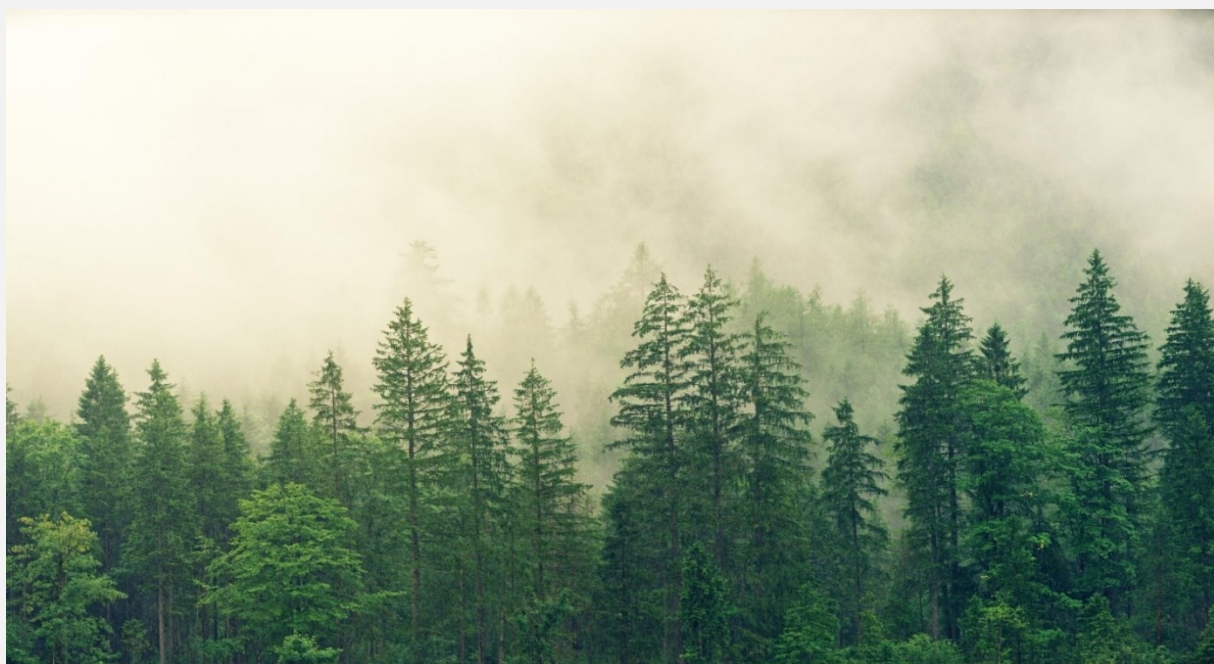


TOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
CONFERENCE

18-19 MAY 2023, BULGARIA



AVANGARD PRIMA
2023

TOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE (ONLINE)
18-19 MAY 2023, BULGARIA

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Publisher AVANGARD PRIMA

Sofia, 2023

ISBN: 978-619-239-887-3

HOW NEW TECHNOLOGIES CAN INFLUENCE THE ADOPTION OF ESG SUSTAINABILITY GOALS IN A TOURIST DESTINATION

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Abstract: *Due to the greater access to technological innovations and changes in consumer behavior, the tourism industry has to cope with the challenge of meeting this new demand, which is better informed, connected, and concerned about the type of service they will consume, who is providing the service, and what social, environmental, and governance values these companies have presented to their customers. Thus, the goal of this study was to answer the following question: how could new technologies influence companies and destinations to adopt ESG sustainability goals in tourist destinations? For this purpose, this study had the following objectives: evaluate the emergence of the debate about ESG and tourism, survey the publications on these themes, analyze the use of the index #esg on Instagram, and evaluate how new technologies can still influence the achievement of ESG goals of companies in the tourism sector. Therefore, the conclusion was reached that, in recent years, the debate has been much greater, given the growing number of publications and companies that have invested heavily in actions to develop ESG goals and in the dissemination of this factor as a way to improve their image, often making use of new technologies, mainly to generate economic improvements and greater market competitiveness.*

Keywords: *ESG; tourist experience; new technologies; sustainability.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of tourist activity is well known to boost the flow of visitors in localities, which consequently, ends up generating changes in the urban layout, movements in the economy, and mainly influences the quality of life of the local population. However, the way of traveling has been changing surprisingly since new technological tools have emerged, such as cloud computing, virtual and augmented reality, mobile technologies, and the adoption of social media, which have been responsible for driving the emergence of intelligence in tourism (Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2017) thereby, the tourist experience also undergoes these changes.

