7th International Conference on Engineering, Project, and Production Management

Tourism Supply Chain – Overview of Selected Literature

Danuta Szpilko*

Faculty of Management, Bialystok University of Technology, Wiejska 45A, 15-351 Bialystok, Poland

Abstract

The development of tourism is inextricably linked to the operation of tourism enterprises and tourism products offered by them. A competitive advantage for enterprises, in the market of tourist services, can be provided by innovative products comprising a response to the ever-increasing customer expectations. The specificity of product development in the tourism industry requires the commitment and cooperation of many partners – operators in the tourist supply chain. The purpose of this article is to identify the areas of research analysed in the international literature in the field of tourism supply chain, published in the Web of Science. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of a map of themes (research areas) most commonly occurring in configuration with the term of the tourism supply chain, as well as in terms of their coexistence in the analysed pool of articles. The process of preparing the article involved the use of the methods of bibliometric analysis and network analysis.

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world, which is confirmed by statistical research of the United Nations World Tourism Organization and the World Travel and Tourism Council, who noted became its steady increase after World War II in both the number of international tourist trips, and tourism revenue. In 1950, the number of international tourist trips amounted to 25 million, and in 2015 increased to 1,186 billion [1]. The revenue from international tourism from year to year is also rapidly increasing. In 1950, it accounted for USD 2 billion, in 1980 – USD 104 billion, in 1995 – USD 415 billion, and in 2015 increased to USD 1260 billion [1]. In 2015, the tourism sector, on a global scale, was the source generating 9.8% of global GDP, the value of which amounted to USD

* Corresponding author.
  E-mail address: d.szpilko@pb.edu.pl

7,170.3 billion [2]. The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that by 2026, the value will increase to USD 10,986.5 billion, which would represent 10.8% of the world GDP [2].

The dynamic development of the tourism sector requires the enterprises, striving to achieve or maintain a competitive advantage, to take actions allowing meeting the ever-increasing customer expectations. As a result, they face the challenge of designing innovative and, at the same time, increasingly complex tourism products, the preparation of which often involves many entities providing various services. Cooperation between multiple business partners in a tourism supply chain constitutes an important determinant of the success of a product on the tourist market, and at the same time, assuming that it is successful, contributes to the optimization of the conducted business activities.

Zhang et al. define the Tourism Supply Chain (TSC) as a network of tourism organizations involved in a series of diverse activities, ranging from providing an entire spectrum of components of tourism products/services, such as flights, accommodation at the tourism reception desk, and ending with the sale of tourism products in the tourism region. This network includes a wide range of subjects, both from the private and the public sector that are involved in the creation, sale, and promotion of tourism products [13]. Shaping tourist supply chains are based on a defined tourist product, which takes the form of the region, the city [19, 20, 23].

Operators within the tourist supply chain, in the process of cooperation, by providing specific materials, products, and services simultaneously, thanks to the correctly shaped relationships, may represent a significant source of value for the company in the process of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage [3]. The essential element of this process is especially the suitable selection of partners in a supply chain focused on the preparation of a competitive tourism product. The contractor selection process is very complicated and requires significant commitment and clarification of the criteria for the evaluation of potential partners [4]. This issue is extremely important, especially in the case of products – tourist services, whose production takes place in the presence of the customer (tourist), and are consumed at the moment of production [5].

Considering the growing importance of tourism in the socio-economic development of many regions and countries, supported each year by the increasing number of international tourist trips, as well as the increase of tourism revenue, the author conducted a bibliographic analysis of the existing publications in the area of the tourism supply chain, collected in the Web of Science database. The aim of this article is the identification of the areas of research analysed in the literature concerning the tourism supply chain. This measure represents the first stage of the research process, aiming to identify the research problems in the field of TSC, which have not yet been undertaken within the field of international science, but their solution would constitute a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of tourism supply chains.

2. Research Methodology

Identification of research areas may be supported by the use of a number of tools and research methods. Among others, the concept of creating knowledge maps on the basis of bibliometric analyses can be applied here. Bibliometry uses mathematical and statistical methods for the analysis of books and other sources of knowledge [21]. It is a collection of research techniques used for the quantitative analysis of publications covering both scientific publications and other documents [22]. The results obtained through the use of bibliometric techniques including the analysis e.g. of the co-occurrence words, are usually presented in the form of a map showing the relationship between the individual elements [18]. These maps allow for a better understanding and analysis of the current state of knowledge, hence constitute an example of the possible to prepare maps of knowledge.

This study was designed to identify the areas of research in the field of the tourism supply chain in international publications collected in the Web of Science database, with the use of the selected bibliometric analysis techniques. It should be noted that the Web of Science database provides access to a wide spectrum of research in multiple disciplines, and multiple sources (journals, proceedings papers, books, book chapters and others). The study was conducted in June 2016. It involved the identification of scientific publications containing the term "tourism supply chain" in the title, abstract, or keywords. All the collected data from the Web of Science database has been formatted for use in Microsoft Excel 2013 and the VOSviewer software.

VOSviewer software is especially useful in the analysis of multi-component data sets. In this program, it is possible to generate visualizations in several forms, each of which focuses on the presentation of a different aspect of the data.