Mapping 30 years of tourism and hospitality research in the Arab world: a review based on bibliometric analysis

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Abstract
Purpose – The Arab world has witnessed a remarkable surge in the growth of its tourism and hospitality (T&H) industry, positioning it as a vital cornerstone for sustainable development. However, an exclusive bibliometric analysis of T&H research contributed by the Arab world has not yet been conducted in the past 30 years, that is, 1993–2022. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide a first-of-its-kind bibliometric assessment and visualization of T&H research produced by the Arab world spanning from 1993 to 2022.

Design/methodology/approach – A comprehensive collection of 1,327 scientific publications related to T&H research contributed by the Arab world was acquired from the Web of Science Core Collection database. To perform a large-scale bibliometric analysis, encompassing performance analysis, science mapping and network analysis, this study used state-of-the-art analytical tools, namely, Bibliometrix package of R Studio and VOSviewer.

Findings – The findings of this study show that the Arab world’s research on T&H has significantly surged since COVID-19, contributing nearly half (50.56%) of the total literature in the T&H domain between 2020 and 2022. Elshaer IA (Suez Canal University, Egypt) emerged as the most productive author, while Nusair K (Sultan Qaboos University, Oman) was identified as the most impactful author in the T&H domain in the Arab world. The most productive journal was found to be Sustainability (MDPI), while Tourism Management (Elsevier) was identified as the most impactful journal in the field of T&H. Furthermore, the thematic analysis highlights that research themes in T&H are not static but rather constantly evolving in response to dynamic changes in the industry, such as emerging trends, shifts in tourist preferences and the impact of global events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Originality/value – To the best of the authors’ knowledge, this is the first bibliometric analysis of T&H research contributed by the Arab world, specifically covering the period from 1993 to 2022. This study’s findings can inform the development of strategies and policies for the sustainable and competitive growth of the T&H industry in the Arab world. This study highlights the importance of continued research and collaboration among industry professionals, academics and policymakers to promote innovation and drive positive change in the T&H sector in the Arab world.

Keywords Tourism, Hospitality, Arab world, Bibliometric analysis, Keywords analysis, Thematic analysis, Network analysis

Paper type Literature review
Mapeo de 30 años de investigación en turismo y hostelería en el mundo árabe: una revisión basada en análisis bibliométrico

Resumen

Propósito: El mundo árabe ha presenciado un notable aumento en el crecimiento de su industria de turismo y hostelería (T&H), posicionándola como una piedra angular vital para el desarrollo sostenible. Sin embargo, aún no se ha realizado un análisis bibliométrico exclusivo de la investigación en T&H realizada por el mundo árabe en los últimos 30 años, es decir, de 1993 a 2022. Por lo tanto, este estudio se erige como el esfuerzo pionero en proporcionar una evaluación bibliométrica y visualización sin precedentes de la investigación en T&H producida por el mundo árabe desde 1993 hasta 2022.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque: Se recogieron 1327 publicaciones científicas relativas a la investigación en T&H elaboradas por el mundo árabe, a partir de la base de datos Web of Science Core Collection. Para llevar a cabo un análisis bibliométrico a gran escala que abarcara el análisis de rendimiento, el mapeo científico y el análisis de redes, se emplearon herramientas analíticas de última generación, como el paquete Bibliometrix de R Studio y VOSviewer.

Resultados: Los resultados muestran que la investigación del mundo árabe en T&H ha aumentado significativamente desde la COVID-19, representando casi la mitad (50.56%) de la literatura total publicada entre 2020 y 2022. El análisis de palabras clave reveló que “turismo,” “impacto,” “satisfacción,” “gestión,” “hospitalidad,” “rendimiento,” “determinantes,” “percepción,” “fidelidad,” “calidad” y “satisfacción del cliente” son los temas de investigación actuales más destacados en T&H en el mundo árabe. Sin embargo, existen varias lagunas en investigación que requieren una investigación adicional por parte de académicos y profesionales de T&H en el mundo árabe, incluyendo temas como “turismo de trasplante,” “liderazgo ético,” “percepción del consumidor,” “huella ecológica,” “compromiso de los empleados,” “Airbnb,” “marketing de destinos,” “incivilidad del cliente,” “desarrollo de turismo sostenible,” y “sostenibilidad ambiental.” El análisis temático destaca que los temas de investigación en T&H evolucionan constantemente en respuesta a cambios dinámicos en la industria, como tendencias emergentes, cambios en las preferencias de los turistas y el impacto de eventos globales como la pandemia de COVID-19.

