



# Tourism and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: a scientific perspective

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**ABSTRACT:** Contemporary society has experienced a significant evolution in its engagement with sustainability, driven by various factors, including global initiatives such as the United Nations (UN) Global Compact (2000), further energized by the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study explores the interplay between tourism and these UN's Sustainable Development Goals, employing a bibliometric analysis of scholarly literature, with findings processed through Iramuteq software. The investigation reveals that academic discourse connects tourism to 13 of the 17 SDGs outlined in the UN's 2030 Agenda, with a predominant focus on SDG 8 – decent work and economic growth. Notably, the analysis uncovers a discrepancy in the scholarly treatment of SDG 14 – life below water, which, despite being earmarked by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as a critical area for tourism, receives limited attention, in contrast to SDG 11 – sustainable cities and communities. The study concludes that the academic exploration of the nexus between tourism and the SDGs has been relatively superficial, lacking depth in the context of the broader tourism and sustainability discourse.

**Keywords:** Tourism;  
SDGs;  
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## INTRODUCTION

The reduction of state involvement, the proliferation of globalization, neoliberal economic policies (Medaglia, 2010), the advent of the Knowledge Society (Dziekaniak & Rover, 2011), technological advancements, and other factors have prompted society to undergo significant transformations towards sustainable development. These shifts have introduced challenges that are increasingly prevalent in contemporary discourse, gradually transforming isolated initiatives into integrated structural endeavors within certain sectors. This evolutionary process has been significantly influenced by international initiatives such as the United Nations (UN) Global Compact (2000), further propelled by the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the realm of tourism, which confronts the intricacies of sustainability, we observe a sector that relies on inherently vulnerable resources, including natural environments, cultural heritage, and unique indigenous communities. Moreover, tourism unfolds in a systemic manner. As the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 1998, p. 45) elucidates, the essence of tourism is “a complex outcome of interrelations among diverse factors that must be collectively considered from a systemic viewpoint—a dynamically evolving ensemble of integrated components.” This model of development is notably susceptible to external pressures and, in turn, exerts significant impacts. Indeed, the UNWTO acknowledges tourism’s interconnectedness with sectors such as agriculture and construction (UNWTO, 2020), highlighting its broad sectoral influences.

On the one hand, tourism is celebrated as a sustainable conduit for development (UNWTO, 2003); on the other, it is criticized as a mass-market endeavor historically reliant on economies of scale (Cacho & Azevedo, 2010) and foundational elements that pose substantial sustainability challenges, particularly from an environmental perspective, such as the automotive and aviation industries (Trigueiro, 2005). This apparent contradiction within tourism does not stem from the industry itself but rather from a contemporary lifestyle anchored in production and consumption (Portilho, 2005). Presently, a model of tourism development that prioritizes economic gains over environmental, social, and cultural considerations may precipitate social turmoil in affected communities (Medaglia, 2010; Souza & Eichenberg, 2018).

The 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda represent the UN’s blueprint for sustainable development, offering a profound and positive framework for action within the tourism industry. This sector, predominantly comprised of micro and small enterprises operating within unique ecosystems, is poised to create substantial impacts through systemic implementation practices (Medaglia,

2010). By integrating the SDGs, tourism can enhance its beneficial effects, bolstering economic growth, advancing gender equality, and fostering the creation of sustainable and inclusive employment opportunities (Peña-Sánchez, Ruiz-Chico, Jiménez-García, & López-Sánchez, 2020).

From an academic standpoint, the field of Applied Social Sciences, embracing a multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary approach (Medaglia & Ortega, 2015), has increasingly aligned with the direction of the SDGs, a trend also observed by Gössling, Scott, and Hall (2020). The innovative nature of adopting the SDGs still represents for economic activity in general and tourism in particular, given that they originated only in the meeting held by world leaders in 2015 (Peña-Sánchez et al., 2020), highlighting how much this relationship between tourism and the SDGs can still be further explored. Furthermore, it indicates that even other productive activities, such as tourism, are still in the process of incorporating the SDGs into their daily practices.

This paper seeks to elucidate the interplay between tourism and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through a detailed review of relevant academic literature. This inquiry is further contextualized by the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry, which has endured a significant crisis. This situation, marked by its severity and scope, also presents unique opportunities for aligning new and existing tourism ventures with the SDGs, aiming for resilience and sustainability in the wake of challenges (Silveira, Medaglia, Vicentim & Barbosa, 2020).

