

# Wellness Tourism Research: Bibliometric Study of the Scientific Field

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The paper presents the results of a bibliometric analysis of academic research covering the field of wellness tourism. The purpose of the article is to identify the structure of relationships between topics that were current in the past and topics that are current now. The aim of the research was to better understand the development of the field of wellness tourism, important constructs, authors, and resources with the help of bibliometric methods. For detailed research of the field of literature on wellness tourism, some two set bibliometric strategies were used: co-citation and keyword co-occurrence. In our bibliometric mapping of the wellness tourism research field, we have investigated the scientific production of articles over the years, the most important journals in the field, and keyword co-occurrence patterns. The obtained results of the study showed a significant increase in the number of publications related to wellness tourism. When it comes to the importance of individual journals, we have identified the 20 best journals that have published the most articles in this field. In wellness tourism research, we identified four clusters: health tourism research, tourism research, wellness topics, and wellness tourism research.

*Keywords:* wellness tourism, bibliometrics, keyword co-occurrence, literature review



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## Introduction

The modern time that we live in has shaped wellness to be regarded as a part of niche tourism, where modern technologies are used to promote global awareness of wellness, and its main focus has become the body and the brain in order to achieve wellness via the tourism experience. The concept of wellness tourism has not always looked like it does today; its characteristics have changed over time (Smith & Puczko, 2008). With the very development of wellness tourism as an industry, the scientific research area that deals with this topic has started to develop more and more. Well-

ness tourism research in recent decades has gained relevance due to the increased efforts and search for well-being by tourists (Rančič Demir et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the concept of wellness in tourism is not completely novel. Basic ideas of wellness tourism were actually researched in older studies as well, through certain elements of medical and health tourism. The increase in researchers' interest in wellness tourism has caused changes in the terminology used.

The aim of the research is to better understand the development of the field of wellness tourism, the most important constructs, and sources and authors, using

bibliometric methods. In order to better understand the development of research in wellness tourism literature, we have decided to apply science mapping methods while striving to answer the following questions:

1. Has wellness tourism research grown over time?
2. Which are the most relevant journals for publishing wellness tourism research studies?
3. Which fields of wellness tourism have mostly been explored in the existing literature?

Revealing the historical development of the wellness tourism research field is highly relevant for understanding past research undertakings, and to be able to spot areas that have been of special importance to researchers over time. As tourism researchers often seek inspiration in tourist interests and behaviours, this field review also implies the areas that have been of interest to tourists as well and have as such motivated increased research efforts. To our knowledge, this is one of the first studies that aim at providing a bibliometric overview of the wellness tourism research literature field.

The paper first provides a detailed review of the literature, which defines the basic concepts related to the research area, such as wellness, wellness tourism, wellness tourists, wellness hotel, and wellness service. After that, a review of bibliometric studies in the field of tourism was performed. The scientific research methods used in the paper are described in detail, and then the results, discussion, and conclusion based on the results are presented.

## Literature Review

### Wellness

Wellness used to be considered as an 'absence of sickness' for a long time (Dunn, 1957). Many scholars and organizations have provided definitions of wellness since the mid-20th century. While these definitions are heterogeneous, the majority of them centre on the following: how humans interact with wellness and the wellness dimensionality (Chi et al., 2020). The World Health Organization has always deemed wellness as 'the fulfilment of one's role expectations in the family, community, place of worship, workplace, and other settings,' and this has been one of the key factors

of wellness (World Health Organization, 2006). It is rather challenging to provide a definition and explain the meaning of the word 'wellness' even today owing to the fact that its nature is so subjective. There are different definitions for this term and the reason why this is the case has to do with who promotes them (Rančić Demir et al., 2021).

Wellness is sometimes used as another word for well-being but is a broader and more complex concept. According to the definition provided by the World Health Organization, health entails the following description: 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (World Health Organization, 2006), and as such, involves both psychological, social, and physical health (Kahneman & Krueger, 2006). Well-being, on the other hand, denotes a general satisfaction when it comes to life (uni-dimensional measurement) or being satisfied with its different areas (a multi-dimensional approach). It should also be noted that well-being massively contributes to health (Nawijn, 2010).