Originalidad/valor: Hasta dónde llega nuestro conocimiento, este es el primer estudio bibliométrico de la investigación en T&H realizada por el mundo árabe, cubriendo específicamente el periodo de 1993 a 2022. Los hallazgos del estudio pueden desplegar el desarrollo de estrategias y políticas para el crecimiento sostenible y competitivo de la industria de T&H en el mundo árabe. Este estudio resalta la importancia de la investigación continua y la colaboración entre profesionales de la industria, académicos y responsables políticos para promover la innovación y generar un cambio positivo en el sector de T&H en el mundo árabe.

Palabras clave Turismo, Hostelería, Mundo árabe, Análisis bibliométrico, Análisis de palabras clave, Análisis temático, Análisis de redes

Tipo de papel Revisión de literatura

Introduction

In the contemporary world, the tourism and hospitality (T&H) industry is widely recognized as a crucial driver of sustainable socioeconomic development for many countries worldwide, including Arab nations (Klingmann, 2023; Naseem, 2021). The T&H industry in the Arab world has experienced rapid expansion and become a robust cornerstone for sustainable development, offering a diverse array of social, cultural, experiential, technological and natural products catering to leisure, religious and
business needs (Tabash et al., 2023; World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 2022a, 2022b; Almuhrzi et al., 2017). However, the global COVID-19 pandemic had an unprecedented economic impact on the T&H industry, significantly affecting the Arab world (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Lew et al., 2020). Nonetheless, Arab nations have made rigorous efforts to transform their T&H industry (Bhutia, 2023; Skirka, 2023). During the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) summit in Riyadh, held from November 28th to December 1st, 2022, Khalid Al-Falih, the Saudi Minister of Investment, announced his ministry’s unwavering support for the tourism industry. He further stated, “We saw during the pandemic if the sector loses, everyone loses — society loses, the macro economy loses, and the spillover effect is quite incredible” (Syed, 2022). The WTTC president and CEO Julia Simpson further claimed that “after a very difficult couple of years, the future is looking brighter with travel and tourism expected to create 3.6 million new jobs across the Middle East over the next decade” (World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), 2022a, 2022b). Consequently, a burgeoning development is witnessed in the T&H industry in the Arab world. This similar trend of increasing interest is also observed in the academic research of the T&H industry, which substantially adds value to the industry’s growth and developmental trajectory (Menon et al., 2022). It is worth mentioning that research and development play a crucial role in enhancing competitiveness, improving service quality, addressing sustainability challenges, supporting economic growth and strengthening the knowledge and skills of professionals in the T&H industry in Arab countries. However, despite the T&H industry being one of the most crucial factors for the socioeconomic development of all the 22 countries in the Arab world, no previous study has examined the trends of T&H research contributed by the Arab world. Therefore, it is imperative to measure, monitor, evaluate and understand the entire T&H research emanating from the Arab world to provide better guidance for future research directions.

In this respect, bibliometric analysis emerges as a potent method that can offer significant insights into the current landscape of T&H research in the Arab world. This method uses statistical and computational techniques to examine the vast amount of scientific data, enabling researchers to uncover the intricacies and nuances of a specific field (Donthu et al., 2021). In recent times, many researchers (Das et al., 2023; Vatankhah et al., 2023; Shin et al., 2023; Knani et al., 2022; Işık et al., 2022; Muritala et al., 2020; Mauleón-Méndez et al., 2020; Lima Santos et al., 2020; Nusair et al., 2019; Okumus et al., 2018) have used bibliometric analysis to evaluate research performance, discover emerging themes and trends, disclose gaps in research and track the progression and growth of knowledge in different areas related to T&H domain. However, the authors could not find any bibliometric analysis focusing on T&H research contributed by the Arab world over the past three decades, spanning from 1993 to 2022. As a result, this study stands as the pioneering effort in providing the first-of-its-kind bibliometric assessment and visualization of T&H research emanating from the Arab world during the period from 1993 to 2022. Specifically, this study is guided by five key objectives:

1. to examine the growth and trends of T&H research originating from the Arab world in the past three decades, that is, 1993–2022;
2. to investigate the productivity and impact of authors, journals, institutions and countries involved in T&H research within the Arab world;
3. to analyze the structure and dynamics of scientific collaboration among authors, institutions and countries engaged in T&H research in the Arab world;
4. to find out the research trends, research hotspots and research gaps in the domain of T&H in the Arab world; and
5. to discover the thematic evolution and development of T&H research in the Arab world over the past three decades, specifically from 1993 to 2022.
Literature review

Over the past few years, there has been a growing use of bibliometric and visualization techniques to deeply investigate the realm of T&H research. A review of such studies is provided as follows:

Knani et al. (2022) investigated artificial intelligence research in T&H literature; Mauleón-Méndez et al. (2020) examined the leading countries in the area of hospitality, tourism and leisure; Shin et al. (2023) explored the development of knowledge and themes in hospitality and tourism technology research; Lima Santos et al. (2020) comprehensively evaluated the current status of sustainability perceptions in T&H; Nusair et al. (2019) analyzed 439 articles on social media from 51 renowned T&H journals over a 15-year period (2002–2016); Vatankhah et al. (2023) assessed the application of multi-criteria decision-making techniques in T&H research; Correia and Kozak (2022) identified gaps in tourism research and highlight trends that should receive emphasis within and beyond the tourism community; İşık et al. (2022) disclosed the intellectual structure and performance of research studies focused on innovation in the T&H industry; and Okumus et al. (2018) investigated the progress and development of food and gastronomy research in the domain of T&H between from 1976 to 2016.

The existing literature reveals that there have been numerous studies in the spectrum of T&H that have used bibliometric and visualization techniques. However, an exclusive bibliometric analysis of the scholarly output pertaining to T&H in the Arab world has not yet been conducted in the past three decades, that is, 1993–2022. Thus, the primary objective of this study is to address the existing research gap by comprehensively mapping the contributions of the Arab world to the field of T&H research over the past three decades, specifically from 1993 to 2022.

Methodology

The quantitative approach of bibliometric analysis was selected for investigating T&H research contributed by the Arab world from 1993 to 2022. The bibliometric analysis typically manifested in two broad categories: performance analysis and science mapping. Performance analysis aims to evaluate various research constituents (such as researchers, journals, institutions and countries) within a specific field of study, leveraging bibliographic indexes based on publication and citation data. Science mapping, in contrast, is primarily concerned with investigating the connections and relationships between various research constituents. It explores the intellectual interactions and structural associations within a specific field (Gaviria-Marin et al., 2019). The detailed account of the bibliometric analysis performed in the present study to accomplish the objectives set forth is given in Table 1.

Data source

The study used the Web of Science Core Collection (WoSCC) database to locate T&H research publications from the Arab world. The WoS database was selected over Scopus for bibliometric analysis because it contains a diverse selection of high-quality scientific research and has been widely used by scholars across numerous subfields of T&H for conducting bibliometric studies. Hence, because of its relevance, it was selected as the primary data source for this research.

Search design and data retrieval

To ensure the reliability, representativeness and comprehensiveness of the research data, investigators conducted a review of earlier studies (Menon et al., 2022; Liao et al., 2022; Shekhar et al., 2022; Lima Santos et al., 2020) and identified two keywords, namely, “Tourism” and “Hospitality.” Then, a comprehensive search strategy was devised using the
keywords “tourism” and “hospitality” in conjunction with the Boolean operator “OR” to extract the maximum relevant literature available within the realm of T&H. Subsequently, on January 14, 2023, the literature search was performed by the advanced search features of the WoS database, using the search strategy listed below:

\[ \text{TS} = (\text{“tourism” OR “hospitality”}) \]

TS denotes a topic search that incorporates the following components: Title, Abstract, Keywords Plus® and Author Keywords.

Types of documents: Article

Period: 1993–2022

Language: English

Country/Region: Arab world

This yielded a total of 1,327 research articles on T&H research, published between 1993 and 2022, by researchers affiliated with any of the 22 countries in the Arab world, which were subsequently included in the data analysis. Figure 1 presents a detailed flowchart that offers a comprehensive overview of the search strategy.

Data analysis

The comprehensive bibliometric analysis and visualization of T&H research in the Arab world were conducted using two cutting-edge analytical tools: VOSviewer and the bibliometrix package in R.

