

## A Bibliometric Analysis on Corporate Social Responsibility in the Tourism Sector between 2018-2023

Alper Ateş<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The tourism literature on corporate social responsibility has significantly expanded in the last decade due to the increased practices of tourism businesses. Tourism companies have implemented Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to promote economic and environmental benefits while demonstrating socially responsible behavior. Tourism companies generally have CSR initiatives that enhance environmental, economic, and social sustainability, involving strategies to promote positive impacts and prevent negative ones. This study aims to analyze the content of studies on CSR in the tourism sector from 2018 to 2023 in the Web of Science (Wos) database. Recent research on CSR has focused on organizational and stakeholder themes. Recent CSR research has shifted its focus from financial to customer-related concerns. Practitioners are urged to assess past corporate social responsibility efforts and create new initiatives in their respective fields. Academics should explore under-researched areas within the field to contribute to advancing CSR research. Seven potential research areas in the tourism sector have been suggested, including secondary stakeholders like residents, government, media, and activists; consequences and antecedents of corporate social responsibility practices; negative aspects of CSR; communication strategies; less explored contexts and topics; and innovative analytical approaches.

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Tourism Sector, Bibliometric Analysis, Web of Science.

**JEL Classification:** M14, Z30

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<sup>1</sup> Doç. Dr. / Assoc. Prof., Selçuk Üniversitesi, Turizm Fakültesi, Turizm Rehberliği Bölümü / *Selcuk University, Faculty of Tourism, Department of Tourism Guidance*, [alpera@selcuk.edu.tr](mailto:alpera@selcuk.edu.tr), ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4347-7306>.

## 1. Introduction

There is a widespread expectation among various stakeholders within society that corporations should assume responsibility for the well-being of both the social community and the natural environment. The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has a long-standing history. In the 1950s, Bowen (1953) first defined CSR as businesses' responsibility to follow societal standards and values in their operations (Wong et al., 2021a: 1). In today's business world, companies view CSR initiatives as a vital strategic necessity (Bohdanowicz & Zientara, 2009; Polonsky et al., 2013; Gursoy et al., 2019). CSR plays a significant role in determining a company's competitive advantage. By meeting social needs through various social responsibility actions, a company can build enduring trust and sustainability with its employees and customers (Wong et al., 2021b: 1).

Tourism businesses demonstrate strategic CSR by incorporating responsible behaviors into operating procedures (Gonzalez-Rodriguez et al., 2019; Camilleri, 2019; Camilleri 2020; Horng et al., 2018; Porter & Kramer, 2011). A review of CSR in the tourism sector explicitly defines it as "a company-wide commitment to improving the societal and environmental conditions upon which the business relies to sustain itself, motivated not by financial profit or legal obligations but as an end in itself" (Farrington et al., 2017: 39).

CSR programs often play a crucial role in the tourism sector's active contribution to developing destination communities. CSR refers to the investment by firms in initiatives that provide environmental or social advantages outside their core operations. The interests of the company's shareholders typically influence the decisions the head office makes regarding these activities (Lindgreen et al., 2009: 439).

CSR has become more critical for companies in the tourism sector. Many companies in the tourism sector have taken on CSR initiatives to benefit both the economy and the environment; all while maintaining social responsibility (Horng et al., 2018: 1085). A destination's social, cultural, and natural attributes form the essence of a tourism product. Despite its economic and social benefits, tourism has faced criticism for its adverse effects on society and the environment. This includes trash production, air and noise pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change (Uyar et al., 2020: 1). In places with tourism, the public expects businesses to adhere to societal and environmental standards for appropriate conduct. Businesses must invest resources to improve employee well-being, support local communities, and participate in environmental conservation efforts (Bello & Kamanga, 2020: 182).

The bibliometric analysis highlights the development, status, and future directions of CSR research in the tourism sector. This systematic review enhances the understanding of the role of CSR in the tourism sector, provides practical implications for advancing research, policy, and practice, and benefits society and the tourism sector. We can use the findings of this study to comprehend and distinguish the various aspects of CSR that positively influence the tourism industry. By identifying key trends and gaps in the existing literature, this review also paves the way for future research avenues to explore innovative CSR strategies tailored to enhance sustainable tourism practices. Ultimately, the insights gained from this analysis can empower stakeholders to implement more effective CSR initiatives that benefit their organizations and contribute to the overall well-being of the communities they serve. It also highlights the economic benefits of these aspects and examines how a lack of resources might be a hindrance. This study asks two key questions:

- (1) What are the tourism industry's main CSR initiatives/themes?
- (2) What is the future research agenda regarding the tourism industry and CSR practices?

