



# Factors Underlying the Choice of a Tourist Destination

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## ABSTRACT

Understanding the multifaceted dynamics driving tourists' destination choices is pivotal in contemporary tourism research. This comprehensive review explores the intricate interplay of factors influencing tourist preferences. Delving into the realms of travel motivations, hospitality, and gastronomy, the study synthesizes existing literature to uncover the pivotal determinants shaping tourists' decisions. Analyzing diverse socio-cultural, economic, and personal aspects, the review highlights the significance of experiential elements in destination selection. It examines the role of hospitality services, emphasizing their impact on visitor satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, the article scrutinizes the influence of culinary experiences, particularly the allure of food and wine offerings in shaping travel decisions. This review not only identifies key determinants but also underscores the evolving nature of tourist preferences in the contemporary landscape. Insights gleaned from this study offer valuable implications for stakeholders in crafting tailored strategies to attract and retain tourists in an increasingly competitive global tourism market.

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## 1. Introduction

The selection of a tourist destination is a complex decision-making process influenced by various factors that encompass individual preferences, socio-cultural dynamics, economic considerations, and experiential components. Understanding the intricate interplay of these elements is crucial for stakeholders in the tourism industry to effectively cater to the evolving needs and desires of travelers. This comprehensive review seeks to illuminate the multifaceted landscape of factors underlying tourists' destination choices.

In recent years, the tourism sector has witnessed a paradigm shift, with travelers increasingly seeking immersive and authentic experiences. Consequently, research endeavors have intensified, aiming to decipher the nuances of tourist behavior and preferences. This review consolidates existing scholarship, offering a synthesized perspective on the diverse array of factors shaping tourists' decisions.

By delving into the realms of travel motivations, hospitality, and gastronomy, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the key determinants influencing destination selection. It explores the significance of experiential elements, the role of hospitality services, and the allure of culinary experiences in driving tourists' choices. Moreover, this review not only identifies pivotal determinants but also underscores the dynamic nature of tourist preferences in today's globalized and competitive tourism landscape. Insights gleaned from this analysis hold immense potential for stakeholders to develop targeted strategies and enrich offerings, thereby enhancing the appeal and competitiveness of tourist destinations worldwide.

## 2. Literature review

Current tourism research necessitates a nuanced understanding of the dynamics steering tourists' destination choices. This paper unraveling the intricate interplay of factors influencing travelers' preferences, starting with travel motivations, hospitality, and gastronomy, the study synthesizes existing literature to reveal pivotal determinants shaping tourists' decisions. Through an in-depth analysis of socio-cultural, economic, and personal aspects, the review underscores the significance of experiential elements in tourism destination selection. Emphasizing the role of hospitality services and their impact on visitor satisfaction and loyalty, the article scrutinizes the profound influence of culinary experiences, particularly the allure of food and wine, medical services, traditional events, and specific ceremonies; safety and stability and tourist infrastructure are important in shaping travel decisions.

In several studies, the objective was to examine the proposed mediating role of face consciousness in the relationship between identity breadth and tourists' deviant behavioral intentions, employing an additional scenario experiment. (Tao Wang, 2023)

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A few researchers have reached the conclusion that underscores the urgent need to tackle tourist misbehavior for the sake of fostering socially and environmentally sustainable tourism development. It provides practical guidance for destination marketing organizations and authorities of tourist-originating nations to mitigate misbehavior and encourage positive tourist conduct. It also reveals that individuals with low identification with their compatriot group are more inclined to criticize misbehavior and diminish the value of transgressors. (Ma & Mohame, 2023; Sun et al., 2023; Thommandru et al., 2023)

A few studies and experts predict a general demographic transition for humanity in the next 100-200 years. This transition may lead to either the stabilization of the global population or the initiation of a soft, extended, and gradual decline. Presently, anthropological flows are spontaneous, contributing to increased disparities in regional labor markets, elevated social tensions, human resource degradation, and a decline in the territory's capitalization. These conditions foster the spread of ideas related to national intolerance and xenophobia among the population. (Metodieva, 2023)