To achieve this objective, beyond this introduction, the article unfolds a literature review that traces the genesis of the SDGs, outlines their 17 goals, and examines their intersection with sustainable tourism development. The third section delineates the methodology employed, followed by the results, which scrutinize the nexus between tourism and the SDGs through a bibliometric analysis. The conclusion then synthesizes the study, articulating its limitations and future research trajectories, preceding the compilation of referenced works.

## THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A RETROSPECTIVE, OVERVIEW, AND THEIR INTERSECTIONS WITH SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The quest for a more peaceful, equitable, and sustainable world prompted leaders from 191 nations to commit to an international agenda focused on critical is-

issues such as environmental sustainability, human rights, gender equality, and social and racial equity at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000. This gathering resulted in the Millennium Declaration. The genesis of these deliberations, and subsequently the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), can be attributed to the culmination of various commitments and objectives previously established at several UN-led and affiliated international conferences throughout the 1990s (Saith apud Carvalho and Barcellos, 2014). Consequently, the MDGs were introduced, constituting a suite of eight pivotal global development objectives derived from the Millennium Declaration's key priorities. "This framework also delineated 18 specific targets and 48 indicators, with each MDG encompassing several targeted goals, each of which, in turn, was associated with multiple indicators." (Andrade, 2013, p. 34). Crafted based on the "Millennium Declaration" and ratified at the Millennium Summit in 2000 with a 15-year horizon for achievement, the MDGs set forth priorities across: 1 – eradicating extreme poverty; 2 – universal education; 3 – gender equality and empowerment of women; 4 – reducing child mortality; 5 – improving maternal health; 6 – combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; 7 – ensuring environmental sustainability; 8 – fostering a global partnership for development.

As the culmination of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) neared, the discourse surrounding a post-2015 agenda began to crystallize (Prandi, Maximo & Lima, 2015). The intent was to establish new objectives, build upon the initial goals, and assimilate lessons learned to avoid past missteps (Garcia & Garcia, 2016). With the MDG period concluding in December 2015, the international community recognized the necessity of a cohesive agenda underpinned by objectives that leveraged these insights for the successful enactment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Petti, Trillo & Makore, 2020). Nonetheless, it is pivotal to acknowledge that the shortcomings of the MDGs paved the way for the adoption of the SDGs (Boluk, Cavaliere & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2019). Whereas the MDGs galvanized governments and international entities to diminish the populace enduring poverty and lacking basic services, the SDGs endeavor to engage these stakeholders in eradicating poverty universally and enhancing global access to services and infrastructure (Petti et al., 2020).

The formulation of the post-2015 agenda christened the 2030 Agenda, was motivated not solely by the impending conclusion of the MDGs but also in anticipation of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. This conference sought to reaffirm the global commitment to sustainable development, evaluating advancements and shortcomings since key summits and addressing newly emerging challenges. Consequently, the

2030 Agenda comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), supported by 169 specific targets to delineate the achievement pathways for these goals. The foundational document, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (United Nations, 2015), underscores the agenda's core pillars: people, planet, peace, prosperity, and partnerships. This Agenda aspires to steer the global community towards sustainability, outlining an action plan centered around people, the planet, and prosperity (United Nations, 2015) and rallying governments, aid agencies, foundations, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to prioritize pressing global issues and refine progress tracking and solution effectiveness (Petti et al., 2020). Spanning a 15-year period, the SDGs prioritize 1 – eradicating poverty, 2 – zero hunger and sustainable agriculture, 3 – good health and well-being, 4 – quality education, 5 – gender equality, 6 – clean water and sanitation, 7 – affordable and clean energy, 8 – decent work and economic growth, 9 – industry, innovation, and infrastructure, 10 – reduced inequality, 11 – sustainable cities and communities, 12 – responsible consumption and production, 13 – climate action, 14 – life below water, 15 – life on land, 16 – peace, justice, and strong institutions, and 17 – partnerships for the goals, as illustrated below:

Figure 1. Sustainable Development Goals and Tourism



Source: Tourism4sdgs (<https://tourism4sdgs.org/>)

Considering the SDGs' extensive reach and foundation rooted in people, planet, peace, prosperity, and partnerships, it becomes clear that the SDGs aspire for individuals to emerge as active participants rather than mere observers or secondary contributors in the collec-

1 Rio + 20: United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Retrieved on April 20, 2021, from:



tive endeavor to forge a better world. Despite the somewhat idealistic viewpoint, it adopts against a backdrop fraught with hunger, poverty, and other social malaises, the 2030 Agenda can be seen as a catalyst for raising awareness and fostering societal engagement with the pressing challenges at hand.