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1. Corporate Social Responsibility**

CSR in the business sector dates back to the 1950s. Since the early 2000s, there has been a significant rise in CSR studies focusing on tourism (Farrington et al., 2017: 40). CSR originated from discussions on the function of business within society. (Moir, 2001; Matten & Moon, 2004; Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010; Tai & Chuang, 2014). It stemmed from societal worries about the negative impacts of business activities, including child labor, poor working conditions, unpaid overtime, and environmental harm (Riano & Yakovleva, 2019: 1). According to Rangan, Chase, and Karim (2015), the principal objective of CSR is to synchronize a company's social and environmental initiatives with its corporate objectives and values.

CSR initiatives have gained more attention because companies need a supportive operating environment to achieve profitability goals. To succeed in the long term, companies had to focus on building social capital and expanding their goals beyond just making profits (Idahosa, 2019: 960). According to the European Commission (2001; 2011), CSR integrates social, environmental, ethical, human rights, and consumer concerns into business operations to create shared value for owners, stakeholders, and society." The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2017) defines CSR as a company's commitment to promoting sustainable economic development by working with employees, families, the local community, and society to enhance the quality of life (Gonzalez-Rodriguez et al., 2019: 399). The understanding of CSR has evolved, leading to changes in its conceptualization. The European Commission (2020) defines it as a concept whereby companies voluntarily integrate social and environmental concerns into their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders.' Corporations must acknowledge their societal impacts and comply with relevant legislation to ensure accountability (European Commission, 2020).

CSR is a framework for firms to incorporate proactively social and environmental considerations into their business operations and stakeholder interactions. Below are the advantages of CSR for businesses (Krasodomska, 2013: 14; Geethamani, 2017: 374):

- (i) Creates a better corporate image for customers, local communities, media, and employees;
- (ii) It would help avoid excessive labor exploitation, bribery, and corruption;
- (iii) The implementation of this strategy has the potential to enhance profitability, foster growth, and ensure long-term sustainability;
- (iv) Organizations would clearly understand the anticipated requirements, fostering equitable competition conditions;
- (v) Downsizing can potentially restore equilibrium between corporations and their workforce;
- (vi) Enables the attraction of more investors;
- (vii) Businesses have found positive outcomes from several dimensions of CSR behavior. These include enhancing reputation, attracting and retaining talented human resources, strengthening branding efforts, and facilitating entry into new areas. Additionally, compliance with relevant regulations is another important factor contributing to the benefits of CSR behavior;
- (viii) Improves governance and increases productivity and competitiveness;
- (ix) It would be increasingly challenging unscrupulous businesses to gain a competitive advantage by adhering to lesser standards;
- (x) Contributes to the recruitment of qualified personnel to the company;

(xi) Increases employee participation, morale, and motivation;

(xii) The wider community would benefit as companies reach out to the critical issue of underdevelopment worldwide;

Provides the opportunity to create a better working environment and maximizes productivity.

CSR involves many aspects, like any strategic business approach. Each aspect has consequences for how resources are used; costs are controlled, and other challenging issues that companies must be aware of CSR brings some disadvantages to businesses. Below are the disadvantages of CSR for businesses (Geethamani, 2017: 374):

(i) Increased administrative procedures, resulting in higher expenses for compliance;

(ii) The expenses associated with operating the business may exceed the amount needed to maintain profitability and sustainability;

(iii) Detractors contend that profit motives primarily drive firms' CSR initiatives, and the enactment of law would amplify the expression of these apprehensions;

Reporting requirements vary significantly across companies, sectors, and countries and are subject to continuous evolution.

CSR activities are essential to sustainable development and critical to tourism organizations' strategies. Furthermore, CSR can affect the functioning of firms. It can also improve favorable consumer impressions of organizations and the long-term viability of the tourism industry (Yoopetch et al., 2023: 2). The integration of CSR within tourism organizations emerges as a pivotal strategy that enhances the organization's vitality and bolsters the health of ecosystems. Tourism organizations can enhance their brand loyalty and attract a more environmentally conscious clientele by fostering a positive corporate image and gaining community trust. By prioritizing CSR, these organizations create a framework that promotes economic prosperity while ensuring the sustainability of the environment and local communities. As a result, integrating CSR into their core strategies benefits the organization and contributes to the overall health of the ecosystems and communities in which they operate.

In the tourist industry, CSR refers to using a corporate responsibility plan to mitigate the adverse ecological and social effects of the rise in travel over the past few decades. Businesses can freely incorporate social and environmental issues into their operations and stakeholder interactions by implementing CSR (Hunter, 1995: 163-164). CSR is a crucial concept that benefits both the areas where companies function and the people participating in tourist activities. (Font & Harris, 2004). Recognizing the inherent connection between tourism and the welfare of individuals, CSR can serve as a significant strategic framework for enterprises to justify their economic operations (Falck & Heblich, 2007: 249).

