# Satisfaction on the Tourism Sector: A Bibliometric Analysis applied to the Hospitality Sector

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### Abstract

The growth of attention suffered by the Tourism industry in the last decades is justified by the perception of its positive contributions to economics, society and culture of countries. The field of customer satisfaction has also accompanied this fast growth of interest. Its relevant impacts on numerous aspects of society have significantly influenced the strategic and management definition processes of governments, institutions and companies. This study uses bibliometric techniques to analyse research trends related to satisfaction on the tourism sector, with an emphasis on sustainability. Biblioshiny app (Bibliometrix R tool) was used. This study analysed 102 articles from Scopus and Web of Science databases. The bibliometric analysis of the 102 collected articles through both Scopus (43 articles) and Web of Science (59 articles) databases concluded that the most prolific period in number of published articles was 2018-2019 and the most productive journal was Sustainability. The most productive authors for the bibliometric analyses performed through both databases have only published 2 articles each, and the most productive institutions were linked to a maximum of 3 articles each. This fact clearly portrays that the inclusion of the sustainability topic into satisfaction on the tourism and hospitality sectors is recent, with a high potential growth. Given this, it is expected that future researchers will deepen out this relationship, finding effective ways to include sustainability into satisfaction measurement.

## **KEYWORDS**

Satisfaction, Tourism, Hospitality, Sustainability, Bibliometric Analysis, PRISMA.

#### 1 Introduction

The Tourism sector is one of the fastest-growing industries and has been gaining relevance due to the positive contributions it gives economically, socially and culturally to the respective countries. To take advantage of all the benefits related to this sector, governments have been trying to provide laws that enhance, favour and protect this valuable way of income. The idea that increasing customer satisfaction will result in higher revenues for the entities present in the destination was shared by Dmitrović *et al.* (2009). Accordingly, there is a connection between customer satisfaction and costumer's behavioural intentions, since the first one influences (positively or negatively) the second. If a consumer has a good overview experience on some hotel or touristic destination, he is prone to return to the same place and repeat the experience, or to recommend it to potential tourists so that they can also benefit from the

positive experience. On the opposite side, if a customer has a bad overview experience on some hotel or touristic destination, the chances of returning and recommending it to potential tourists is reduced.

Satisfaction is a concept that has tremendous relevance on the tourism sector. The satisfaction of a tourist is a measure of the extension of matching between the tourist's expectations and the service effectively delivered. Therefore, a satisfied tourist is an objective for all entities involved in the area, since it can lead to the development of mutually beneficial long-term, trusty and loyal relationships between these entities and consumers.

The purpose of this work is to develop a systematic review and a bibliometric analysis by investigating, collecting, synthesising and examining the most relevant contributions and conclusions in existing literature related to satisfaction in the hospitality and tourism sectors, with a sustainability perspective. This bibliometric review will focus on satisfaction not only on the hospitality sector, but also on a touristic destination level. By offering a condensed source of the main conclusions on previous research made, this work will be a guiding structure for future researchers and scholars interested on these research topics, allowing them not only to better understand what the evolution regarding these matters has been, but also to start their own future research. This study also intends to provide new insights on this matter, highlighting future directions of research.

### 2 Literature Review

## 2.1 Satisfaction Definition and the Decision-making Process Towards Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is nowadays a strongly investigated topic as companies and institutions want not only to know how their actions can influence tourists' behaviour, but also to include this knowledge into their management acting plans. Although, a consistent and unified theory relating customer satisfaction and its causes and consequences is lacking (Line & Runyan, 2012).

Gundersen *et al.* (1996) stated that satisfaction is a post-consumption evaluative judgement concerning a certain product or service that can, in turn, be measured by the assessment of the guests' evaluation of performance on specific attributes. For Chen (2008), satisfaction is defined as a psychological concept that involves a feeling of happiness resulting from an experience with products or services. Satisfaction can also be defined as an overall evaluation of the value perceived by tourists (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Vuuren *et al.* (2012) stated that tourist satisfaction is an emotional response present when evaluating the difference between expectations and perceptions of service performance and actual perceptions obtained through physical interaction with products and services businesses. According to Dmitrović *et al.* (2009), loyalty is a consequence of tourist satisfaction, represented by the repeated act of purchase, the ability to pay a higher price and the phenomenon of word-of-mouth recommendations.