Within this framework, the notion of sustainability is pivotal in reassessing tourism's contribution to modern society. Sustainable development should be recognized not merely as an endpoint but as a continuous effort to alleviate the repercussions of human activity on the environment. This endeavor presents a formidable challenge, necessitating a collective societal effort. It demands a recalibration of priorities towards fostering a culture of peace, eradicating poverty, ensuring equitable wealth distribution, universal education, and harmonizing development with environmental conservation (Matheus, Moraes & Caffagni, 2005). This concise and targeted historical introspection underscores attempts to devise strategies for integrating sustainability principles into contemporary societal practices. Although the established guidelines and proposed measures may appear somewhat superficial and inadequate, it is important to note that international agencies function without authoritative or executive power. Their role is to guide policy through facilitation and advocacy, honoring the autonomy of nations and institutions.

Within the realm of tourism, the SDGs have found fertile soil for both development and implementation. By solely analyzing tourism through economic lenses, which predominantly focus on monetary transactions, the anthropological essence of this phenomenon risks being overlooked, perceiving tourists not as people but merely as financial vessels. Conversely, examining tourism solely through socio-anthropological and environmental lenses neglects its economic implications, potentially fostering a romanticized perception detached from contemporary realities (Barretto, 2003). Hence, it becomes evident that the convergence of different dimensions of sustainability also resonates within the context of the SDGs.

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the UN body tasked with advancing sustainable and universally accessible tourism, tourism holds the potential to contribute to all SDGs directly or indirectly. However, specifically, "the tourism industry is specifically included as a target in SDGs 8, SDG 12, and SDG 14, which relate to inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production, and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, respectively." (Abdou, Hassan & Dief, 2020, p. 4). This underscores the shift towards conceptualizing tourism as a tool for sustainable development within the UN framework, particularly following its integration into the SDGs in 2015 (Tourism for SDG, 2021). Moreover, in 2017, the UNWTO designated the

year as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism with the objective of catalyzing positive transformations within the tourism sector (UNWTO, 2017). This initiative aimed to instigate policy reforms, alter business practices, and influence consumer behavior to foster a more sustainable approach to tourism, thereby facilitating the attainment of the SDGs (Diaz & Fernandez, 2019). It is pertinent to note that the UNWTO had already acknowledged the interconnection between tourism and sustainability in its 1999 publication *Agenda para planificadores locales: turismo sostenible y gestión municipal, edición para América Latina y Caribe* (UNWTO, 1999). Hence, the relationship between tourism and sustainability within the purview of international agencies and, consequently, the SDGs predates recent efforts and aligns with ongoing reflections on the role of these agencies. Their role is primarily pedagogical and directive, guiding processes and offering recommendations rather than enacting policies directly.

Thus, considering this theoretical framework, built on the trajectory of sustainability at the UN and also at the UNWTO, it becomes possible to understand the SDGs and their relationship with tourism, which will be further explored in the research results presented below.

## METHODOLOGY

Bibliometrics, a theoretical domain within Information Science, encompasses statistical laws and empirical principles to investigate various aspects of publications, authors, keywords, users, citations, and journal titles, among others, as variables in the management of information and knowledge (Guedes, 2012). This approach not only quantifies scholarly output but also furnishes insights into the trajectory of literature within a particular field of knowledge. An integral component of this evolutionary process is the utilization of bibliometrics as a research method, wherein it serves as a valuable investigative tool, supporting studies that analyze data within specific contexts. This methodology is particularly relevant in research across humanities, social sciences, and applied sciences, as highlighted by Araújo (2006).

Thus, within the identified research context and anchored by the terms "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Tourism" and "Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Tourism," along with their respective intersections, we present the bibliometric study undertaken to comprehend the interfaces delineated by these terms. This study constitutes a descriptive research endeavor (Richardson, 2012), given that the results elucidate these interfaces based on predefined search criteria. However, for a clearer depiction of the descriptors utilized, they are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Characterization by Database Descriptors

<b>Time Frame</b>		2016 – 2020	
<b>Search Criteria</b>		Title, abstract, and keywords	
<b>Descriptor: SDG and Tourism</b>			
<b>Filter: Open access, articles only, and early access</b>			
<b>Database</b>	<b>Found</b>	<b>Retrieved</b>	<b>Used</b>
<b>Web of Science</b>	23	15	12
<b>Descriptor: SDGs and Tourism</b>			
<b>Database</b>	<b>Found</b>	<b>Retrieved</b>	<b>Used</b>
<b>Tourism Articles</b>	1	1	1

Source: prepared by the authors (2021).

