Bibliometric Analysis of Studies on Online Reviews in the Tourism Sector Between 2018 and 2023

Turizm Sektöründe Çevrimiçi Değerlendirmeler Üzerine 2018-2023 Yılları Arasında Yapılan Çalışmaların Bibliyometrik Analizi

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the articles written on online evaluations in the tourism sector to reveal the current state of research and offers suggestions. This study aims to determine the journals that have produced the highest number of publications, the works that have laid the groundwork for further research, and the main issues explored in the research area. Within the scope of the research, the Web of Science database was searched using the words "online reviews, tourism sector" between 2018 and 2023. In order to examine a total of 146 articles, the bibliometric method was preferred, and the Vosviewer program was used. The relationships between the keywords, abstracts, citations, references, bibliographies, authors, and countries of the studies examined within the scope of the research were interpreted by creating graphs to visualize the connections. Furthermore, both qualitative and quantitative research topics, along with the current state of the literature over the years, have been thoroughly examined, leading to the formulation of recommendations.

Keywords: Online Reviews, Tourism Sector, Bibliometric Analysis, Vosviewer

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, turizm sektöründe çevrimiçi değerlendirmeler üzerine yazılmış makaleleri analiz ederek araştırmaların mevcut durumunu ortaya koymakta ve öneriler sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, en çok yayın üreten dergileri, daha fazla araştırma için zemin hazırlayan çalışmaları ve araştırma alanında incelenen ana konuları belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında Web of Science veri tabanında 2018-2023 yılları arasında "çevrimiçi yorumlar, turizm sektörü" kelimeleri kullanılarak arama yapılmıştır. Toplam 146 makalenin incelenebilmesi için bibliyometrik yöntem tercih edilmiş ve Vosviewer programı kullanılmıştır. Araştırma kapsamında incelenen çalışmaların anahtar kelimeleri, özetleri, atıfları, referansları, kaynakçaları, yazarları ve ülkeleri arasındaki ilişkiler, bağlantıları görselleştirmek için grafikler oluşturularak yorumlanmıştır. Ayrıca, hem nitel hem de nicel araştırma konuları, literatürün yıllar içindeki mevcut durumu ile birlikte derinlemesine incelenmiş ve önerilerin oluşturulmasına öncülük etmiştir

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevrimiçi Değerlendirmeler, Turizm Sektörü, Bibliyometrik Analiz, Vosviewer

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INTRODUCTION

Before commencing their travel plans, tourists should choose suitable tourism products to avoid making a regrettable choice that could potentially spoil their entire trip (Ru-xin et al., 2020). Online reviews can also impact the performance of tourism-related items, as they are a common factor in the experience of such products (Fang et al., 2016, p. 499). Online reviews are crucial for tourists and companies during travel, as they provide information, discuss experiences, and provide feedback (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014; Schuckert et al., 2015; Fang et al., 2016). They also help establish an online presence, influence booking intentions, and generate income. Online reviews are widely discussed in tourism and hospitality, attracting attention from scholars and managers due to their utility for producers and customers (Gunter et al., 2019; Reyes-Menendez et al., 2019; Muritala et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2023). Online reviews are crucial for tourism industry success, providing feedback and growth opportunities. Proper handling and proactive responses to consumer issues can lead to positive outcomes (de la Hoz-Correa & Muñoz-Leiva, 2019; Guo & Pesonen, 2022). Therefore, it is essential for businesses in the tourism industry to actively monitor and engage with online reviews to enhance their reputation and ultimately increase their revenue. By leveraging the insights gained from online reviews, businesses can make informed decisions to improve customer satisfaction and drive growth in a competitive market.

Online reviews pose significant analytical challenges for traditional data processing tools, necessitating the development of practical methodologies for analyzing voluminous, unstructured, and textual review data. Computational methods like statistical machine learning, deep learning, and natural language processing are used for topic extraction and sentiment analysis (Zheng et al., 2023). Academics can use computational methods to analyze vast internet reviews, identify patterns and trends, and enable businesses to make informed decisions based on customer feedback. These methods can also help companies improve their products or services by understanding customer preferences.

