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12. Smart or sustainable? Toward smart tourism cities that deliver at both levels

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1. Introduction

The number of tourist arrivals nearly trebled (+172%) in the period from January to July 2022 compared to the same period in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to data published by the UNWTO's Barometer, which effectively amounts to 60% recovery on pre-pandemic levels (UNWTO, 2022). This is a very positive sign for a sector key for the economy at a time when the cost-of-living crisis affecting much of the Western world was casting a shadow of uncertainty over forecasts for the economy.

The application of smart principles to urban settings has been a growing field of research and innovation for academics and urban managers. Much of this has focused on energy savings, environmental sustainability, transport infrastructure and governance, among other strategic priorities (Molinillo et al., 2019; Coca-Stefaniak, 2020). A parallel concept has started to emerge in tourism: smart tourism destinations (Buhalis, 2000). Also, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become a key success factor for many urban tourism destinations (Benckendorff et al., 2019), especially in terms of their contribution to smart tourism cities (Chen et al., 2022). The smart tourism destination concept has been defined by scholars from different perspectives (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013; Shafiee et al., 2019; Shafiee et al., 2022). Over the last two decades, scholarly activity in this field has grown significantly using a variety of methodologies (Johnson and Samakovlis, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2020; Coca-Stefaniak and Seisdedos, 2021; Sustacha Melijosa et al., 2022), from earlier studies that focused mainly on ICTs (e.g., Huang et al., 2012) to today's efforts to improve the quality of the visitor experience (Trunfio and Campana, 2019).

Smart tourism research has also evolved in the direction of sustainable tourism, from the initial proviso of sustainable destinations as places that offer local economic development, a better quality of life for residents, environmental protection and appropriate levels of

conservation with regards to cultural heritage (Almeida-Santana and Moreno-Gil, 2019; Della Corte et al., 2019; Sharmin et al., 2021).

This chapter addresses a knowledge gap by providing a bibliometric analysis that combines the search terms “smart destination" and "sustainable destination”, which are seen as complementary and key to the development of integrated tourism strategies (Sousa et al., 2022). Some 153 articles published in Web of Science (WoS) were analysed using SciMAT and VOS Viewer. The following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: How has research on smart tourism destinations and sustainable destinations evolved over time?
RQ 2: Which WoS categories and journals are cited most frequently and who are the authors leading the research globally?
RQ3: Which are the main emerging themes in this field and what opportunities lie ahead for future research?

The next section outlines the methodology adopted in the bibliometric analysis as well as its main findings. An agenda for future research in this field is discussed.

2. Materials and methods: A bibliometric study

2.1 Strategic diagram

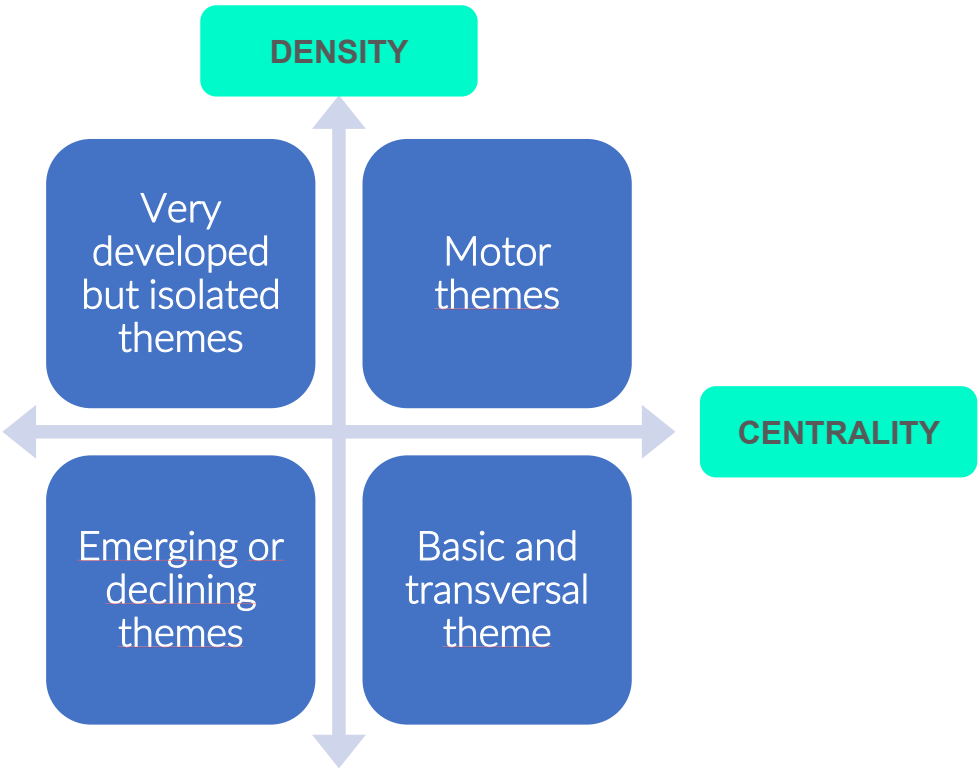
The bibliometric analysis methodology adopted was based on studies carried out by Cobo et al. (2011a; 2012). This approach combines performance measures such as research impact and volume of publications with a scientific or strategic mapping aimed at unveiling conceptual research themes as well as the evolution of these themes over time (Muñoz-Leiva, 2011). The analysis of the data was carried out using Web of Science (WoS) reports and SciMAT software, which allows for scientific maps to be developed based on bibliometric data. The social, scholarly and conceptual evolution of these fields were analysed. Similarly, VOS Viewer software adds to this through the development of network and nodal maps, which outline past research trends and help to predict new ones through content analysis. This allowed for interactions between different scholarly camps to be identified and described (Zhang et al., 2018; Díaz et al., 2018; Pan et al., 2018; Moral-Muñoz et al., 2018; Castillo-Vergara et al., 2018). Furthermore, co-word analysis helps to narrow down the descriptors (keywords) to a series of network diagrams that help to visualise the strongest links between these descriptors (Coulter et al., 1998).