The tourist is now more connected, informed, and critical of the products and services he or she will consume locally. Therefore, the localities managements also need to be alert to make the necessary changes and adapt to this new profile and their expectations. According to Tussyadiah (2014), creating unforgettable travel experiences requires a careful choreography of many components based on a thorough understanding of tourists' needs. Thus, it is extremely important to identify the visitor profile of the localities so that they can best get prepared to

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welcome them. The way localities have invested in promoting their potential may greatly influence the tourist profile who will seek them, and recent factors such as new technologies, already mentioned, have greatly influenced tourism.

However, in the middle of this path between tourism supply and demand, relevant sustainability issues arise for companies and localities, which, although they are not necessarily new, they have changed in terms of the repercussion in the context of destination marketing, and the image that localities have attempted and, consequently, managed to convey to their visitors.

Technology, if well used, can be a great partner for the sustainability issue of a tourist destination, since according to Tong, Yan, and Manta (2022), automated systems can solve problems that need immediate attention as the size of the visitors flow in a destination, sending push notifications and recommending alternative destinations for cases of high demand.

These new technologies can be very useful not only for tourism businesses such as agencies and hotels, but also for localities management, and it is interesting to analyze all these available technological innovations for the tourism sector and understand how they can contribute to the achievement of more sustainable activity in several aspects.

Sustainability has been discussed for a long time, but the possibilities and benefits for all areas have not yet been exhausted. So, within this theme, some issues have been drawing a lot of attention in recent years, especially for companies, which are the so-called Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance Sustainability Goals, also known as ESG goals.

According to SEBRAE (2023), the first mention of ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) goals was in 2004, when the United Nations (UN) published Who Cares Wins, and more recently, the UN has published a plan with the 17 goals for sustainable global development (SDG). The term ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) refers to corporate practices that address environmental, social, and governance issues.

As a result, these goals have become a quest for companies to always do their best, especially to present a better image to society and potential customers. Based on all of this, we ask the following research question: how might these new technologies influence companies and destinations to adopt ESG sustainability goals in a tourism destination?

To answer this question, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the emergence of the debate about ESG and tourism, as well as to observe what companies have done to incorporate ESG goals into their operations. For that, the specific objectives are a survey of publications on ESG and Tourism, in one of the largest databases, Scopus (Elsevier); an analysis of the use of

the index #esg in the social media Instagram to identify how it is used and evaluate how new technologies can influence the achievement of ESG goals in the tourism sector.

All of this is justified by the necessity for a greater discussion of this topic because when done correctly tourism can be a significant driver of economic, social, and environmental development for destinations. However, to achieve this, they must adhere to societal values and interests, and the topic of sustainability in all of its social, economic, and environmental facets needs to be increasingly discussed.

2. METHODOLOGY

Exploratory research with a qualitative approach was chosen to fulfill the objectives outlined here, which, according to Gil (2002) is typically designed to provide an overview of a specific subject and is especially useful when the chosen theme has received little attention.

Therefore, some studies related to the themes proposed here were raised from this exploratory research, such as the ESG goals of sustainability and tourism, using new technologies as a tool to understand what has changed in this process. Thus, the first information was obtained and treated qualitatively, using the technique of content analysis, by Bardin (2011).

Then, a methodological path was traced with the survey of information on publications already made on these themes in the Scopus database (Elsevier). On April 26, 2023, it was conducted a survey of documents already published in this database with the association of the concepts in their titles, keywords, or abstracts. The term "ESG" was used with the Boolean operator "AND" and the term "tourism" to reach the studies produced. Although the intention was to relate these themes to the use of new technologies, when the term "new technologies" associated with the other two constructs was entered into the search, no document was found. So, it was decided to analyze the documents that related ESG to tourism to better understand how the research was in the area and if any document addressed the issue of new technologies.

In the first stage of the search (Chart 1), it was tried not to restrict the time horizon and this allowed to observe the first publication with these themes in this database in the year 2014. Likewise, no restriction was made as to the language of publication or location, all to demonstrate the general reality of publications.

