

Systematic Literature Review of Health Tourism Innovation

İge Pınar* Hüseyin Ozan Altın**

Yaşar University (Turquia)

Abstract: Innovation is an important issue for any business and especially vital concept for the establishment and growth of a successful health tourism businesses for gaining business improvement and differential advantage in competition. Purpose of this study is to figure out gaps in the innovation in health tourism entrepreneurship literature, show the comprehensive whole situation, areas where the related areas focused on and indicate the related promising areas for research in health tourism innovation. Thus, the significance of this study lies in 2 sub topics as; 1) providing a brief literature review on health tourism innovation 2) indicate the research gaps in health tourism innovation. Results indicate that there is a serious research gap in the innovation studies in spa and wellness tourism, since studies are concentrated on health and medical tourism. Moreover, it is understood that qualitative research is preferred by the majority of the authors followed by the mixed methods which leads to a research gap for quantitative studies in the area. Hence, most researched areas consist of determinants of innovativeness, impact on costs, innovation's relationship with sustainability, innovation drivers, collaboration, aspects of innovation on success, innovation types' effectiveness on health tourism establishments and successful innovation applications.

Keywords: Bibliometric analysis; Health tourism; Spa tourism; Innovation; medical tourism.

Revisión sistemática de la literatura sobre innovación en turismo de salud

Resumen: La innovación es una cuestión importante para cualquier negocio y un concepto especialmente vital para el establecimiento y crecimiento de un negocio de turismo de salud exitoso para obtener mejoras comerciales y ventajas diferenciales en la competencia. El propósito de este estudio es descubrir las lagunas en la literatura sobre innovación en emprendimiento de turismo de salud, mostrar la situación integral y completa, las áreas en las que se centraron las áreas relacionadas e indicar las áreas prometedoras relacionadas para la investigación en innovación en turismo de salud. Así, la importancia de este estudio radica en 2 subtemas como; 1) proporcionar una breve revisión de la literatura sobre la innovación en el turismo de salud 2) indicar las lagunas en la investigación en innovación en el turismo de salud. Los resultados indican que existe un grave vacío de investigación en los estudios de innovación en turismo de spa y bienestar, ya que los estudios se concentran en el turismo médico y de salud. Además, se entiende que la mayoría de los autores prefieren la investigación cualitativa seguida de los métodos mixtos, lo que genera una brecha de investigación para los estudios cuantitativos en el área. Por lo tanto, la mayoría de las áreas investigadas consisten en determinantes de la innovación, el impacto en los costos, la relación de la innovación con la sostenibilidad, los impulsores de la innovación, la colaboración, los aspectos de la innovación sobre el éxito, la efectividad de los tipos de innovación en los establecimientos de turismo de salud y las aplicaciones exitosas de la innovación.

Palabras clave: Análisis bibliométrico; Turismo de salud; Turismo balneario; Innovación; Turismo médico

* Yaşar University, Department of Business Administration (Turquia); <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8068-1736>; E-mail ige.pınar@yasar.edu.tr

** Yaşar University, Department of Business Administration (Turquia); <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9000-2944>; E-mail ozan.altin@yasar.edu.tr

Cite: Pınar, I. & Ozan, H. (2024). *Pasos. Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 22(2), 381-396. <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2024.22.026>

1. Introduction

Innovation applications are crucial for every single business in the world that aims to improve their operations to be more effective and efficient. Additionally, innovations are known to provide competitive advantage to their innovators along with other great opportunities. According to Hilami et al. (2010), innovativeness can be exemplified as launching a significantly changed aspect into the market by incorporating something new and unique. In many different sectors, innovative practices are embraced dearly due to the aforementioned benefits it provides. One of the most prominent of these sectors is the health tourism sector. Innovation is vital for health tourism establishments which want to grow, improve and gain competitive advantage within the market. Health tourism innovation covers various aspects of formation and development of new ideas, creative applications or improvement for better health tourism offerings resulting in increased customer satisfaction, increased brand loyalty, cost reductions, increased positive word-of-mouth, more efficient marketing and management strategies, all leading to higher profits and/or lower costs. Especially the innovations in health, spa and wellness tourism are pivotal to establishments that host the aforementioned innovations since the patient experience is crucial to the satisfaction and overall health of the patient. As Smith et al. (2016) mentions, close interaction between employees of the health tourism establishment and the patients are of great importance since it can affect the experience of the patient immensely. Moreover, as the technology is progressing and the overall world population is aging faster than ever, health tourism services are getting more and more significant (Szymanska, 2017). Being one of the sub-sectors of tourism field, health tourism is growing faster than any other sub-sectors of tourism (Szymanska et al., 2017). Thus, studying the innovative practices and innovativeness in health tourism sector holds crucial importance.

Therefore, innovation in the health tourism sector is an important topic for not only health tourism practitioners but also for academics studying on the topic. Even though this is the case, the number of related studies is few and quite scattered in their scope, which a considerable gap in the literature. Thus, primary purpose of this study is to present a comprehensive picture of the health tourism entrepreneurship literature by pointing out the research gaps in the field, aspects where the current, existing studies are focusing on and by identifying potential future study areas.

2. Literature Review

Innovation is a trendy and popular term in many fields of management. “The term “innovation” comes from Latin and means the introduction of something new, a reform – based on *innovatio*, which means “renewal”, or *innovare*, which means “to renew” (Szymańska, 2016:29). It is a term concerning the introduction of new or trendy marketable ideas, goods, services, applications, adaptations and practices aiming to be useful for the user. It is a vital topic for businesses which want to grow, be profitable and gain a competitive advantage. Innovation applications have other benefits like improvement of systems and applications, increase in effectiveness, efficiency and quality levels (Pirnar et al., 2019). There are many types of applied innovations in tourism industry like product innovations, process innovations, marketing innovations, organizational innovations, logistics innovations, business model innovations (Pirnar, 2020). As stated by Szymanska et al. (2017), tourism is considered as one of the fastest growing sectors among many others. It is already considered as one of the most important sectors in the world. In a similar note, a growing interest that surrounds the tourism is quite apparent (Yuan, Tseng & Chang, 2014). There is no single uniform description in the literature that is widely accepted by researchers due to the definitional paradoxes and consequent complexities (Theobald, 2015; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012). Literature is filled with different definitions of tourism. According to Goeldner et al. (2000), tourism can be defined as the business, art and the science of alluring, enticing, accommodating and even transporting visitors and satisfying their various needs and wants. World Tourism Organization on the other hand, defines the tourism as the “temporary staying of visitors at least 24 hours in the country visited for leisure (recreation, holiday, health, study, religion, sport); business, family, mission, meeting” (Veal, 2008 p. 68). Due to the complexity of the field, description of tourism and its sub-aspects are still up for continuous debate. However, this definitional conundrum has not affected the tourism’s impact on world economy. Tourism is still one of the most important sectors in the world. In line with this importance, tourism is among one of the most research topics in academic

leagues. Therefore, many sub-sectors of tourism can be found in the literature such as adventure tourism, dark tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, heritage tourism, business tourism, cultural tourism etc. (Arunmozhi & Panneerselvam, 2013).

