









GLOBAL BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS IN THE SCOPUS DATABASE FROM 1983 TO 2024 ON TOURISM FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND ITS THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract: Tourism for people with disabilities has attracted increasing scholarly attention due to demographic changes, social inclusion initiatives, and the recognition of accessibility as a critical dimension of sustainable tourism development. Despite the growing body of research, the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and theoretical foundations of the field remain fragmented. This study aims to systematically examine scientific output on disability tourism to identify dominant themes, emerging trends, and their theoretical and practical implications, providing a comprehensive overview of the field's development and guiding future research and policy initiatives. A structured search of the Scopus database (1983–2024) using the term “disabled tourism” in publication titles yielded 157 relevant articles. Bibliometric analysis was performed using the Bibliometrics software, allowing formal and thematic characterization of the scientific output. Key indicators included annual publication trends, country and institutional contributions, productivity by type of institution, and journal profiles. Additional analyses focused on citation patterns, keyword co-occurrence, thematic cluster development, and interconnections between research topics. The study also examined emerging directions and patterns of international collaboration to reveal the conceptual structure and global reach of the field. Findings indicate a marked increase in research activity since 2015, highlighting the consolidation of disability tourism as a distinct and sustainable research domain. Core thematic clusters focus on accessibility, disability, tourism development, and consumer behavior. Emerging trends emphasize sustainability, digital technologies, social capital, and virtual tourism. The analysis reveals a gradual shift from barrier-centered studies toward integrative, opportunity-oriented conceptual approaches. Patterns of collaboration across countries and institutions demonstrate increasing internationalization and the formation of a global research network. Overall, these results clarify the intellectual landscape of disability tourism research, identifying knowledge gaps, priority areas, and practical implications for policy formulation and the development of inclusive tourism strategies worldwide.

Keywords: Disabled tourism, tourism for all, accessible tourism, bibliometrics, tourism development

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become a necessity in people's lives, and in recent years, the number of individuals with disabilities actively participating in tourism has increased (UNWTO, 2023). Travel and tourism are regarded as fundamental human rights that can provide better living conditions (Reindrawati et al., 2022). The emerging concept of accessible tourism encourages people with disabilities to travel and contributes to the development of responsible and sustainable tourism (UNWTO, 2021). According to estimates by the World Health Organization (2011), 16% of the global population live with disabilities, including mobility/physical impairments, visual, psychological, hearing, cognitive/learning, and invisible disabilities (WHO, 2023). Due to chronic diseases and population aging, the prevalence of disability is also increasing worldwide (Chiu et al., 2021). Disabled tourism (often referred to as accessible tourism or tourism for people with disabilities) is a specific branch of tourism aimed at creating conditions for travel and leisure for people with disabilities and other health-related limitations. Its goal is to ensure equal opportunities for participation in travel, cultural, and recreational activities by removing physical, social, and informational barriers. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines accessible tourism as «a form of tourism that enables people with physical disabilities to participate independently and with equal rights in tourism activities by ensuring universal access to facilities, products, and services» (UNWTO, 2016).

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The European Networking for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) highlights that accessible tourism encompasses «the development and provision of tourism services and infrastructure suitable for use by all people, including persons with disabilities, older adults, and families with children» (ENAT, 2014). In the academic literature, a narrower definition can also be found «Disabled tourism is a specialized type of tourism that takes into account the medical, physiological, and social characteristics of tourists with disabilities and ensures the creation of special conditions for their mobility, accommodation, and leisure» (Mironova, 2020). Thus, disabled tourism can be seen as part of the broader concept of accessible tourism, which emphasizes not only physical accessibility but also transport, informational, and service support. A brief description of the historical development of disabled tourism can be divided into five stages. The first stage is antiquity and the Middle Ages, when in Ancient Greece and Rome therapeutic journeys to mineral springs and healing temples (Asklepieia) already existed, in which people with physical limitations could also participate. In the Middle Ages, pilgrimages to sacred sites were also considered a form of «health» travel, including participation by the sick and persons with disabilities (Towner, 1996). The second stage was the 19th century, when health resort and spa tourism emerged. With the development of railways and resorts, Europe and Russia began offering sanatorium treatment for people with chronic diseases and disabilities. Specialized resorts started to form, such as Karlovy Vary and Baden-Baden (Sigala & Leslie, 2005). The third stage came after World War II, when attention to the rehabilitation of disabled veterans increased. In the 1950s-1960s, the first organizations appeared in Europe and the United States to ensure the accessibility of tourism for people with disabilities (e.g., Handicapped Travel Club, 1958, USA). In the 1980s, tourism for people with disabilities became a distinct area of academic research and accessibility policy (Darcy, 1998). This stage can be described as the institutionalization of disabled tourism. The fourth stage, from the late 20th to the early 21st century, is linked to the concept of accessible tourism, as the term itself emerged, encompassing not only people with disabilities but also older adults and families with children. The United Nations and the World Tourism Organization incorporated accessibility into strategic documents, such as Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (1999) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) (UNWTO, 2016). The fifth stage of development can be called modernity – digitalization and inclusion. The active introduction of technologies, such as online booking services with accessibility filters, mobile applications for travelers with disabilities, as well as the worldwide promotion of inclusive tourism through government programs and private initiatives, serves as clear evidence of this trend (Buhalis & Darcy, 2011). As shown in Figure 1, the historical development of disabled tourism is illustrated, highlighting its key stages.