Results

General overview of tourism and hospitality research produced by the Arab world

Table 2 provides the statistical information of the bibliographic data retrieved from WoSCC on T&H research produced by the Arab world from 1993 to 2022. Specifically, the collection contains 1,327 articles contributed by 3,696 authors published in 519 journals. The average number of citations per document is 17.1, and the document’s average age is 5.2.
addition, all the retrieved articles on T&H research have 3,087 keywords plus, 4,786 author’s keywords and 68,564 references.

**Growth and trends of tourism and hospitality research in the Arab world**

*Figure 2* unveils the timeline distribution of T&H research produced by the Arab world from 1993 to 2022. The first phase (1993–2007) marked the initial stage of development, during which T&H research grew at a slow pace, with an average of only 3.07 publications per year. The second phase (2008–2022) saw a period of exponential growth, with the number of publications increasing from 13 in 2008 to 265 in 2022, resulting in an average of 85.4 publications per year. It is noteworthy that there has been a significant surge in research publications focused on T&H since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, between 2020 and 2022, the Arab world contributed nearly half (50.56%) of the total
literature in the T&H domain. This indicates that the academic community in the Arab world is placing a great deal of emphasis on T&H research lately.

**Most prolific researchers in the domain of tourism and hospitality in the Arab world**

This study discloses the top ten most influential authors engaged in T&H research in the Arab world. Table 3 displays the number of articles and citations corresponding to each author, indicating their research productivity and citation impact. In this regard, a total of ten influential authors have been identified who have contributed 147 articles, with an average of 14.7 papers per author, accounting for 11.08% of total publications, that is, 1,327. Furthermore, these ten authors received 4,155 citations for 147 publications, with an average of 28.27 citations per publication. Based on research productivity, the top three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>h-index</th>
<th>g-index</th>
<th>TP</th>
<th>TC</th>
<th>CPP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>ELSHAER IA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>19.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>EID R</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>589</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>NILASHI M</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>SAMAD S</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>377</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>NUSAIR K</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>54.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>REISINGER Y</td>
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<td>18.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>ASSAKER G</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>41.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>ALRAWADIEH Z</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>25.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>PARIS CM</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>40.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** TP = total number of published articles; TC = total number of citations; CPP = citations per paper

**Source:** Table by authors
most productive authors are Elshaer (19), Zaman (17) and Eid (16), while based on average citations per paper, the top three most impactful authors are Nusair (54.93), Assaker (41.85) and Paris (40.08) in T&H research in the Arab world.

**Most influential journals disseminating tourism and hospitality research of the Arab world**

Table 4 displays the details of the top ten core journals disseminating T&H research of the Arab world, ranked by publication count and total citations. These journals collectively published 374 papers from 1993 to 2022, averaging 37.4 papers per journal, constituting 28.18% of the total output of research publications in T&H research contributed by the Arab world. Among these, the top three most productive journals by publication count are “Sustainability” (93), “Current Issues in Tourism” (47) and “International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management” (46). In terms of citations per paper, the top three most impactful journals are “Tourism Management” (75.52), “International Journal of Hospitality Management” (31.44) and “International Journal of Tourism Research” (29.35).

**Most productive institutions involved in tourism and hospitality research in the Arab world**

Table 5 displays the top ten institutions that have been highly productive in conducting research on T&H in the Arab world. The King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia, ranks first with 105 publications, followed by United Arab Emirates University, UAE, ranks second with 96 publications and Suez Canal University, Egypt, ranks third with 87 publications.

### Table 4: Top ten most productive and impactful journals disseminating T&H research of the Arab world

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name of journal</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>h-index</th>
<th>g-index</th>
<th>TP</th>
<th>TC</th>
<th>CPP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>MDPI</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>9.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Current Issues in Tourism</td>
<td>Taylor &amp; Francis</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>17.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</td>
<td>Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>967</td>
<td>21.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tourism Management Perspectives</td>
<td>Elsevier</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>15.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>International Journal of Hospitality Management</td>
<td>Elsevier</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1132</td>
<td>31.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tourism Management</td>
<td>Elsevier</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2341</td>
<td>75.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tourism Economics</td>
<td>SAGE Publications Inc.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>6.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Journal of Travel Research</td>
<td>SAGE Publications Inc.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>25.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>International Journal of Tourism Research</td>
<td>John Wiley and Sons Ltd</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>29.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management</td>
<td>Elsevier</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total of 10 journals</td>
<td></td>
<td>374</td>
<td>8,492</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** TP = total number of published articles; TC = total number of citations; CPP = citations per paper