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Advances in information technology have transformed customer and company communication, extending beyond current conversations to potential customers who observe how companies interact with their clients. Tourism companies are adapting to online reviews on platforms like Google Maps, TripAdvisor, and Booking.com to stay competitive. They are developing management strategies to respond to negative reviews and defend their reputation, as online reviews significantly influence tourists' decisions (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014). This shift towards digital communication has forced companies to prioritize their online presence and actively engage with customers on various platforms. By effectively managing their online reputation, tourism companies can build trust with potential customers and maintain a positive image in the competitive market.

This paper aims to synthesize and present a comprehensive overview of the current research by identifying the fundamental and influential works and the established and emerging areas of prior scholarship. The goal is to enhance knowledge, develop a deeper understanding, and indicate the future research trajectory in this field. We accomplish this by using bibliometric analytical tools, which allow us to dissect the primary foundations and progression of the research field. In addition, we provide a novel approach to visually representing the progression of the leading research topics. In order to accomplish this purpose, we have formulated three research questions:

RQ1. What are the general trends in this research area?

RQ2. What is the foundational literature?

RQ3. What are the major research themes?

ONLINE REVIEWS

Today, consumers can share their opinions, experiences, and ideas about products and services via the Internet. This has brought innovation to reviewing positive and negative evaluations and gathering information by expanding the options for other potential consumers to gather information (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Jeong & Jang, 2011). These developments have given rise to "Electronic Word of Mouth Communication (E-WOM)," a process by which one person can influence others. Electronic word-of-mouth (Goldenberg et al., 2012) or user-generated content (UGC), online recommendations/opinions (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014), online consumer reviews (Filieri, 2015), online word-of-mouth (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014), and online reviews (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014) are generally referred to as online word-of-mouth in the literature because they are similar concepts with minor differences, also called marketing buzz (Thomas, 2004). Online reviews refer to all electronic communication between producers and consumers, such as emails, websites, consumer review sites, blogs, virtual communities, chat rooms, newsgroups, and instant messaging, and between consumers themselves, such as data generated online by consumers (Litvin et al., 2008).

Online reviews refer to evaluations, comments, ratings, or feedback provided by customers or users of a product, service, business, or experience on the Internet (Sunar, 2021). Online reviews are generally published on various platforms, such as e-commerce websites, social media platforms, review sites, forums, and applications (Erdem, 2020). In the following sections, the benefits of online reviews will be explored through the following headings:

✓ Information and Evaluation: It provides potential customers with information and evaluation about the quality, features, and performance of a product or service from the perspective of other users (Sunar & Ateş, 2021).

✓ -Building Trust: Positive reviews can build trust and credibility for a business or product when seen as social proof of its value and reliability (Singh, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2020; Shaheen et al., 2020).

✓ Decision Making: Online reviews are highly effective in enabling consumers to make informed decisions when purchasing, selecting services, or making a purchase choice (Zhang et al., 2014; Le et al., 2022).

✓ Feedback for Improvement: Online reviews provide businesses with valuable feedback about their products or services, helping them understand customer preferences and areas for improvement and see their products and services through customers' eyes. Businesses can identify strong and weak areas by analyzing reviews, addressing customer concerns, and improving the overall visitor experience (Ateş & Sunar, 2019; Park et al., 2020; Jensen et al., 2021).

✓ SEO and Visibility: Reviews also affect search engine optimization (SEO), as search engines often consider the quantity and quality of reviews when ranking websites (Mladenović et al., 2023).