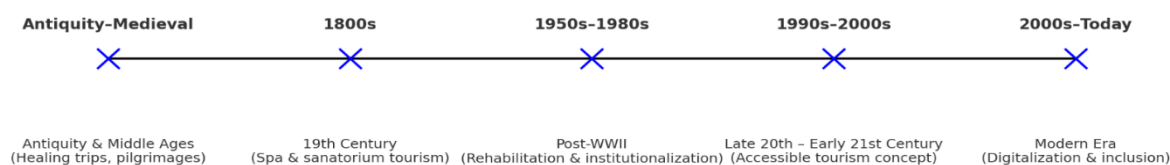


Figure 1. Timeline of the historical of Disabled Tourism (Source: Own elaboration)

Thereby, disabled tourism has evolved from therapeutic and religious journeys in antiquity > to spa treatment in the 19th century > to institutional support after the wars > to the modern concept of accessible tourism, where the emphasis is placed on equality, technology, and sustainability. Accessible tourism has become a thriving niche market worldwide, and many studies describe this market as significant, profitable, and increasingly popular each day (Ozcan et al., 2022). According to Kusufa et al. (2022), serving people with disabilities is not only about profit but also about ensuring equal rights to travel and understanding how to address the needs of unique and special consumers. Currently, the accessible tourism market is strongly influenced by tourist attractions, hotels and restaurants that declare themselves accessible to travelers with disabilities without fully understanding their actual requirements and needs (Zaluska et al., 2022).

Given the increasing complexity and volume of scientific output in tourism research, bibliometric analysis has become a widely accepted methodological approach for mapping knowledge structures, identifying research gaps, and tracing the intellectual evolution of specific fields. Bibliometric techniques allow scholars to synthesize large bodies of literature in a systematic and reproducible manner, offering insights into publication trends, influential authors and journals, as well as emerging research themes. In this regard, the methodological framework proposed by Donthu et al. (2021) provides comprehensive guidelines for conducting rigorous bibliometric analyses, emphasizing transparency, replicability, and theoretical contribution. More recently, Shin & Kang (2023) demonstrated the potential of combining bibliometric methods with advanced digital tools, such as artificial intelligence-based text analysis, to enhance the interpretation of tourism research trends. Building upon these methodological foundations, the present study applies a bibliometric approach to the domain of tourism for people with disabilities in order to clarify its intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and theoretical implications within the broader tourism literature. Research on tourism for people with disabilities is undoubtedly diverse, and one of the methods that allows reflecting the studies on a given topic is the bibliometric method (Qiao et al., 2022), which connects theoretical aspects, the current state, and trends in the field of tourism for people with disabilities. In this regard, several studies have focused on bibliometric analyses of tourism (Comerio & Strozzi, 2019; Garrigos-Simon et al., 2019; Agapito 2020; Naruetharadhol & Gembsombut, 2020; Yagmur et al., 2020; Sigala, 2016; Ridho et al., 2021; Qiao et al., 2022; Awan et al., 2020; Shin et al., 2023; Yildirim et al., 2022) which examine the scientific output developed in the tourism sector and its relationship with theory and related elements in a similar way. However, there are no bibliometric studies specifically dedicated to tourism for people with disabilities. Therefore, this study conducts a bibliometric analysis of research on tourism for people with disabilities, providing a detailed account of the scientific publications and achievements in this field.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method applied consists of a bibliometric analysis of scientific publications on tourism for people with disabilities, based on a structured search query in the Scopus database. The use of this type of analysis is justified by the need to evaluate scientific output. It allows for the presentation of the most significant results from a set of documents in a summarized form (Parra-Lopez & Martinez-Gonzalez, 2018), the identification of new research trends, and the enhancement of collaboration opportunities among researchers (Rosas Jaco et al., 2021). The analysis relies on bibliometric indicators, which are statistical data derived from scientific publications in a specific field and measure the role of publications in the dissemination of knowledge (Kalia, 2022). The results are used to classify and analyze scientific publications in the field, providing information that makes it possible to observe the behavior of the analyzed variables, considering the parameters for assessing scientific activity (Donthu et al., 2021; Lopez-Rodriguez, 2022).