A series of studies highlight the evolution of smart tourist destinations and assess how technology, culture and real estate contribute to resilience and sustainability. The authors investigate the influence of cultural sites and destination attractions on real estate dynamics. The studies examine the links between technological advances, urban sustainability and real estate dimensions and analyzes successful smart initiatives in big cities. (Vardopoulos et al., 2023)

Regions characterized by multicultural, multinational, multilingual, and multi-religious diversity contribute significantly to broader cultural circles in Central Europe and the Balkans. Centuries of migration have fostered the coexistence of numerous ethnic groups within these compact regions. Research focused on the gastronomic potential of these areas' ethnic minorities unveils the presence of traditional segments that hold substantial appeal for gastronomic tourists. However, the current integration of ethnic minority dishes into the hospitality offerings of these regions is limited, indicating a lack in authenticity. To foster tourism centered around authentic cuisine, collaborative efforts are essential to sustain and integrate preserved gastronomic segments into hospitality establishments. This would transform the consumption habits of residents who may have overlooked these authentic flavors. The enhancement of authenticity plays a crucial role in crafting a more distinctive tourism experience, encompassing promotions, marketing, authentic national dishes, traditional local ingredients, diverse offerings, and considerations of authenticity, food quality, safety, minority associations, marketing research, cooperation, education, state and industry support, and affordability. These regions, with their rich ethnic and gastronomic heritage, harbor untapped potential to attract tourists seeking genuine culinary experiences. The successful implementation of gastronomic heritage into tourism requires a more robust integration of authentic ethnic products into the region's restaurants. (Grubor et al., 2022 ; Hernández-Rojas et al., 2022 ; Ma & Mohame, 2023; Yachen Zhang, 2023)

Some studies demonstrate the significance of gastronomy and culinary practices, like in Făgăraș County, framing them as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage that can contribute to the area's sustainable development. The field research specifically emphasizes the importance of local "ciorbe" (sour soups). The study's groundwork identifies traditional local soups and recipes, suggesting an opportunity for heritage-driven social entrepreneurship. Emphasizing the use of local ingredients and the expertise and willingness of women in the area to collaborate in cooking, the study advocates exploiting this culinary heritage. The tourist appeal of the region facilitates the creation of a network among entrepreneurs nationwide. The study's primary contribution lies in presenting arguments that highlight the generosity of gastronomy and culinary practices as a heritage resource, illustrating the potential for a popular culinary product to evolve into a local brand. (Bolborici et al., 2022)

**Table 1. Literature Review**

Reference & Purpose			Subjects		Conclusion
Research article	Research Aim	Purpose	Subject characteristics	Sample Design	
<b>(Vardopoulos et al., 2023)</b>	Smart tourism destinations' development, assess the impact of technology, culture, and real estate on resilience and sustainability.	Insights for tourism policymakers, city authorities, and real estate professionals.	The impact of cultural sites on real estate dynamics, including land and housing prices and building activity	Smart tourism destinations, relationship between digital technologies, cultural components	The crucial role of local authorities and public awareness in implementing effective strategies for integrating sustainable and technologically advanced features.
<b>(Metodieva, 2023)</b>	Tourism's impact on identity. Analyze tourism and cultural identity.	Explore tourism's influence on identity. Examine cultural	Tourism's impact on national identity. Cultural identity and	Observing the sharp change of historical circumstances for each country	Demographic transition foreseen in 100-200 years. Anthropolok becomes a state concern. Current