This chapter provides the first analysis of research published to date combining sustainable tourism and smart tourism in a way that merges theoretical advances in these fields with practitioner-led innovations. In this respect, Cobo et al. (2011a) suggest four stages to a bibliometric analysis, namely:

1. Eliciting existing research themes through an initial keyword search.
2. Outline the findings of stage 1 adopting a coarse-grained approach.
3. Analyse the evolution of emerging research themes over a pre-defined time frame identifying thematic areas of research, including their origins and relationships.
4. Measure the volume of publications, their quality and impact over a pre-defined time frame and extending this analysis to research themes using a combination of quantitative

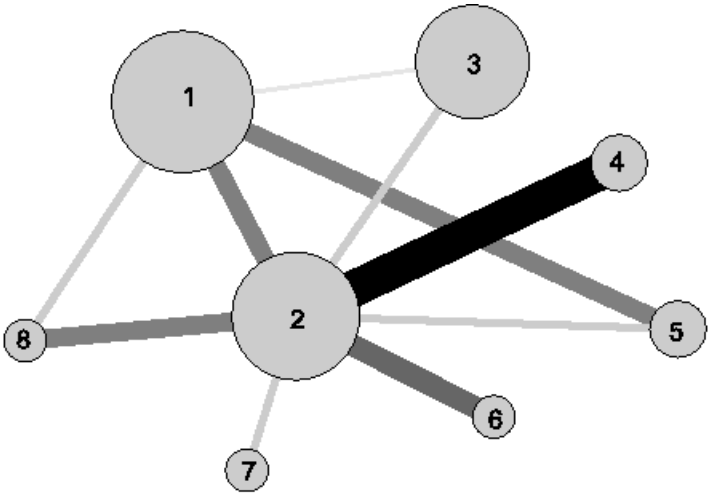
and bibliometric approaches.

Once these four stages have been completed, clustering may be added to the analysis. As part of this process, each keyword network or theme can be characterised by two parameters (Callon et al., 1991), namely the degree of interaction of each network with other networks and the density that measures the internal robustness of the network. Based on these two parameters, four groups can be developed using strategic diagrams, as shown in Figures 12.1 and 12.2. This method of analysis has been used recently in similar studies by Leong et al. (2020) and Bastidas-Manzano et al. (2021).



Source: Callon et al. (1991)

Figure 12.1 Strategic diagram quadrants



Source: Callon et al. (1991)

Figure 12.2 Example of a thematic network

Using these two parameters - centrality and density - any research field can be divided into themes, represented in a two-dimension format and classified into four groups (Díaz et al., 2018). For instance, the top right quadrant (motor themes) encapsulates well-developed research themes essential for the development of a research field. The top left quadrant contains peripheral themes with weak internal and external links and little relevance to the field of research under analysis. The lower right quadrant includes declining or emergent themes with little impact on the field of research under analysis. Finally, the lower left quadrant contains themes characterised by low levels of development and relevance, which could be exemplified by research themes characterised by their transversal or rather general nature. Similarly, strategic diagrams can bear a third dimension to convey further information.

A literature performance analysis may include a quantitative and/or qualitative analysis of themes, resulting in scholarly themes with the highest levels of impact (e.g., citations received) and productivity (e.g., number of publications).

The analysis involved the evolution over time of the following:
a) Number of publications in each theme
b) Main WoS categories in which each theme was listed
c) Authors contributing to knowledge in each theme and country origin of the research
d) Journals publishing research for each theme

2.2 Data set

This bibliometric analysis covered the period 2011 to 2021 using articles published in Web of Science. The database was searched using the keywords "smart destination" AND "sustainable destination". As a result, 153 articles were obtained with 501 different keywords. The plural and singular forms of these keywords were included. Similarly, keywords generally associated with smart tourism destinations and sustainable destinations found as part of this analysis were also incorporated into the overall search. These are shown in Table 12.1.

Table 12.1 Keywords associated with "smart destination" and "sustainable destination" found more than five times as part of this analysis