Martin *et al.* (2008) stated that a growing body of literature suggests that positive and negative emotions associated with the service encounter play an important role in defining satisfaction, and predicting future behavioural intention (Allen *et al.*, 1992; Oliver, 1993b; Richins, 1997; Barsky & Nash, 2002). Furthermore, there is a general acceptance towards the idea that customer satisfaction levels and long-

term behavioural intention are influenced by emotions during the pre-, actual and post-consumption stages of the service encounter (Oliver, 1997; Cronin Jr. *et al.*, 2000; Barsky & Nash, 2002). This work highlighted the need to measure both cognitive and affective elements of customer satisfaction in order to acquire a better understanding of its formation and likely effects on behavioural intention, in opposition to the previous idea that excluded the affective component. The results of this study enabled to support the theory that satisfaction is better explained when including the emotional aspect than without. It could also be concluded that emotionally-based satisfaction is a stronger indicator of future behavioural intention than the previous cognitive measures.

Another definition is the one proposed by Chi & Qu (2008) where customer satisfaction was defined as a psychological concept that involves the pleasure and feeling of well-being that results from obtaining exactly what a person expects from a certain product or service. Satisfaction is created by the comparison between the customer's expectation before and after consumption so that the higher the similarity between the customer's expectations, the higher the degree of satisfaction produced. The authors aimed to offer an integrated approach to understand destination loyalty by analysing the empirical evidence on the causal relationships between destination image, attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction, and concluded that: destination image directly influences attribute satisfaction; destination image and attribute satisfaction were direct precursors of overall satisfaction; and overall satisfaction and attribute satisfaction had positive impacts on loyalty towards a destination. Rojas (2010) defined customer satisfaction as a result of a client's perception of the value received by a product or service. Del Bosque & Martín (2008) developed a model that explained the relationships among the psychological variables (cognitive and affective) that affect the tourist in pre-experience and postexperience stages. Research involved 807 individuals visiting a destination in Spain and the results portrayed that a preconceived image of the destination has impact on expectations and tourist loyalty towards the destination. In addition, the impact of expectations and emotions on satisfaction was proven, having a relevant influence on behavioural intentions.

According to Baker & Crompton (2000), satisfaction refers to a tourist's emotional state after exposure to an opportunity. The authors developed a structural equations model that confirmed that perceived performance quality has a stronger impact on behavioural intentions than satisfaction. Gallarza & Saura (2006) indicated that quality is an antecedent of perceived value and satisfaction is the behavioural consequence of perceived value, being loyalty attitude the final outcome. The results confirmed a quality-value-satisfaction-loyalty chain and showed the complexity of very sensitive value dimensions to the tourism experience. There is also evidence that there is a positive and direct correlation between the attributes of tourism facilities and customer satisfaction but, surprisingly, satisfaction and loyalty are tenuously linked. Clarifying, despite tourists' loyalty is especially influenced by hotel design and amenities, their satisfaction depends mostly on hotel ambience and facilities (Skogland & Siguaw, 2004).

Oliver (1999) agrees that despite most loyal consumers are satisfied, the opposite is not always true. In other words, a satisfied consumer is not immediately a loyal one. In fact, satisfaction is a needed step towards loyalty formation but loses relevance when loyalty starts setting through factors like personal determinism or social bonding at the institutional or personal level. Another conclusion extracted was

that, due to the nature of the product category or consumer disinterest, loyalty cannot be achieved as a defined objective by providers. Bigné *et al.* (2001) focused the relationship between the image of a tourism destination perceived by tourists and their behavioural intentions and between this image and the post-purchase evaluation of the stay. Together, the authors proposed a structural equation model to jointly analyse the relationship between quality and satisfaction and between these variables and tourists' behaviour variables. The results showed that the image of a tourism destination is a direct predecessor of perceived quality, satisfaction, intention to return and willingness to recommend the destination to others. In addition, quality was confirmed to have a positive influence on satisfaction and on the intention to return, and also determines the willingness to recommend the destination. The idea that the satisfaction levels of a tourist are deeply related with behavioural intentions is highlighted.