The wellness model, developed by Dr. Bill Hettler (co-founder of the American National Wellness Institute) represents six dimensions of wellness: physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, social, and occupational. The emotional dimension is the level to which people are aware of their feelings and able to control them, including a realistic assessment of limitations. The physical dimension represents life habits that help prevent disease, such as healthy food, physical activity, etc. The spiritual dimension is a constant effort in search of the meaning of human existence, which respects the forces of nature in the universe. The intellectual dimension is the inclusion of thoughts in creative mental activities while sharing personal potential with others. The social dimension is a contribution to the collective well-being of the whole community, coexistence with others, and nature. The occupational dimension refers to personal life satisfaction through work (Hettler, 1980).

### Wellness Tourism

Not only are wellness and tourism old concepts, but they have also been connected with the stimulation

of tourism development for a very long time. Also, well-being and guest wellness were the centres of the development of spa tourism and the early stages of the evolution of inland and coastal tourism resorts in a great number of countries, which involved hydro-pathic treatments (Page et al., 2017).

There are numerous ways to classify and define health and wellness tourism. Health tourism, in its broadest sense, involves healing, medical and wellness tourism. Healing tourism is connected to the act of preventing, treating, and rehabilitating. Medical tourism is about visiting another country so as to be subjected to a medical procedure. Wellness tourism, nevertheless, focuses on preserving good health using preventive activities, and these include a balanced diet, recreation, relaxation, etc. (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001).

Mueller and Kaufmann (2001, p. 7) provided the following definition of wellness tourism: 'The sum of all the relationships and phenomena resulting from a journey and residence by people whose main motive is to preserve or promote their health. They stay in a specialized hotel that provides the appropriate professional know-how and individual care. They require a comprehensive service package comprising physical fitness/beauty care, healthy nutrition/diet, relaxation/meditation, and mental activity/ education.'

Medical tourism is normally defined as going to another country in search of medical intervention so as to cure a sickness, which is very different from how wellness tourism is perceived. The latter is seen as a holistic way of contributing towards the betterment of one's health without using medicines; it involves both body and mind and takes place while one is on holiday. Healthy people who pursue a healthy lifestyle are its primary target, and are given the chance to enjoy treatments such as spas and other therapy establishments (Page et al., 2017).

#### Wellness Tourists

The focus of wellness tourists is on different programmes and treatments which centre on the preservation and promotion of health. These can also involve segments such as those related to spirituality and social interaction. This is why the wellness tourism as-

pects can be rather versatile (Težak Damijanić, 2020). Wellness tourists actively work on finding ways to improve their health. They are often motivated by the desire to spend time outdoors, experience different cultures, customs, and communities or other activities offered as part of the wellness services (Smith & Kelly, 2006; Smith, 2007).

A report under the name of *Global Wellness Tourism Economy* which comes from the Global Wellness Institute (Florida, USA) states that the wellness tourism market can be divided into two categories of visitors: primary wellness visitors, who are driven to travel and select their destination because of what is offered to them (e.g. they can visit a wellness resort or take part in a yoga session); and secondary wellness visitors, whose goal is to maintain wellness or participate in its activities during the course of any travelling experience (e.g. a person visiting a gym, enjoying a massage, or choosing to focus on healthy food during a trip). Secondary wellness travellers make up the majority of this kind of tourism, as many as 89% of its trips and 86% of funds spent in 2017 (Yeung & Johnston, 2018). The wide definition of this type of wellness travel makes up the vast value placed on wellness travel in this report, and involves almost all healthy activities, e.g. swimming or indulging in healthy food which is seen as a peripheral portion of a trip (Yeung & Johnston, 2018).