2.1. Health Tourism

Based on the information stated previously, it is prudent to remark that health tourism has the fastest growing rate between the sub-sectors of tourism. Boruszczak (2010) defines the health tourism as a specific sub-topic of tourism which aims to improve or preserve the health of the recipient. Considering this statement; Szymanska and Panfiluk (2020) mentions that recipients of health tourism services include people who suffer from not only critical diseases, but also people who wants to change some fundamental aspects in their lives or improve their health overall. Health tourism is defined as an industry characterized by high development dynamics where the related services are offered at various markets. Hence, the market levels vary from local to regional and going beyond more to national and even to global scale (Panasiuk, 2018).

Health tourism is a huge market that accounts for 15% of the total global revenue of tourism (Dunets et al., 2020). Individuals seek out health tourism options for many reasons such as cost of health services in tourist's home countries, queues for waiting to receive health services, shoddy quality of health institutions, availability of high-tech health services in foreign countries, new treatment options, increased importance given to the physical well-being and convenient travel options which made health tourism much more desirable throughout the world (Ulusoy & Tosun, 2020). For these reasons, health tourism is one of the booming sectors in all around the world which has led to the establishment of networks of sanatoriums, franchise hospitals, resort organizations, health institutions, wellness clinics and complementary establishments (Dunets et al., 2020). Establishment of these aforementioned organizations and health institutions paved the way for more sophisticated health services offered to tourists. According to Lunt et al. (2014), these health services and treatment options include but not limited to eye surgeries, hair transplants, cardiologic surgeries, cosmetic surgeries, wide range of dentistry, oncoming diagnostics, orthodontic prostheses and even organ transplantations. Within this context, Helmy (2011) remarks that health tourism is a huge topic that encompasses immediate healthcare, cure treatment, therapeutic practices, leisure-healing and spas. All of which increases the quality of life for individuals or downright treats any health-related issues.

Thus, health tourism is related to living a long and prosperous life, remaining healthy and gaining beauty and good body fit (Szymańska, 2015), therefore, health tourism innovation aims the end result as this with various new applications as the product and service, process, management and marketing, organization and business model innovations. Considering health tourism innovations, introduction of cold spas to hospitality for health tourism is an example of product innovation, whereas using robots for cleaning services, E-Health and using other digital services are process innovation types, applying Total Innovation Management or co-branding are management and marketing innovation types and low-cost carriers are types of logistics or transportation innovations (Pirnar et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2016; Zsarnoczka, 2018). Hence, the changes in the profiles of health tourists and available innovation application or adaptation areas are stated in Table I.

2.2. Spa and Wellness Tourism

In the academic literature, spa and wellness tourism is often seen as a sub-area of health tourism (Ulusoy & Tosun, 2020; Vystoupil, Sauer & Bobkova, 2017). Spa and wellness tourism are one of the fastest growing parts of health tourism. Within this context, wellness tourism can be described as a specific type of a health tourism in which individuals travel to different destinations for many reasons such as maintaining and even enhancing their health, seeking leisure integrated with health services, looking for unique experiences and authentic practices. On the other hand, Ulusoy and Tosun (2020) defines wellness tourism as the international and domestic travels that individuals undertake to maintain and protect the wellbeing of his/her own mental state or physical body. According to Zelenka and Paskova (2012), wellness can be described as recreational activities whose main aim is to ensure a good physical and mental health. According to Arunmozhi and Panneerselvam (2013), services provided within wellness experience includes post-operative treatments, body treatments, spa experiences, massages, fitness facilities, exercise programs, facial treatments, mental cures and weight loss programs. Additionally, Ulusoy and Tosun (2020) includes thalasso therapy, bath cares, algae baths, skin care practices that involve mud therapy into the scope of wellness tourism.

Table 1: Changes in the health tourists / customers and related areas for innovation in health tourism services

Changes in the segment of health tourists	Areas for Innovation in Health Tourism Services
Higher income / relative increase in affluence Increasing demand for luxury health tourism products	Higher demand for individualization and personalization High quality service offerings New market segment demanding affluent products
Customers looking for excitement, adventure, something special and different	Culture and experience as important ingredients Authenticity Meaningful experiences, themes and stories
Changing life-styles /habits of individuals / consumers	Diversifying tastes and looking for alternative health tourism products Polarizing spending patterns within individuals
Easy access to any information, too much communication and promotion messages	Social media Digital marketing E-health tourism
Co-creation tourism	Innovative cooperative / co-creative health tourism product / service packages Various collaboration areas
More sophisticated tourists	Standardization, certification and better price/quality ratio in health tourism services Quality management
Increasing number of Internet users	Internet booking is quickly becoming a key channel for travel products Tourism establishments and travel suppliers are use more sophisticated online marketing and distribution strategies Various online communication and consumption patterns appearing
Individualism	Niche marketing Increasing popularity for specific health tourism themes
Ecology, green applications and sustainability gaining popularity	Responsible tourism & corporate social responsibility (CSR) Nature friendly, ecological and culturally sensitive health tourism products Green spas, green health travel packages

As one of the sub-areas of health tourism, wellness tourism can be differentiated from the health tourism based on the fact that the main motive of the recipients of wellness tourism is to maintain their physical wellbeing, preserving their health, preventing any potential diseases. Unlike health tourism, recipients of wellness tourism do not seek treatment for their any existing health problems (Muller & Kauffman, 2001). Thus, wellness tourism is often conducted and sought after by already healthy people hoping to ensure their wellbeing by protecting their health. Health tourism recipients on the other hand, actively seek treatment for various illnesses, diseases or medical conditions (Özsarı & Karatana, 2013). According to Ulusoy and Tosun (2020), Europe has the highest number of tourists coming to their establishments but North America is the highest recipient of wellness tourism expenditures.