For information retrieval, the Scopus database was employed, which provides access to publications across all fields of knowledge with a high-quality index (Shah et al., 2019). The inclusion criteria focused on articles published in English between 1983 and 2024, using the keyword «disabled tourism». For this purpose, the «Bibliometrix» software was applied to conduct the bibliometric analysis of the most relevant records (Lopez-Rodriguez et al., 2022). As shown in the table, the selected indicators include those with the highest number of publications, citations, and co-occurrences, as these are considered the most important in bibliometric research (Comerio & Strozzi, 2019; Yagmur et al., 2020; Naruetharadol & Gemsombut, 2020; Mukherjee et al., 2022; Al-Smadi et al., 2022; Minga et al., 2022; Yildirim & Esen, 2023).

Table 1. Search criteria and analysis parameters

Parameter	Description
Database	Scopus
Language of publications	English
Time frame	1983-2024
Date of consultation	September 7, 2024
Document type	Scientific publications “articles”
Journal types	All types
Search field and conditions	TITLE “disabled tourism”
Search result	157 publications
Analysis parameters	Annual scientific output; publications by country; institutional productivity; most cited articles; journals with the highest number of publications on tourism for people with disabilities; keywords and their co-occurrence with other topics; main research directions (thematic map).

A ranking of the most relevant elements is also presented (Minga et al., 2022). Table 1 presents the search criteria and analysis parameters, while a diagram summarizing the developed stages is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Methodological flow diagram (Source: Own elaboration)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of scientific publications on tourism for people with disabilities are presented in Figure 2. It can be seen that the first articles on this topic were published by Head (1984) in the «Journal of Environmental Health», titled «Georgia Increases Access for Mobility Handicapped», and by Smith (1987) in «Annals of Tourism Research» with the article «Leisure of Disabled Tourists: Barriers to Participation». Starting from 2004, the number of publications shows a slight increase until 2014, but it is from 2015 onwards that significant growth begins, reaching 19 articles published in 2022. This represents a 900 percent increase since the inception of research on this topic. Thus, the field of tourism for people with disabilities is becoming increasingly studied, and its contribution to society is reflected in its economic, social, and cultural impacts.

In bibliometric analysis, it is important to highlight the institutions that have made the most significant contributions, as well as the countries and journals that have also played a role (Yagmur et al., 2020; Mukherjee et al., 2022; Alsmadi et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2022; Bahuguna et al., 2023). This represents a 900 percent increase since the inception of research on this topic. Thus, the field of tourism for people with disabilities is becoming increasingly studied, and its contribution to society is reflected in its economic, social, and cultural impacts. Recent bibliometric studies further confirm the growing scientific interest in tourism research and emphasize the importance of identifying key contributors and structural patterns within the field. In particular, Ayaviri-Nina et al. (2023) highlight the role of bibliometric approaches in revealing thematic structures and development trends in tourism research, while Orts-Cardador et al. (2024) demonstrate the significance of analyzing publication dynamics and scientific evolution within tourism-related studies. In bibliometric analysis, it is important to highlight the institutions that have made the most significant contributions, as well as the countries and journals that have also played a role. Accordingly, Figure 3 presents the 20 countries that have achieved the best results and contributed most to the

development of tourism for people with disabilities. At the top of the ranking are two countries, Poland and the United Kingdom, each with 11 publications, followed by Spain with 9 publications, and Italy and the United States with 8 publications each. These positions can be explained by the concentration of tourism activities and government policies aimed at promoting tourism for people with disabilities, which are linked to economic, social, and cultural aspects.

Regarding the contribution of universities to scientific publications on tourism for people with disabilities (Figure 4), the «University of Aveiro» stands out with 8 articles, followed by the «Near East University» with 5 articles. In addition, four universities contributed 4 articles each: the «Eastern Mediterranean University», «Griffith University», «North-West University», and «University of Foggia», all of which are among the most significant contributors.

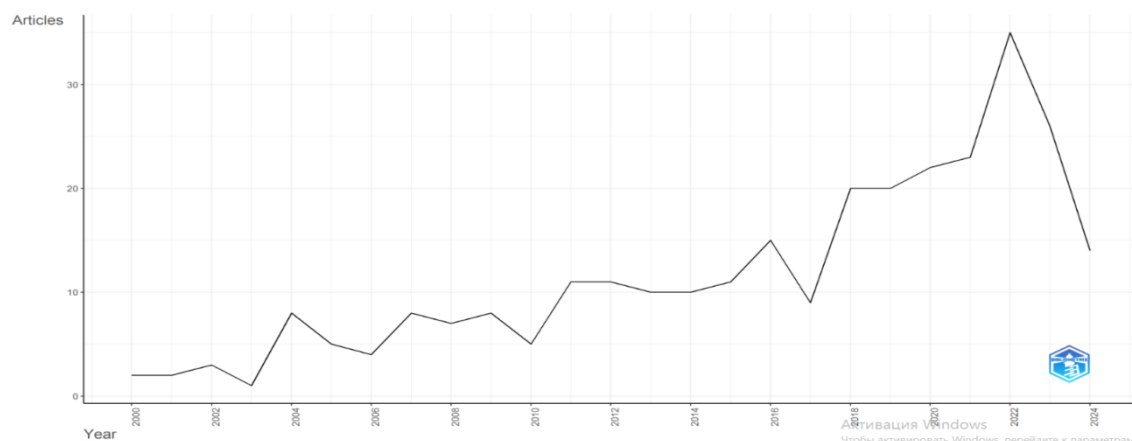


Figure 3. Annual scientific publications on the topic of tourism for people with disabilities, 1983-2024
 (Source: Author's elaboration based on Scopus database, 2024)