✓ Impact on Revenue: Online reviews can directly impact various revenue streams of a tourism business, such as restaurant sales and hotel bookings. A review of the literature reveals that there is a positive relationship between online reviews (points, stars, etc.) and revenue (Xie et al., 2014); a one-point increase in online reviews leads to a 5-9% increase in restaurant revenue; and there is a positive relationship between the number of online reviews

and hotel occupancy rate (Tuominen, 2011) and booking (Torres et al., 2015). Thus, it is imperative to uphold positive online reviews to both attract customers and optimize revenue potential (Sayfuddin & Chen, 2021).

✓ Reputation and Image Building: Negative reviews can damage the reputation of a tourism business and negatively affect potential visitors. Effective reputation management strategies should include responding quickly and professionally to negative feedback, addressing customer complaints, and resolving issues to maintain a positive brand image (Marchiori & Cantoni, 2011; Lien et al., 2015; Sunar et al., 2019).

Online reviews come in many forms, from star ratings to detailed written accounts of experiences. With all these benefits, it is essential to remember that not all online reviews are accurate or unbiased, as some online reviews may be fake or manipulated by businesses/competitors. Therefore, consumers often must critically evaluate and consider multiple reviews before making decisions.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Bibliometric analysis was used to reveal the literature between 2018 and 2023. First, the database to be searched was determined to identify studies on online reviews in the tourism sector. Web of Science (WOS) was preferred as the database. The main reason for choosing WOS is that it contains first-class academic journals that largely reflect academic progress (Su et al., 2018). In line with the research objective, 146 articles with the keywords "online reviews, tourism sector" were identified in the WoS database on March 19, 2024. The VOSviewer program was utilized to analyze and visualize the 146 studies within the research scope. The VOSviewer program examined the distribution of publications by years, distribution by authors, keywords, authors' institutions, countries, journals published, citation status, bibliographic matching, and co-citation analysis by creating relationship networks for all of them.

FINDINGS AND COMMENTS

The distribution of the 146 articles analyzed within the scope of the research according to years, the results of the co-author analysis, the most published and influential journal for online evaluations in the tourism sector, the most cited publications and authors, the publications with the most significant impact level, and keyword analysis were analyzed.
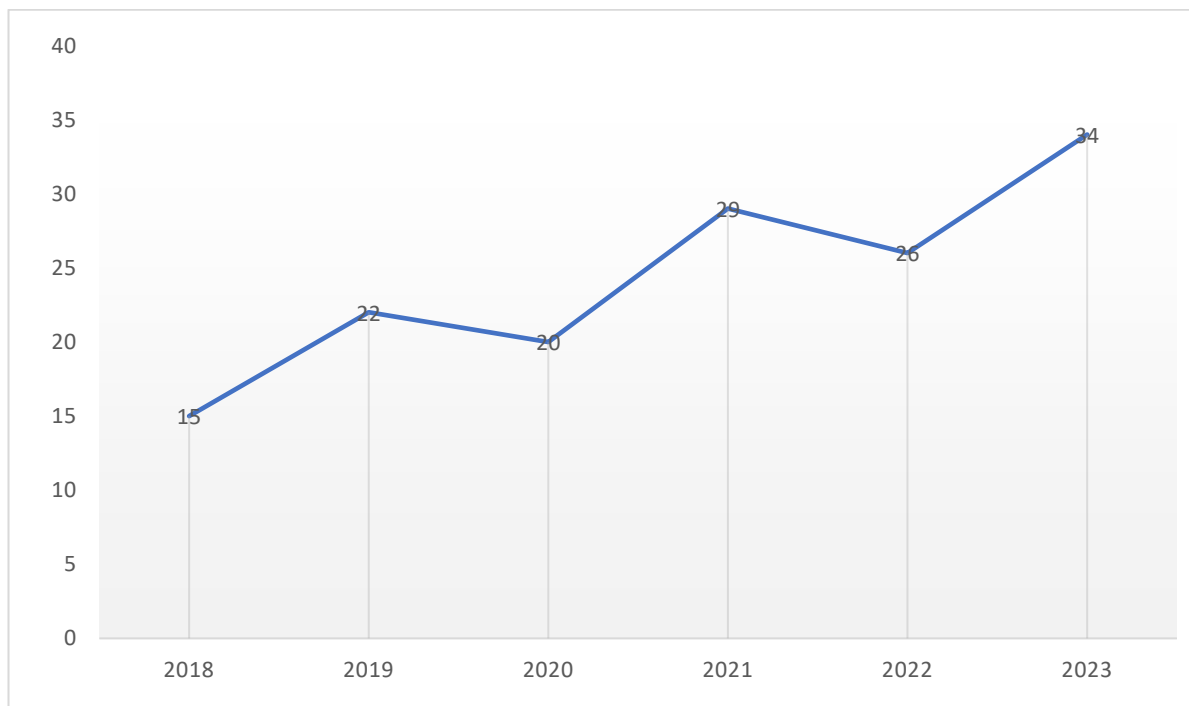
Figure 1: Visualization of the Distribution of Publications between 2018-2023
Source: Created by the authors.