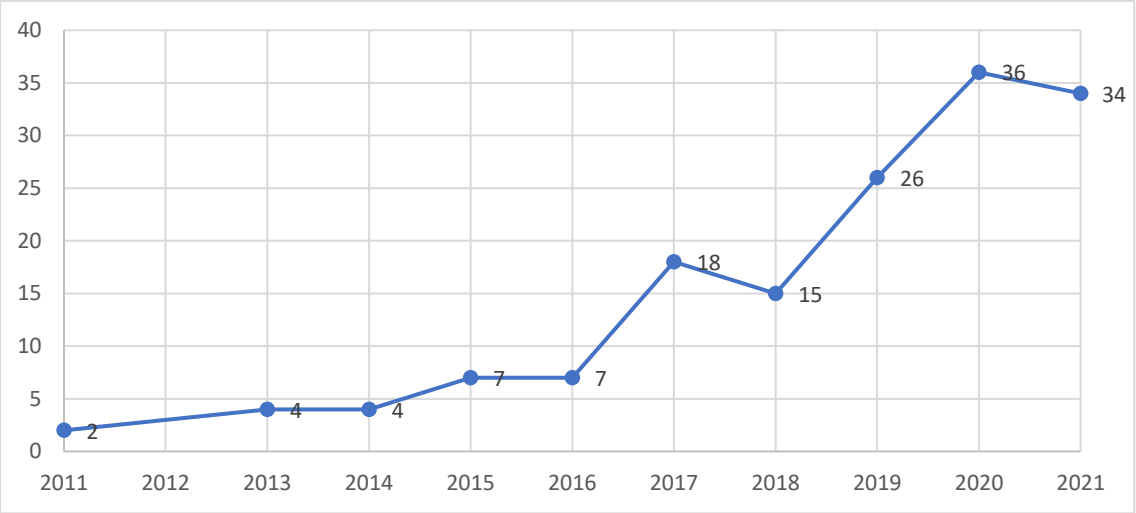
Keyword	Items	Documents
Sustainable	22	45
Tourism	20	37
Destination	20	45
Smart	16	23
Transport	15	16
Technology	14	32
Big Data	13	19
Urban	12	16
Travel	12	13
Marketing	11	8
Brand	10	8
Tourist	10	8
Innovation	9	22
Mobile	9	11
Development	9	10
Social media	8	16
City	8	27
Residents	8	10
Smart tourism	7	29
Knowledge	7	11
Rural	7	7
Sustainable transport	6	8
Behaviour	6	10
Information	6	9
Information and communication	6	12
WOM	6	9
System	6	13
Services	6	9
Community	6	6
Heritage	6	4
Experience	5	15
Stakeholders	5	10
Perceptions	5	12
Value	5	8
Electric vehicles	5	4
Mobility	5	7
Bike	5	5
Design	5	5
Environmentally	5	3

Source: Web of Science

3. Results

3.1 Scholarly articles between 2011 and 2021

The volume of articles published on smart tourism and smart destinations from 2011 to 2021 varied considerably, with a remarkable growth in scholarly activity after 2016, as shown in Figure 12.3.



Source: Web of Science

Figure 12.3 Scholarly articles on smart destination and sustainable destination published between 2011 and 2021

3.2 Main categories

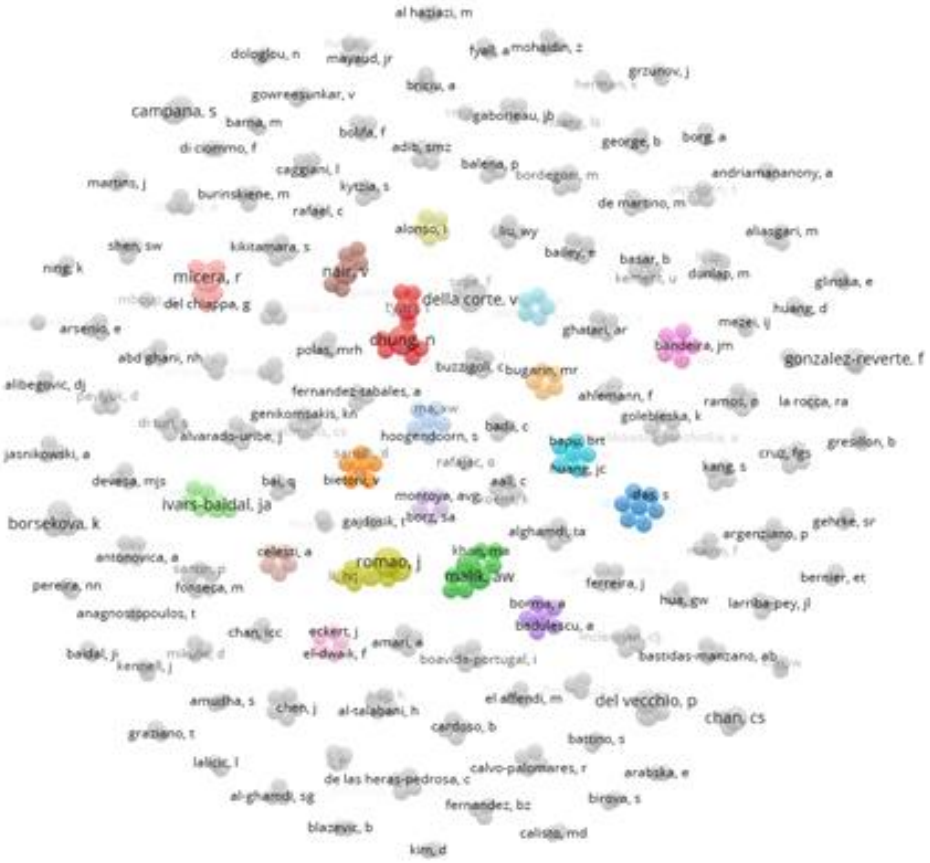
Published research in the green sustainable science technology category encompassed 32.46% of all publications found in the search. This was followed by the environmental studies category (27.92%), environmental sciences (25.97%), hospitality leisure sport tourism (23.37%) and management (11.68%), as shown in Figure 12.4.