Most studies in the tourism sector have explored one or more dimensions of CSR (Horng et al., 2018: 1087). As a result of the review of the tourism literature by Wong et al. (2021b), there were five main research streams (Coles et al., 2013; Farrington et al., 2017; Iyer & Jarvis, 2019; Yoopetch et al., 2023; Gonzalez-Rodriguez et al., 2019; Rhou & Singal, 2020; Bello & Kamanga, 2020; Serra-Cantallops et al., 2018). The first stream focuses on how CSR influences internal aspects such as financial performance (Lee & Park, 2009; Uyar et al., 2020), firm value (Kang et al., 2010), employee satisfaction (De Grosbois, 2012; Lee et al., 2013), turnover intention (Lee et al., 2012; Filimonau et al., 2020), and employee well-being (Bohdanowicz & Zientara, 2009; Kim et al., 2018). The second stream examines how CSR influences external factors like customer satisfaction (Lee & Heo, 2009; Athwal et al., 2019), customer loyalty (Martínez et al., 2013; Martínez et al., 2014), customer revisit intention (Kim et al., 2017), corporate reputation (Barnett et al., 2006), and brand image (Martínez et al., 2014;

Kim et al., 2017). The third stream concentrates on analyzing the content of CSR reports, considering the varying methodologies, measures, and scopes used by different hotel companies (De Grosbois, 2012; Holcomb et al., 2007). The fourth stream examines the reasons behind and obstacles to implementing CSR initiatives (Idahosa, 2019; Calveras, 2015; Garay & Font, 2012). The fifth stream focuses on identifying and analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of CSR activities related to the environment (Chan et al., 2009; Gatt & Schranz, 2015; Hens et al., 2018; Gursoy et al., 2019). Wong et al. (2021b) summarized the five main research streams in this manner.

### **3. Methods**

The primary objective of this study is to examine and analyze the implementation of CSR initiatives within the framework of the tourism industry by reviewing the tourism literature. In this study, the bibliometric method was used. The bibliometric method is a joint research approach that thoroughly examines and analyzes literature on a specific subject (Liberati et al., 2009: 26). The systematic literature review involved three main steps, as outlined by Mialon and McCambridge (2018):

- (i) Identification of the articles;
- (ii) Selection and description of the sample;
- (iii) Bibliometric analyses.

An eight-step method comprising these three stages was applied in the study:

- In the first stage, the research problem, purpose, and questions to be answered were presented
- In the second stage, research terms, databases, and study selection criteria were defined. As per the study's objectives, the literature review used "corporate social responsibility" and "tourism sector" keywords.
  - In the third stage, databases were searched, and the studies included in the research were selected. The Web of Science (WoS) was used as the source database because it is one of the most popular and accessible databases for tourism studies. The literature review will cover the studies published in the journals registered in the WoS database, which were examined as the primary database, and 271 studies were identified between January 2018 and December 2023.
  - In the fourth stage, the relevant literature was reviewed to identify studies for inclusion in the research.
  - In the fifth stage, the studies were examined in detail to decide their inclusion in the analyses.
  - The studies not included in the research were excluded in the sixth stage.
  - In the seventh stage, the studies were categorized according to the field of study, subject, method, and results, compared, and interpreted in terms of their results and recommendations.
  - In the eighth and final stage, evaluations are presented in light of the findings (Okoli, 2015; Xiao & Watson, 2019; Timur & Köz, 2022).

#### **3.1. Descriptive Summary of Selected Studies**

In the study, research articles from journals published in English on tourism-related CSR between January 2018 and December 2023 were included in the literature review. In order to focus on high-quality research, only full-text research articles in peer-reviewed journals were considered. The review did not include publications such as books, book chapters, reviews, conference proceedings, reports, thesis summaries, and editorials.

The papers needed to meet three criteria before finalizing papers for further analysis:

- (i) They had to be published in a peer-reviewed journal;