The study included 146 publications from 2018 to 2023, with the lowest number in 2018 and the highest in 2023. The average number of publications from 2018 to 2023 was around 24, indicating an above-average trend since 2021. Additionally, the data reveals a significant rise in publications within the research field over the past few years.
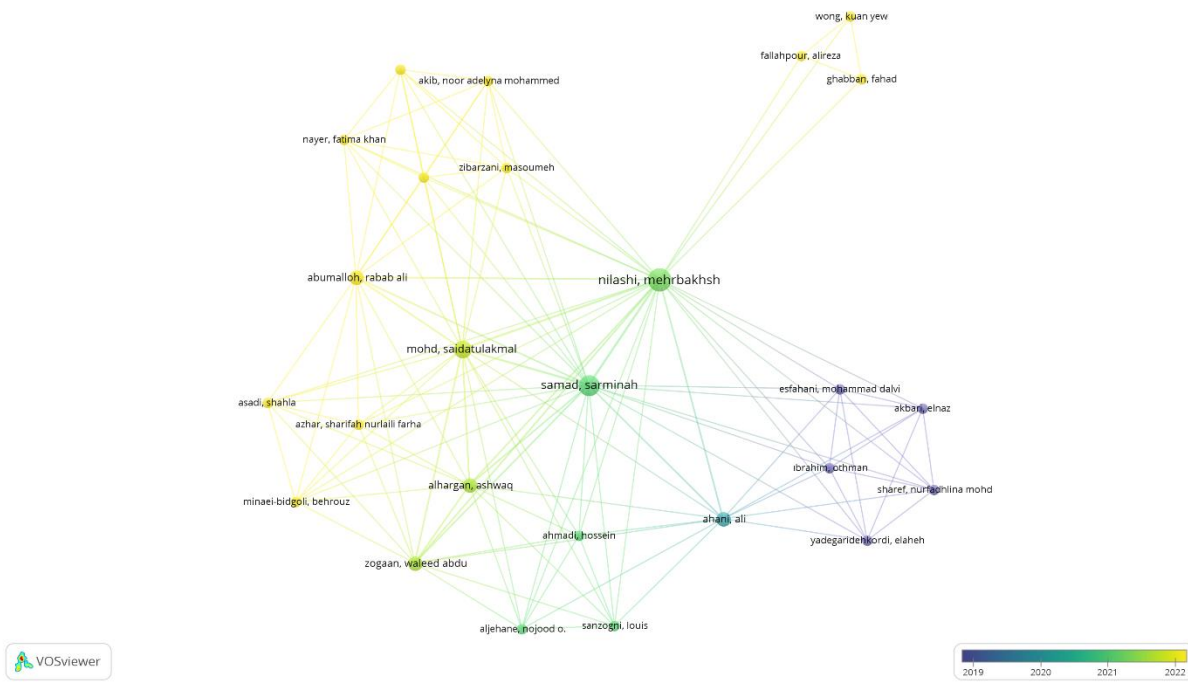
Figure 2: Collaboration Network between Authors
Source: Created by the authors with the VOSviewer program.