Spa tourism can be considered as an important aspect and component of wellness tourism (Papadopoulou, 2020). In line with this information, spa establishments generate an important part of the tourism revenue generate by overall health tourism institutions. According to Okech (2014), spa tourism is a sector that experiences quick growth. Moreover, current interest in spa tourism is due to the integration of remedial therapies which has traditional characteristics with newer practices known as new age therapies. Of course, there are many other reasons why spa tourism is sought after. First and foremost, spa tourism offers its recipients to enjoy their time and forget the stress that their daily life incurs on them (Yurcu, 2017). Based on this information, spas are conceptualized in the literature as the establishments in which professional wellness services and offered to ensure the recipients wellbeing via remedying and refreshing the mind and body of the individual (Hyde-Smith, 2012).

Scope of services provided within spa establishments are often similar to each other. Shock baths, balneotherapy, thalassotherapy, hydrotherapy, fitness options, curative massages, saunas, water-based therapies, cosmetic therapies are only some of the services provided by spas (Papadopolou, 2020). Additionally, exercises, mud therapies, sound therapies, climatherapy, color massages and period therapies can be provided by spas

In the literature, types of spas are differentiated based on their operation styles, scope of services and geographical locations provided to customers. There are various types of spas. Day spas are open only on days and provide no services on evenings or nights. As stated by Okech (2014), day spas provide fitness services, wellness treatment options and massages. Hotel spas on the other hand, provide accommodation in addition to the aforementioned services provided by day spas. Destination spas offer people to reach their desired healthy lifestyle through healthy cuisines, physical activities and even education on the wellness. (Hashemi et al., 2015). Spas that are established around a source of thermal mineral water or seawater is called mineral springs. Cosmetic spas provide various services which include non-invasive procedures such as waxing, wellness services, massage, peeling and mud baths (Okech, 2014). Cruise spas are established in cruise ships, which mostly provides similar services as day spas (Okech, 2014).

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to figure out the gaps in the innovation in health tourism entrepreneurship literature, show the comprehensive whole situation, the areas where the related studies are focused on and indicate the promising areas for research in health tourism innovation. Study at hand is theoretical in essence with the primary objective of seeking information and knowledge in a given area, which makes it descriptive and exploratory in nature. Within this context, bibliometric analysis method is employed in this paper. As stated by Aliaga-Isla and Rialp (2013), bibliometric analysis can be utilized to gather a comprehensive body of knowledge in a given academic area while also reducing the bias that may occur. Throughout the bibliometric research process, an altered version of the search protocol previously generated by Fahimnia et al. (2015) is used. To strengthen the reliability of the search process and foster the validity of research, 3 different criteria are implemented throughout the search process, which are adapted from Indarti et al. (2020).

First criterion to be embraced during the search process is the keywords that are employed to identify studies relevant to our purpose. Two sets of keywords are utilized to uncover related studies, which can be seen in Figure XXX. First set of keywords consists of “Health Tourism”, “Wellness Tourism”, “Spa Tourism” and “Medical Tourism” whereas second keywords set include “Innovation”, “Innovativeness” and “Innovation Management”. Keywords are generated based on the initiative of the authors and a thorough scrutinization of the academic literature. 12 different keyword combinations are searched on relevant databases.

Second criterion that are incorporated is the classification of studies. Journal articles, book chapters, dissertations and conference proceedings are taken into consideration during the search process since latest scholarly development, scientific developments as well as the contemporary academic themes and theories are represented by those scholarly works. Remaining publications such as newspapers, non-academic magazines are excluded. Only the articles that are published by peer-reviewed journals are included in the search in order to maintain the rigorousness of the research (Indarti et al. 2020).

Last criterion to be considered is the language of the studies examined throughout the search process. Only the scholarly works that are published in English are included into our research. Majority of prominent academic databases uses English as their primary language and most reputable academic journals throughout the world are publishing their articles in English (Cruz & Falcao, 2016), which justifies the language choice.

As stated previously, a set of criteria is followed strictly to identify relevant academic studies in databases and exclude those who are not eligible. Nevertheless, quite liberal inclusion criteria are utilized while exclusion criteria are kept to a minimum level. Table 2 below present a compact version of the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Table 2: Utilized Keyword

Health Tourism	AND	Innovation
Spa Tourism		Innovativeness
Wellness Tourism		Innovation Management
Medical Tourism		

After identifying inclusion and exclusion criteria, search process began for the bibliometric analysis. To maximize the inclusiveness of the research, EBSCO, Web of Science, Emerald and SCOPUS databases were examined and scrutinized. From these databases, relevant scholarly works are identified and retrieved by searching for pre-determined keywords and using necessary Boolean operators such as “AND”, “OR”, “NOT” “EXCL” and “INCL” in the advanced search section of the databases.

After a thorough search processes covering 4 databases and 12 different keyword combinations, 35 studies are identified. After a careful evaluation, it was found that 12 of the studies are either duplicates or does not conform to inclusion criteria, which reduced the number of eligible studies to 23. All of the remaining studies are carefully analyzed again to ensure that they are eligible to be included in this study. This process is conducted by both authors independently to increase the rigorosity and reliability of the research.

In order to identify contemporary theories, current breakthroughs, theoretical patterns and recent trends in innovation within health tourism sector, various information is excerpted from previously identified studies. An excel spreadsheet is generated to dissect previously identified studies. Title of the studies, publication year, their attached keywords, author name(s), utilized methodology and results of the studies are carefully examined and recorded by both authors in an iterative manner to ensure the objectivity of the research. Additionally, iterative process revealed unique insights about the studies which may not have been possible if conducted by only one author. Findings yielded interesting and thought-provoking results, which can be examined in the next section.