Source: Web of Science

Figure 12.4 WoS categories for publications in sustainable tourism and smart destinations

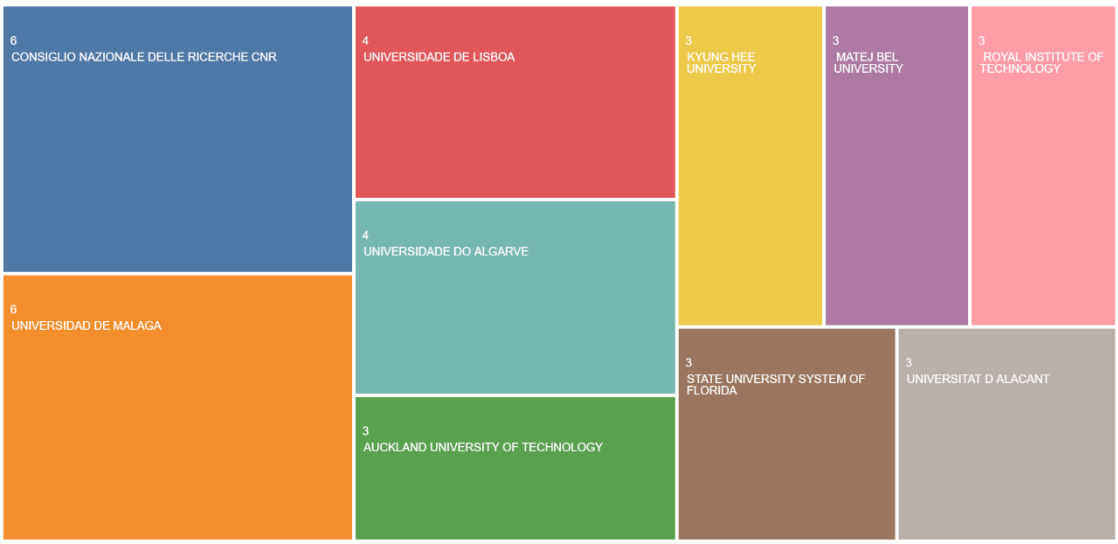
3.3 Leading authors in sustainable tourism and smart destinations and country of origin of research publications

The authors with the highest number of publications were found to be Chung, Micera and Romao, with three publications each, as shown in Figure 12.5. As regards the origin of publications on smart destinations and sustainable tourism, Italian research institutions and universities (Consiglio Nazionale Delle Ricerche CNR) were at the top of the ranking, followed by Spanish universities (University of Málaga) and Portuguese ones (University of Lisbon and University of the Algarve), as shown in Figure 12.6.



Source: Vos Viewer

Figure 12.5 Main scholars by number of publications

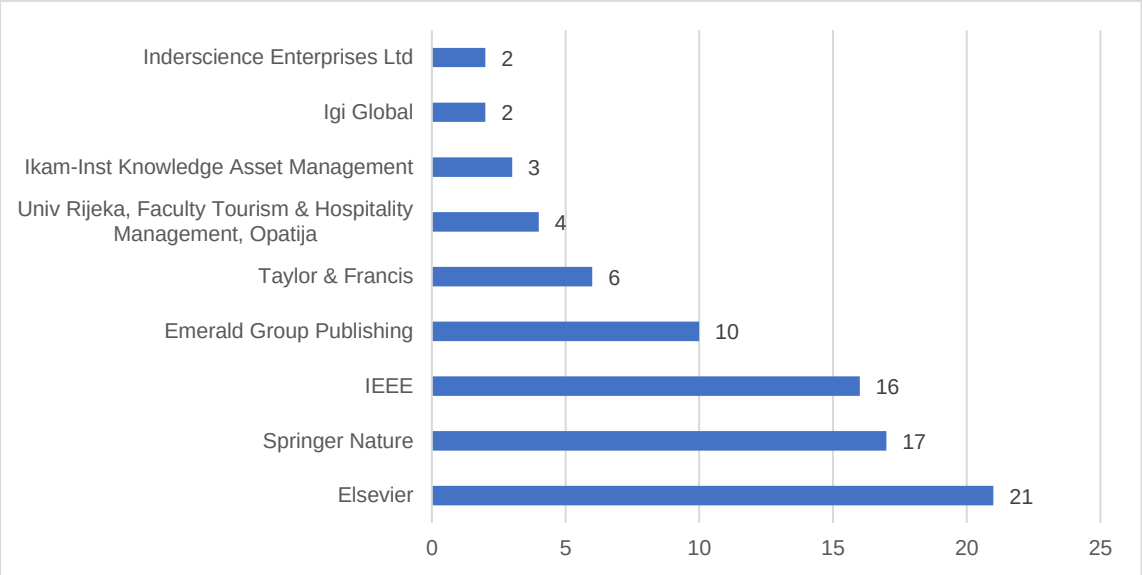


Source: Web of Science

Figure 12.6 Origin of published scholarly research (2011-2021)

3.4 Main publishers and journals

MDPI publishers accounted for 26.62% of all articles published in smart destinations and sustainable tourism, followed by Elsevier (13.63%), IEEE and Springer Nature (both at 11.04%), and Emerald Group Publishing (6.49%), as shown in Figure 12.7. Sustainability led all other academic journals by proportion of publications (33.03%), followed by the Journal of Sustainable Tourism (2.75%), and group of journals (all at 1.83%), which included the European Transport Research Review, International Journal of Tourism Cities, Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, and Tourism Management.