Reference & Purpose			Subjects		Conclusion
Research article	Research Aim	Purpose	Subject characteristics	Sample Design	
	Investigate globalization's role in disorientation.	identity and tourism	tourism interaction. Globalization's role in cultural disorientation.		flows are spontaneous. Risks include social tensions, xenophobia.
<b>(Ma &amp; Mohame, 2023)</b>	Heritage tourism growth	Explore heritage tourism's social dynamics, heritage, and culture by communities for tourism.	Cultural richness, historical significance, heritage tourism	Underline growth  In heritage and cultural tourism	Highlighting the elements like authenticity, heritage tourism, cultural evolution
<b>(Sun et al., 2023)</b>	Compatriot tourist misbehavior: responses, mechanisms, consequences, emotions, strategies.	Understanding responses to tourist misbehavior	Individuals' characteristics	Between-subjects design, three levels, online survey, misbehavior severity, 220 participants	Tourist misbehavior after pandemic: consequences, emotions, ingroup favoritism, communication strategies.
<b>(Grubor et al., 2022)</b>	Explore gastronomic heritage tourism potential. Evaluate authenticity and market placement. Examine representation of traditional dishes	Assess authenticity, representation, and positioning. Examine traditional dishes in homes.	Survey residents of Vojvodina's ethnic minorities. Analyze statistical data for insights.	Adult respondents, 63.8% female. Average age 38.43 years. Divided into early and late maturity. Most participants over 40. Age distribution analyzed for insights.	Ethnic cuisines' tourism potential established. Authentic segments attract gastronomic tourists. Inclusion in hospitality offerings lacking. Sustainability efforts needed for preservation. Authenticity enhancement crucial for tourism. Recommendations include marketing strategies, education, and collaboration.
<b>(Bolborici et al., 2022)</b>	Gastronomy's value in Făgăraș County, as part of Intangible Cultural Heritage, supports sustainable development.	Showcasing how a popular culinary product can evolve into a local brand	The study's key contribution lies in demonstrating the generosity of gastronomy as a heritage resource	Traditional soups and recipes were identified, suggesting an opportunity for heritage-driven social entrepreneurship.	Underscores the use of local ingredients and the experience and willingness of local women to cook collaboratively. For each commune, mapping sheets were produced based on the field study data, aligning with the dimensions of intangible cultural heritage set by UNESCO and the WTO.
<b>(Hernández-Rojas et al., 2022)</b>	Enhancing Tourism Management in Heritage Cities	Enhance Heritage Cities' Tourism Management	Traditional Gastronomy in Heritage Cities, Quantitative Analysis of Tourist Preferences	Quantitative Study on Tourists	Gastronomy Influences Visitor Loyalty

Reference & Purpose			Subjects		Conclusion
Research article	Research Aim	Purpose	Subject characteristics	Sample Design	
<b>(Wang et al., 2022)</b>	Mitigate Chinese tourists' deviant behavior	Reduce deviant behavior in tourism	International tourism, social identity breadth, Deviant tourist behavior, Chinese outbound tourists	Between-subjects design, international and domestic, online survey, manipulated identity breadth, 210 participants.	Successful manipulation, identity breadth and context, deviant behavior intention, moderation by tourism context.
<b>(Sgroi, 2021)</b>	Exploring rural religious tourism impact	Fostering rural development through religious tourism, assessing Santa Rosalia path impact	Religious tourism in rural development	Case study: Santa Rosalia itinerary	Unlocking territory potential through spirituality
<b>(Lin et al., 2021)</b>	Explore and describe the evolution and status of gastronomic heritage research	Analysis of gastronomic heritage literature in tourism and hospitality	Analysis of gastronomic heritage literature	Focused analysis on 46 case studies. Selection based on prominence in the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list. Qualitative research predominates in Asian and European case studies.	Influence on the development of gastronomic heritage comes from the awareness of its importance for different countries
<b>(Karsavuran &amp; Özdemir, 2019)</b>	Transformation of the tourism and hospitality management schools into tourism faculties	Analysis of tourism faculties	Institutionalism theories, isomorphic processes	Qualitative data analysis	Transformation of tourism, hospitality management schools

Source: authors

This comprehensive review navigates through various facets of contemporary tourism research, unveiling the intricate interplay of factors shaping tourists' destination choices. By synthesizing existing literature, the study highlights pivotal determinants, such as travel motivations, hospitality, and gastronomy, emphasizing the importance of experiential elements in tourism destination selection.