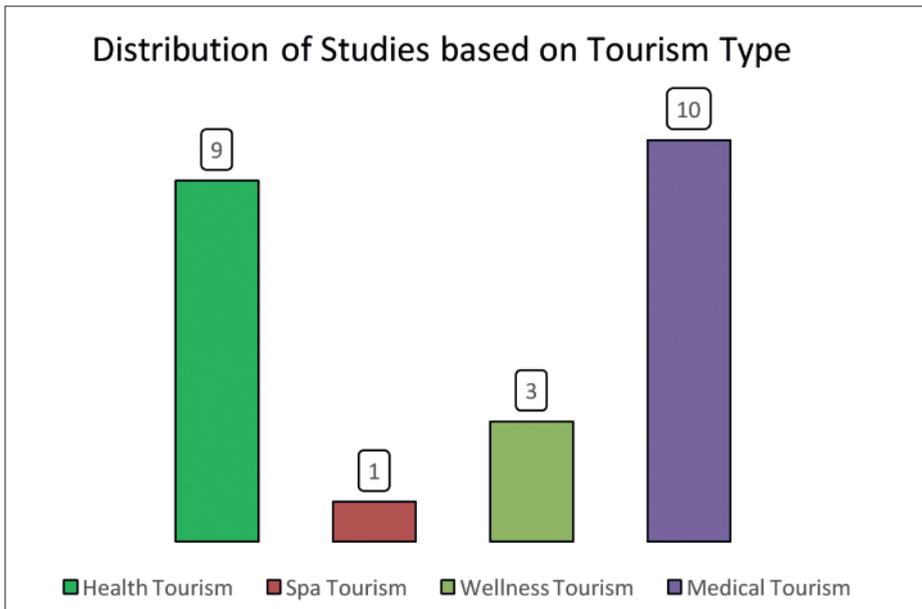
4. Results

The results of the bibliometric study are stated below. The table 4 refers to the number of articles found in each combination of keywords. Even though bibliometric analysis identified 23 unique studies, virtually none of them are associated with “health tourism innovation management”, “spa tourism innovativeness” “spa tourism innovation management” “wellness tourism innovativeness” “medical tourism innovativeness” and “medical tourism innovation management”. Lack of academic studies that include these keywords present a huge gap in the academic literature; which may yield alluring research avenues for future studies to pursue. Additionally, among the second set of keywords, bibliometric search for “innovativeness” and “innovation management” yielded only 1 study for each; which shows that particular field is nascent.

As the related research results and table 4 indicate, there is a serious research gap in the spa and wellness tourism related academic studies within the context of innovation and innovativeness. Rather, it was found that existing scholarly works are mainly concentrated on health tourism and medical tourism. Regardless, it must be mentioned that apparent lack of academic studies regarding spa and wellness tourism is not surprising since the history of both health tourism and medical tourism goes way beyond that those of spa and wellness tourism. Bibliometric analysis revealed that %43.47 of the studies are associated with medical tourism whereas health tourism comprises of %39.13 of the studies. Spa and wellness tourism on the other hand accounts only for %17.39 of the studies. For the distribution see the figure below:

Table 3: The Distribution of the Studies

Keywords		Quantity
Health Tourism	Innovation	8
	Innovativeness	1
	Innovation Management	0
Spa Tourism	Innovation	1
	Innovativeness	0
	Innovation Management	0
Wellness Tourism	Innovation	2
	Innovativeness	0
	Innovation Management	1
Medical Tourism	Innovation	10
	Innovativeness	0
	Innovation Management	0
Total No. Of Studies		23

Figure 1: Studies Based on Tourism Type

Methodologies employed by the authors is another aspect we have examined in our bibliometric analysis. As shown in Figure 2 below, %45 of the studies in our analysis have utilized qualitative analysis whereas %30 employed quantitative analysis. %25 of the studies on the other hand implemented mixed methods as their methodology. Widespread usage of qualitative analysis may be associated with the nascent stage of the fields. As stated by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007), qualitative methods are mostly incorporated into inductive research; which are particularly suitable for up-and-coming academic fields with only few concrete theories and uniform theoretical framework.

Figure 2: Research Methodologies of Articles

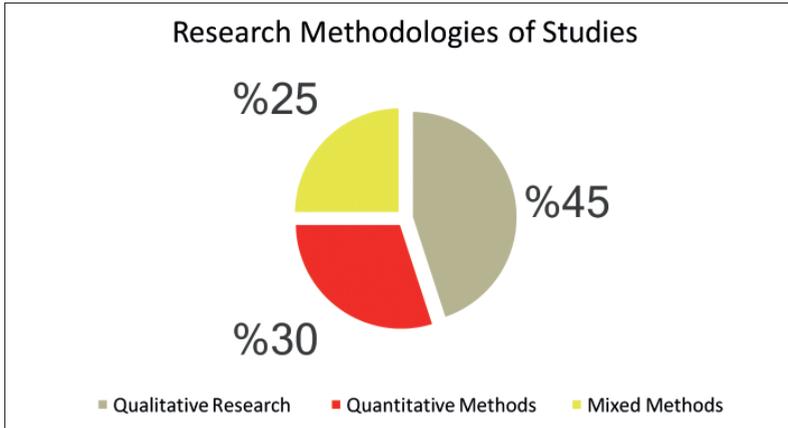
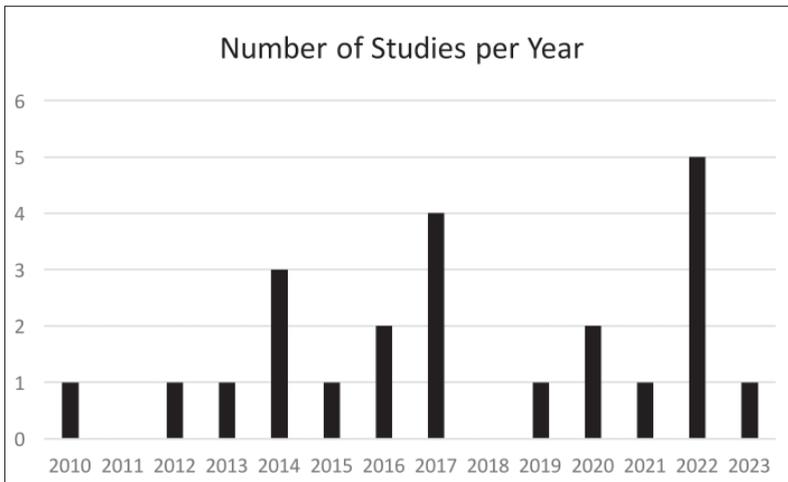


