



Commentary on Network Science Approach in Determining the Intellectual Structure, Emerging Trends and Future Research Opportunities: An Application to Senior Tourism Research

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses the attention in a tourism market segment that is becoming more and more important as a result of the impact of demographic trends and ageing populations. Thus, taking senior tourism as the object under study, the aim of the article is to apply a bibliometric analysis to identify the intellectual structure and emerging trends during the last twenty years, and future research opportunities.

Keywords: Senior tourism; Bibliometric; Network analysis; CiteSpace

DESCRIPTION

The increasing number and complexity of research articles has created the need for a visualisation tool, which is one of the most important and useful steps in management. The number of bibliometric studies with network visualization is small and only covers short time periods [1]. This research collects 700 articles and 7,221 citations from Web-of-Science and Scopus across the last twenty years. Through CiteSpace, which is one of the most popular visualization tools [2], senior tourism research was analysed in five dimensions:

- 1) Types of networks: co-citation, co-occurrence, co-authorship.
- 2) Types of metrics: structural, temporal and semantic.
- 3) Citation burst including strength, duration, beginning, and end.
- 4) Clusters of research themes.
- 5) Author keywords and keyword plus.

Jang were identified as the most productive and central authors. Research themes produced nine clusters: information source, nature conservation, elderly population, information technology, cultural politics, rural development, social relation, value orientation, and destination preference. Highly cited and central articles were identified. Shoemaker [3] was one of the first articles to question homogeneity in the senior market and to use senior travel motivations to segment the market into clusters [4], focuses on the analysis of the senior market over ten-years [5], conducted research comparing the behaviour of senior versus non-senior

tourists [6], analyse senior travellers' motivations and constraints [7], study of push and pull motivations and emotions [8], provide an analysis of the destination selection attributes focusing on direct travel suppliers and indirect travel motivator [9], with a citation burst near the current period, was the first researcher to analyze the connection between tourists' home situation and their leisure patterns, including factors stemming from "anomie" and "ego-enhancement" in the tourist himself, Romsa et al. [10] concentrate on differences in their preferred activities from nonseniors, Sedgley et al. [11] focused on the need for more individualised, subjective research that explores the intricacies of older people's lives, Kim et al. [12] representing an investigation of seniors' perception of the relevant travel features. All these articles have high sigma scores, being innovative articles. The publication of articles is centered on 10 main journals, topped by Tourism Management and Annals of Tourism Research. The most productive institutions include the University of Queensland and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The United States boasts the highest number of institutions, with Hebrew University Jerusalem displaying highest inter-institutional research collaboration. The production of documents made by researchers within the institution itself occurs in the National University Singapore, University Guelph, and University Munich. The USA, Australia and UK have acted as the foundation for collaboration with other countries. An overview of the co-cited network of references and citation burst allowed identifying the areas under development. Emergent topics were identified from the network of keywords. More recent and hot topics were tourism destination, tourism development, tourism

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management, motivations, destination attractiveness, and heritage tourism. This article presents a substantive contribution to the development of an appreciation of research evolution in the field of senior tourism, thereby enabling the identification of research gaps (structural holes) and the establishment of a research agenda based on new emerging trends and opportunities for research in this field. The introduction includes an interesting section on the originality of the work and a clear and detailed aims and objectives of the research. It is explained why this research is necessary to the wider tourism academic community and in specific to the reader of the journal. There is a long discussion in the conclusive part of the paper on what the news trends in the senior tourism research. This article could be a starting point of many literature reviews in senior tourism research [13]. In fact, in the discussion and conclusions through an innovative and scientifically rigorous method, this article also provides a sound analysis of the state of art of senior tourism research incorporating insights into the major identified articles. It provides deep information on research objects/topics/major results for each cluster, the emerging trends and future research opportunities in senior tourism. It is an article with good contribution to knowledge informing about interesting facts on what CiteSpace is able to perform: Intellectual structure, emerging trends and future research opportunities in senior tourism.

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