For the research, articles were sourced from the Web of Science (WoS) and Tourism Publications (PubTur) databases. PubTur, an extension project of the Graduate Program in Tourism at EACH-USP, houses a compilation of Ibero-American tourism articles spanning approximately 40 indexed journals (Publicações de Turismo, 2021). Despite its scope, PubTur yielded only one result pertaining to tourism and the SDGs. Hence, supplementation from the international WoS database was imperative to broaden the research literature.

Data was extracted from these databases' websites on March 30, 2021. A quantitative analysis was conducted to ascertain the number of articles containing the selected descriptors within the stipulated timeframe of 2016 to 2020, considering the inception of the SDGs in 2015. Notably, neither database had studies published prior to this period.

The primary criterion for article selection was the presence of the specified descriptors in the title, abstract, or keywords. Following this, a thorough assessment of abstracts was undertaken to determine the suitability of each article for the research. Out of the 24 articles identified, 16 were retrieved, and 13 were ultimately utilized for the research findings.

It is worth noting that the WoS database applied the "open access" filter, which initially yielded 58 results for the descriptor. However, this figure was refined to 30 after applying additional filters to include only "articles" and "early access," excluding categories such as "proceeding papers" and "reviews." Consequently, 25 articles remained. Following this procedure, two articles were found to be inaccessible, resulting in a final count

of 23 articles in the WoS database. Combined with the one article from the PubTur database, the total corpus comprised 24 articles for analysis. It is essential to mention that alongside the articles, additional sources such as books and other documents contextualizing the MDGs and SDGs were utilized.

Subsequently, all 24 retrieved articles were meticulously reviewed, and a bibliometric analysis was conducted on the 13 selected articles to delineate the relationship between tourism and the SDGs. Iramuteq software was employed for this analysis. R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires (Iramuteq) is a licensed software that facilitates statistical analysis of text corpora and tabular data comprised of individuals/words (Camargo & Justo, 2019). This program, built on the R software and Python language, enables a spectrum of textual data analyses, ranging from simple to multivariate, and presents vocabulary distribution in a user-friendly and visually comprehensible manner (Camargo & Justo, 2013). Additionally, a word cloud was generated to visualize the keywords used in the articles.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As delineated in the literature review, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the UN entity overseeing global tourism, links tourism to SDG 8 ("Decent Work and Economic Growth"), SDG 12 ("Responsible Consumption and Production"), and SDG 14 ("Life Below Water") (UNWTO, 2021). However, within the Tourism for SDGs platform developed by the UNWTO, indicators suggest that tourism, through its dissemination, can directly or indirectly contribute to achieving all 17 SDGs (Tourism for SDGs, 2021), acknowledging the interdisciplinary nature of the tourism phenomenon.

Upon retrieving and reviewing articles pertaining to the nexus between tourism and the SDGs, it emerged that the literature on this topic reveals tourism's association with 13 of the 17 SDGs outlined in the 2030 Agenda. To conduct a bibliometric analysis of these articles, we employed the bibliometric method to ascertain the relationship between tourism and the SDGs, examining countries, publication years, journals, and methodologies utilized in these publications. Tools such as the Iramuteq software and word clouds were utilized to dissect objectives and keywords.

From this analysis, it became apparent that Spain leads in publications concerning the intersection of tourism and the SDGs, with four (4) articles. Notably, Spain serves as the host country of the UNWTO, potentially influencing this prevalence. Australia follows with two (2) publications, while other countries each contribute one (1) publication: England, Italy, Denmark, the United



Kingdom, Iceland, Egypt, and Brazil. The prominence of European countries in publishing on this subject underscores the significance Europe places on the SDGs. Notably, the continent boasts the “SDG Watch Europe” platform, which scrutinizes European countries’ strategies and policies for achieving the goals, monitors SDG implementation across Europe, explores ways to engage society in achieving the goals, and reflects on innovations pertinent to the 2030 Agenda (SDG Watch Europe, 2021).

Australia, the second country with the highest number of publications, also places a priority on the SDGs. The Australian government offers a platform where stakeholders can track the country’s progress towards achieving the SDGs, along with reports demonstrating how the nation contributes to these goals (Australian Government’s Reporting Platform, 2021).

In terms of year of publication, 2020 emerges as the most prolific year, with six (6) articles published, closely followed by 2019, which saw five (5) studies released. This trend suggests an increasing focus on research and discussion on the topic each year, aligning with the urgency of advancing the SDGs as per the 2030 Agenda.