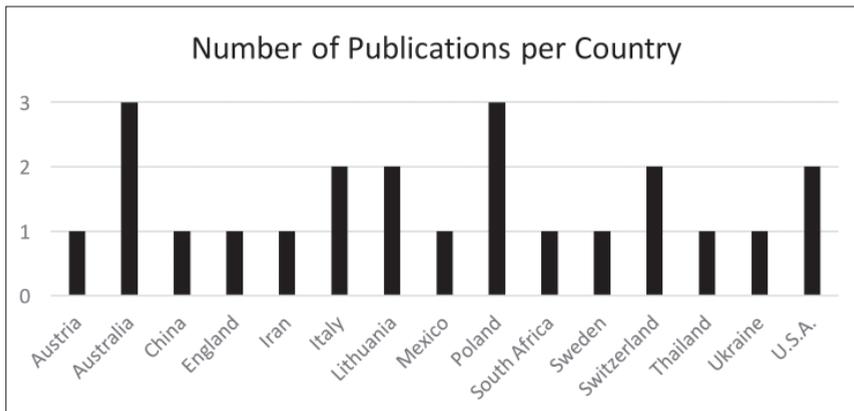
Figure 3 below remarks the publication year of the studies. Even though no year-based restrictions were implemented during the search on databases, it was found that first ever academic study on health tourism was conducted in 2010. Since 2010, number of studies were found to be increasing at a gradual rate. 2022 marks the highest number of studies conducted on health tourism innovation with 5 studies in one year; which can be associated with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) disease. It is prudent to assume that worldwide spread of COVID-19 also drawn significant attention to innovation concept in health and medical tourism. Naturally, oncoming years will produce higher number of health tourism and innovation related academic studies.

Figure 3: Number of Studies Based on Years



Publication location of the studies reveal that Poland and Australia leads health tourism innovation field with 3 studies whereas Switzerland, U.S.A., Lithuania and Italy follow with 2 study for each. Primary takeaway from the table 4 below is that developed nations throughout the world regardless of their respective continents lead the academic spearhead on health tourism and innovation discipline.

Figure 4: Publishing Location of Studies



Detailed bibliometric analysis covering the whole literature review on health tourism innovation is shown in Table 5 below:

Table 4: Detailed Bibliometric Analysis of Health Tourism Innovation

Keyword	Year	Title of The Study	Author(s)	Methodology	Results and Conclusion
Health Tourism & Innovation	2022	An Ontology-Based Decision Support System to Foster Innovation and Competitiveness Opportunities of Health Tourism Destinations	Daniele Spoladore, Elena Pessot	N/A	Chapter point out the usage of collaborative engineering in order to highlight the role of natural resources and other amenities so that destination's health-based tourism offer can be enhanced.
Health Tourism & Innovation	2022	Innovation Practices and Techniques for Nature-Based Health Tourism Competitiveness	Mirjana Nenad, Elena Pessot	N/A	Chapter present recommendations to magnify the attractiveness of nature and health-based tourism in the Alpine region of Italy. Recommendations include adaptation to current infrastructure and engagement with stakeholders
Health Tourism & Innovation	2022	Valorization of Natural Cardio Trekking Trails Through Open Innovation for the Promotion of Sustainable Cross-generational Health-Oriented Tourism in the Connect2Move Project: Protocol for a Cross-sectional Study	Barbara Mayr, Maximilien Beck, Laura Eisenberger, Verena Venek (...), Josef Niebauer	Quantitative Methods: Cross Sectional Study of Laboratory Testing	Findings of the study mentions the benefits of hiking activities and overall fitness with a primary focus on Alpine region. Decreased blood pressure and stress, increased emotional and physical well-being and stronger immune system are some of the said benefits.

Keyword	Year	Title of The Study	Author(s)	Methodology	Results and Conclusion
Health Tourism & Innovation	2020	Tourism Service Factors Affecting Health Tourism Service Innovation in Mae Hong Son Province	K. Phanpanya, W. Leelapattana, W. Thongma, Y. Waiapha	Quantitative Methods: Multi-Variable Regression Analysis with Descriptive Statistics	Results of the study remarks that proactive approach to the operational procedures in the Mae Hong Son provinces along with the customer cooperation concurrently affects the innovation in health tourism providers.
Health Tourism & Innovation	2020	Determinants of Technological Innovations in Health Tourism Enterprises	Elzbieta Szymańska, Eugenia Panfiluk	Mixed Methods: Delphi Method and Standardized Interview	Results revealed that in the health tourism organizations and subsequent services, most crucial aspect of innovation is the transfer of knowledge, that has two fundamental components: human resources quality and external information inflow.
Health Tourism & Innovativeness	2017	The Measurement of the Innovativeness of Health Tourism Services Using an Adequacy Matrix	Eugenia Panfiluk, Elzbieta Szymańska	Mixed Methods: Delphi Method and Questionnaires.	Study identifies the measurement levels of the assessment of the level of involvement in innovative activities. Results reveal that in order to measure the innovativeness, number of tourists and visitors is considered an accurate measurement.
Health Tourism & Innovation	2017	Innovation Systems in Health Tourism	Elzbieta Szymańska	Mixed Methods: Delphi Method, Questionnaire and Interviews	Study showed that most of the innovations applied on the health tourism providers have basic, linear characteristics. Moreover, open innovation is the most frequently applied innovation system in the health tourism providers.
Health Tourism & Innovation	2017	Organizational Innovations in Health Resort-Based Tourism	Elzbieta Szymańska, Ewa Dziedzic, Andrzej Rutkowski	Mixed Methods: Delphi Method, Standardized Interviews and Mapping	Study shows that openness to the customers and official certification systems affect the innovativeness of the health tourism institutions. Moreover, external stakeholders may have an impact on the innovativeness of the organization.
Health Tourism & Innovation	2016	Consumer Participation in the Health Tourism Innovation Process	Elzbieta Szymańska	Mixed Methods: Standardized Interviews, Questionnaire and Comparative Analysis	Result displayed that among the different types of innovation, diffuse innovation is considered as the most innovative but least used whereas the cooperative innovation types are quite common. Most popular is the linear innovation process.