Chart 1: Criteria for document selection

Scientific publication base	Scopus
Keyword / Expression	ESG AND Tourism
Language	Not specified
Time Horizon	Not specified
Areas researched	Not specified
Type of document	Articles
A total of studies found	20

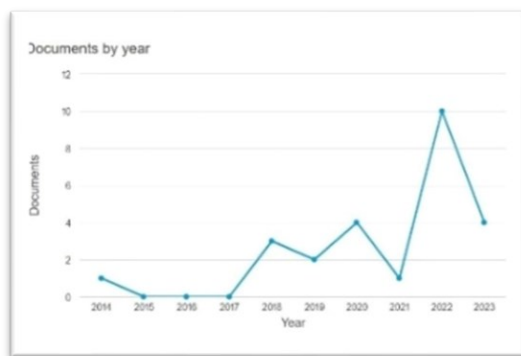
Source: Research data, 2023

As shown in Chart 1, the only restriction was about the type of document, where it was opted only for articles that dealt with the theme, thereby it was reached at 20 articles to have their abstracts read and observing if, in fact, all of them addressed the issue of ESG goals in the tourism activity.

3 ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

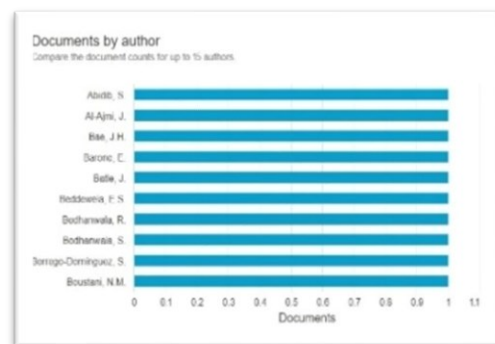
The first publication on these topics appeared in the year 2014 (Figure 1), as it was previously indicated, and the year 2022 saw more publications, with a total of 10 papers released. It was also noted that the top ten authors on this topic (Figure 2) were tied and each had only one article on the topic, indicating that this field of study is still very new. The ESG goals were first mentioned in 2004 by the UN, but the topic as a whole only began to gain popularity in 2017.

Figure 1 – Documents published by year



Source: Scopus, 2023

Figure 2 – Documents published by author

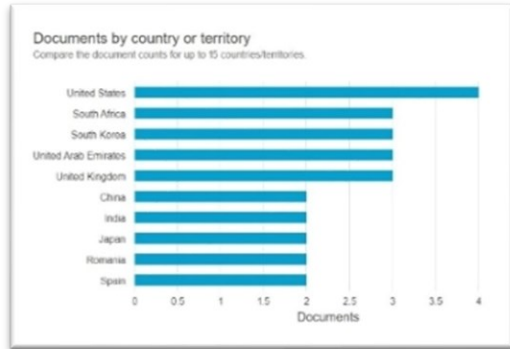


Source: Scopus, 2023

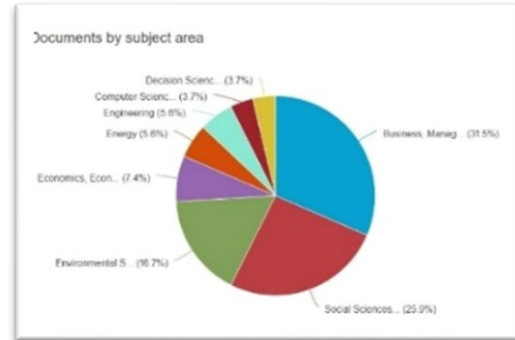
About publications by country or territory, another interesting analysis was made on the origin of the documents found, which shows the United States in the first place, with 4 published articles; South Africa, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom then tied for second place, with 3 articles each (Figure 3). On the other hand, analyzing the area of study for which the research was developed (Figure 4), it was observed that Business is the most researched area, with 31.5% of the publications, which corroborates the fact that ESG

goals are implemented in companies in various sectors, followed by the social sciences area with 25.9% (Figure 4)

Figure 3. Documents published by territory **Figure 4.** Documents published by subject area



Source: Scopus, 2023



Source: Scopus, 2023

Because there are still very few publications in this field of tourism, even though it has been developing over time, it is evident from this analysis that much more work has to be done on these linked topics. Following the research steps, 5 articles were disqualified for not referencing the terms examined after reading all the abstracts of the 20 articles chosen from Scopus. and ultimately, 15 publications in total were entirely read to assess their objectives (Chart 2).