The Vosviewer program's co-authorship analysis of 146 articles resulted in the creation of a relationship network map. This map identifies authors who are most connected and collaborative based on publication and citation criteria. The authors with the most research are Mehrbakhsh Nilashi (5), Saminah Samad (4), Saidatulakmal Mohn (3), Rob Law (3), Estela Marine-Roig (3), Abhisek Tandon (3), Anu G. Aggarwal (3), Jose Ramon Saura (3), and Ana Reyes-Menendez (3). The most cited authors are Jose Ramon Saura (173), Ana Reyes-Menendez (173), Mehrbakhsh Nilashi (150), Sarminah Samad (145), Rob Law (122), and Ali Ahani (97).
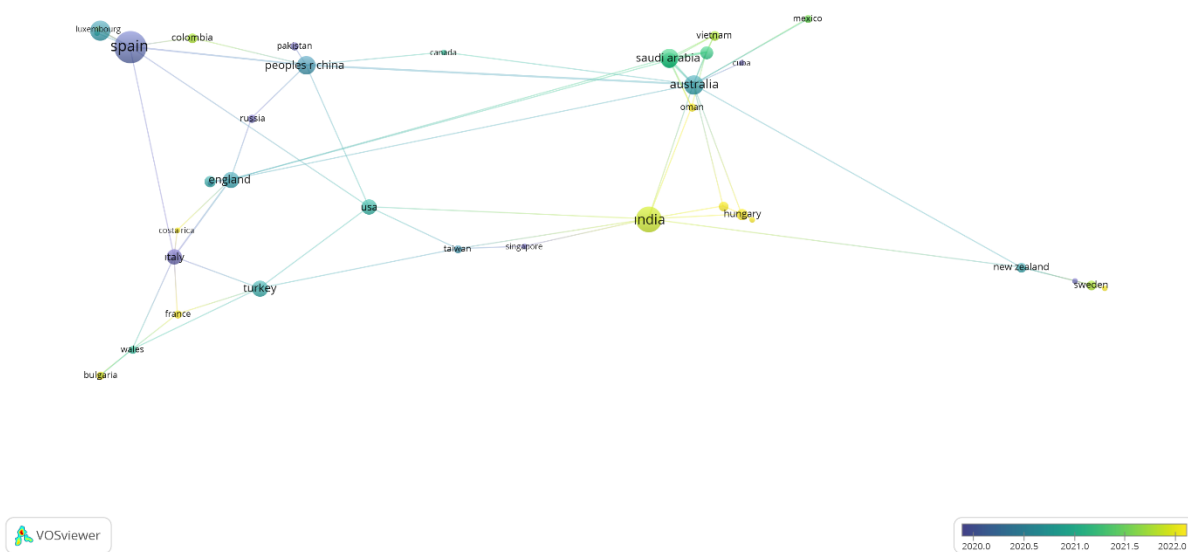
Figure 3: Collaboration Network for Authors' Countries
Source: Created by the authors with the VOSviewer program.

In the 146 articles analyzed within the scope of the research, there are authors from 51 different countries. When the countries of the authors were analyzed, Spain with 30 articles, India with 19 articles, Portugal with 12 articles,

Australia with 11 articles, Saudi Arabia with 10 articles, and China with 10 articles were included in the ranking. When the countries with the highest number of citations are analyzed, Spain ranked first with 402 citations in 30 publications, Portugal ranked second with 209 citations in 12 publications, Italy ranked third with 192 citations in 7 publications, Australia ranked fourth with 189 citations in 11 publications, India ranked fifth with 188 citations in 19 publications, and China ranked sixth with 187 citations in 10 publications.