Keyword	Year	Title of The Study	Author(s)	Methodology	Results and Conclusion
Spa Tourism & Innovation	2016	Service Innovations and Experience Creation in Spas, Wellness and Medical Tourism	Melanie Kay Smith, Sonia Ferrari, László Puczkó	Quantitative Methods: Online Interview w/ Case Studies	According to the study; design, technology and other innovation aspects are not as important as it was initially thought within the case of spas. However, local resources, medical services, treatments etc. are considered important.
Wellness Tourism & Innovation	2022	Empirical Research into the Development Mechanism of Industry Innovation of Health and Wellness Tourism in the Context of the Sharing Economy	Li Li, Xuejun Chen	Quantitative Methods: Questionnaire Surveys	Study revealed that public operational resources, existing infrastructure and industry cooperative networks of health & wellness tourism yield significant positive influence on industry innovation.
Wellness Tourism & Innovation Management	2015	Suggesting a Framework for Innovation Management in the Industry of Wellness Tourism and Spas	Marios Sotiriadis, Cina Van Zyl, Carmen Poole	Qualitative Research: Extensive Literature Review	Findings of the article shows that in order to generate innovation in spas and wellness centers, offering an environment that conforms to the expectations of the customers is important. Opportunities for added value should be identified and exploited.
Wellness Tourism & Innovation	2012	Capitalizing on Emerging Tourism Trends: An Exploratory Examination of Jamaica's Wellness Tourism Sector Within an Innovation System Framework	Dawn H. Percy, Jacquelyn Lester	Qualitative Research: Extensive Literature Review	Findings of the study indicate that collaboration is crucial for the success of wellness tourism. Study also mentions that for sustainable medical tourism to work effectively in Jamaica, society and environment must be connected at a fundamental level.
Medical Tourism & Innovation	2023	Innovation environment for sustainable medical tourism in a country	Nasrin Sultana, Ekaterine Turkina, Patrick Cohendet	Quantitative Research: Fixed Effect Regression Analysis	Study remarks that building up and strengthening the innovation environment in a country is of great importance. Additionally, sustainable medical tourism can be achieved by integrating different stakeholders via collaboration.
Medical Tourism & Innovation	2022	Effect of knowledge resources on innovation and the mediating role of dynamic capabilities: case of medical tourism sector in Iran	Gerry Edgar, Amirali Kharazmi, Sedigheh Behzadi, Omid Ali Kharazmi	Quantitative Research: Questionnaire Surveys	Results of the research shows that dynamic capability of learning in medical tourism sector pave the way for knowledge resources to be transformed into innovation.

Keyword	Year	Title of The Study	Author(s)	Methodology	Results and Conclusion
Medical Tourism & Innovation	2021	Innovation in Value Chain in the Medical Tourism Industry in Tijuana, Baja California	Alma Laura Bonilla Hernandez, Rodolfo Martinez-Gutierrez	Qualitative Research: In-Depth Interviews	Study highlights the historical development of health tourism in Baja California, such as the improvement of infrastructure, creating an affordable health ecosystem and designing a sustainable strategy.
Medical Tourism & Innovation	2019	Innovations in Medical Tourism Against the Paradigm of Sustainable Development Background	Aleksandra Machnik, Adrian Lubowiecki-Vikuk	Qualitative Research: Case Study	Research indicate that although in theory sustainability is advantageous and beneficial for medical tourism, it is quite hard to implement. Moreover, findings suggest that medical tourism is not always perceived as a sustainable sector.
Medical Tourism & Innovation	2017	New innovations in medical tourism and wellness in Europe: Switzerland	Frederik Demicco	Qualitative Research: Group Interviews	Study mentions the state-of-the-art medical resorts located in Swiss Mountains, which combines luxury with hotels. Moreover, results remark that price can be an important attraction factor for patients.
Medical Tourism & Innovation	2014	Medical Tourism: A Conceptual Framework for an Innovation in Global Healthcare Provision	Anita Medhekar, Ho Yin Wong, John Hall	Qualitative Research: Literature Review	Research indicate that there are three drivers for medical tourism: quality, cost and waiting time. Additionally, study propose a model which represents the innovational aspects in medical tourism.
Medical Tourism & Innovation	2014	Innovation and Specialization Strategies in Medical Tourism: Evidences from Europe	Erik A. Borg, Karl Gratzner, Kjell Ljungbo	Qualitative Research: Extensive Literature Review	Study recommends some pathways for medical tourism institutions to counter the impact of globalization. Specialization and better customer targeting is suggested for aforementioned institutions.
Medical Tourism & Innovation	2014	Innovation in Medical Tourism Service Marketing: A Case of India	Anita Medhekar, Ho Yin Wong, John Hall	Qualitative Research: Literature Review	According to the study, medical tourism in India should be supported by government via sustainable marketing campaign since the India has received increased number of medical tourists. Some suggestions are provided to aforementioned institutions.

Keyword	Year	Title of The Study	Author(s)	Methodology	Results and Conclusion
Medical Tourism & Innovation	2013	Development of Regional Medical Tourism Markets in Ukraine Based on Innovation Principles	Viktoriya Malimon, Iryna Vakhovych, Yuliya Volynchuk	Qualitative Research: Literature Review	Results revealed that to increase the tourism incomes, medical problems should be solved with innovative approaches. Furthermore, study recommends that implementing innovative technologies can effectively develop the medical tourism in Ukraine.
Medical Tourism & Innovation	2010	Medical Tourism: Game-Changing Innovation or Passing Fad?	Howard Underwood, Harvey J. Makadon	N/A	Study mentions that innovations that increases the fundamental value of medical tourists are usually time-consuming and not cost-effective. Within this context, medical tourism is a viable option for accessible healthcare.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Innovation is a term concerning the introduction of new or trendy marketable ideas, goods, services, applications, adaptations and practices aiming to be useful for the establishment or the user. It is a vital topic for businesses which want to grow, be profitable and gain a competitive advantage. Yet, it is understood that as an important and vital issue, innovation studies in health tourism are few in numbers and scattered in scope.

Thorough examination of the databases and subsequent bibliometric research indicate that there is a serious research gap in the innovation studies in spa and wellness tourism, where the present studies are concentrated on health and medical studies. This apparent gap in the literature may provide interesting and alluring research avenues for future studies in which innovation will play even a bigger part. Bibliometric research also revealed that oldest academic study in the field dates back to 2010; which is quite recent. Since then number of studies on health tourism and innovation is gradually rising, peaking in 2022. A justification for this peak can be associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, otherwise known as novel coronavirus. Worldwide spread of the coronavirus drew significant attention to the health tourism field as well, which explains the higher number of studies after 2021. Among the 23 studies included in our bibliometric research, almost half of them have utilized qualitative research methods. Only %30 of the studies were employed quantitative methods. Prominent usage of qualitative methods can be attributed to the infancy of the field where inductive research approach is much more suitable due to the lack of uniform findings, lack of concrete theoretical background and conceptual framework.