Source: Web of Science

Figure 12.7 Main publishers in sustainable tourism and smart destination research (minimum of two articles)

4. Content analysis

A thematic network analysis was carried out which revolved around keywords used to label each theme and outlined their inter-relationships. Figure 12.8 shows the resulting thematic network developed, where the size of a sphere is proportional to the number of articles associated with each keyword. As a result, this figure shows the themes linked to each of the areas shown in the strategic diagram. The motor themes reflect the importance of research related to destinations (46 articles), cities (36), social media (15), intention to visit (6) and website (6). The lower right quadrant contains basic and transversal themes, which are key to the field, albeit under-researched. Terms such as community, tourist and mobile were included here. Emerging research themes and sub-themes are captured in the lower left quadrant, with design, institutions, strategy and smart destination present here. The last quadrant, on the top left-hand side, captures isolated, peripheral, and highly specialised themes such as transport, reputation and green.

Source: SciMAT

Figure 12.8 Strategic diagram (2011-2021) by number of publications

5. Main research topics

The analysis carried out based on the number of publications shows different thematic groups, which nevertheless share common themes. These themes are outlined in Figure 12.9 and include the following: (1) tourism destination, (2) smart city, (3) social media, (4) the web and (5) visit intentions.

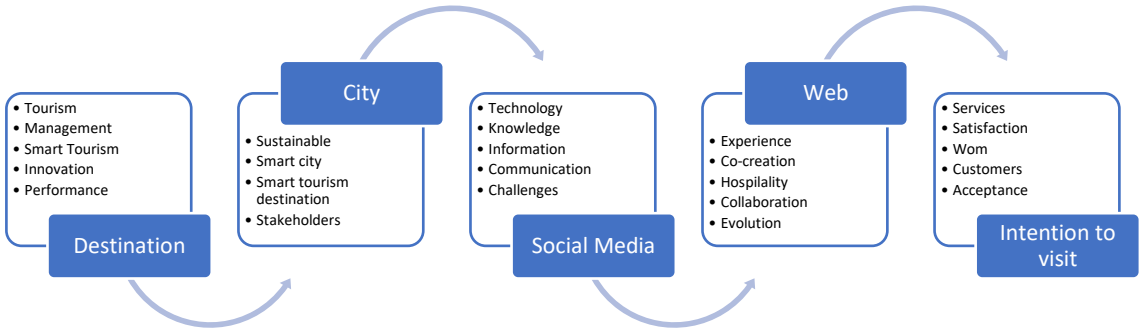
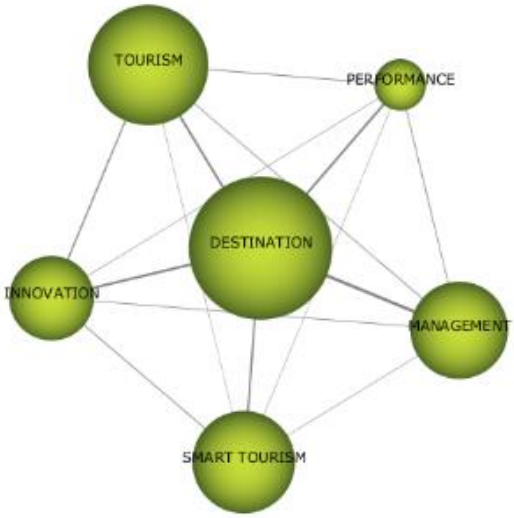


Figure 12.9 Summary of main themes

5.1 Destination

Davidson and Maitland (2000) suggest that tourism destinations remain places, geographical areas such as countries, cities or islands with a policy and legislative framework for the marketing and planning of tourism. Similarly, a tourism destination can be defined as "a natural entity which has in terms of tourism unique conditions and properties different from other destinations" (Královová and Pavlíčeka, 2015).

In the analysis carried out (Figure 12.10), the term "destination" is the most prevalent as many other key themes (e.g., tourism, management, smart tourism, innovation and performance) revolve around it. Given the importance of competitiveness in the framework of destination planning, marketing and management (Leung and Baloglu, 2013), strategic positioning will continue to grow in importance (Cronjé and du Plessis, 2020) using innovation as an integrating factor for destinations that are smart and competitive (Halkier et al., 2014; Bagiran Ozseker, 2019).



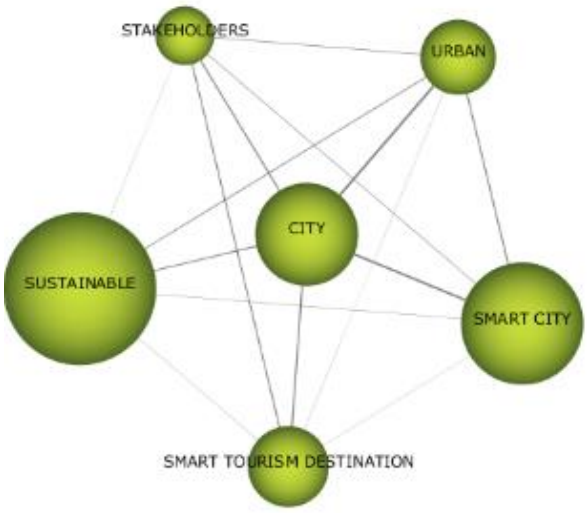
Source: SciMAT

Figure 12.10 Thematic network revolving around the "destination" concept

5.2 City

Another motor theme was found to be "city". Themes associated ith this one include "sustainable", "smart city", "smart tourism destination" and "stakeholders" (Figure 12.11). Scholarly research on sustainable cities is a well-established field of enquiry (Pan et al., 2021). There is a growing number of publications that address the use of the term "smart" by governments as well as the public and private sectors in the development of new policies and strategies related to sustainable development and economic growth in cities with the aim of achieving a better quality of life for local communities (Boes et al., 2015; González-Reverté, 2019). Consequently, scholarly publications on smart tourism destinations tend to argue that