### 3. Methodology

This article presents the findings of a qualitative research study that analyzed 31 recent articles published over the past eight years (with nearly 75% published in the last five years) to investigate the various factors that influence tourist destination selection. The literature consulted for this study encompassed book chapters, journal articles, and conference proceedings. Our search focused primarily on reputable online databases like IEEE, Science Direct, Springer, IEEE Computer Society, iJET, ACM Digital Library, Taylor & Francis Online, Sage Journals, Inderscience Publishers, WIT Press, Science Publications, EJER, and Wiley Online Library (Table 1). To ensure the quality of the selected papers, we excluded those deemed insufficient in terms of rigor or contribution. Journal articles without an impact factor listed in the ISI Journal Citation Report or those lacking peer review were also excluded from the analysis.

Our quantitative analysis articles from Scopus platform based on the following keywords: tourism, hospitality, gastronomy, food & drink, cultural heritage resulted in 3690 articles.

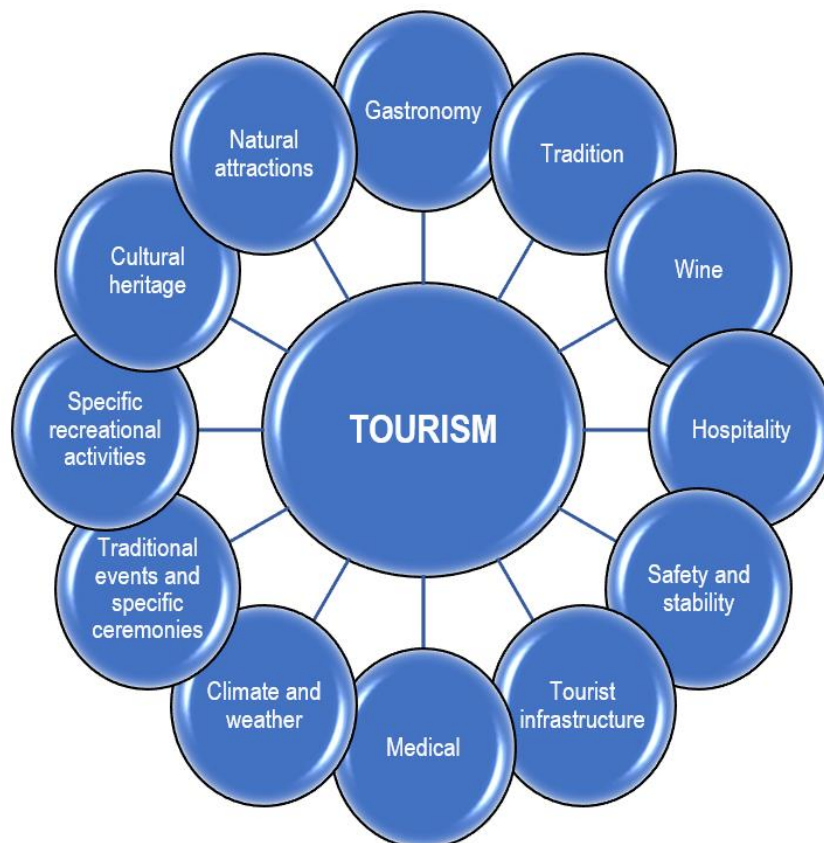
The first 2000 articles published between 2017 and 2023, shows an average of 9.16 citations per paper (Figure 1), indicating a high level of interest in the field. The Hirsch index of 54 further underscores the significance of this research area. These findings underscore the complexity of tourist destination selection, a decision-making process influenced by a myriad of factors including individual preferences, socio-cultural dynamics, economic considerations, and the experiential components of a destination. (See Figure 2). Data for this bibliometric analysis were extracted from Scopus and processed using VOSViewer. (Figures 3 and 9)

Citations	<2019	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Subtotal	>2023	Total
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>1111</b>	<b>3085</b>	<b>5771</b>	<b>8158</b>	<b>18320</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>18591</b>

**Figure 1: The number of citations from the studied articles**

*Source: authors*

This scientific work delves into the intricate factors that play a pivotal role in shaping the decisions behind selecting a tourist destination. Recognizing the complexity of this process, the study aims to unravel the various elements influencing individuals' choices when it comes to travel. In an era where tourism has evolved into a significant postmodern phenomenon, understanding the underlying factors becomes crucial. The review critically examines the roles played by travel guides in collecting tourist information, shaping cultural tastes, and molding preferences. While highlighting the impact of guides on social change, it emphasizes the need for a broader theoretical perspective and interdisciplinary approaches in future studies on tourist identity formation.