According to Bigné & Andreu (2004), consumers that experience greater pleasure show higher satisfaction levels and more favourable behavioural intentions, reflected in a future loyalty feeling and intention to visit the destination. For Bigné *et al.* (2005), satisfaction is responsible for mediating the relationship between experienced/produced emotions and behavioural intentions. Other authors state that overall satisfaction can be determined by push and pull motivations (Caber & Albayrak, 2016). Pestana *et al.* (2018) developed a model associated with the previous idea, explaining the mediation role played by satisfaction in the relationship between motivation, emotion and behavioural intentions.

### 2.2 Sustainable behaviour and Customer Satisfaction

Several authors have studied the impact of implementing sustainable practices on overall guest satisfaction. Assaf & Magnini (2012) stated that regardless of the commitment to sustainable practices, hotels must focus on customer satisfaction in order to be able to compete in the industry. In fact, this study provides empirical evidence that not considering customer satisfaction in hotel efficiency studies may lead to significant differences in the mean and ranking of hotel efficiency scores. For Berezan et al. (2013), hotel managers should clearly understand how to integrate and achieve sustainability into their businesses according to the three pillars of sustainability, in a way that enables customer satisfaction to be either maintained or increased. In their study, the authors also conclude that green practices have an overall positive relationship on guests' satisfaction levels and intention to return. It is important that hotels recognise what customers expect in order to meet those expectations (Robinot & Giannelloni, 2010). This task can be truly challenging since there might be disparities over what costumers expect for hotel environmental practices because not every costumer has the same preferences or requests. In fact, Robinot & Giannelloni (2010) concluded that not every green attribute can be viewed as differentiating criteria when choosing for a certain hotel, some of them are actually expected to be part of the service offer. In example, the reuse of linens and towels was considered a basic attribute expected from hotels by guests, and the absence of this measure was considered to negatively affect customer satisfaction. On the other hand, the study also concluded that the fact that a hotel used clean and renewable energy sources was considered a "plus" attribute that could contribute to the hotel's competitive advantage and could lead to greater satisfaction levels.

Lee *et al.* (2010) developed a study that tested the relationship between green attributes, a hotel's image and customers' behavioural intentions. The authors found out that customers' emotions and cognition were involved in the process of formation of customers' opinions of an overall green image of a hotel. Relating cognition to functional green attributes (i.e., linens reuse measure) and emotions to emotional green attributes (i.e., tranquillity), the authors concluded that the implementation of these functional and emotional green attributes into the daily hotel operations was intimately related with the creation of an overall green hotel image. The findings confirmed that cognitive image components (namely value and quality attributes) can positively influence a green hotel's affective and overall images. The affective image was also found to have a positive influence on a green hotel's overall image. In addition, the study was also helpful to demonstrate that an overall green hotel image was positively related to customers' behavioural intentions (such as intention to revisit, intention to offer positive recommendations to others or word-of-mouth and willingness-to-pay a premium). Manaktola & Jahuari (2007) also shared the conclusion that the image of a hotel worried about environmental practices can result in favourable behavioural intentions by customers, leading to the intention to return.