Figure 4: Network Analysis of Keywords
Source: Created by the authors with the VOSviewer program.

As a result of the online reviews and tourism sector metasearch for bibliometric analysis, 600 different keywords were found in 146 studies. The most used keywords other than online reviews and the tourism sector were social media, Tripadvisor, E-WOM, sentiment analysis, hospitality, and customer satisfaction.

Figure 5: Network Analysis of the Most Cited Publications

In order to determine the citation networks for the publications, a network map of the citation analysis of the publications with at least one citation criterion was created. Among 146 publications, the most cited are Filieri, Açıkgöz &; Dwivedi (2021), 90 citations, Nilashi et al. (2019), 85 citations, Gossling et al. (2018), 85 citations,

Reyes Menendez et al. (2019b), 68 citations, Reyes Menendez et al. (2019a), 58 citations, and Oliveira & Casais (2019), 57 citations.
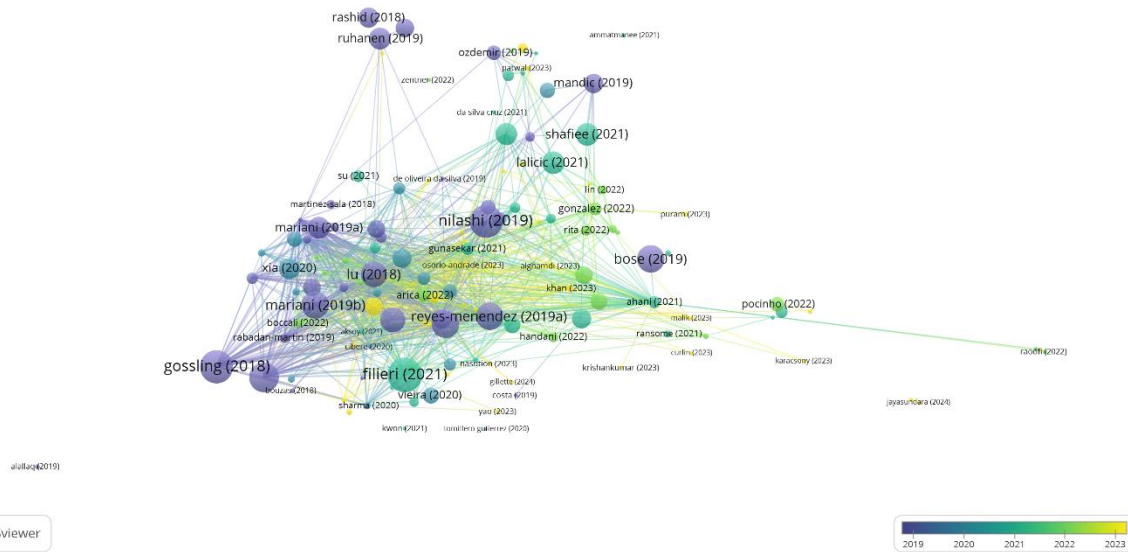
Figure 6: Visualization of Relationships for Bibliographic Matching by Years
Source: Created by the authors with the VOSviewer program.