**Figure 2. Determinants influencing tourist destination selection**

*Source: authors*

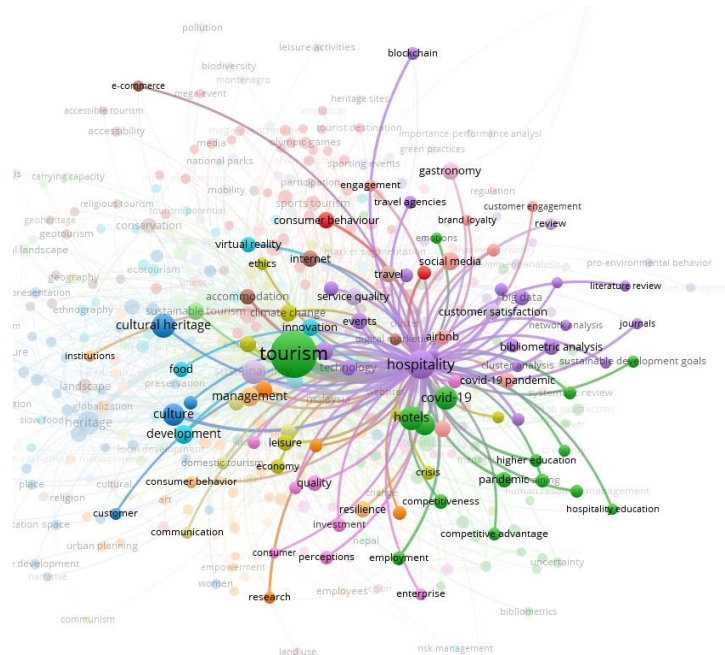
The determinants of **specific recreational activities, natural attraction, cultural heritage, tradition** significantly influences the selection of a tourist destination by serving as a primary motivator for travelers. Firstly, individuals with recreational interests are drawn to destinations that align with their preferred activities, enhancing their overall travel experience. Secondly, the availability and diversity of specific recreational options heavily impact destination choice, as tourists seek places that offer the desired activities in abundance. Thirdly, this determinant plays a crucial role in shaping travel itineraries, influencing decisions on the duration and nature of the trip based on the availability of preferred recreational pursuits. Furthermore, the appeal of specific recreational activities contributes to positive word-of-mouth and online reviews, influencing others to choose the destination. In conclusion, understanding and catering to the determinant of specific recreational activities is pivotal for destination marketers and planners aiming to attract and retain a diverse range of tourists. (Grubor et al., 2022; Hernández-Rojas et al., 2022; Sanyal & Hisam, 2019)

The determinants of **traditional events and specific ceremonies, safety and stability, tourist infrastructure** significantly impact the selection of a tourist destination by adding cultural richness and unique experiences to the travel itinerary. Tourists are often attracted to destinations that offer the opportunity to witness or participate in traditional events and ceremonies, seeking an authentic cultural immersion. These determinants play a crucial role in shaping the perception of a destination, as travelers are drawn to places that

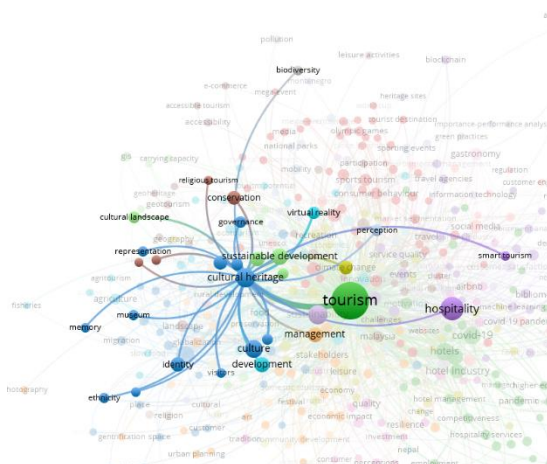


Generally, it can be observed that there is a strong relationship between tourism and other fields such as marketing, economics, sustainable development, and technology. Additionally, it can be noted that tourism is a continuously growing field, with new research and developments constantly emerging.

