

Health and wellness tourism – systematic review of the literature

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Objectives | i) define and particularize the concept of health and well-being tourism; (ii) specify the benefits and development of regions often associated with this tourism; (iii) identify areas, methodologies and case studies that have been studied in this type of tourism in order to present topics or aspects that have not been much investigated on this topic.

Methodology | The methodology of this research focused on a systematic review of the literature of conceptual and empirical research on Health and Wellbeing Tourism (HWBT), with the aim of identifying and understanding diverse contributions from research in the area of HWBT. Therefore, to create research criteria, the Scopus and Web of Science databases were used as they present multiple investigations of relevant quality and peer review by experts in different areas of knowledge. These search criteria were based on the following keywords: health tourism and wellness, in the field: Article Title, Abstract, Keywords, which registered a total of 558 documents (last consulted on 03/30/2023). To delimit the research and analysis, four inclusion criteria were applied, namely: (i) type of document: articles; (ii) language; (iii) analysis of unavailable and repeated articles and (iv) analysis of titles and abstracts with the identification of articles relevant to the topic of this investigation. This investigation presents a systematic review of the literature based on 36 articles analyzed in an integrated way and the representation, as well as the previously mentioned steps of this methodology were adapted from the exposition of Prisma in the study by Liberati et al. (2009). This methodology, when using the Prisma technique, also distances itself from studies on health and well-being tourism within the scope of literature reviews, as it allows an integrated analysis of a set of studies on this area. The selection process of the studies analyzed went through inclusion criteria based on keywords, type of document, language, analysis of unavailable and repeated articles, as well as analysis of article titles and abstracts. In a first phase, a descriptive and bibliometric analysis was carried out on the results obtained from both databases (547 records) and, subsequently, a qualitative content analysis was carried out on the 36 selected articles.

Main Results and Contributions | The research topic centered on the benefits of health and wellness tourism, list as results of this study a wide variety of methodologies and contributions

developed by researchers, as well as pointing to a multiplicity of areas of application in the study of health and well-being tourism. Three themes stand out regarding the benefits of HWBT that have been most studied in the literature in the area, therefore, cooperation between various agents or stakeholders in the sector, economic dynamization with positive benefits in the areas of hospitality, gastronomy, crafts and museology, as well as the motivations and profile of the HWBT tourist. With the analysis of 36 articles, it was possible to identify research gaps that can be filled by future studies, such as the perceptions, opinions and satisfaction of local communities in health and well-being tourism destinations regarding consumption and flows tourism in this segment.

Limitations | (i) reduced number of articles analyzed, taking into account that the research area has several investigations that could have been the subject of analysis; (ii) the selected languages, being English, Spanish and Portuguese, limited the obtaining of other studies that could be important and complementary to this area; (iii) the fact that only articles from Scopus and Web of Science were selected constitutes another limitation, since in these databases there are more types of investigations such as proceedings, book chapters and others that could also have been used.

Conclusions | This type of tourism has been investigated from several areas, such as the areas of branding, marketing and strategy of tourist destinations, the impacts of technological innovations, the characteristics of the HWBT tourist, as well as the natural factors of the destination. Consequently, more recent studies such as those by Hoz-Correa et al. (2018), Jiang et al. (2022) and Zhong et al. (2021) report that in HWBT, the topics that have been most studied have covered aspects related to tourist demand, tourist behavior, promotion, impacts, policies and development of HWBT destinations.

The methodologies, data analysis techniques implemented, and the case studies of the research analyzed are quite diverse and are like what happens with other types of tourism. In this context, the use of quantitative and/or qualitative methodologies in numerical terms is not significantly different, and there is clearly space and possible opportunities for carrying out studies in countries outside Europe, as this is the continent with the greatest presence of studies of HWBT.

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