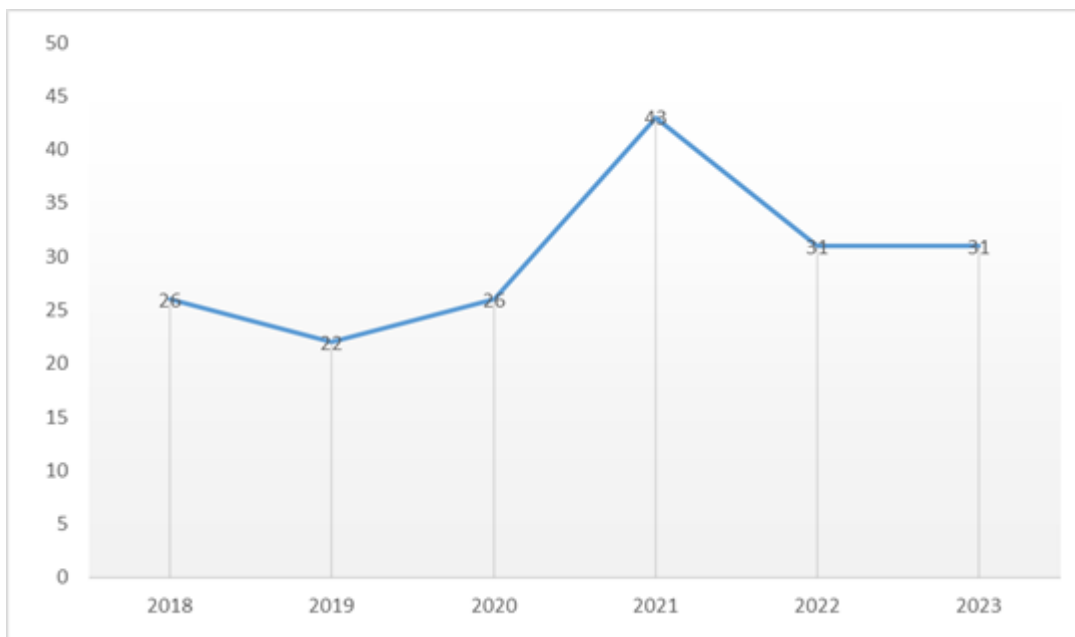
- (ii) They had to have open-access access to full-length research papers in English and listed in WoS;
- (iii) They had to be based on a CSR-related concept and theory.

Concerning the last criterion, more was needed for a paper to address a CSR concept and theory; instead, the CSR theory and concept needed to be the dominant theme of the study. The study identified publications on CSR in the field of tourism. On March 24, 2024, 271 publications on CSR in the tourism sector were found in the Web of Science (WoS) database. As the research focused on articles published between 2018 and 2023, 157 publications were identified through the applied filtering process. The VOSviewer program was utilized to analyze these 157 articles, allowing for data visualization and analysis. Many researchers in the literature have used VOSviewer, a tool that facilitates quantitative analysis of research in specific disciplines (Xie et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2023). Following this approach, publications and authors with high impact levels in the WoS database about the research area were pinpointed. The 157 studies identified within the scope of the research were downloaded and examined with the VOSviewer program. Graphs were created to analyze the distribution of publications by years, authors, keywords, institutions of authors, countries, journals published, citation status, bibliographic matching, and co-citation analysis, providing a comprehensive overview of the research landscape.

#### **4. Findings**

The distribution of the articles obtained as a result of the search in the WoS database using the titles "corporate social responsibility" and "tourism" by years is shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 illustrates that the fewest studies were conducted in 2019 and the highest number in 2021. When the studies in 2021 are examined, after the easing of travel bans applied in many areas during the COVID-19 pandemic period, there has been a significant increase in the number of studies revealing the current situation and proposing solutions, mainly due to the responsibilities of institutions towards human health and hygiene and the uncertainties in the sector.

**Figure 1. Visualization of Frequency Distribution of Publications between 2018-2023**



As can be seen in Figure 2, which shows the author network/activity analysis conducted with the Vosviewer program, there are 464 authors in 157 studies, and the number of authors mentioned in



at least two studies is 32. Daniel Badulescu, Sarminah Samad, Aqeel Ahmad, Irfan Siddique, Naveed Ahmad, and Miklas Scholz are notable authors in this field of study. These clusters consist of authors who conducted the primary studies on the subject. The researchers have focused on numerous studies related to CSR, particularly in the fields of tourism, hospitality, and marketing