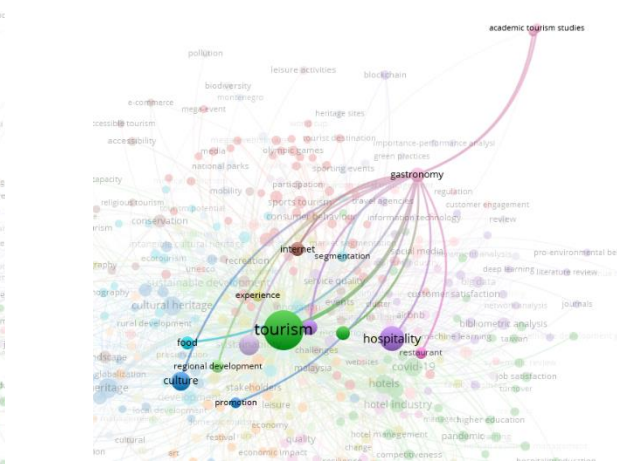
The terms "tourism" and "hospitality", " food & wine", „gastronomy" and "cultural heritage" are connected by a thick line, suggesting a strong relationship between the two fields (Figures 4-8). Tourism is an industry based on marketing, and marketing is essential for the success of a tourism business. The terms "tourism" and "economics" are also connected by a thick line. Tourism is a significant source of income for many countries and regions. The terms "tourism" and "sustainable development" are connected by a thinner line, suggesting a developing relationship. Tourism can have both positive and negative impacts on the environment and local communities. Researchers and practitioners in the field of tourism are working to develop more sustainable forms of tourism. The terms "tourism" and "technology" are connected by a thick line. Technology has a significant impact on tourism, from booking travel to the tourist's experience at the destination.



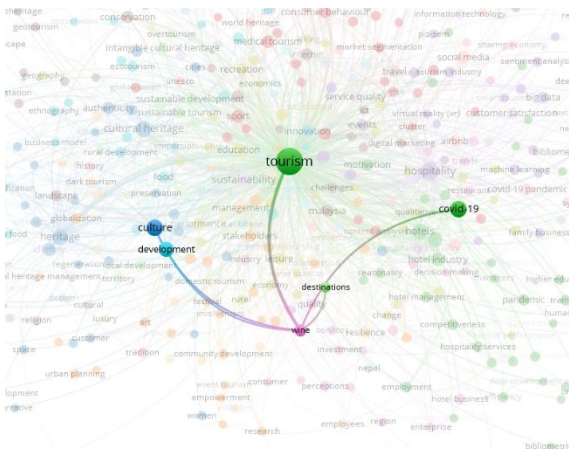
**Figure 4. Bibliometric analysis on the hospitality**  
*Source: by authors procced in VOSViewer*



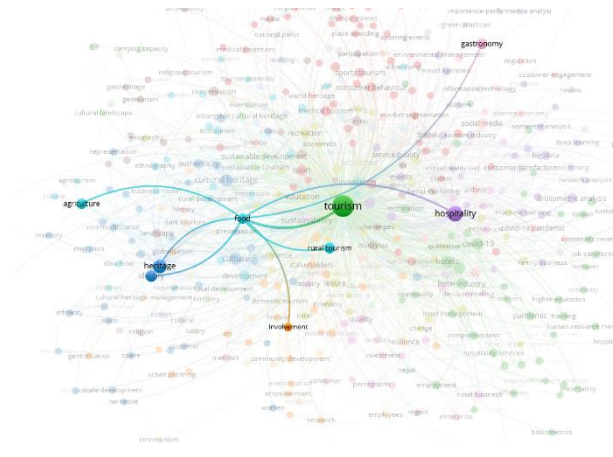
**Figure 5. Bibliometric analysis on the cultural heritage**  
*Source: by authors procced in VOSViewer*