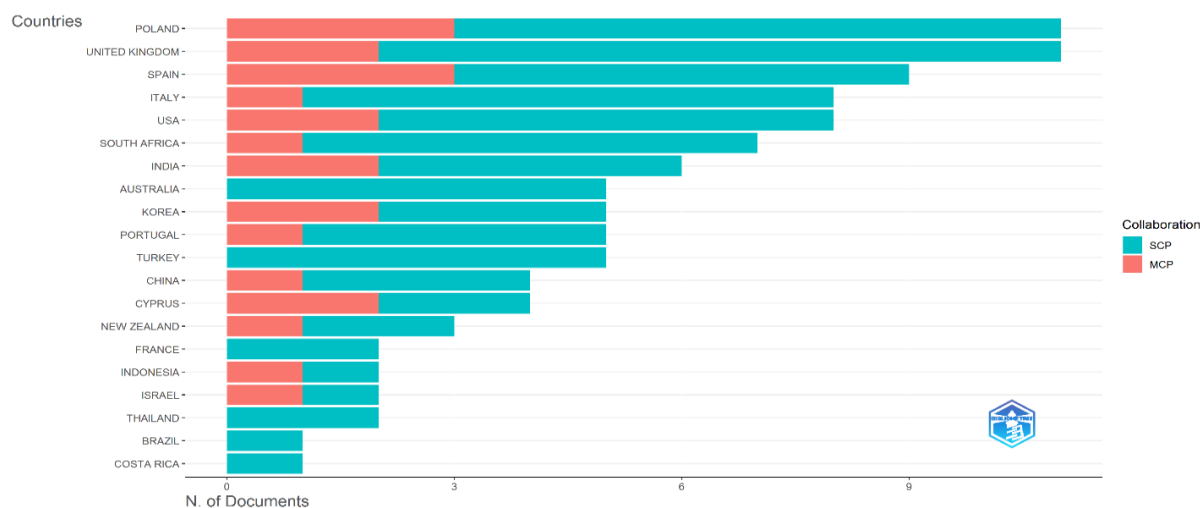


Figure 4. Scientific publications by country on the topic of tourism for people with disabilities in the period 1983-2024
 (Source: Author's elaboration based on Scopus database, 2024)

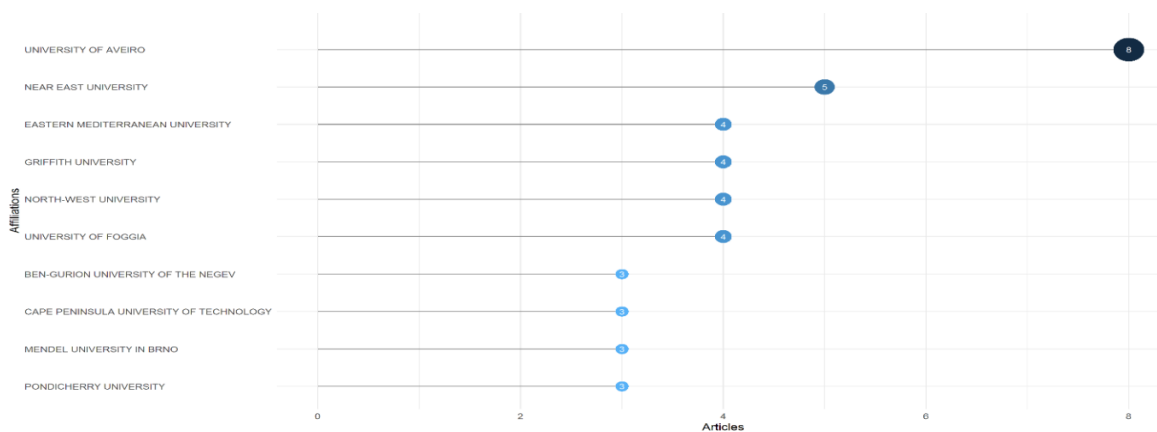


Figure 5. Performance indicators by type of academic institutions on the topic of tourism for people with disabilities, 1983-2024
 (Source: Author's elaboration based on Scopus database, 2024)

Table 2 presents the 20 most cited authors and articles related to the studied topic. The most cited works undoubtedly highlight relevant themes on tourism for people with disabilities and its interconnections with other research areas, opening up numerous opportunities for the creation or expansion of new lines of inquiry.