#### Wellness Hotel

The GWI (Global Wellness Institute) report states that wellness visitors invest more money in every trip than average tourists. In the year 2017, international wellness visitors spent on average \$1,528 on every trip, 53% more than the regular international visitor. The amount of money spent by domestic wellness visitors is greater, as they spend \$609 on every trip, which is 178% more than the typical domestic visitor. The report further explains that the fact that wellness visitors are inclined to spend a lot of money on this industry provides it with many chances to 'infuse wellness into their offerings and capture spending.' It lists examples that include airports and airlines, which offer spa treatments, wellness lessons and the possibility to select healthier food. In the meantime, 'healthy ho-

tels' have now become popular and accepted, with in-room fitness equipment, healthy snacks and cooperation with wellness brands. We can see something very similar in the cruise department, with travels related to wellness, according to the GWI (Yeung & Johnston, 2018).

Although wellness tourism has been increasingly researched, the studies focusing on investigation of wellness in different tourist settings (e.g. hotels) are not frequent at all (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001). A wellness hotel centres on its guests who are primarily motivated by the prospect of improving and boosting their health and ways of life. It also provides an extensive service package in order to fulfil the needs of its visitors, who crave physical, mental, and environment-related wellness activities (Chi et al., 2020).

In the present hotel market, the number of hotels which maintain to be providing wellness-connected services is growing. Wellness hotels have received significant attention from this industry, which leads to the development of concrete products and services which would serve to meet the needs of wellness customers. This could refer to something such as in-room yoga equipment or things that tend to be more experimental; an example in point could be a sensory deprivation tank – an isolation tank used for restricted environmental stimulation therapy. Nevertheless, the occurrence of the wellness hotel has, to a large extent, not been neglected by scholars. Their attention is mainly focused on hotels in order to address the importance of wellness tourism generally, and not the hotels as units.

#### Wellness Service

Mueller and Kaufmann (2001) analysed the significance of wellness facilities and services in this area of tourism. The past several decades have seen a rise in the number of people travelling abroad for wellness in the international tourism industry. It transpires that the wellness tourism market surpassed the tourism domain itself in the last several years (Han et al., 2017). This goes to show that interest in obtaining a healthy lifestyle has been growing and wellness is deemed as a vital part that can lead to achieving this very goal (e.g. massage and spa) (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2017).

The past several decades have witnessed the rise and development of wellness spa tourism. This has all been a direct reaction to the needs of its travellers and their determination to contribute to their healthier lifestyles. Tourists of all ages have been more and more willing to do what it takes to improve their health using the services provided by this branch of tourism. They are motivated by the fact that they are the ones responsible for their own health. In order to fulfil these needs, the focus of this domain of tourism has been on maintaining both the physical and psychological health of these individuals, as well as putting a stop to any health conditions. Nowadays, international visitors are more active when it comes to finding spa and massage treatments and want to take part in these kinds of activities, so much so that it has become the main part of how they experience tourism (Kucukusta & Guillet, 2014).

Wellness is equated with lifestyle, and it denotes 'a special state of health, incorporating the harmony of body, mind, and spirit.' On the other hand, the term 'spa' is seen as water/non-water-based facilities that provide one with different kinds of treatments/care for health, relaxation, and beauty (Hashemi et al., 2015). Activities such as spa-visits and others are common and prevailing during the holiday season. This suggests that these activities are invariably connected to the way tourists act or to tourism activities (Han et al., 2017).

#### **Bibliometric Studies in the Tourism Research Literature**

Over the last decade, researchers have given extensive effort to systematizing and structuring knowledge in tourism research. In this process, the use of quantitative literature reviews techniques and bibliometric methods was very common. In their recent study, Rodríguez-López et al. (2020) provided an extensive overview of studies that use bibliometric methods in researching different aspects of leisure, sports, tourism and hospitality. They have identified over 20 studies conducted in the past 20 years. Those include studies conducted in the field of sports research (e.g. Ciomaga, 2013; Lindahl et al., 2015), adventure tourism (Cheng et al., 2018), sustainability in tourism (e.g. Niñerola et al.,

2019) and ethics in tourism and hospitality (Köseoglu et al., 2016).

