrumental in fostering a more profound comprehension of the intricate relationships between tourism development and destination management (see Fig. 2).

Documents by author

Compare the document counts for up to 15 authors.

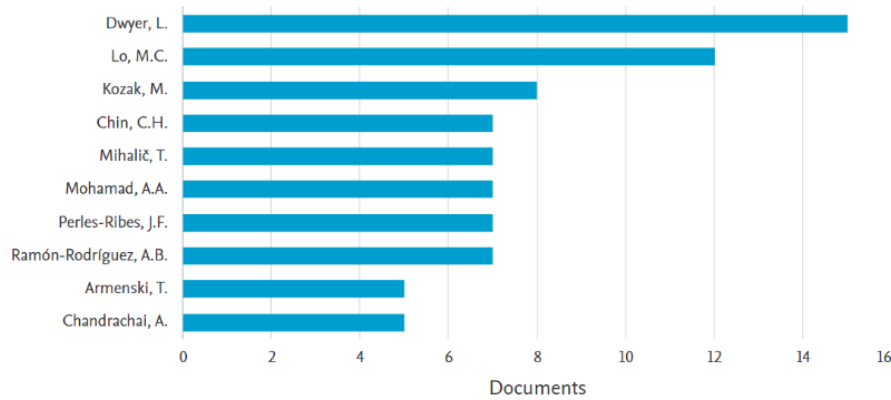


Figure 2. Author

Source. Scopus (2023)

4.3 Main publication sources

The journals *Tourism Management* (31 publications), *Current Issues in Tourism* (20), and *Tourism Economics* (19) are the primary drivers of discussion and dissemination on the variable under study, reinforcing its importance by the manner in which they address this topic on their debate and sharing platforms as academic references for research in the field (see Fig. 3).

Documents per year by source

Compare the document counts for up to 10 sources.

[Compare sources and view CiteScore, SJR, and SNIP data](#)



Figure 3. Publication sources

Source. Scopus (2023)

A thorough analysis of the available literature reveals that the variable "destination competitiveness" exhibits a substantial growth trajectory in research conducted within the Scopus database. This observation underscores the pivotal role that this factor plays in the success of tourist destinations within a progressively globalized and competitive market. Research in this field may pertain to the identification and enhancement of strategies that ensure the competitiveness of destinations, thereby augmenting their attractiveness, resilience, and sustainability. In this context, Mazo et al. (2021) posit that the incorporation of a superior service into a tourist product of excellence enhances competitiveness in relation to direct competitors. Almeida and Almeida (2023) further emphasize the potential of a destination to attain competitiveness through the implementation of public policies and strategies by regional actors.

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE INVESTIGATION

The relationship between the variable investigated and tourism translates into an integrated and effective approach to tourism management in destinations between 2000 and 2023. The mapping of scientific production facilitated the identification of the total number of publications, thereby offering a more precise perspective on the volume of research dedicated to the variable and confirming the periods of greatest intensity in the publication of studies.

The evolution of the study in terms of volume and analytical complexity in different approaches is evident. These approaches range from comparative quantitative studies between destinations to qualitative studies focusing on the perceptions of stakeholders and tourists themselves.

The study identified the authors, years of publication, and journals that contributed most to this literature, thereby highlighting the main agents of knowledge production and dissemination in this field. A review of the extant literature reveals a paucity of studies addressing this variable, suggesting the presence of significant gaps in our understanding of the tourism sector's dynamics. The study's limitations stem from its reliance on a single database, Scopus, and its exclusive focus on a single variable. This may have implications for the representativeness of the results and underscores the necessity for future research to employ specialized software.

For future research endeavors, it is recommended that longitudinal studies be conducted to capture changes over time. Additionally, the inclusion of other variables in the study would be advantageous, as it would allow access to one or more articles or journals by authors to understand whether there is a correlation between them.

The study makes a significant contribution to the extant literature in this field by providing valuable guidelines for the development of future research. These guidelines include the inclusion of additional variables, which will enhance our understanding of the existing dynamics and practices within the domain of tourism. The study's findings underscore the pivotal role of bibliometrics in facilitating structural and epistemological dynamics within the field, fostering critical discernment, and providing a framework for guiding future research agendas.

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