Chart 2 – List of publications analyzed

Title	Authors	Objectives	Year
The adoption of the UN sustainable development goals in hotels in Dubai	Singh, S., Dutt, C.S.	Understanding the role of tourism and hospitality in sustainability through qualitative study in 4 and 5-star hotels in Dubai.	2023
A Study on the Relationship between ESG Performance Information and Value-Relevance	Kwon, H.-G., Shin, H.	It investigates the value relevance of ESG performance information in Korean tourism.	2022
Developing ESG Evaluation Guidelines for the Tourism Sector: With a Focus on the Hotel Industry	Bae, J.-H.	Developing an ESG rating index that accurately captures the characteristics of the hospitality industry.	2022
Exploring the relationship between sustainability and firm performance in the travel and tourism industry: a global evidence	Bodhanwala, S., Bodhanwala, R.	Investigating the relationship between aggregate and individual dimensions of sustainability and the financial and stock market performance of companies in the travel and tourism industry in different geographies.	2022
Sustainability engagement's impact on tourism sector performance: linear and nonlinear models	Buallay, A., Al-Ajmi, J., Barone, E.	Investigating the relationship between the level of sustainability reporting and the performance of the tourism sector.	2022
Artificial Intelligence Influences Intelligent Automation in Tourism: A	Tong, L., Yan, W., Manta, O.	Getting to know the relationship between AI and intelligent automation in tourism with mediating role of the Internet of Things (IoT),	2022

Mediating Role of Internet of Things and Environmental, Social, and Governance Investment		sustainability, enabling adoption, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) investment.	
Tourist destination competitiveness and ESG Performance in the airline industry	Dempere, J., Modugu, K.	Analyzes the influence of the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index and constituent factors on environmental, social, and governance performance variables at a major airline.	2022
Economic and Political Uncertainties and sustainability disclosures in the tourism sector firms	Kumar, D.	Investigates the impact of economic and political uncertainties at the national level on the amount of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) sustainability disclosures by tourism companies.	2022
Does countries' environmental, social, and governance (ESG) risk rating influence international tourism demand? A case of the Visegrád Four	Hassan, A.S., Meyer, D.F.	Examines whether international tourism demand in Visegrád countries is influenced by risk rating on ESG factors.	2022
Does the sustainability index matter to the hospitality industry?	Su, C.-H.J., Chen, C.-D.	Employing the Dow Jones Sustainability North America Index (DJSI) as a proxy for a firm's socially responsible investments examines whether the DJSI generates short- and long-term impacts on the financial values of hospitality firms.	2020
The link among board characteristics, corporate social responsibility performance, and financial performance: Evidence from the hospitality and tourism industry	Uyar, A., Kilic, M., Koseoglu, M.A., Kuzey, C., Karaman, A.S.	Exploring whether board characteristics lead to higher corporate social responsibility (CSR) performance and test whether performance improves firms' financial results and performance in the hospitality and tourism industry.	2020
The impact of material and immaterial sustainability on firm performance: The moderating role of franchising strategy	Kim, B., Lee, S.	Showing that franchising positively moderates the impact of intangible sustainability investment on firm performance.	2020
Influence of ESGC Indicators on the financial performance of listed travel and leisure companies	Rodríguez-Fernández, M., Sánchez-Teba, E.M., López-Toro, A.A., Borrego-Domínguez, S.	Investigating the impact of environmental, social, governance, and controversy (ESGC) indicators on financial performance.	2019
The impact of ESG factors on the market value of companies from the travel and tourism industry	Ionescu, G.H., Firoiu, D., Pirvu, R., Vilag, R.D.	Investigating the relationship between environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors and firm market value for firms in the travel and tourism industry.	2019
The Link Between Firm Financial Performance and Investment in Sustainability Initiatives	Singal, M.	It examines the link between sustainability and economic performance for the hotel industry compared to other businesses.	2014

Source: Scopus, 2023

After analyzing the selected articles, a clear concern was realized about the relation between the pursuit of ESG goals and the performance of companies, whether in financial terms or competitiveness and image in the market. This was visible in the results of studies such as those by Kumar (2022), which showed that when there is an increase in economic and political uncertainties, tourism companies make more sustainability disclosures to build good relationships and spread good word-of-mouth about the company's contribution to social welfare and environmental conservation.