In their research efforts in bibliometric analysis and mapping of tourism research, authors have used different methods. Intellectual structure and research networks in tourism have been mapped using co-citation analysis (e.g. Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2013). Researchers have bibliometrically mapped the areas of restaurant, food and gastronomy literature in tourism and hospitality (e.g. Rodríguez-López et al., 2020; Okumus et al., 2018), sustainable and eco-tourism (Shasha et al., 2020; Ruhanen et al., 2015), hospitality management (García-Lillo et al., 2016) and strategic management in hospitality (Köseoglu et al., 2019).

To date, the authors of the current study have not encountered a specific study that applies the bibliometrics approach to wellness tourism literature. Nevertheless, bibliometric studies have been undertaken in the literature areas close to wellness tourism. De la Hoz-Correa et al. (2018) researched past medical tourism research and identified the future trends in this area, focusing on co-word analysis. In this study, the authors have identified a strong interconnection between research in wellness tourism and medical tourism. The additional study provided a deeper field investigation of health tourism (Del Río-Rama et al., 2018), focusing on spas, thalassotherapy, and thermalism in the health tourism context.

### Methodology

Bibliometric methods are commonly used to analyse established information in a research area, as well as hidden trends and associations, and to measure (to some extent) descriptive knowledge available in the literature. These approaches are well known for using bibliographic data from current databases of publications (e.g. Scopus, WoS). In view of this information, bibliometric strategies are primarily used to evaluate and better understand elements and connections between and within the research fields (Župič & Čater, 2015). In this interaction, these strategies uncover hidden connections of creators, the significance and effect of distributions, as patterns and important themes in logical zones. The capacity to bring quantitative meticulousness into subjective writing and its assess-

ment have made these techniques established and extremely pertinent in logical field surveying. As well as organizing the current information and field qualities (creators, fundamental discourses, coordinated efforts, and so on), bibliometric techniques are generally utilized for recognizable proof of hidden spaces of examination, uncovering subjects as well as areas of interest and patterns in research fields (Pritchard, 1969).

Visual bibliometric maps use charts and organizations to portray the associations existing among things. Hubs (i.e. nodes) and edges are utilized to picture the organizations' fundamental fields of writing. Hubs address the things of significance (for example, articles, books, journals, authors, or keywords), while edges show the relations between the hubs. The size of the hub demonstrates its recurrence of appearance in the dataset (bigger hubs show that the given item was more regularly referenced in the dataset and as such has more weight in data organization and presentation), while the thickness of an edge shows the strength of a connection between two hubs. The distance between the hubs and bunches they structure (generally set apart by shading) shows the recurrence of their common presence in research introduced by hubs (Van Eck & Waltman, 2014).

For our investigation of the wellness tourism literature field, a couple of bibliometric strategies have been applied: co-citation and keyword co-occurrence. In writing, co-citation investigation is clarified and characterized as the recurrence with which two units are referred to together (Small, 1973). The bigger number of things in which the two units are referred to together (co-cited) suggests a more grounded co-citation connection between the two units (Small & Griffith, 1974). This examination (its subtypes) can be utilized for estimating likeness or more referenced recurrence between authors, sources, and documents. While document co-citation investigation makes associations between explicit distributed reports (articles, books, or other distributed material), sources reference examination recognizes inert relations between logical journals (sources) referred to in the dataset (Župič & Čater, 2015).

Keyword co-occurrence is a procedure that aims

at building a theoretical construction of the field by setting up connections between the words in articles. While co-citation utilizes meta-information (references, authors, sources, and so on) of articles to make associations between them, keyword co-occurrence is a technique that utilizes the real substance of the archive to quantify similitude and make a network between pertinent catchphrases. The primary point of this examination is to make an organization of topics and their connections, addressing the applied space of a logical field (Župič & Čater, 2015).