The heterogeneity of the customer profile caused by the different sociocultural backgrounds, values and beliefs, expectations and preferences, turns the task of studying the willingness to pay a premium for green practices very hard. Numerous authors have studied this relationship and the developed studies found out conflicting, inconsistent and inconclusive results. Mendleson & Polonsky (1995) showed that many consumers would be willing to pay extra for products that were less harmful to the environment. On the other hand, Manaktola & Jauhari (2007) concluded that consumers in India would prefer staying in hotel facilities that follow environmental practices than those who don't, but were not willing to pay more for this type of services. If the price increase component can be a negative issue in customers' acceptance towards green practices, Kim & Han (2010) found out, in an undertaken study, that respondents were keen to have minor inconveniences during their stay in order to cope with proposed sustainable measures such as reusing towels and using recycled products, as well as to learn about the positive environmental attributes of green hotels.

The study developed by Berezan *et al.* (2014), in which they identified which green practices satisfy guests the most, showed that hotel guests were willing to pay a daily premium at different levels for environmentally-friendly hotel practices. In addition, the study revealed that discounts and frequent guest points were the most effective ways to motivate guests' participation in green programs/practices. For Berezan *et al.* (2014), despite minimal differences between different demographic groups regarding satisfaction with green practices, management should consider customers' sociocultural backgrounds and should develop efforts on sensitizing guests about the benefits of balancing social responsibility with service expectations.

In general, customers who have a positive Attitude Towards Green Behaviours (ATGB) tend to change their buying behaviours, willing to pay extra in order to buy a product or service from a firm that follows environmental practices. In other words, environmentally conscious customers who are willing to change their buying behaviours, build more favourable Overall Images (OI) of firms that follow environmental practices (Lee *et al.*, 2010; Kim & Han, 2010).

## 3 Methodology

Considering that the purpose of this study is to analyse the state-of-art by identifying the most relevant trends and actors (authors, journals, countries, institutions), a bibliometric analysis was performed, since it is the best-suited methodology for the purpose of the study. For the collection and extraction of the articles used for the bibliometric analyses, the PRISMA method was selected.

Before identifying the articles that were used for the study, it was important to select the databases used as a source for the articles' search. Then, it was important to define the keywords that filtered the articles' search, in order to identify the ones which served the purpose of this study. The search for documents in these databases (accessed in December 2021) was carried out using the keywords "Satisfaction" AND "Tourism" AND ("Hospitality" OR "Hotel") AND ("Sustainable" OR "Sustainability") in the articles' title, abstract and keywords. Different inclusion and exclusion criteria were added to filter the results in order to reduce the sample of articles to work with. Therefore, only articles published during the 2000-2021 period were selected in the English language. In what concerns the articles' source, not every journal was considered for the selection. The SCImago Journal Rank indicator is a measure of journal's impact, influence or prestige, and expresses the average number of weighted citations received in the selected year by the documents published in the journal in the three previous years. Therefore, only journals with a SCImago Journal Rank Indicator associated with a Q1 or Q2 evaluation category for the articles' year of publication were considered. The choice of a reliable journal as articles' source is important to give credibility to the developed study, since an article published in a top-tier journal is expected to be associated with high-quality researchers and research. It is important to notice that for the 2000-2021 period, some selected journals had a SCImago Journal Rank Indicator associated with a Q3 or Q4 for certain years, but it was assured that the selected articles from these journals were published in a year associated with Q1 or Q2 evaluation categories for these specific journals.

In resume, inclusion criteria included articles published during the 2000-2021 period, in English language and in top ranked journals regarding the tourism and hospitality fields. Exclusion criteria included document types such as reviews, conference papers, reports, book chapters, books, conference reviews, letters, notes and editorials.

In this study, two different methods were used to perform the bibliometric analysis: performance analysis and science mapping. Performance analysis consists of measuring the scientific impact and citations through different indices (García *et al.*, 2020) and aims to evaluate the citation impact of the scientific production of different scientific actors. These indexes or indicators used for measuring the scientific output of researchers can be: Production indicators, focused on the counting of published papers by different scientific actors (total number of published papers, number of papers published in a period of time); Impact indicators based on received citations (total number of citations, average number of citations per paper, number of highly cited papers, h-index, etc.); Indicators based on the impact of the journal: Impact Factor, SJR (SCImago Journal Rank), relative citations ratio, etc. (Gutierrez-Salcedo *et al.*, 2017). Science mapping represents scientific research and its evolution through time in the conceptual, intellectual and social fields (Gutierrez-Salcedo et al., 2017). It is a spatial representation of

the relationship between disciplines, fields, documents or authors altogether (Small, 1999). In science mapping analysis, the scientific knowledge is seen as a complex system, where the network structure is used to model the interaction between scientific actors (authors, keywords, journals, references, etc.) (Boccaletti et al., 2006).