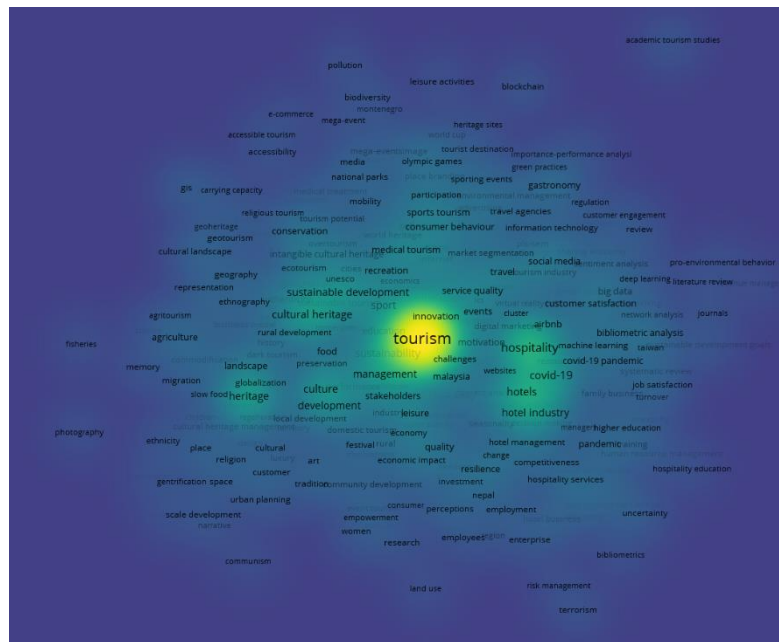
**Figure 6. Bibliometric analysis on the gastronomy**  
*Source: by authors procced in VOSViewer*



**Figure 7. Bibliometric analysis on the wine**  
*Source: by authors procced in VOSViewer*



**Figure 8. Bibliometric analysis on the food**  
*Source: by authors procced in VOSViewer*



**Figure 9: Density visualization**

*Source: by authors procced in VOSViewer*

From the visualization density graph can be observed the division into three zones (Figure 9). The central zone is the most visually dense, including terms such as "tourism," "marketing," "economy," and "sustainable development." These terms are the most frequently mentioned in the specialized literature on tourism. The transition zone is less visually dense, encompassing terms such as "technology," "history and culture," and "environment." These terms remain important in the field of tourism but are mentioned less frequently than those in the central zone. The peripheral zone is the least visually dense, containing terms such as "lifestyle," "behavioral intention," "COVID-19 pandemic," and "co-creation." These terms are either newer or less relevant in the field of tourism.

Overall, the graph indicates that the field of tourism is a complex and continually evolving domain. There are numerous relationships among the various areas of interest within the field of tourism.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the presented analysis, in the field of tourism some emerging trends can be identified. First of all, responsible tourism implies a growing traveler interest in journeys that positively affect the environment and local communities. This creates opportunities for the development of more sustainable forms of tourism that protect the environment and contribute to the economic and social development of tourist destinations. Personalized tourism involves travelers seeking distinctive and tailored travel experiences, opening up opportunities for the creation of products and services that align with individual tourist needs and preferences.

Experiential Tourism involves travelers seeking a more profound engagement with tourist destinations. This trend opens avenues for the creation of products and services that offer learning opportunities and foster connections with local culture and traditions.

These emerging trends have the potential to transform the tourism industry. They create new opportunities for tour operators and tourist destinations, but also present challenges, such as the need to develop new products and services and educate tourists about the importance of responsible tourism.

In conclusion, we identify new emerging trends in the tourism industry. Adventure tourism revolves around outdoor activities like hiking, camping, rafting, mountaineering, and similar pursuits, catering to travelers in search of more demanding and authentic experiences. Tourists seeking more challenging and authentic travel experiences are attracted to this type of tourism. Culinary tourism revolves around the exploration of local gastronomy. Tourists interested in learning about local culture and traditions are drawn to this type of tourism. Urban tourism centres around the exploration of cities. Tourists interested in history, culture, and architecture are attracted to this type of tourism.

These are just a few of the emerging trends in the field of tourism. The tourism industry is constantly evolving, and new trends will continue to emerge in the future.

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