one of the characteristics of these destinations is their use of ICTs (Xiang, 2018). Also, smart tourism destinations often act as a co-creation platform for the development of visitor experiences and added value services for tourism cities (Boes et al., 2015; Gelter et al., 2021). Similalry, stakeholders (Buhalis and Sinarta, 2019; Post et al., 2002) form a crucial part of these co-creation processes, where technology is a key enabler (Ye et al., 2021). Scholars (e.g., Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013) have grouped stakeholders of smart tourism destinations into five categories, namely tourism organisations, governments, local communities, tourists and the environment.

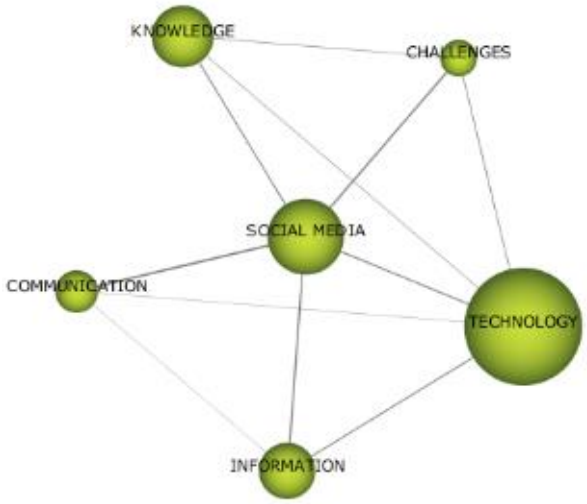


Source: SciMAT

Figure 12.11 Thematic network revolving around the "city" concept

5.3 Social media

The third of the motor themes that emerged was "social media", associated with the following themes: "technology", "knowledge", "information", "communication" and "challenges" (Figure 12.12). One of the main types of ICTs that destination management organisations have adopted globally is social media, which allow for key decision makers in tourism to be connected to visitors at a relatively low cost and in a more efficient manner than what more traditional communication tools can offer (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Key social media tools today include blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds, among others (Kiráľová and Pavlíčeka, 2015; Devasia and Kumar, 2022). However, social media have also brought a number of challenges related to their use in the future (Ray, 2022), including how they should influence new communication strategies and their role in the implementation of new commercialisation channels, including the live-streaming of tourism (Lin et al., 2022).

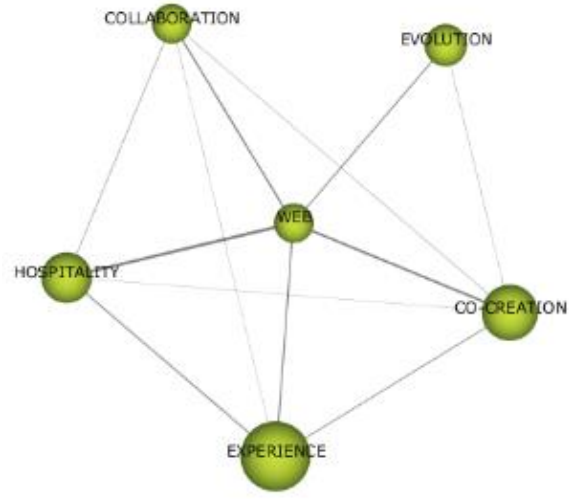


Source: SciMAT

Figure 12.12 Thematic network revolving around the "social media" concept

5.4 The Web

The fourth of the motor themes was "web", associated with the following themes: "experience", "co-creation", "hospitality", "collaboration" and "evolution"(Figure 12.13). Today, the web has become the main source of information for tourists making decisions about tourism destinations. As a result, the web has become an important communication channel for the marketing and promotion of destinations (Zhu et al., 2022). Thus, customer experience has become a focus for scholarly enquiry (Ramkissoon, 2022), particularly in terms of its added value and effect on the performance of destinations (Xie et al., 2021). Inevitably, the delivery of memorable visitor experiences is also linked to customer-destination co-creation processes (Shoukat and Ramkissoon, 2022).

