



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Journal of Destination Marketing &amp; Management

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jdmm](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jdmm)

## Research Paper

## Changes in the structures and directions of destination management and marketing research: A bibliometric mapping study, 2005–2016



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## A B S T R A C T

The growing importance of destinations as loci for change in tourism systems has led to the recent accelerated growth of destination management and marketing (DMM) research. This paper conducts an integrated exploration of the structure and interconnections, and the dynamics of the recent growth of DMM research in terms of research fronts and trajectories. A quantitative, visualization-rich approach is proposed, based on bibliometric mapping networks comprising DMM-relevant articles extracted from 49 tourism journals published from 2005 to 2016. The results reveal a DMM structure consisting of 10 key clusters. Sustainable development, competitiveness of tourist destinations, destination development and innovation, and ICT/social media are found to have rapidly evolved as research fronts, while the more traditional research clusters on destination perception and tourist decision-making have developed more slowly. Significant interactions can be observed between management- and marketing-oriented research domains. At deeper levels of analysis, more diverse research trajectories stand out, including those focusing on destination governance; knowledge and experience-based analytical frameworks; service-related domains; subjective issues such as emotions, attachment, and identity; destination brand equity; and sustainability. The paper also shows that additional value will come from research that integrates up-to-now distant DMM topics. The results of this study can help policymakers, practitioners, and scholars understand the recent progress in, and the major trends shaping, the DMM research agenda.

## 1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that tourism fosters the economic growth and social development of cities, regions, and countries (Lee & Chang, 2008). Owing to the extremely globalized and competitive nature of the tourism industry, the survival of tourism destinations depends heavily on their ability to generate and deliver value-added services and experiences to visitors (Fabricius, Carter, & Standford, 2007). Management and marketing studies thus play a key role in gaining competitive advantage and creating value from tourist destinations. Since its formal establishment in the late 1990s (Capone, 2016a; Laws, 1995), the field of destination management and marketing (DMM) has rapidly expanded to encompass the study of the development, management, and planning of tourist destinations from multiple disciplinary perspectives, including marketing and management, psychology, economics, geography, sociology, policy, and public administration (Laesser & Beritelli, 2013). As Pike (2016) argues, DMM research provides novel perspectives in tourism research as it focuses on the causes behind the attractiveness of destinations, their activities, and their competitive advantages. In contrast, previous tourism research has mainly considered places and tourist choices.

As its name suggests, DMM research deals with the management and marketing of tourism destinations. The division between the

management and marketing domains is blurry and has been a contentious issue in the literature. For instance, Pike and Page (2014) view destination management and marketing as two separate entities under the responsibility of two different research communities. In contrast, Laesser and Beritelli (2013) consider marketing as part of destination management, together with additional activities, such as planning, lobbying, and service coordination.

As fields of research mature and become more complex, it becomes increasingly important for researchers to seek a quantitative understanding of the role, content, and directions of their knowledge-generation efforts (Rivera & Pizam, 2015). In tourism research, such review studies have been regarded as essential for its promotion as a field and for strengthening its academic foundations (Koseoglu, Rahimi, Okumus, & Liu, 2016). Many studies have reviewed the body of DMM research. However, these reports are highly qualitative, as they rely heavily on the judgment of experts (Laesser & Beritelli, 2013; Reinhold, Laesser, & Beritelli, 2015), with the exception of Capone (2016a) and Capone (2016b). Moreover, extant research efforts have focused on the study of DMM from specific points of view, such as image, branding, competitiveness, or destination sustainability (Fuchs, Höpken, & Lexhagen, 2014; Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2012). Therefore, there is a need to complement the insights from previous qualitative studies with the quantitative assessment of research on the management and marketing

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of destinations.

Bibliometrics, defined as the quantitative study of bibliographic data, is a useful approach for the examination of DMM field. The use of bibliometric approaches has expanded rapidly in recent years due to the greater availability of computing power and faster and easier-to-use analytical tools (Cobo, López-Herrera, Herrera-Viedma, & Herrera, 2011). The mapping of bibliometric data through visualization and network approaches has experienced the largest growth (Cobo et al., 2011; Van Eck & Waltman, 2011). Bibliometric mapping enables the identification of main research areas, an estimation of their size, and – of particular importance for this study – an assessment of the levels of interaction between these research areas (Van Eck & Waltman, 2011). Such information can provide researchers with insights into the future trajectories of DMM research (Porter & Cunningham, 2004).

This study examines advances in the field of DMM research using bibliometric mapping approaches, focusing on the structure of DMM knowledge and its dominant directions of growth in terms of general research fronts and specific research trajectories. To this end, the present paper present a structured approach comprising evidence-driven, visualization-rich research methods based on network approaches, including portfolio analysis charts, bibliographic coupling networks, co-word networks, and circular plots. The dataset is drawn from tourism destination-relevant publications from 49 tourism and hospitality journals indexed in Elsevier's Scopus® bibliographic database covering 2005–2016. Unlike previous research approaches, this study investigates the field of DMM through relational bibliometric techniques – focusing on the interactions between a field's research domains – which, to the authors' knowledge, the present study is the first to attempt (Koseoglu et al., 2016).