**Figure 2. Visualization of the Relationship Network of Publication Numbers by Authors**

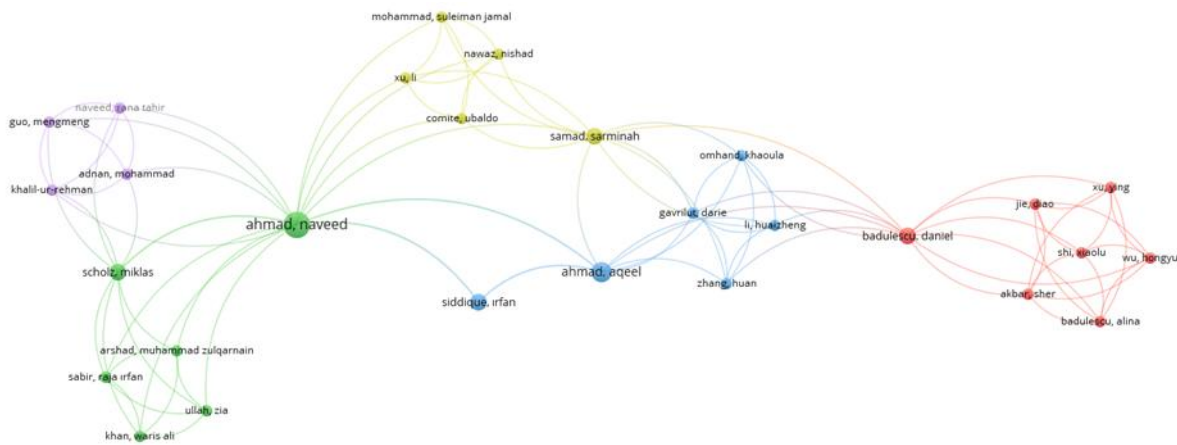


Figure 3 illustrates the relationship network of keywords, revealing that 555 keywords were utilized across 157 studies. In the WOS database, common keywords used, besides 'corporate social responsibility' and 'tourism sector,' included terms like 'sustainability,' 'trust,' 'ethics,' 'performance,' 'loyalty,' 'corporate sustainability,' 'hospitality,' and 'sustainable entrepreneurship.' Additionally, keywords such as 'reputation,' 'philanthropy,' 'hospitality industry,' 'reporting,' and 'service quality' were commonly used.

**Figure 3. Visualization of the Relationships between Key Words in Publications by Years**

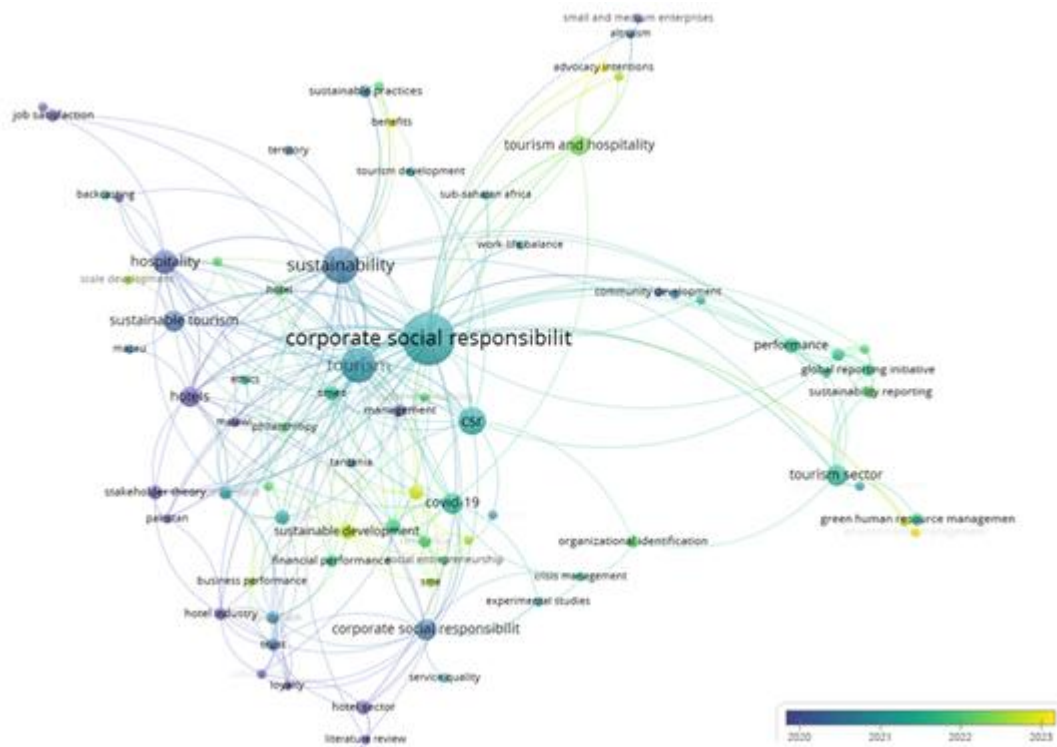
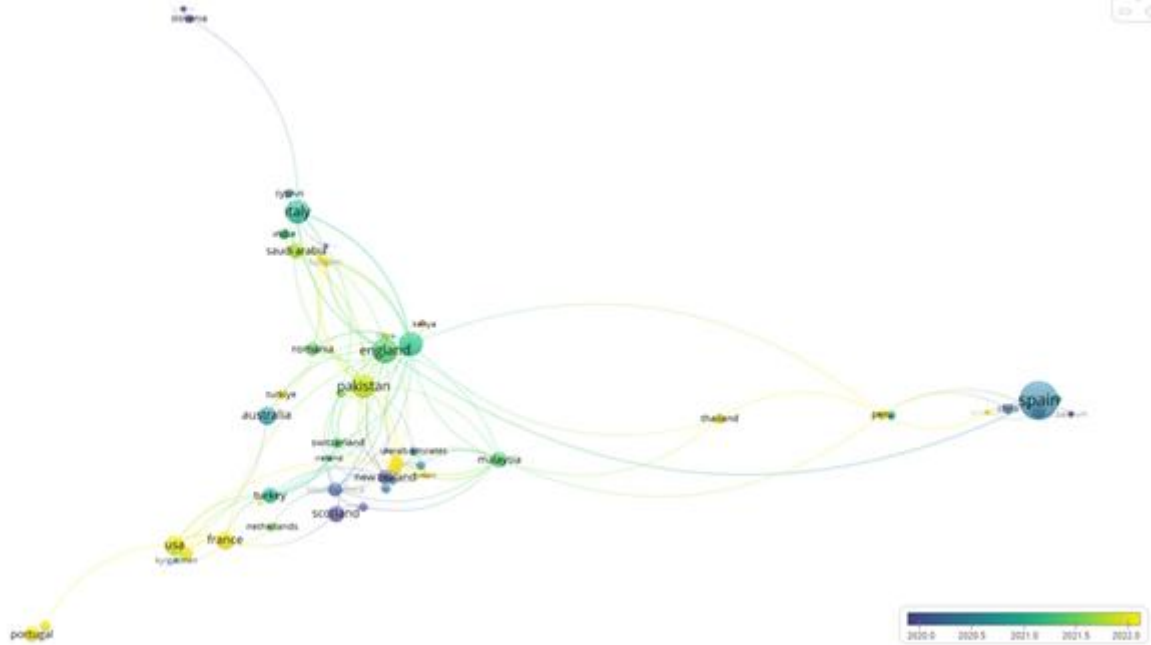


Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of keywords by year, revealing distinct trends in their usage: In 2018, the focus was on business satisfaction, profitability, performance, loyalty, and stakeholder

theory. From 2021 to 2022, the emphasis was on COVID-19, environmental sustainability, management, reporting, efficiency, planning, and development. In 2023, new keywords emerged, including advocacy intention, identification, organization, altruism, information systems, environment, and ethics. In contrast to 2022, 2023 saw the use of keywords such as advocacy intention, identification, environmental management, sustainable organization, altruism, information system, environment, and ethics.

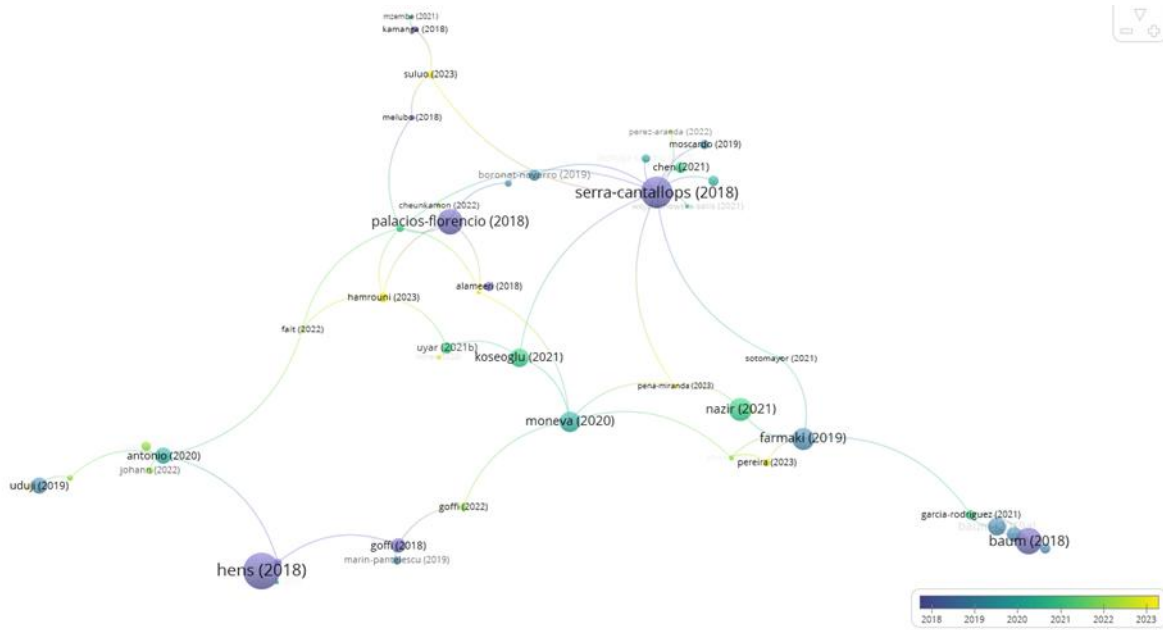
**Figure 4. Visualization of the Number of Publications by Country**



The number of published academic studies is an essential indicator for determining the development and trends of specific scientific research. Figure 4 shows that by examining the distribution of publications over the years, differences in content are observed despite minor variations in quantity. Upon examining the countries involved in the publications, the top five contributors are Spain (37 articles), England (16 articles), China (14 articles), Pakistan (14 articles), and Italy (14 articles). Despite Spain having the highest publication count researchers from various countries like those that Pakistan, Thailand, the USA, France, and Portugal have also published in the last two years. Examining the collaboration network of authors in 157 studies revealed information from 301 different institutions. The top five institutions with the highest number of joint publications in the inter-institutional collaboration network were the University of Central Punjab (Lahore/Pakistan) with six publications, the University of Johannesburg (North Africa) with five publications, Murray State University (USA) with four publications, the American University of the Middle East (Kuwait), and Malaga University (Spain).