The most cited article is by Daruwalla & Darcy (2005), with 208 citations. This study examined the theoretical and conceptual foundations concerning the formation and change of attitudes, cognitive dissonance, as well as the relationship between attitudes and behavior toward disability (Daruwalla & Darcy, 2005).

Following this is Smith (1987), with 189 citations, which analyzed barriers disproportionately affecting tourists with disabilities (Smith, 1987). With the same number of citations (1989), Burnett & Baker (2001) proposed new ideas regarding opportunities related to disabilities, including general trends and sets of needs (Burnett & Baker, 2001).

Table 2. Most cited articles on the topic of tourism for people with disabilities, 1983-2024
(Source: Author's elaboration based on Scopus database, 2024)

№	Author(s) & Year	Title	Citations
1	Daruwalla & Darcy (2005)	Personal and societal attitudes to disability	208
2	Smith (1987)	Leisure of disable tourists. Barriers to participation	189
3	Burnett & Baker (2001)	Assessing the travel-related behaviors of the mobility-disabled consumer	189
4	Lu et al. (2022)	The potential of virtual tourism in the recovery of tourism industry during the COVID-19 pandemic	169
5	Lee et al. (2012)	Influences of travel constraints on the people with disabilities' intention to travel: An application of Seligman's helplessness theory	158
6	Ray & Ryder (2003)	Ebilities tourism: An exploratory discussion of the travel needs and motivations of the mobility-disabled	151
7	Shaw & Coles (2004)	Disability, holiday making and the tourism industry in the UK: A preliminary survey	146
8	Israeli (2002)	A preliminary investigation of the importance of site accessibility factors for disabled tourists	121
9	Figueiredo et al. (2012)	How diverse are Tourists with Disabilities? A Pilot Study on Accessible Leisure Tourism Experiences in Portugal	112
10	Blichfeldt & Nicolaisen (2011)	Disabled travel: Not easy, but doable	102
11	Navickas & Malakauskaite (2009)	The possibilities for the identification and evaluation of tourism sector competitiveness factors	99
12	Michopoulou & Buhalis (2013)	Information provision for challenging markets: The case of the accessibility requiring market in the context of tourism	96
13	Packer et al. (2007)	Understanding the complex interplay between tourism, disability and environmental contexts	93
14	Pigram (1983)	Outdoor recreational and resource management	92
15	Perry et al. (1995)	Virtual reality: A new horizon for the tourism industry	92
16	Bizjak et al. (2011)	Attitude change towards guests with disabilities. Reflections From Tourism Students	90
17	Kim & Lehto (2013)	Leisure travel of families of children with disabilities: Motivation and activities	82
18	Ozturk et al. (2008)	Is the Turkish tourism industry ready for a disabled customer's market? The views of hotel and travel agency managers	81
19	Gladwell & Bedini (2004)	In search of lost leisure: The impact of caregiving on leisure travel	72
20	Pagán (2012)	Time allocation in tourism for people with disabilities	62

Table 3. Journals with the highest number of publications on tourism for people with disabilities during the period 1983-2024
(Source: Author's own elaboration based on Scopus database, 2024)

№	Journals	Publications	Quartiles (2024)	ISSN
1	Tourism Management	9	Q1	0261-5177
2	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality	6	Q1	0959-6119
3	Sustainability	6	Q1	2071-1050
4	African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure	5	Q3	2223-814X
5	Annals of Tourism Research	5	Q1	0160-7383
6	Journal of Tourism Futures	4	Q1	2055-592X
7	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	3	Q1	1094-1665
8	Current Issues in Tourism	3	Q1	1368-3500
9	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	3	Q2	1661-7827
10	Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism	3	Q0	2068-7729
11	Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events	3	Q2	1940-7963
12	Journal of Travel Research	3	Q1	0047-2875
13	Tourism and Hospitality Research	3	Q1	1467-3584
14	Tourism Review	3	Q1	1660-5373
15	Annals of Agricultural and Environmental Medicine	2	Q3	1232-1966
16	Disability and Rehabilitation	2	Q1	0963-8288
17	Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology	2	Q1	1748-3107
18	Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education	2	Q1	1473-8376
19	Journal of Medical Ethics	2	Q1	0306-6800
20	Planning Malaysia	2	Q3	1675-6215

It is also important to mention the work of Lu et al. (2022), with 169 citations, which focuses on the potential of virtual tourism, the factors influencing its acceptance among people during the pandemic in China, and how virtual tourism can support the recovery of the tourism industry during and after the pandemic (Lu et al., 2022).

Equally noteworthy is the study by Lee et al. (2012), which analyzed the impact of travel constraints on the intention of people with disabilities to travel and applied Seligman's theory of learned helplessness (Lee et al., 2012).