The results of this study reveal a DMM structure consisting of 10 key clusters. Research fronts such as sustainable development, the competitiveness of tourist destinations, destination development and innovation, and ICT/social media are found to have evolved rapidly. While more traditional research clusters such as destination perception and tourist decision-making have developed more slowly, the study observes significant interactions between management- and marketing-oriented research domains. At deeper levels of analysis, more diverse research trajectories stand out, including on destination governance; knowledge and experience-based analytical frameworks; service-related domains; subjective issues such as emotions, attachment, and identity; destination brand equity; and sustainability. The results show that additional value will come from research that integrates up-to-now distant DMM topics. These are used to enumerate a series of major trends shaping the DMM research agenda. The study serves to offer implications that can help policy-makers, practitioners, and scholars to better understand the progress of DMM research.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 describes the study's data and research methods. Section 4 enumerates the results on the structure and development trajectories of DMM research. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper and outlines its key implications.

## 2. Literature review

Few studies have examined global advances in the research on the management and marketing of destinations. Some studies that have focused on destination marketing are Pike and Page (2014), Dioko (2016), Fyall and Leask (2006), and Baker and Cameron (2008). Other studies have examined destination management, including Amposta (2015), Capone (2016a) and Laesser and Beritelli (2013). Of specific relevance to this study are the series of papers summarizing the major outcomes of the St. Gallen Consensus on Destination Management 2012, 2014, and 2016 (Laesser & Beritelli, 2013; Reinhold et al., 2015, 2018), in which key experts assess the future avenues of research on tourism destinations. The general results of these exercises with DMM experts are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Ten main topics identified by St. Gallen Consensus on Destination Management 2012, 2104, and 2016 (Laesser & Beritelli, 2013; Reinhold et al., 2015).

- (1) Definition of destination
- (2) Sustainable destination development and governance
- (3) Destination branding
- (4) Destination marketing and competitiveness
- (5) Governance and leadership in destination networks
- (6) Sustainability
- (7) Relevance of experiences to the destination concept
- (8) Destination strategy and resilience
- (9) Tourism taxation and regulation
- (10) Big data and visitor management

Despite their usefulness, the DMM topics shown in Table 1 were obtained with methods largely qualitative in nature and are highly dependent on the reviews and judgments of experts. Most of the review studies on DMM research have been confined to books and reports, including Wang (2011), Marshall (2016), and Morrison (2013) to name a few. These review studies have examined tourism destinations from specific points of view, including their branding (Balakrishnan, 2009; Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005; Chen & Šegota, 2015; Dioko, 2016; Kladou, Giannopoulos, & Mavragani, 2015), image and perception (Li, Ali, & Kim, 2015; Mair, Ritchie, & Walters, 2016; Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Tasci & Kozak, 2006; White, 2004), competitiveness and benchmarking (Abreu-Novais, Ruhanen, & Arcodia, 2016; Capone, 2016b; Kozak, 2004; Tsai, Song, & Wong, 2009), collaboration and networks (Fyall, Garrod, & Wang, 2012; Meriläinen & Lemmetyinen, 2011; Van der Zee & Vanneste, 2015), and sustainability (Borges, Eusébio, & Carvalho, 2014; Njoroge, 2015; Schianetz, Kavanagh, & Lockington, 2007). Furthermore, these review studies have typically examined hundreds of publications and a handful of journals. The question of where DMM research as a whole is moving has not yet been addressed.

The accelerated generation of knowledge in the natural and social sciences, particularly in emerging fields of research such as DMM, makes it imperative to develop approaches that help researchers overcome the pervading 'flood of information' (Shibata, Kajikawa, Takeda, Sakata, & Matsushima, 2011). In this context, bibliometrics – the quantitative study of bibliographic data – is a useful approach. The field of bibliometrics has experienced rapid growth in the last decade due to the greater availability of computing power and faster and easier-to-use analytical tools (Cobo et al., 2011). In particular, the visualization of interrelations between scientific studies through network approaches, known as 'bibliometric mapping,' has received considerable attention in recent years. Bibliometric mapping allows the identification of main research areas, and the estimation of their size and levels of interaction (Van Eck & Waltman, 2011). The five fundamental bibliometric mapping approaches are shown in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, these bibliometric mapping approaches rely on the co-occurrence or interconnection of bibliographic elements, such as keywords, authors, cited references, and citing papers.

Bibliometric methods have been widely used in tourism and hospitality studies (McKercher & Tung, 2015) that have provided valuable insights into the evaluation of the progress of tourism and hospitality research and the epistemological and ontological structures of their knowledge-creation processes (Koseoglu et al., 2016; Rivera & Pizam, 2015). Bibliometric studies are also important building blocks for the promotion of the tourism field and for the strengthening of its academic foundations (Koseoglu et al., 2016). Recently, Koseoglu et al. (2016) reviewed bibliometric-based studies in seven top tourism and hospitality journals. They collected 190 bibliometric-based studies published up to 2015, which they classified into three main categories:

- (1) *Evaluative techniques*, which focus on the impact of scholarly work and include aspects such as rankings, h-indexes, and citation counts;
- (2) *Review studies*, which build on traditional review methods through

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