#### Bibliometric Examination of the Field: Process Portrayal

During the process of gathering materials and making a dataset for wellness tourism bibliometric study, a few standard steps in bibliometrics were carried out (Župič & Čater, 2015):

##### 1. Data assortment:

- Selecting publications database. To gather distributions and their metadata for bibliometric investigation for this study, the Scopus data set was consulted because of its exhaustiveness. Scopus is an electronic scientific database. It is evaluated as an appropriate and comprehensive source of articles for science mapping and bibliometric analysis (Mishra et al., 2017). Additionally, the Scopus database is more extensive in comparison with other similar datasets.
- Identification of significant articles. In order to collect bibliographic records on wellness tourism, searches in Scopus were conducted in August 2020. Based on the previous usage of keywords in previous wellness tourism studies, we have selected 6 combinations of keywords for research item identification in Scopus: 'Wellness hotel\*', 'Wellness service\*' AND hotel\*, 'Wellness service\*' AND touris\*, 'Wellness center\*' AND hotel\*, 'Wellness center\*' AND touris\*, and 'Wellness touris\*.' For the purpose of this research, only articles and reviews written in English were taken into account. All titles and abstracts were reviewed for relevance and relation to wellness tourism.

Articles with explicit or causal relation to wellness tourism were taken into account for the final database, which consisted of 212 items.

##### 2. Data investigation and visualization:

- Creating and saving the meta-information. To conduct further analysis, we downloaded articles' metadata (titles, authors, abstracts, references, etc.) in Bibtex and csv format, and used it in the bibliometric analysis. In order to analyse the given dataset, we used the programs vosviewer and biblioshiny package in R, both of which are frequently used in such studies.
- Cleaning and changing information. Saved information was screened and rectified for possible duplicate values or irregularities (for example, utilization of both journal abbreviations and complete names).
- Conducting investigation and obtaining results. After saving and adjusting steps, the dataset was imported in the programs and the calculations of desired analysis were conducted.

## Results

### Wellness Tourism Literature: Annual Scientific Production

The development of wellness tourism literature shows an increase in the number of publications over the years. The first articles were published in the 80s and 90s, where the focus of the research was on medical characteristics of wellness tourism and health rehabilitation (e.g. Spivack, 1998). Publications in the early 2000s extensively researched wellness and spa offers specifically for different regions, dominantly in Europe (e.g. Magdalini & Paris, 2009; Lebe, 2006).

A larger increase in the number of articles published in wellness tourism literature can be noticed from 2010 onwards (Figure 1). Under the influence of the increase in general publicity of wellness and its beneficial effects on health and well-being, scientific research interests flourished. In the last decade, attention has been increasingly paid to researching the impact of wellness tourism on holistic consumer

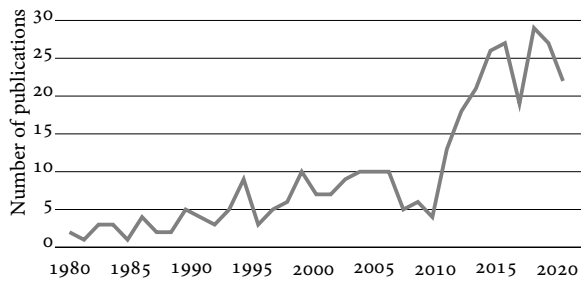


Figure 1 Evolution in the Number of Publications

wellness (Dillette et al., 2021) and spiritual characteristics of wellness tourism (Öznalbant & Alvarez, 2020; Alkhmis et al., 2020), as well as the connection to sustainability (Wang, Hu et al., 2020).

#### Most Prominent Journals

When it comes to the relevance of individual journals for publishing wellness tourism research, we have identified the top 20 journals which have published the highest number of articles in the field (Table 1). Journals from tourism dominate in this list, which is not surprising taking into account the research area of this bibliometric study. Some of the journals are geographically determined and publish studies specific for particular regions (e.g. Scandinavia, Africa).

Out of the top 20 journals that publish wellness tourism research manuscripts, *Tourism Recreation Research* is the journal with the most wellness tourism-related publications (11), followed by *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* and *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing* (9 publications each). The lowest number of publications in the top 20 journals was 2.

#### Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis

Analysis of the most frequently used keywords identified 22 keywords that were marked by authors as relevant for their research in 5 or more publications. According to keyword co-occurrence analysis, these keywords can be classified in four clusters (Figure 2).