During the analyzed period (1983-2024), 98 journals published materials on tourism for people with disabilities, of which the twenty most productive are presented in the ranking (Table 3). The journal «Tourism management» leads with 9 publications, followed by two journals – «International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management» and «Sustainability» – each with 6 publications on this topic.

Among the most important journals and published themes, the following stand out: «African Journal of Hospitality», «Tourism and Leisure», «Annals of Tourism Research», «Journal of Tourism Futures», «Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research», and «Current Issues in Tourism». It is important to note that of the eight highlighted journals, seven are currently ranked in 'Q1', which indicates their high academic standing and relevance within the field.

The interconnection of research keywords with other themes is an essential element of bibliometric analysis, as it makes it possible to identify areas of knowledge and topics related to the construct and its analysis (Naruetharadhol & Gembsombut, 2020; Sigala, 2016; Yildirim & Esen, 2023). Figure 6 shows that studies on tourism for people with disabilities are fully connected to the themes of disability, tourism, humans, and people with disabilities. In recent years, research has become closely associated with biodiversity, social capital, economic development, tourism sustainability, the COVID-19 pandemic, ethical issues in tourism for people with disabilities, and information systems linked to platforms or networks. This suggests that these variables determine the range of research directions generated by the phenomenon under study within a changing scenario. These more recent variables incorporated into research reflect the orientation of studies toward current issues in the evolving social, economic, and cultural context (Wijijayanti et al., 2020; Ruiz-Real et al., 2022; Ramkissoon, 2023).

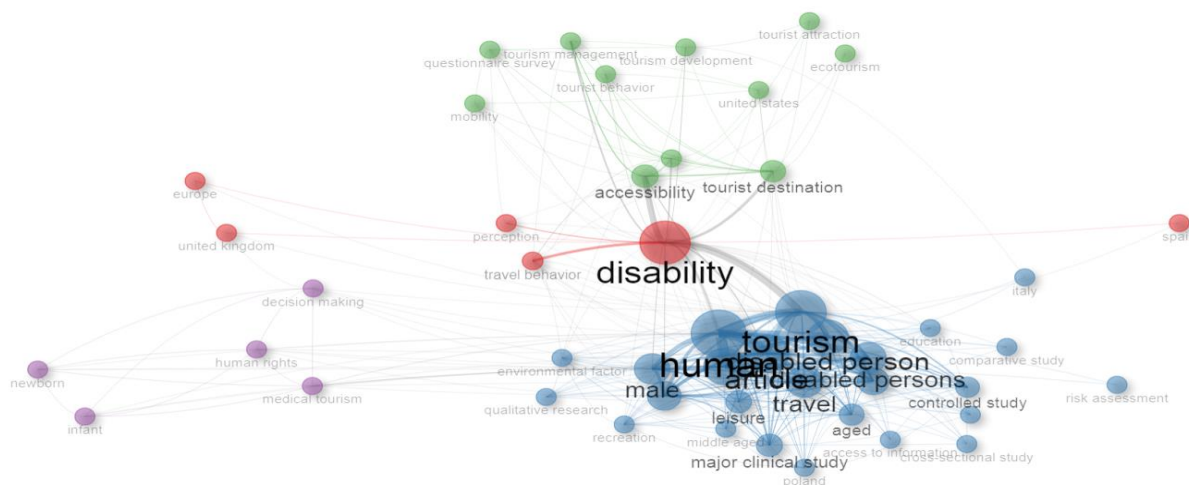


Figure 6. Keywords and their connections with themes (1983-2024) on tourism for people with disabilities (Source: Author's elaboration based on Scopus database).

To clearly illustrate the research trends in social tourism, an analysis was carried out based on developed themes. Figure 5 presents a thematic map of areas or topics related to the construct; its importance lies in identifying the relationships and trends that exist between disability tourism and other fields of knowledge (Ruiz-Ballesteros & Hernandez-Ramirez, 2010; Stone & Nyaupane, 2018; Agapito, 2020; Ninerola et al., 2019; Donthu et al., 2021; Qiao et al., 2022).

Quadrant A highlights research developed in the fields of decision-making, medical tourism, and the United Kingdom. Quadrant B contains central themes or driving forces in the approach to disability tourism, the most significant of which are: *people*, *persons with disabilities*, *individuals*, *tourism*, *disability*, and *accessibility*. These themes show a strong relationship with studies developed based on the research variable. On the other hand, Quadrant C includes new or trending themes, such as *sustainability*, *sustainable tourism*, and *tourism sectors*. Finally, Quadrant D presents the basic themes defining the construct, which are linked to *tourist destinations*, *tourism development*, and the *tourism market*.

In this way, Figure 6 displays the theoretical implications of disability tourism, showing its interconnections with other fields of knowledge, its progress, and its contribution to the research subject.