**Figure 5. Visualization of the Most Cited Publications by Year**



In Figure 5 it is shown that among the publications examined in the study, the most cited studies were Hens et al. (2018), Palacios-Florencio, Dominguez-Orta & Santos-Roldan (2020), Filimonau et al. (2020), Serra-Cantalops et al. (2018), Athwal et al., (2019).

**Figure 6. Network Analysis by Published Journals**

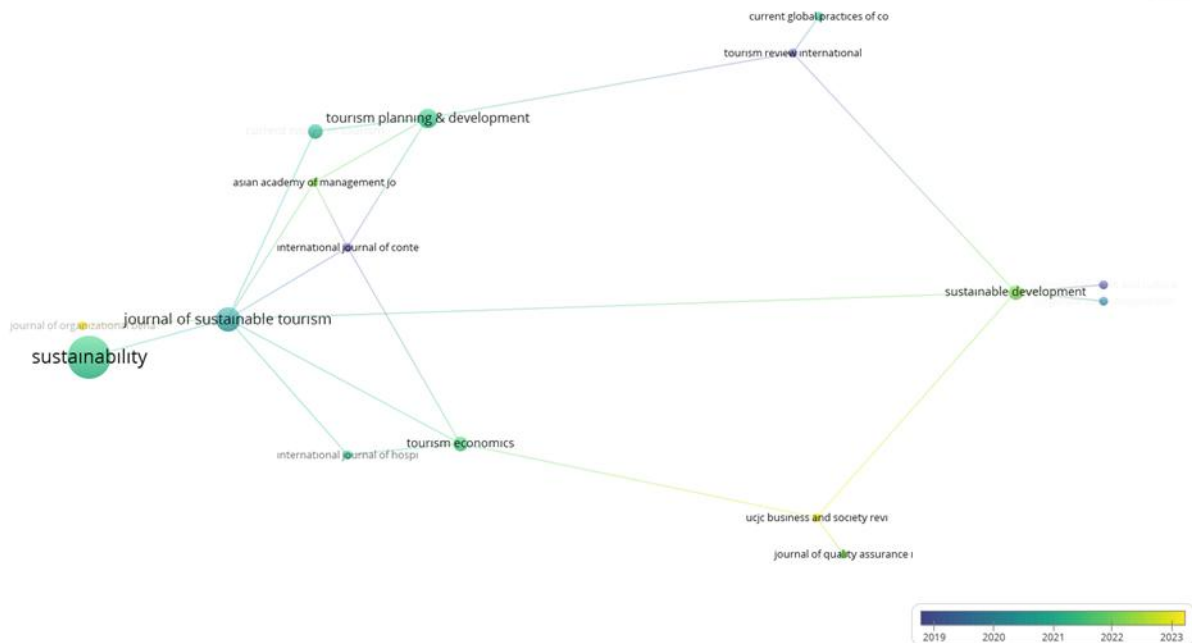


Figure 6 shows that 34 different journals published the 157 articles selected for the study. The distribution of articles across various journals is shown as follows: Sustainability (9), Journal of Sustainable Tourism (4), Tourism Planning & Development (3), Sustainable Development (2), Tourism Economics (2), and Current Issues in Tourism (2). Other journals published only one article. The most cited journals, along with their respective citation counts, are Journal of Sustainable Tourism (151), Sustainability (96), International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (60), Sustainable Development (48), International Journal of Hospitality Management (44), Journal of Cleaner Production

(35), Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management (33), and Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change (31).

Among the 157 articles examined within the scope of the research, Hen et al. (2018), Serra-Cantalops et al. (2018), Athwal et al. (2019), Filimonau et al. (2020), and Palacios-Florencio et al. (2020) were the most exciting studies according to the number of citations (Figure 5) and the interaction (Figure 2) they created. We provide a brief overview of these studies below.

Hen et al. (2018) examined the concept of cleaner production within the scope of CSR. They discussed that businesses need to change for the environment and health within the scope of CSR and in the context of diluting the original environmental goals in a broader, more societal context and transitioning to a more responsible, proactive, and reliable management of sectors implementing cleaner production. The study underscored the significance of incorporating cleaner production practices into corporate strategies for sustainable development, thereby reducing environmental impact and enhancing market competitiveness.