In the first, the biggest cluster, we can observe keywords that are specific for wellness tourism research in general. These keywords are the following: wellness tourism, rural tourism, lifestyle, health, well-being,

Table 1 Top 20 Journals that Publish Wellness Tourism Research Manuscripts

Journal	Number of publications
<i>Tourism Recreation Research</i>	11
<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management</i>	9
<i>Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing</i>	9
<i>Tourism Review</i>	8
<i>African Journal of Hospitality Tourism and Leisure</i>	7
<i>Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research</i>	7
<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	7
<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing</i>	7
<i>Tourism Management</i>	6
<i>Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism</i>	5
<i>Current Issues in Tourism</i>	4
<i>Journal of Destination Marketing and Management</i>	4
<i>Tourism</i>	4
<i>Tourism Management Perspectives</i>	4
<i>Tourismos</i>	4
<i>International Journal of Tourism Research</i>	3
<i>Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality and Tourism</i>	3
<i>Sustainability</i>	3
<i>Tourism Analysis</i>	3
<i>Acta Clinica Croatica</i>	2

and quality of life. This cluster briefly represents several relevant constructs in wellness tourism literature such as well-being, quality of life, health, and lifestyle.

The second-largest cluster contains keywords that strongly connect to tourism research in wellness tourism literature. The keywords tourism, lifestyle segmentation, cluster analysis, motivation, satisfaction, and personal health belong to this cluster, that strongly connects wellness research to consumer research, as it captures research that aims at better understanding the motivation and satisfaction of tourists, as well as their segmentation (Lee et al., 2020; Chrobak et al., 2020; Thawornwiriyaatrakula & Meepromb, 2020).

The third cluster represents wellness tourism research focusing on health and medical tourism. Keywords from this cluster are health tourism, medical tourism, health and wellness tourism, spa, and

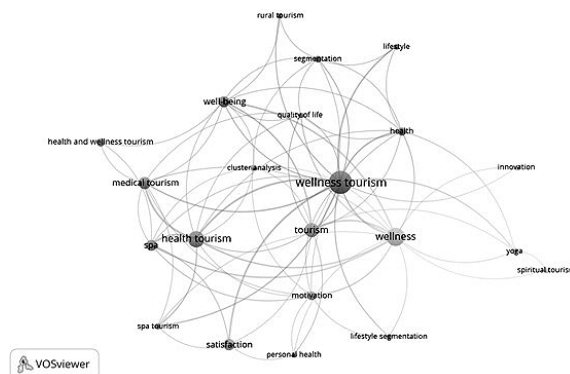


Figure 2 Map of Keyword Co-Occurrence in Wellness Tourism Research

spa tourism. The importance of physical health for overall individual well-being is well known and researching health tourism from the perspective of wellness tourism is therefore somewhat expected. In this branch of wellness research, spas and spa tourism take one of the most important places due to their connection with wellness and relaxation treats in general (Chrobak et al., 2020; Dryglas & Salamaga, 2018). Spa facilities are important for tourists' well-being, loyalty, and overall positive feeling in health tourism (Huang et al., 2019).

Finally, the fourth cluster accounts for wellness tourism research specific for wellness elements of this branch of tourism. The keywords wellness, innovation, yoga, and spiritual tourism imply that this cluster is among the newest ones, as these as these topics have become heavily researched in the past five years. Researchers are extensively trying to elaborate on the concepts of yoga, spiritual elements and the holistic approach to vacation (including stress relievers and mind relaxation) necessary for achieving wellness in tourism (Kim et al., 2020; Dilletta et al., 2021; Telej & Gamble, 2019).

### Discussion and Conclusion

Wellness tourism has recently managed to draw the attention of researchers due to its fast development. When it comes to the supply side, the focus of research has been on the potential limitations and strategies of development for the wellness tourism industry. On

the other hand, when it comes to the demand side, the focus has been on the socio-demographic and behavioural aspects, the drive and the expectations of visitors, and also elements that boost their well-being and affect the way decisions are made (Wang, Xu et al. 2020).