The breakdown of the studies and detailed analysis reveals that some authors focus on the measurement and determinants of innovativeness whereas others focused on various innovation applications and their impacts on the marketing or organization success, consumer satisfaction or profits. Within context of innovation types, studies in the field point out that cooperative innovation is quite common among the health tourism organizations with two or more institutions get together to incorporate unique innovation into their operations; yet the most popular innovation type is the linear model of innovation. In the same topic, another study revealed that majority of the innovations implemented by health tourism institutions have basic and linear characteristics; which is in line with the findings in academic literature. Openness to the customers, cooperation with both external and internal actors as well as utilizing official certification systems were found to be positively impacting innovativeness among health tourism institutions. In a similar manner, inviting external stakeholders into the innovation process were found to be fruitful for apparent innovativeness in health tourism institutions, which is the reason why open innovation is the most frequently applied innovation system in health tourism providers. This phenomenon is also present in relevant academic literature. Our bibliometric research highlighted some of the most

significant drivers of medical tourism. Namely, authors in the field identified quality, cost and the waiting time as the primary drivers of medical tourism. In line with these findings, studies in our bibliometric research revealed that innovative approaches implemented on medical problems will lead to exponential increase in the tourism income. Nevertheless, negative impact of the innovation on health and medical tourism is also present among the studies. Underwood (2010) in particular remarks that even though innovations increase fundamental value of the medical tourism; they are also quite time-consuming and not so cost-effective. Breakdown of the studies also highlight the importance of collaboration. Studies mention that for wellness and spa institutions to maintain their operations in a sustainable manner, a connection between environment, organizations and society is necessary. Moreover, a proactive approach embraced by wellness and spa organizations to their operational procedures along with customer cooperation positively impact the innovation in health tourism providers. Aspects of innovation for success is also a preferred research area. Studies emphasize that local resources, provided medical services and implemented treatments are some of the most important aspects for spa institutions whereas technology, design and other innovation-based aspects are of secondary importance. In a supporting study, Sotiriadis, Van Zyl and Poole (2015) mentions that in order to generate innovation in spas and wellness centers, offering an environment that conforms to the expectations of the customers is important. Opportunities for added value should be identified and exploited. These opportunities can be identified through transfer of knowledge; which is considered as the most important aspect of innovation for spa organizations. Last topic of interest that are researched in health tourism and innovation context is the sustainability. Findings of the studies include in the bibliometric research points out that while medical tourism is not always perceived as a sustainable sector and it is quite hard to implement, it is also quite advantageous and provide competitive advantage in the long run. To summarize, the areas researched most consists of measurement and determinants of innovativeness, impact on costs, innovation's relationship with sustainability, drivers of innovation, collaboration, aspects of innovation on success, various innovation types' effectiveness on health tourism establishments and successful innovation applications.

Naturally, number of limitations exist are present in this study. Foremost of the limitations is the number of examined databases. Due to the time and accessibility limitations, only 4 databases (EBSCO, Emerald, Web of Science and SCOPUS) are examined. Thus, any other relevant study or scholarly work that may be present in other databases are not included in this bibliometric research. Language barriers present another limitation for this study. Only the studies published in English were included in this bibliometric research. Studies published in any other language were not included in the research due to the language limitations of authors. Within this context, future studies may incorporate additional databases to expand their scope of research which may yield additional insights about the innovation concept within health tourism sector.

References

- Aliaga-Isla, R. and Rialp, A., 2013. Systematic review of immigrant entrepreneurship literature: previous findings and ways forward. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 25(9-10), pp.819-844.
- Arunmozhi, T., & Panneerselvam, A. 2013. Types of tourism in India. *International Journal of Current Research and Academic Review*, 1(1), 84-88.
- Boruszczak, M. 2010. *Turystyka zdrowotna*. Wyższa Szkoła Turystyki i Hotelarstwa, Gdańsk.
- Demiccò, F. J. 2017. New innovations in medical tourism and wellness in Europe: Switzerland. In *Medical Tourism and Wellness* (pp. 279-288). Apple Academic Press.
- Dunets, A. N., Yankovskaya, V., Plisova, A. B., Mikhailova, M. V., Vakhrushev, I. B., & Aleshko, R. A. 2020. Health tourism in low mountains: A case study. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 7(3), 2213. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2020.7.3\(50\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2020.7.3(50))
- Cruz, E. P., & de Queiroz Falcão, R. P. 2016. Revisão bibliométrica no tema Empreendedorismo Imigrante e Étnico. *Revista Eletrônica de Negócios Internacionais (Internext)*, 11(3), 78-94.
- Fahimnia, B., Sarkis, J., & Davarzani, H. 2015. Green supply chain management: A review and bibliometric analysis. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 162, 101-114.
- Goeldner, C.R., Ritchie, J.R.B., & McIntosh, R.W. 2000. *Tourism, principles, practices and philosophies*. John Wiley & Sons
- Goeldner, C. R., & Ritchie B. 2012. *Tourism: Principles, Practices, Philosophies*. Wiley Publication.