Bibliographic matching refers to the citation of a joint work cited by two independent sources. We identified 115 selected publications with the criterion of having at least one citation and a link between them. The studies with the most links between them were Nguyen (2023), Lu (2018), Gunasekar (2021), Nilashi (2022), and Reyes-Menendez (2019b).
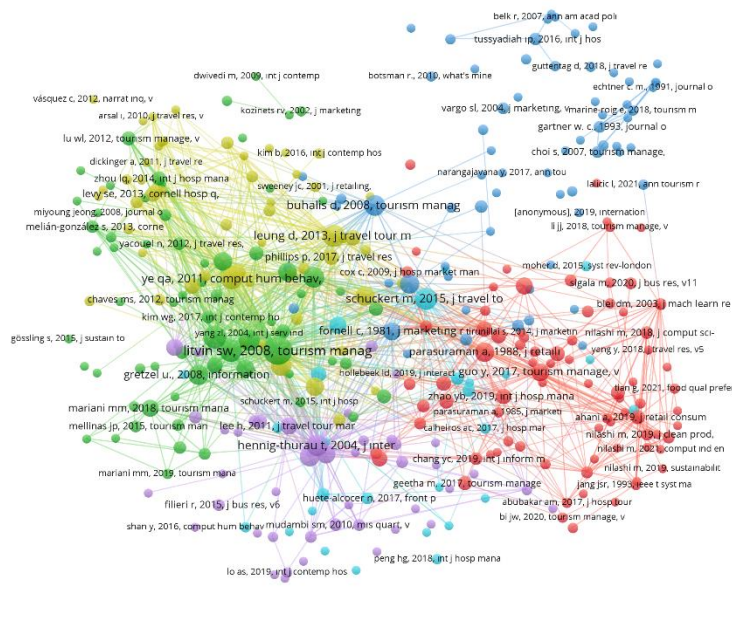
Figure 7: Network Analysis of Co-Citations
Source: Created by the authors with the VOSviewer program.

Different references in a publication are referred to as co-citations. By making the minimum number of citations 3, the analysis was carried out over 634 units. The authors with the highest number of co-citations were Filieri, Nilashi, Mariani, Litvin, Buhalis, and Xiang.

Figure 8: Network Analysis by Published Journals
Source: Created by the authors with the VOSviewer program.

In total, 146 articles were published in 98 different journals. The distribution of the journals in which 146 articles related to the research topic were published were Sustainability (11), International Journal of Hospitality Management (6), Tourism Review (5), International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (5), Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology (4), Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights (4), Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research (4). When the most cited journals were analyzed, the order was International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (167 citations), International Journal of Hospitality Management (142 citations), Sustainability (133 citations), Current Issues in Tourism (115 citations), Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology (112 citations), Tourism Review (101 citations).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The subject of the study is online reviews in the tourism sector. In line with the study's subject, it aims to reveal the existing literature by bibliometric analysis of studies on online reviews in the tourism sector. Using the Web of Science database, 146 articles were analyzed as a result of a search with the meta "online reviews, tourism sector." The Vosviewer program was used during the analysis, and analyses were carried out for the authors of the publications, authors' countries, keywords, authors' institutions, most cited publications, and the number and content of publications by years. The majority of co-authored works and sources utilized were examined to reveal similar results. In addition, the wide variety of keywords used in the studies reveals that the researchers conducted research in different fields in the tourism sector. The fact that the researchers obtained similar results indicates that online evaluations in the tourism sector can be generalized. In the 146 studies analyzed within the scope of the research, there is a total of 446 authors, showing a high degree of scientific cooperation with a score of 3.05.

The publications examined within the scope of the research focused on content analysis of online reviews of restaurants, accommodation establishments, etc., by users. In addition, these studies reveal the current situation and the positive and negative aspects of the area examined through content analysis. Among the prominent studies in the literature, rare and exciting studies examine the relationship between pictures shared in online reviews as physical evidence and purchase decisions, factors influencing user-generated content on online platforms, discourse analysis for environmentally friendly content, and online fake or misleading reviews. Methodologically examining the publications revealed the frequent use of machine learning, discourse analysis, scaling, performance evaluation, meta-analysis, and other analytical methods. Bibliometric analyses can provide important references for identifying current issues, research gaps, and future research directions and for selecting future research topics. In this context, in the publications examined, it is seen that studies on sharing (photos, videos, emojis used in comments, etc.) using methods such as artificial neural networks, classification according to consumption experiences, determination of

consumers' intentions to exaggerate in online evaluations, and semiotic analysis have recently started to be conducted in the literature on online evaluations. In addition, for future studies, online reviews in the tourism sector should be conducted in different databases and compared with the findings and results of this study or in the same database to compare the orientations of the subjects.

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