In analyzing the publication outlets, the journal *Sustainability* stands out with seven papers, followed by the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* with three publications. Additionally, the journals *Journal of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS)*, *Land*, and *Culture* each feature one published article. Notably, *Sustainability* is an international interdisciplinary academic journal renowned for its peer-reviewed and open-access approach, addressing themes encompassing environmental, cultural, economic, and social sustainability (MDPI, 2021).

Similar to *Sustainability*, the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* is an esteemed international scientific journal renowned for publishing research on tourism and sustainable development, covering economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions (Taylor & Francis Online, 2021). Hence, it is evident that these two journals, which have published the highest number of articles on tourism and the SDGs, focus on topics encompassing environmental, social, cultural, economic, and political sustainability. This reflects the SDGs’ purpose, which is to enable a balance among all these aspects through a holistic approach. From the journals addressing these topics, the achievement of the SDGs is facilitated through academic research that undergoes peer review before being published and subsequently delivered in an accessible form to the academic community, thus disseminating the importance of the SDGs to the global community.

To dissect the objectives of the examined articles, the Iramuteq software was employed to construct a word

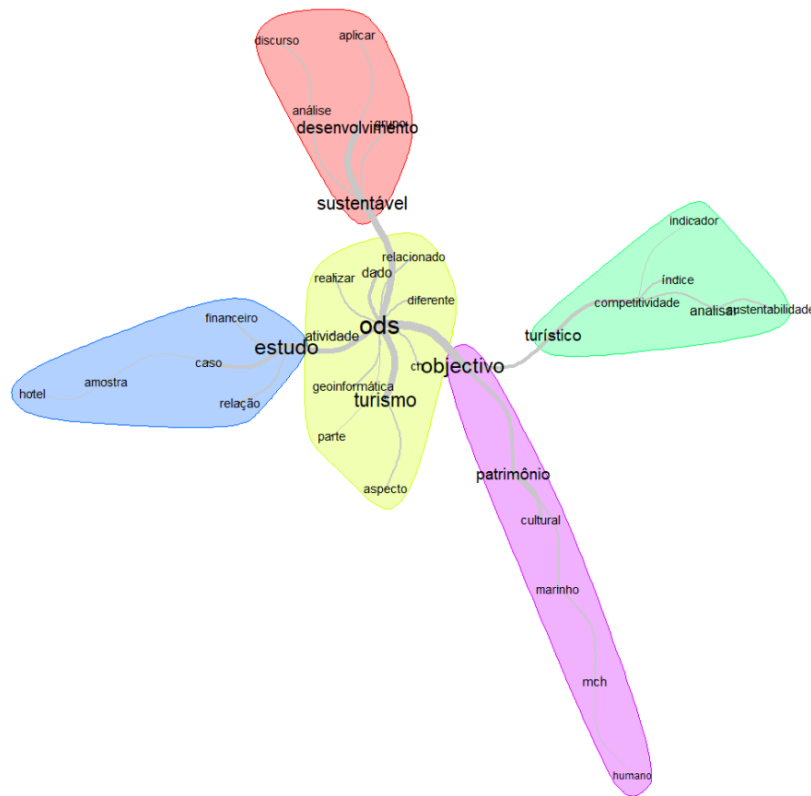
cloud (Figure 1).

The word tree generated by the software was constructed using the objectives outlined in the abstracts of the 13 analyzed studies. From the visualization, it is apparent that in terms of objectives, there is a prevalence of generic verbs and terms, such as “realize,” “relate,” “data,” and “activity,” placing tourism within the same quadrant as the SDGs. This suggests that these studies are inherently connected to both tourism and the SDGs. Regarding the core of the word “study,” case studies primarily pertain to the financial context and private initiatives, as indicated by the term “hotel.” The “sustainable” dimension is closely associated with “development,” stemming from a series of objectives linked to terms like “analysis,” “apply,” and “discourse.” Additionally, the SDGs are intertwined with the quadrant denoted by the term “tourism,” signifying studies focused on competitiveness and sustainability, highlighted by terms such as “indices” and “indicators.” Lastly, the branch stemming from the words constituting the “goal” is correlated with domains directly related to tourism, such as “heritage,” “culture,” “marine,” and “MCH” (Marine Cultural Heritage), alongside the human dimension at the apex of the tree. This aspect reflects a more humanized and socially oriented context of sustainability associated with the SDGs.