There used to be stress on the recovery and relaxation of our body, which was normally achieved by attending spas or going to the seaside. The emphasis was very small when it came to other aspects of our health, such as the mental, spiritual, and emotional ones. Even though medieval pilgrimage might be seen as an early form of spiritual tourism, it was founded on concrete, organized religions, and its destinations. Modern societies are much different and are gradually starting to be attracted to options enabling them to engage in activities characterized by physical, spiritual, and mental balance and integration (Smith & Puczkó, 2008).

It is evident that wellness is a concept involving multiple dimensions and that it involves both physical and mental health, along with social and environmental elements. Before, what was more important was to cure problems connected to health using conventional or traditional medicine that would be prescribed by a doctor, while now, it has become more normal to attempt to have a healthy life and preclude medical conditions by taking measures into our own hands without the help of a medical professional and thus being independent. The growing wellness business allows people the opportunity to use all kinds of activities that put our body, mind, and soul in balance.

The Global Wellness Tourism Economy report maintains that in 2015–2017, the department of wellness tourism increased by 6.5% yearly from 2015–2017 (which is more than double the increase rate for general tourism). Visitors went on 830 million wellness trips in 2017, 139 million more than in 2015 (Yeung & Johnston, 2018).

Considering the fact that the interest in wellness tourism has been growing by the year, it is not surprising that the same can be said for researchers in this field. This is, of course, directly connected to natural and social changes. A rapid way of life means that there is a need to rest and relax, which is most effectively achieved by engaging in wellness trips and ex-



periences. Also, the money gained through this type of tourism has grown significantly. In order to maintain and improve this trend, there needs to be a constant need for researching natural, social, economic, cultural and other elements, which have an effect on the course of wellness tourism.

Our study results show an evident increase in the number of publications related to wellness tourism. Analysis of the annual scientific production of articles in the field of wellness tourism shows a significant increase in the number of publications in the last ten years. Over 80% of the articles from this research field have been published in the last decade. This increasing trend is evident from the field's beginnings in the late 90s. The rise of the importance of wellness and well-being in the lives of tourists is followed by enlarged research efforts by academics, resulting in a larger number of wellness tourism research items being published. Apart from this, we can observe journals from both tourism and hospitality in the top 20 most important journals in the field, implying that the research is extensively gathering both perspectives of wellness tourism. Co-occurrence of keywords analysis detected the patterns of connections between author keywords. We have identified four clusters within wellness tourism research: health tourism research, tourism research, wellness topics, and wellness tourism research. Health tourism research covers both health and medical-related tourism topics, while tourism research keywords mostly focus on consumer research (e.g. motivation for a visit, satisfaction). Wellness topics mostly refer to personal wellness (e.g. yoga, spiritual tourism), while the biggest cluster, wellness tourism, depicts many relevant keywords in this research field (e.g. well-being, quality of life).

### Implications and Research Limitations

The findings of this wellness research bibliometric study have several implications for both academics and practitioners. Implications of this study for academics can be seen in answering some of the important issues researchers should take into account when researching wellness tourism and aiding researchers in understanding and detecting important patterns and

journals in this research field. When it comes to the practical point of view, this research identifies several areas in wellness tourism in which attention is needed from practitioners as well. Keyword analysis showed multiple aspects of wellness that are provided specifically from practice (e.g. venues like spas).

While we aimed at conducting rigorous research, this study is not without limitations. First, the dataset was created using a single database (Scopus) in the English language. This is a usual procedure in such studies, but it brings certain limitations with it. The inclusion of additional sources and articles in local languages could identify different patterns of research and contribute to broader applicability and generalization of the results obtained.

Additionally, this study conducted a one-time analysis of the wellness tourism research field. Replications or repetitions of this study at different points in time might be able to identify new phenomena, research interests, and issues that are appearing in this research topic.

Finally, this study aimed at providing an overview of the wellness tourism research field. Future studies might benefit from in-detail studies of sub-fields (e.g. spiritual wellness tourism, well-being in wellness tourism). Such future research endeavours could enable us to more deeply understand the chronological development of this research field, as well as to understand trends and their shifts and emergence over time.

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