**Source:** Table by authors

### Table 5: Top ten highly productive institutions involved in T&H research in the Arab world

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Nature of institution</th>
<th>Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates University, UAE</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Suez Canal University, Egypt</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Qatar University, Qatar</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>King Saud University, Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sultan Qaboos University, Oman</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>University of Jordan, Jordan</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Zayed University, UAE</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>University of Sharjah, UAE</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Table by authors
Interestingly, nine of the top ten institutions engaged in T&H research in the Arab world are publicly funded, with only one being privately funded.

**Most productive countries engaged in tourism and hospitality research in the Arab world**

Table 6 showcases the top ten most productive countries engaged in T&H research in the Arab world with features like the number of publications, single-country publications and multiple-country publications. The United Arab Emirates is the leading country in the Arab world, with 169 publications, securing the first rank. Egypt and Saudi Arabia follow the second and third ranks closely, with 118 and 113 publications, respectively.

**Knowledge structure and dynamics of scientific collaboration in tourism and hospitality research in the Arab world**

This study made an attempt to analyze the knowledge structure and dynamics of scientific collaboration among authors, institutions and nations engaged in T&H research in the Arab world using VOSviewer software. Figure 3 depicts the identification of three distinct clusters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>NP</th>
<th>MCP</th>
<th>SCP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Oman</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
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<td>Lebanon</td>
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<td>Tunisia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** NP = number of publications; MCP = multiple-country publications (inter-country collaboration); SCP = single-country publications (intra-country collaboration)

**Source:** Table by authors

![Figure 3](https://example.com/fig3.png)

**Source:** Figure by authors
within the collaboration network of authors engaged in T&H research in the Arab world. Cluster 1 (red color) consists of four authors: Samad, Sarminah; Nilashi, Mehrbakhsh; Ahani, Ali; and Yadegaridehkordi, Elaheh. Cluster 2 (green color) comprises three authors: Mohd, Saidatulakmal; Abumalloh, Rabab Ali; and Minaei-bidgoli, Behrouz. Finally, cluster 3 (blue color) consists of two authors: Han, Heesup; and Ahmad Naveed. Figure 4 displays the collaboration network of institutions involved in T&H research in the Arab world, revealing three major clusters centered around the United Arab Emirates University, King Saud University and King Faisal University. The United Arab Emirates University cluster maintains collaborative ties with various institutions, including Sultan Qaboos University, Zayed University, University of Sharjah, University of Sadat City and Cairo University. The cluster around King Saud University has established co-authorship relationships with Qatar University, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Helwan University, King Faisal University and Suez Canal University. Lastly, the cluster around King Faisal University has collaborative associations with several institutions, such as King Saud University, Suez Canal University, Helwan University, Mansoura University, Alexandria University and Cairo University. Figure 5 illustrates country-level research collaboration in the scientific production of T&H research within the Arab world, revealing the presence of four distinct clusters. Cluster 1 (red color) consists of nine countries, including Algeria, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Morocco, The Netherlands, Spain and Tunisia. Cluster 2 (green color) also comprises nine countries: Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Russia, Vietnam, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and the People's Republic of China. Cluster 3 (blue color) consists of eight countries: Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, New Zealand, Oman, South Korea, Turkey and the USA. Finally, cluster 4 (yellow color) comprises seven countries: Australia, England, India, Lebanon, Qatar, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates.

Research hotspots, research trends and research gaps in tourism and hospitality research in the Arab world