- Hashemi, S. M., Jusoh, J., Kiumarsi, S., & Mohammadi, S. 2015. Influence factors of spa and wellness tourism on revisit intention: The mediating role of international tourist motivation and tourist satisfaction. *International Journal of Research-Granthaalayah*, 3(7), 1-11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v3.i7.2015.2976>
- Helmy, E. M. 2011. Benchmarking the Egyptian medical tourism sector against international best practices: an exploratory study. *Tourismos*, 6(2), 293-311.
- Hilami, M. F., Ramayah, T., Mustapha, Y., & Pawanchik, S. 2010. Product and Process Innovativeness, Evidence from Malaysian SMEs. *European Journal of Social Science*, 16(4), 557-568.
- Hyde-Smith, J. 2012. *The wellness spa: construct definition and performance evaluation* [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation] Auckland University of Technology.
- Indarti, N., Hapsari, N., Lukito-Budi, A. S., & Virgosita, R. 2020. Quo vadis, ethnic entrepreneurship? A bibliometric analysis of ethnic entrepreneurship in growing markets. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*.
- Lunt, N., Smith, R.D., Mannion, R., Green, S.T., Exworthy, M., Hanefeld, J., Horsfall, D., Machin, L. and King, H. 2014. "Implications for the NHS of inward and outward medical tourism: a policy and economic analysis using literature review and mixed-methods approaches", *Health Services and Delivery Research*, 2(2) 1-234. DOI: 10.3310/hsdr02020
- Machnik, A., & Lubowiecki-Vikuk, A. 2019. Innovations in medical tourism against the paradigm of sustainable development background. In *Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Inequality* (pp. 132-160). Routledge.
- Medhekar, A., Wong, H. Y., & Hall, J. 2014. Medical tourism: A conceptual framework for an innovation in global healthcare provision. In *Innovations in services marketing and management: Strategies for emerging economies* (pp. 148-169). IGI Global.
- Medhekar, A., Wong, H. Y., & Hall, J. 2014. Innovation in medical tourism service marketing: A case of India. In *Innovations in services marketing and management: Strategies for emerging economies* (pp. 49-66). IGI Global.
- Muller H, & Lanz Kauffman E. 2001. Wellness tourism: market analysis of a special health tourism segment and implications for the hotel industry. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 7(1), 5-17 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/135676670100700101>
- Okech, R. 2014. Promoting the Spa Tourism Industry: Focus on Coastal Resorts in Kenya. *Athens Journal of Tourism*, 1(1), 67-77. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajt.1-1-43>
- Özsarı, S. H., & Karatana, Ö. 2013. Sağlık Turizmi Açısından Türkiye'nin Durumu. *Journal of Kartal Training & Research Hospital*, 24(2). DOI: 10.5505/jkartaltr.2013.69335
- Panfiluk, E., & Szymańska, E. 2017. The measurement of the innovativeness of health tourism services using an adequacy matrix title of the article. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 4(4), 400-420. DOI: 10.9770/jesi.2017.4.4(1)
- Panasiuk, A. 2018. Theoretical aspects of innovation in health tourism. *European Journal of Service Management*, 25(1), 213-220. DOI: 10.18276/ejism.2018.25-26
- Papadopoulou, G. 2020. Spa Tourism in Europe: An Economic Approach. *Athens J. Tour*, 7, 133-144. DOI: 10.30958/ajt.7-3-1
- Pearcy, D. H., & Lester, J. 2012. Capitalizing on emerging tourism trends: An exploratory examination of Jamaica's wellness tourism sector within an innovation systems framework. *International Journal of Business, Marketing, and Decision Sciences*, 5(2), 121-137.
- Phanpanya, K., Leelapattana, W., Thongma, W., & Waiapha, Y. 2020. Tourism service factors affecting health tourism service innovation in Mae Hong Son Province. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 11(7). 34-51 DOI: 10.48047/rigeo.11.05.14
- Pirnar, I., Bulut, C., & Eris, E. D. 2012. Improving the performance and competitiveness of tourism establishments by means of innovation: trends and applications. In *Enlightening Tourism: 1st International Conference Competition and Innovation in Tourism: New Challenges in an Uncertain Environment* 133-142 Naples
- Pirnar, I., Kamali, Y. C., & Eris, E. D. 2019. Soft innovation in hotel services: case of Izmir City. *International Journal of Tourism Cities*. 6 (4). 1025-1043. DOI: 10.1108/IJTC-05-2019-0072
- Pirnar, I. 2020. Innovation Management in the International Hotel Industry. In *The Routledge Companion To International Hospitality Management* (pp. 296-308). Routledge.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. 2009. Research methods for business students. Pearson education.

- Smith, M. K., Ferrari, S., & Puczkó, L. 2016. Service innovations and experience creation in spas, wellness and medical tourism. In *he Handbook of managing and marketing tourism experiences*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Smith, M. K., & Puczkó, L. (Eds.). 2016. *The Routledge handbook of health tourism*. Taylor & Francis.
- Sotiriadis, M., Van Zyl, C., & Poole, C. 2015. Suggesting a framework for innovation management in the industry of wellness tourism and spas. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 5(4)
- Szymańska, E. 2015. Construction of the model of health tourism innovativeness. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 213, 1008-1014. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.11.518>
- Szymańska, E. 2016. Consumer participation in the health tourism innovation process. *Ekonomia i Zarządzanie*, 8(4). 28-38 DOI: 10.1515/emj-2016-0030
- Szymańska, E. 2017. Innovation systems in health tourism. *Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 5(1), 1-5. DOI: 10.18178/joebm.2017.5.1.475
- Szymańska, E., Dziedzic, E., & Rutkowski, A. M. 2017. Organizational innovations in health resort-based tourism. *Business: Theory & Practice*, 18(1). 54-63 DOI: 10.3846/btp.2017.006
- Szymańska, E., & Panfiluk, E. 2020. Determinants of technological innovations in health tourism enterprises. *Business: Theory and Practice*, 21(1), 348-359. DOI:10.3846/btp.2020.11104
- Theobald, W. F. 2005. The meaning, scope, and measurement of travel and tourism. In *Global Tourism*, (pp. 23-48). Routledge
- Ulusoy, H., & Tosun, N. 2020. Comparisons of Health Tourism Within the EU Countries. In *Strategic Innovative Marketing and Tourism* (pp. 385-392). Springer, Cham.
- Underwood, H. R., & Makadon, H. J. 2010. Medical tourism: game-changing innovation or passing fad? The growth of medical travel can mean not only lost revenue, but also potential liability for US healthcare providers. *Healthcare Financial Management*, 64(9), 112-117.
- Vakhovych, I., Volynchuk, Y., & Malimon, V. 2013. Development of regional medical tourism markets in Ukraine based on innovation principles. *Економічний часопис* 11-12(1), 42-45.
- Vystoupil, J., Šauer, M., & Bobková, M. 2017. Spa, spa tourism and wellness tourism in the Czech Republic. *Czech Journal of Tourism*, 6(1), 5-26. DOI: 10.1515/cjot-2017-0001
- Yuan, Y. Y., Tseng, Y. H., & Chang, C. Y. 2014. Tourism subfield identification via journal clustering. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 47, 77-95. DOI: 10.1016/j.annals.2014.05.009
- Yurcu, G. 2017. Wellness and Spa Tourism. *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality*, 6(2), 274. DOI= 10.4172/2167-0269.1000274
- Zelenka, J., & Paskova, M. 2012. *Glossary of tourism*. Praha: Linde.
- Zsarnoczky, M. 2018. Novel concepts in the health tourism industry. *Journal of Management*, 32(1), 67-73.

Recibido: 28/01/2022
 Reenviado: 17/07/2023
 Aceptado: 18/07/2023
 Sometido a evaluación por pares anónimos