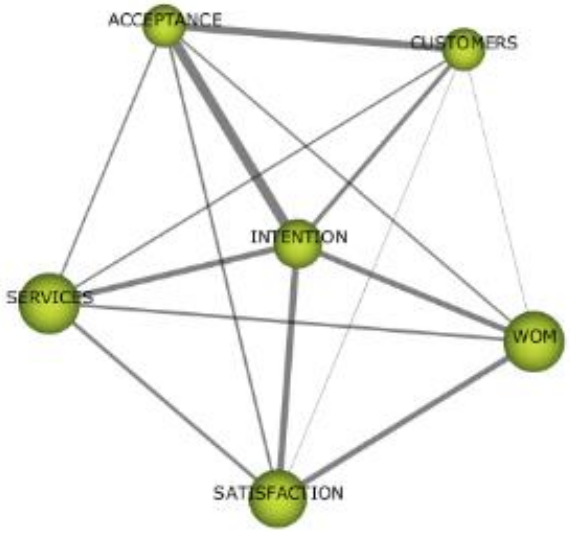


Source: SciMAT

Figure 12.13 Thematic network revolving around the "web" concept

5.5 Intention to visit

The last of the motor themes was "intention to visit", associated with the following themes: "services", "satisfaction", "word of mouth (WOM)", "customers" and "acceptance"(Figure 12.14). Tourist intentions to visit a destination refer to the probability of visit intentions actually materialising (Luo and Ye, 2020). As visitor satisfaction improves during stays through the services provided by host destinations, the positive influence of word of mouth toward those destinations will increase (Molinillo et al., 2018; Kanwel et al., 2019; De La Hoz-Correa and Muñoz-Leiva, 2019).



Source: SciMAT

Figure 12.14 Thematic network revolving around the "intention to visit" concept

6. Case study - Málaga

Smartcity Málaga is a project that started in 2009 with the aim of meeting European Union guidelines for energy efficiency, adoption of renewable energy sources and the development of an advanced electricity grid. In addition, the city started various initiatives aimed at improving its environmental credentials, including a reduction of CO_2 emissions; air quality improvements; a reduction of noise pollution levels; enhanced water management; achieving more sustainable mobility; supporting entrepreneurship initiatives linked to technology and innovation; and improvements to public services, including online access. In 2020, a major milestone was achieved when Málaga received the accolade of *European Capital of Smart Tourism*.

Geographically, Málaga is located in the south of Spain's Mediterranean coast on the Costa del Sol (Sun Coast) and remains the second largest city in Andalusia and the largest southern city in Europe. The city has experienced a growth in its population of 8% over the last 20 years. Today, Málaga has a population of 580,000. Over this same period of time, the city's hotel offer has trebled to reach a capacity of 13,000 rooms, in addition to a further 4,000 rooms available through privately-rented accommodation for tourism. Málaga has evolved rapidly from a traditional sun and beach tourism destination on the Costa del Sol to a key international tourism city with over five million visitors annually. The city has also developed a new image and a much more diversified tourism offer, which combines modernity and innovation with cultural attractions, cruise tourism, foreign language (Spanish) tourism, whilst also growing its offer related to nature-based tourism, sports events and activities, culinary tourism and other tourism typologies, including religious and retail tourism.

In 2016, the European Commission's Eurobarometer ranked Málaga among the world's top ten most liveable cities in the world – the only city in Spain to be included in this ranking. In 2020, Forbes magazine ranked Málaga tenth in its *Best European Destinations* (EBD) ranking of the world's best 20 cities to live and invest in. More recently, Condé Nast Traveller magazine ranked Málaga as one of the world's top ten urban destinations. In 2018, the UN's UNITAR agency chose Málaga as a base for its International Training Centre for Local Authorities and Local Actors, focusing on supporting local, regional and national leaders in southern Europe and northern Africa to deliver more sustainable communities with a better quality of life.

All these achievements and accolades have been attained as a result of a carefully planned strategy for the city. In terms of sustainability, for instance, Málaga has created 50 hectares of protected nature spaces, 60 hectares of botanical gardens, over 400 hectares of green spaces and five beaches. In addition to this, the city has implemented LED lighting in all public spaces, 20 bicycle rental hubs, a widespread network of cycling lanes, a fleet of electric vehicles for use by the City Council and is currently upgrading the existing public transport fleet for it to become fully electric with the aim of achieving a target of zero emissions by 2030 using electricity from renewable sources. The city also uses water-saving smart irrigation systems in its parks and green spaces. It has implemented a plan to reduce air pollution, pollen levels and noise pollution. Similarly, street cleaning has been improved as well as the city centre's waste segregation system.

Málaga is also a city with a considerable offer in terms of museums. In two decades, their number has increased from four to 37, with the city's exhibition space increasing from 400m^2 to 35,000 m^2 resulting in the highest geographical density of museums in Europe. However, a great deal of the city's drive towards becoming a leading urban destination globally has focused on the digitalisation of services. Much of the impact of this work has been on the use of smart technologies to improve the quality of life of local communities as well as the visitor experience, and to support the ability of local enterprises to innovate effectively. For instance, *Málaga Ciudad Genial* is a mobile app with information on the city's main monuments. Another app, *Playas de Málaga*, offers information on beaches, tides and public services linked to the use of local beaches. Similarly, the *Aparcamientos Málaga Smassa* mobile application provides users with a real-time assessment of the level of occupancy of city centre car parking areas as well as the most efficient way of reaching them, while *EMT Málaga* is an augmented reality app that provides information related to public transport bus services in the city. A slightly more advanced mobile application in this respect is *CityGo*, which offers suggestions for the most efficient itinerary to follow along with the best public transport

connection options using local sensors and open data in Málaga. These are just some of the examples of Málaga's drive for innovation in the digital domain, which is supported by Málaga TechPark – a technology innovation business park created in 1992 with eight enterprises and 130 employees, which in 2023 boasted 624 enterprises with 22,000 employees.

Málaga has now set itself a new challenge – a bid to host the International Expo in 2027 with the motto "The urban age: towards sustainable cities".