To uncover the current research hotspots, emerging trends and gaps in the spectrum of T&H research in the Arab world, a comprehensive keyword analysis was conducted. Keywords play a pivotal role in identifying key research topics in numerous scientific
research areas, making them a crucial element of any research article. High-frequency keywords shed light on research hotspots and evolutionary patterns, whereas low-frequency keywords underscore areas warranting deeper investigation in the future (Hernández et al., 2017). In this study, we extracted a total of 7,873 keywords (including keywords plus and author’s keywords) from 1,327 research articles published by the Arab world in the field of T&H between 1993 and 2022. Figure 6 presents the results, depicting the most frequently used keywords in the titles of T&H research articles from the Arab world. The result indicates that the prevalent keywords used in the titles of research articles pertaining to T&H research by the Arab world are tourism, impact, satisfaction, management, hospitality, performance, determinants, perception, loyalty, quality and customer satisfaction. These keywords are considered the current research hotspots of the T&H domain in the Arab world. Conversely, low-frequency keywords such as transplant tourism, ethical leadership, consumer perception, ecological footprint, employee engagement, Airbnb, destination marketing, customer incivility, sustainable tourism development and environmental sustainability indicate research gaps that need further investigation from T&H scholars and academics in the Arab world. Furthermore, the research trends in the area of T&H in the Arab world are also exhibited in Figure 7, which discloses that earlier studies in this field primarily concentrated on pollution, cointegration, hospitality management, strategy, heritage and the red sea. In contrast, recent studies have shifted their focus toward COVID-19, hospitality industry, sustainable tourism, performance, hotel industry and sustainability.

**Strategic thematic map of tourism and hospitality research in the Arab world**

A strategic thematic map categorizes research themes into four quadrants according to their centrality and density values, along with the count of their publications, citations and
interconnections with other themes (Fusco et al., 2020). In this context, we used the strategic map (Figure 8) to visually depict the research themes that have evolved, progressed and transformed with time in the domain of T&H in the Arab world. These themes are explained below:
Motor themes (first quadrant): The motor themes significantly influence and shape the research landscape within the field and possess high internal density and centrality. In the first quadrant, six highly influential motor themes were identified: satisfaction, destination, motivation, Jordan, social media and sustainable tourism.

Niche themes (second quadrant): The niche themes have strong internal interconnections but demonstrate limited external associations, resulting in their lower regional significance. They are classified as specialized and secondary in importance. In the second quadrant, seven niche themes were discovered: geo-tourism, archaeology, geo-heritage, coastal erosion, corporate social responsibility (CSR), environmental and governance.

Peripheral themes (third quadrant): The peripheral themes are underdeveloped and represent nascent or declining research areas. They show low levels of centrality and density. In the third quadrant, four peripheral themes were observed: Tunisia, geographic information system (GiS), remote sensing and technology.

Transversal and general, basic themes (fourth quadrant): The transversal themes are considered crucial for a research topic but are still developing. The fourth quadrant detected nine research themes: Saudi Arabia, economic growth, international tourism, Morocco, sustainable development, climate change, tourism, COVID-19 and Egypt.

**Thematic evolution of tourism and hospitality research in the Arab world**

This detailed assessment sheds light on the trajectory of development, evolution routes and emerging themes that shape T&H research in the Arab world spanning from 1993 to 2022. The 30-year timeframe that we focused on for our collection of articles was divided into three separate intervals: 1993–2010, 2011–2021 and 2022–2023, as illustrated in Figure 9. Eight research themes were detected during the first period (1993-2010): Dubai,
sustainability, heritage, ecotourism, Egypt, Aqaba, tourism and GIS. In the second period (2011–2021), newly emerged research fields included Jordan, tourism, Tunisia, economic growth, behavior, hospitality industry, destination image, geotourism, tourism development, structural equation modeling, customer satisfaction, Oman, international tourism and destination. In the third period (2022-2023), we observed recently emerged research themes, including sustainable development, gravity model, satisfaction, sustainable tourism, climate change, food waste, Morocco, Red Sea, COVID-19 pandemic, PLS-SEM, economic development, environment, archaeology and CSR. Notably, the research theme “geographic information systems (GIS)” was first detected in the first period (1993–2010) and was also observed in the last period (2022–2023). These findings suggest that the academic community in the Arab world is placing significant emphasis on T&H research, as evidenced by the diversification of research themes over time.

Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed to evaluate the cutting-edge research in the spectrum of T&H contributed by the Arab world over the past three decades (1993–2022). The study’s results have yielded several conclusions, which are discussed below:

The study found that research in T&H in the Arab world experienced slow growth, averaging only 3.07 publications per year between 1993 and 2007, but witnessed a significant surge, with an average of 85.4 publications per year, starting from 2008 and continuing until 2022. Furthermore, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a substantial increase in research publications from the Arab world in the field of T&H, accounting for almost half (50.56%) of the total literature in T&H between 2020 and 2022. The sharp increase in research publications related to T&H following the COVID-19 pandemic can be attributed to several reasons: The pandemic disrupted the industry, spurring research on new challenges and opportunities (Ratten, 2021) and emphasized industry vulnerability, requiring a better understanding (Algassim and Abuelhassan, 2021).
The author analysis results disclosed that the top three most productive researchers in the domain of T&H in the Arab world are Elshaer, Zaman and Eid, while the top three most impactful authors are Nusair, Assaker and Paris. Furthermore, the top three most productive journals by publication count are “Sustainability,” “Current Issues in Tourism” and “International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management,” whereas the top three most impactful journals based on citations per paper are “Tourism Management,” “International Journal of Hospitality Management” and “International Journal of Tourism Research.” Regarding the institutions in the Arab world that have made remarkable contributions to T&H literature, it has been brought to light that King Faisal University (Saudi Arabia) has emerged as the leader, trailed closely by United Arab Emirates University (UAE) and Suez Canal University (Egypt). It is worth mentioning that of the top ten institutions conducting research in the T&H domain, nine of them are publicly funded, and only one is privately funded. This finding indicates that the public universities engaged in T&H research in the Arab world exhibit a strong research culture, receive substantial funding support and foster collaborations with industry and other research institutions. This finding corroborates the observation made by Alsharari (2018) that many Arab countries firmly espouse the view that education serves as the crucial catalyst for unlocking advancement and driving economic prosperity. We have also discovered that the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco are the top five most prolific countries in T&H research in the Arab world. These findings highlight that a significant portion of research related to T&H originates from a select few Arab nations. Additionally, it is worth noting that Somalia has not produced a single research article pertaining to T&H between 1993 and 2022. It is not unexpected that certain Arab countries lag behind in T&H research, primarily because they are perceived as unattractive tourist destinations. This perception stems from factors like political instability, security issues, cultural disparities, insufficient infrastructure and unfavorable media portrayals (Ozguzel, 2020).

The degree of scientific collaboration has risen dramatically across different fields of knowledge (Wagner et al., 2017). In this context, we used network analysis at different levels (authors, institutions and countries) to examine the current structure and dynamics of scientific collaboration in T&H research contributed by the Arab world from 1993 to 2022. Our results disclosed three distinct clusters of authors engaged in T&H research in the Arab world, as demonstrated in Figure 3. Cluster 1 (red) comprises four authors: Sarminah Samad, Mehrbakhsh Nilashi, Ali Ahani and Elaheh Yadegaridehkordi. Cluster 2 (green) consists of three authors: Saidatulakmal Mohd, Rabab Ali Abumalloh and Behrouz Minaei-bidgoli. Finally, cluster 3 (blue) is made up of two authors: Heesup Han and Ahmad Naveed. Furthermore, Figure 4 illustrates the collaboration network of institutions involved in T&H research in the Arab world, revealing three major clusters centered around the United Arab Emirates University, King Saud University and King Faisal University. The cluster associated with the United Arab Emirates University has established collaborative links with numerous institutions, including Sultan Qaboos University, Zayed University, University of Sharjah, University of Sadat City and Cairo University. The cluster related to King Saud University has established co-authorship relationships with Qatar University, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Helwan University, King Faisal University and Suez Canal University. Finally, King Faisal University cluster has established collaborative associations with several institutions, such as King Saud University, Suez Canal University, Helwan University, Mansoura University, Alexandria University and Cairo University. Figure 5 depicts research collaboration at the country level in the scientific production of research published in the spectrum of T&H in the Arab world. Cluster 1 (red color) encompasses nine countries: Algeria, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Morocco, The Netherlands, Spain and Tunisia. Cluster 2 (green color) comprises nine countries: Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Russia, Vietnam, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and the People’s Republic of China. Cluster 3 (blue color) consists of eight countries: Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, New Zealand, Oman, South Korea, Turkey and the USA. Finally, cluster 4 (yellow color)
encompasses seven countries: Australia, England, India, Lebanon, Qatar, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates. In essence, the network analysis results suggest that there are distinct clusters of authors, institutions and countries involved in T&H research, highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and collective effort in addressing complex research questions.