Different data was used to perform the bibliometric analysis of the present study. The frequency of authors, journals, titles and keywords enabled not only to investigate the impact and productivity in literature of certain authors, journals and articles, but also to identify the main topics and trends related to satisfaction on the tourism sector with a sustainability approach. In addition, the network analysis was used to identify research topics through the construction of networks based on the co-occurrence of keywords.

#### 4 Results

The bibliometric analysis of the 102 collected articles through both Scopus (43 articles) and Web of Science (59 articles) databases concluded that the increasing relevance verified for the topic of this study is shown by the increasing number of articles published in literature related to the study's topic (the most prolific period was 2018-2019). The most productive journal in the topic of the study was Sustainability. In what concerns the most productive authors, institutions and countries, different results were revealed. For the bibliometric analysis through the Scopus database, the most productive institution and country were the Tomas Bata University in Zlín and China, respectively. The most productive authors were T. Avci and B. B. Sousa, but the most cited article was from Martínez (2015). For the bibliometric analysis through the Web of Science database, the most productive institutions were the Sejong University, the University of Cantabria and the University of Johannesburg, and the most productive country was Spain, with China right behind. B. B. Sousa was also one of the most productive authors alongside other authors, and the most cited article was again the one by Martínez (2015).

## 5 Conclusions and Future Work

The tourism sector has been increasing in a large scale over the last decades, with increasing and significant numbers regarding the number of tourists and revenues for the related sectors of society involved. Due to the specificness of this sector, its features, numbers and impacts for the different sectors of society (economic, social, environmental) are becoming increasingly relevant for the development of countries. On the other hand, issues related to overpopulation during the vacations period, the degradation of the environment and the increase in the consumption of natural resources are rising increasingly, representing a threat to the way of life we know to date. A sustainability-oriented perspective was added to the study, addressing the increasing awareness for green practices.

The hospitality sector represents a significant share of the tourism industry. Its main objective is to achieve customer satisfaction by the development of constant efforts regarding customers' preferences and demands. Customer satisfaction is another topic that has been targeted with extensive recent research, since companies try their best to achieve and even exceed customers' expectations. The

surpassing of customers' expectations can lead to important consequences regarding the relationship between customers and companies, namely the reaching of a loyalty feeling by the customer, evidenced by repeated purchases.

Limitations of the present study were identified, namely regarding the selection of articles and journals to be collected for the research. The sample of selected articles only considered articles published during the 2000-2021 period and in the English language, as well as with the keywords "Satisfaction" AND "Tourism" AND ("Hospitality" OR "Hotel") AND ("Sustainable" OR "Sustainability). Also, only certain journals were considered for the articles' search, namely those with a SCImago Journal Rank Indicator associated with a Q1 or Q2 evaluation category for the 2000-2021 period considered. Given this, a large number of studies that did not accomplish the previously enunciated criteria were excluded and therefore not considered for the bibliometric analysis. Another limitation lies on a software or data failure that did not consider some articles or journals in the tables related to journal productivity.

For future research, it is expected that this study represents a valuable tool guiding scholars and researchers in their studies. Responding to the increasing awareness regarding sustainability, future similar analysis will include a higher number of collected articles for analysis, and researchers will deepen out the relationship between sustainability and satisfaction on the tourism and hospitality sectors, finding effective ways to include sustainability into satisfaction measurement. The satisfaction measuring process in a sustainability context presents itself as a future direction of research, focusing on the different available practices and their impacts on the satisfaction level and on the decision-making process of the stakeholders involved.

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