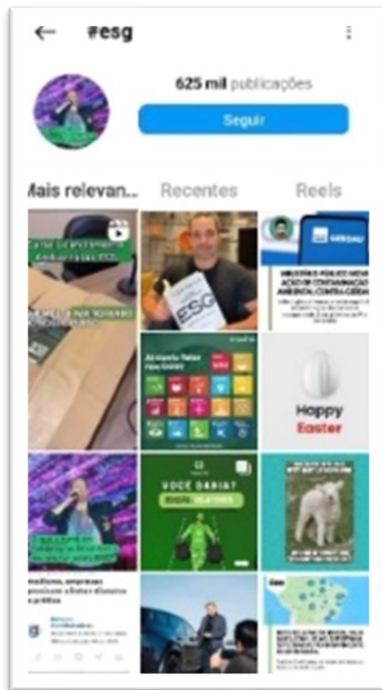
Another study, by Hassan and Meyer (2022) examined whether international tourism demand in the countries of the Visegrád region (a village in Hungary) is influenced by the risk rating of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors i.e. whether there is a relationship between the implementation of ESG goals, image and consequent stimulation of visitation. Along these same lines, Kwon and Shin's (2022) study investigated the relevance of ESG performance information in the Korean travel and tourism industry.

The oldest study found in this search, by Singal (2014), examines the link between sustainability and economic performance for the hotel industry, followed by Ionescu, Firoiu, Pirvu, and Vilag (2019) which investigated the relationship between environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors and the market value given to firms in the travel and tourism industry.

It was noticed that among the studies analyzed, some already said so about the use of new technologies to achieve the ESG goals of sustainable development, as is the case of the study by Tong, Yan, and Manta (2022), which states that tourists can be persuaded to visit well-known places through predictive analytics and virtual tourism information and investments in ESG goals and IoT (Internet of Things) and the use of artificial intelligence designs intelligent automation tourism environments and can make a more sustainable investment for the market in general.

Although, the increased access to the internet and the greater use of social media have leveraged a great change and thus, according to Schneider et al. (2018), the so-called digital "nudge" and aspects of the so-called Push Theory or Incentive Theory can be used to achieve outreach goals and improvements in the image of tourism destinations.

Figure 5 – Search on Instagram for #ESG on April 10, 2023



Source: Instagram, 2023

Figure 6 – Search on Instagram for #ESG on April 28, 2023



Source: Instagram, 2023

Thus, it can be seen that the use of social networks and the indexing of hashtags for the dissemination of companies or destinations that have worked on the ESG goals of sustainability have grown considerably. Using these hashtags, many companies have tried to attract the attention of potential tourists, disseminating responsible actions and policies regarding sustainability, consequently improving the image of the destinations and their competitiveness in the tourism market.

It is believed that with the use of these new technologies already mentioned, it is possible to better map the demand and supply (with the use of Big Data), better publicize the destinations and to the correct audience, promote the decentralization of the tourist flow, the generation of automated services in situations where human contact may be more difficult due to language barriers or even public health emergencies, and also; a range of information to provide the tourist about the attractions, and companies about their habits and social, environmental and governance responsibilities.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Evidence shows that consumer behavior in tourism has undergone many changes and issues of innovation, new Technologies, and greater access to all this have contributed significantly to this. Adding to the factors related to the sustainability of the localities and the companies, the tourist activity is turning a little more to these concerns, changing the way they advertise and work their potential.

Therefore, it was sought to make a more detailed analysis of what has been published in terms of sustainability in tourism companies and more specifically related to ESG goals and how these new technologies could influence companies and destinations to adopt ESG sustainability goals. After the study, it was concluded that, in recent years, the debate has been much greater, considering the growing number of publications and evidenced companies that have invested heavily in actions to develop ESG goals.

It is not the intention of this article to address all of these issues, but rather to spark discussion about the significance of these issues, not only for academic research but also for the management of localities to take effective actions that take into account these goals of sustainable development and that all this is not only for the creation of a better image but for the practice of an effective activity with values and a social, economic and environmental awareness that makes companies and tourist destinations are, in fact, in solid and sustainable growth.

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