Recently, keyword analysis has become an increasingly popular tool for identifying research trends, hotspots and gaps in numerous fields of study (Vatankhah et al., 2023; Knani et al., 2022). In line with this approach, we performed a keyword analysis of T&H research produced by the Arab world (figure 6), identifying current research hotspots such as “tourism,” “impact,” “satisfaction,” “management,” “hospitality,” “performance,” “determinants,” “perception,” “loyalty,” “quality” and “customer satisfaction.” Conversely, we also noted a number of research gaps, including areas such as “transplant tourism,” “ethical leadership,” “consumer perception,” “ecological footprint,” “employee engagement,” “Airbnb,” “destination marketing,” “customer incivility,” “sustainable tourism development” and “environmental sustainability.” The identification of these research gaps emphasizes the need for more in-depth and context-specific investigations in T&H research within the Arab world. Figure 7 further highlights the T&H research trends of the Arab world, indicating that the early studies were focused on “pollution,” “cointegration,” “hospitality management,” “strategy,” “heritage” and “Red Sea.” However, recent studies have shifted toward topics such as “Covid-19,” “hospitality industry,” “sustainable tourism,” “performance,” “hotel industry” and “sustainability.”

The thematic evolution of T&H research in the Arab world has been classified into three distinct periods, namely, 1993–2010, 2011–2021 and 2022–2023, as depicted in Figure 9. The research conducted during the first period (1993–2010) yielded eight dominant themes: Dubai, sustainability, heritage, ecotourism, Egypt, Aqaba, tourism and GIS. Subsequently, in the second period (2011–2021), new research fields emerged, such as Jordan, tourism, Tunisia, economic growth, behavior, hospitality industry, destination image, geotourism, tourism development, structural equation modeling, customer satisfaction, Oman, international tourism and destination. In the most recent period (2022–2023), we observed a new set of research themes, including sustainable development, gravity model, satisfaction, sustainable tourism, climate change, food waste, Morocco, Red Sea, COVID-19 pandemic, PLS-SEM, economic development, environment, archaeology and CSR. The thematic analysis highlights that research themes in T&H are not static but rather constantly evolving in response to dynamic changes in the industry, such as emerging trends, shifts in tourist preferences and the impact of global events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contributions to theory and implications for practice

The study’s results hold substantial implications for both theoretical advancement and practical applications within the realm of T&H research in the Arab world. The study reveals a remarkable growth in T&H research output over the past three decades, particularly since 2008, with a surge observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This demonstrates the Arab world’s recognition of the importance of T&H research in addressing industry challenges and opportunities. Factors driving this growth include tackling new challenges, understanding the impact of global crises and enhancing the industry’s sustainability and resilience. Moreover, the study uncovers distinct clusters of authors, institutions and countries actively involved in T&H research, highlighting the significance of interdisciplinary collaboration and collective efforts in addressing complex research questions within the T&H domain. This identification of research clusters offers valuable insights into potential research partners and collaboration opportunities. Additionally, keyword and thematic analysis shed light on current research trends, hotspots and gaps, aiding scholars,
policymakers and practitioners in prioritizing research areas, allocating funding resources and making informed decisions regarding policy interventions in the T&H industry.

On the managerial front, the study provides practical implications by identifying influential authors, top journals disseminating T&H research, institutions making significant contributions and leading countries in T&H research within the Arab world. Early career researchers can benefit from the identification of influential authors to seek collaboration opportunities, while funding agencies can support these authors to further advance research in the field. The assessment of top journals guides scholars in selecting appropriate outlets for publishing their research and staying updated with the latest developments. Moreover, recognizing institutions making significant contributions enables policymakers, funding agencies and institutions to support those with a strong research culture and foster collaborations. Finally, prioritizing countries for collaborations, investments and initiatives aids policymakers and practitioners in enhancing research capabilities and promoting T&H development in specific regions. By staying informed about emerging trends and research themes, stakeholders can develop effective strategies and policies to improve the industry’s sustainability and competitiveness in the Arab world, aligning it with evolving market demands.

Limitations of the study
The present study has made a noteworthy contribution to the field of T&H; nevertheless, it does have some limitations. The data analyzed in this study were gathered from the WoSCC database on a specific date, and as such, data collected at different times may yield varying results and conclusions. While the WoSCC is widely regarded as one of the most exhaustive and reliable databases in the academic world, researchers can further enhance their studies by using data from alternative sources, including Scopus and Dimensions to expand on this research and gain a more comprehensive understanding of T&H research.

References


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