7. Conclusions

Shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism suffered a US$1 billion decline internationally. Outbound tourism income (including passenger transport income) reached US$713,000 million in 2021, which amounted to a mere 4% rise in real terms compared to 2020 and still 61% below 2019 levels. International tourism income reached US$602,000 million – a figure 4% higher than in 2020. Europe and the Middle East registered the best results, with an increase in income of nearly 50% that of pre-pandemic levels in both regions (UNWTO, 2022). This economic recovery of the sector has prompted a new wave of research on tourism destinations. This bibliometric analysis is part of this trend and aims to amalgamate the concepts of "smart tourism" and "sustainable destination", both of which are rising research topics (Bastidas-Manzano *et al.*, 2021). This chapter has identified key motor themes and sub-themes related to the following concepts (1) tourism destination, (2) smart city, (3) social media, (4) the web and (5) intention to visit.

This bibliometric analysis has shown evidence of growing levels of scholarly research in these fields between 2011 and 2021, even if the amount of published works appears to reach a plateau in 2021 following on from very high levels of growth in 2016. This body of knowledge focused mainly on green sustainable science technology, environmental studies, environmental sciences, hospitality leisure sport tourism and, to a lesser extent, management (11.68%), which would appear to show that research topics related to the environment attract more scholarly enquiry than those related to management and technology. The majority of research in this context (environmental topics) was published in Sustainability (MDPI publishers) and, to a lesser extent, in other journals, including the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, European Transport Research Review, International Journal of Tourism Cities, Journal of Destination Marketing & Management or Tourism Management.

As regards research question 3, the following key motor themes and sub-themes have been identified as: 1) Destination (tourism, management, smart tourism, innovation and performance); 2) City (sustainable, smart city, smart tourism destination and stakeholders); 3) Social media (technology, knowledge, information, communication and challenges); 4) Website (experience, co-creation, hospitality, collaboration and evolution); and 5) Intention to visit (services, satisfaction, WOM, customers and acceptance).

The results obtained delivers important theoretical implications for the study of tourism destinations linked to the terms "smart destination" and "sustainable destination", both of which are key to the definition of smart cities (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021). The bibliometric analysis carried out builds on similar earlier studies, including Koseglu et al.'s (2016) bibliometric analysis (190 articles) of smart tourism research as well as Ivanka et al.'s (2023), where the evolution of tourism destination management research between 2000 to 2020 (1,393 articles) rendered seven key research themes, including destination loyalty, destination image,

digitalisation, destination marketing, experience and visitor recommendations, governance and resources. Other studies (e.g., Hernández-Bastida et al, 2020) linked smart tourism destinations with information communication technologies in the context of hospitality (258 publications), with a later study by Molina Collado et al. (2022) extending this analysis to include 2,424 documents and concepts such as the technology acceptance model, electronic word-of-mouth, user-generated content, self-service technologies, robots, smart tourism, virtual reality and consumer trust in technology. Soliman et al (2021) (84 articles) focused on the study of smart tourism experiences and López-Rodríguez et al. (2022) suggested the identification of research trends associated with brand management in tourism (1,421 articles). Finally, Kalia et al. (2022) suggested more research on digital tourism, given that the management of smart tourism destinations, with the Internet as a communication channel for marketing, their sustainability, and consumer behaviour are emerging research trends in digital tourism (827 papers on digital tourism).

Future research on tourism in smart cities should address four key areas (Figure 12.15), namely:

1) Improving the definition of "smart tourism destination" and "sustainable destination".
2) Analysing the influence of technology on tourism destinations and specifically on smart tourism destinations.
3) Revising the role of social media in today's context as well as new commercialisation pathways for tourism destinations.
4) Analysing the factors influencing visitor intentions to go to smart tourism destinations.

Source: Hamid et al (2021)

Figure 12.15 Future research themes related to smart tourism destinations

Similarly, further research should explore further the conceptual definitions of what constitutes a smart destination, a sustainable one and the nexus between the two, including the added value that each positioning brings to the destination. Equally, the links between smart and sustainable with digital tourism or recommender systems in tourism merit further exploration.

Technology also plays an important role in this context. In this sense, the level to which tourist experiences are enhanced by the use of technologies such as augmented reality, apps, mobile technologies, beacons or gamification should be explored further. Big data may help on this front, and so would its interpretation using artificial intelligence (AI) tools or machine learning technology. The metaverse is likely to grow in significance in this context, especially as regards the choice of tourism destinations. Crucially, further research on the life cycle of smart technologies used by smart tourism destinations is something that would merit further scholarly enquiry.

There are also potential negative consumer reactions to some technologies, which may need to be predicted and at least understood. These include a potential consumer backlash against the use of robots, AI or algorithm-based visitor advice systems in tourism and hospitality. Other negative impacts on the visitor experience may include a loss in privacy due to the use of intrusive technologies (e.g., Bluetooth, GPS). Furthermore, how will the sector ensure that vulnerable groups (e.g., elderly visitors and residents) are not excluded by these technologies? Similarly, will visitors' cultural backgrounds, ethnicity and countries of origin have an impact on how they use these technologies?

Inevitably, social media also have a major role to play in this context and further research will be required on the importance of their use by consumers in destination selection processes, and the relevance of l-media, such as travel live-streaming, as well as the specific uses that destinations and visitors will make of these channels. Also, how empowered are consumers in their use of large platforms for tourism destinations (e.g., Tripadvisor, Booking.com and Airbnb, among others)? Parallel to this, how much of an influence do online influencers have on consumers when it comes to making decisions about next tourism destinations?

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