Athwal et al. (2019) researched sustainable luxury marketing. The researchers analyzed research published in English-language peer-reviewed major scientific publications in business, marketing, ethics, fashion, food, and tourism journals between 2007 and 2018. As a result, the researchers emphasized the importance of consumer concerns, institutional concerns and inadequacy of practices, institutional problems, and cross-cultural reflections. The study underscored the importance of luxury brands integrating sustainability practices into their marketing strategies to meet consumer demands and tackle global challenges.

Filimonau et al. (2020) researched the link between organizational resilience to COVID-19, CSR practices, and the perceived job security of senior managers in hotels in Spain. As a result, the researchers found that managers' organizational resilience levels and the extent of CSR practices strengthen their perceived job security, determining their organizational commitment. The study emphasizes the significance of fostering organizational resilience and implementing CSR practices in the hospitality industry to improve job security, commitment, employee well-being, and crisis resilience.

Serra-Cantalops et al. (2018) conducted a literature review on CSR in the hospitality industry between 2006 and 2015. While conducting this literature review, they categorized the studies they examined as those that address only the hotel industry and those that address CSR regarding economic, social, and environmental aspects. The researchers compared consumers and companies regarding CSR Practices, CSR Reporting, and CSR Impacts. The hospitality industry is experiencing a surge in interest in CSR, with consumers increasingly demanding that companies demonstrate social responsibility.

Palacios-Florencio et al. (2020) conducted a bibliometric analysis by searching energy use, CSR, and tourism. They identified the topics of the existing studies in the literature and stated the deficiencies and suggestions. The authors suggest future research to explore CSR's social and economic dimensions in the tourism industry, focusing on environmental aspects.

## **5. Conclusion**

CSR programs in developing nations contribute to improving local communities by complementing government efforts to provide public services in areas such as education, healthcare, environmental conservation, and security. CSR is widely recognized as a crucial means of establishing a mutually advantageous connection between companies and society. Tourism companies have displayed different interest levels and commitment towards CSR efforts. Tourism companies can enhance their CSR programs by investing in local infrastructure, supporting small businesses, and

promoting cultural preservation, which can positively affect their communities and enhance their overall reputation.

Of the 157 articles included in the study, 116 used the survey method, 18 used the bibliometric analysis method, 10 used the content analysis method, 7 used the interview method, and 6 used the review method. The diverse methodologies highlight researchers' multifaceted approaches to gathering data and insights. This variation enriches the findings and underscores the importance of methodological rigor in addressing complex research questions. Consequently, this methodological diversity fosters innovative perspectives and solutions crucial for advancing knowledge in the field.

The study aims to identify gaps in research on CSR in the tourism sector by analyzing 157 articles from the WoS database between 2018 and 2023. The analysis revealed a correlation between CSR and financial performance, information systems, sustainability, and tourism development within the sector. The researchers identified influential authors, cited publications, and related relationship networks. Recent research on CSR has shifted from financial to customer-related concerns, prompting practitioners to assess past efforts and create new initiatives. Seven potential research areas in the tourism sector include secondary stakeholders, consequences, negative aspects, communication strategies, less explored contexts, and innovative analytical approaches. Tourism companies should communicate their CSR strategies to raise awareness of environmental, social, and governance contributions.

The research included studies from five main research streams related to CSR. The research encompassed 54 studies focusing on the internal factors of CSR, 35 studies examining the external factors of CSR, 26 studies exploring the advantages and disadvantages of CSR, 23 studies examining the barriers to CSR practices, and 19 studies examining the content of CSR reports. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of CSR and the various dimensions that organizations must consider when implementing such practices.

Researchers must create a globally acknowledged definition of CSR and standardized measurement tools. Establishing a universally accepted CSR definition and standardized measuring tools is crucial due to conflicting results within the existing CSR literature, which can be attributed to the need for more consistency in defining CSR and the incongruity in using measurement scales for assessing CSR. Studying the many reactions and opinions of stakeholders thoroughly is crucial in CSR research. CSR research frequently examines stakeholder theory, but shifting the focus toward community viewpoints is crucial. In certain nations, the tourism sector is likely to engage in specific CSR initiatives due to the influence of stringent rules, sanctions, or pressure from civil society.

Scientific collaboration and multi-authored studies indicate the value and necessity of measuring the development of a particular discipline. The most significant indicator of scientific collaboration is the degree of collaboration. The degree of collaboration was calculated at 2.95 in the analysis of publications and collaborations. This ratio is also considered to represent a high level of collaboration among authors. Strong collaboration is essential for offering diverse viewpoints on the researched topic and promoting interdisciplinary studies among researchers. The study examined various research papers that identified specific gaps and proposed recommendations for future research. These include ethics and quality in CSR, stakeholder engagement, economic outputs, and certification systems for CSR.



### **Competing Interest**

*The author declares that he has no competing interests.*

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### **Ethical Statement**

*It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.*

### **Author's Contributions**

*This article was created as a result of the author's own efforts and reviews*

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