In one of his articles, Ślężyński & Petryński (1995) emphasized that «...in order to enable the participation of people with special needs (people with disabilities) in tourism, it is necessary to consider their preferred forms of tourism and the needs arising from the situation of this particular group». Despite the obviousness of this statement, current research conducted in our country does not provide answers to the question of how this largely justified demand should be met. Similar issues are observed in other European countries, where, as Buhalis et al. (2005) argued, this segment of tourism will only flourish if each client group is fully understood.

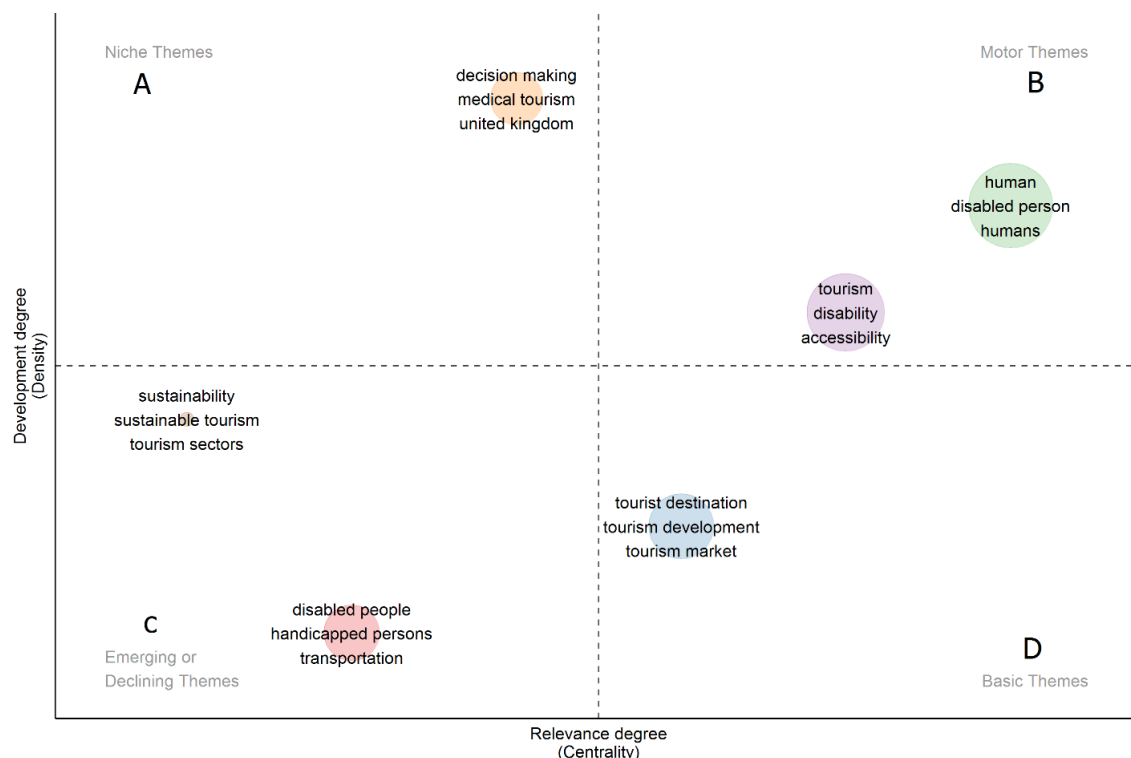


Figure 7. Main research directions on disability tourism during the period 1983-2024 (Source: Author’s elaboration based on Bibliometrix, 2024)

This problem appears to be rather complex. On the one hand, it is necessary to consider so-called internal determinants, such as the possibility of participating in tourism resulting from specific types of dysfunction, personal abilities, and individual needs. On the other hand, one cannot overlook external determinants, such as financial circumstances and transportation. Jones (2004) shared a similar viewpoint, highlighting that the best approach tourism organizers can take for travelers with disabilities is to demonstrate genuine understanding. Comprehensive diagnostics and the identification of recreation of barriers to participation in tourism, as well as the organization of recreation in disability-friendly destinations, are required.

The main problems faced by people with disabilities in tourism include physical inaccessibility of infrastructure, informational barriers, financial constraints, social barriers and stereotypes, as well as legal and organizational issues. Physical inaccessibility can be exemplified by the fact that many tourism facilities (hotels, airports, public transportation, museums, historical monuments, beaches) remain unsuitable for persons with disabilities. The absence of ramps, elevators, and handrails, along with narrow doorways, inconvenient staircases, and inadequate accessibility of restrooms, significantly restricts mobility for wheelchair users. This makes full participation in the travel nearly impossible (UNWTO, 2016; Darcy & Dickson, 2009).

Informational barriers are also evident: a lack of accessible data on adapted routes and services, limited availability of detailed information on the degree of accessibility of facilities, and the absence of alternative formats such as Braille, audio guides, or visual materials for individuals with hearing impairments (Poria & Brandt, 2010; Buhalis & Darcy, 2011). Financial difficulties constitute another key challenge. Tourism products tailored for people with disabilities are often more expensive due to the need for specialized equipment, adapted transportation or personal assistance. At the same time, income levels among people with disabilities are frequently below average, which reduces their ability to travel (WHO, 2011; ENAT, 2014). Social barriers and stereotypes persist, as disability is still perceived by many as an “obstacle” to active living. Moreover, staff in tourism companies often lack adequate training to appropriately interact with customers with disabilities (Shakespeare, 2013; Buhalis et al., 2012).

Finally, legal and organizational problems also remain significant. In many countries, there is an absence of clear legislative frameworks ensuring accessibility of tourism infrastructure, and insufficient enforcement of existing regulations, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Hendriks, 2007; Darcy, 2010). The accessible tourism segment encompasses older adults, pregnant women, and individuals with diverse accessibility needs (Adam, 2019), while the potential of social tourism to foster inclusivity is exemplified through the study of a non-governmental social tourism organization and its management model (Akdemir, 2020).

In most cases, people with disabilities do not travel for leisure. Some disability rights advocates even claim that people with disabilities hardly travel at all. The main reasons for refusing both leisure and business travel include poverty and lack of access to segregation and discrimination in employment. Even when they are employed, they are rarely given opportunities to assume managerial positions. This is supported by Khupe’s (2012) study, which revealed that people with disabilities are relegated to menial tasks, even within organizations that people with disabilities are relegated to menial tasks, even within organizations that are supposed to represent their interests. All these factors directly affect the disposable income of persons with disabilities, which in turn determines their capacity and willingness to travel.

CONCLUSION

The bibliometric analysis of tourism for people with disabilities demonstrates that during the study period, scholarly publications exhibit a steady upward trend. The exponential growth observed between 2015 and 2022 underscores the relevance of this research field, highlighting its potential to generate future studies and its interconnections with other areas of knowledge. Among the top twenty countries, Poland and the United Kingdom stand out, followed by Spain, Italy and the United States. In terms of institutional contributions, the most significant universities include the «University of Aveiro», «Near East University», and «University of Foggia». The most highly cited articles within the analyzed group are authored by scholars addressing topics related to attitudes toward disability, travel barriers, and the behavior of consumers with disabilities.

As of 2020, research in the field of tourism for people with disabilities has been associated with themes such as attitudes toward disability, leisure experiences of tourists with disabilities, the impact of travel-related constraints, needs and motivations of people with disabilities when traveling, and outdoor recreation. These variables determine the spectrum of research directions that emerge from the studied phenomenon. In recent years, increasing attention has been given to sustainable tourism, sustainable development, and economic growth. Moreover, the topic of virtual tourism has gained particular significance during and after the pandemic, promoting the integration and use of new technologies in tourism.

Disability tourism is a multidimensional phenomenon that, in recent decades, has been actively studied in the context of inclusion, social justice, and sustainable development. Scholarly perspectives on this field vary: some emphasize issues of accessibility and the removal of barriers, while others highlight the potential of tourism activities of people with disabilities as an important market segment. From a methodological standpoint, the appropriateness of different approaches is debated. The social approach views disability tourism through the lens of human rights and equal access; the economic approach examines demand and market potential; the cultural perspective investigates the role of societal stereotypes; and the interdisciplinary approach integrates marketing, urban studies and social work. Research continues to focus on accessibility infrastructure and standards, psychological and sociocultural barriers, innovative technologies, and marketing strategies for promoting accessible tourism. Yet several open questions remain should research focus primarily on barriers? Or should greater attention be given to the positive potential of tourism for people with disabilities? Do quantitative methods adequately reflect lived practices and experiences, or do quantitative approaches provide deeper insights? Can international standards be applied in countries with different infrastructure and cultural contexts? Where is the boundary between specialized «tourism for people with disabilities» and genuine inclusion within the mainstream tourism flow?

Scholars largely agree on the need to strengthen cross-cultural research, pay closer attention to behavioral factors such as motivation and expectations, integrate digital technologies into research practices, and account for local specificities. Disability tourism should be regarded not only as a distinct segment of the tourism industry but also as a complex socio-economic and cultural construct that integrates issues of human rights, inclusion, innovation, and market dynamics. Its research relevance is defined by interdisciplinarity, requiring the combination of sociological, economic, cultural, and managerial approaches. Consequently, the theory of disability tourism is being shaped at the intersection of the social sciences and tourism practice, reflecting a shift from studying barriers to exploring opportunities and the values of inclusive participation. Ultimately, the theoretical insights associated with tourism for people with disabilities represent a significant contribution to knowledge-building and the development of a scientific structure around this construct and its related dimensions. The connections between disability tourism and other areas of knowledge are diverse and depend on the theoretical frameworks adopted by researchers. Emerging themes and new trends open up further avenues for research, which will continue to strengthen the field of tourism for people with disabilities.

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