Regarding the methodologies employed, we observed that the most frequently used method in the studies comprising the research to accomplish their objectives was “bibliographical research,” with eight (8) papers employing this approach, followed by research utilizing the application of “questionnaires” (three papers). Subsequently, there was the utilization of “interviews” and “exploratory research” (two papers each), and lastly, “quantitative analysis based on secondary data” and “documentary analysis,” each utilized by one publication. Interestingly, some articles employed more than one methodology to achieve their proposed objectives. Given the prevalence of bibliographical research and analysis based on secondary data—whether quantitative or documentary—it is evident that research focused on the involved issues is still in an under-applied stage, despite sustainability being discussed by the UN-WTO since the 1990s, as outlined in the theoretical framework.

Thus, despite the scarcity of publications linking tourism and the SDGs, researchers in the field have endeavored to conduct studies grounded in the existing literature on the subject, bolstering its scientific rigor. Field research has also been conducted employing questionnaires and interviews as data collection tools, indicating that, in addition to the knowledge derived from the literature, researchers have engaged with available materials from organizations and destinations contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. In this context, explor-

Figure 2. Objectives Collected from the Articles Abstracts – Iramuteq



Source: prepared by the authors (2021).

Figure 3. Word Cloud Based on Keywords



Source: prepared by the authors (2021).

atory research holds significance as the topic is relatively recent, and the literature remains largely unexplored, prompting further in-depth investigation into the relationship between tourism and the SDGs through bibliographic studies.

The keywords serve as descriptors identifying the topic under discussion, with studies typically containing an average of up to five keywords. In this paper, we opted to include only the first three, as they represent the most significant ones, guiding the reader to the research area. Upon analyzing the keywords, the term “Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” emerged as

the most frequent, with seven (7) articles utilizing it as a keyword, followed by “tourism” and “sustainable tourism” (each mentioned in two publications), and the remaining words depicted in the image above, each mentioned once.

Examining the word cloud, it becomes apparent that the SDGs are central to the discussions outlined in the articles and are frequently intertwined with tourism or sustainable tourism, based on specific cross-cutting themes that vary according to the area of research explored. Simultaneously, the cloud underscores the diverse array of possibilities that the relationship between

tourism and the SDGs can offer, considering the assortment of methodologies employed (such as critical discourse analysis or critical thinking) and the focus on themes linked to economic aspects, such as the peer-to-peer economy and competitiveness, among others.

Following the bibliometric analysis of the selected variables, the process of identifying the SDGs and their direct correlation with tourism commenced. According to the analysis, SDG 8 emerged as the most frequently mentioned (nine times) in the publications, focusing on decent work and economic growth, underscoring tourism's potential to contribute to job creation and economic expansion.

SDG 8 underscores the imperative of fostering inclusive economic growth to drive progress, create decent employment opportunities, and enhance the quality of life for people worldwide. This entails drafting a comprehensive plan to achieve these objectives, particularly in the least developed countries, by expanding job prospects, bridging inequalities across nations, age groups, and genders, curtailing informal employment, and cultivating safe work environments (Peña-Sánchez, Ruiz-Chico, Jiménez-García & López-Sánchez, 2020).

While the prevailing perspective on economic growth in various sectors, including contemporary tourism, leans towards neoliberalism, a more critical approach is necessary to recognize that economic growth entails more than just quantitative expansion. It also entails an environmental-economic narrative that intertwines equity with social sustainability (Boluk, Cavaliere & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2019). Tourism, as an activity, embodies numerous political characteristics pertinent to labor rights, encompassing equitable wages, the provision of secure workspaces and protective gear, equal opportunities regardless of gender or race, and the empowerment of workers to advocate for their rights and career advancement (Winchenbach et al., 2019 apud Ioannides, Gyimóthy & James, 2021).

Within the framework of SDG 8, a key concern lies in recognizing that contributing to job creation does not solely entail increasing employment numbers but also entails ensuring the overall quality of these occupations (Winchenbach et al., 2019 apud Chen, Cheng, Edwards & Xu, 2020). However, this perspective often fixates on quantity, focusing on job creation metrics and employment multipliers rather than prioritizing the quality of employees' work (Ioannides, Gyimóthy & James, 2021).

Tourism stands out as a continuously expanding sector, widely acknowledged for its entrepreneurial vigor, necessitating a substantial workforce for various entities encompassing accommodation, food and beverage, and transportation operators, among others (Lyon & Hunter-Jones, 2019). These establishments rely on operational teams, proficient individuals versed in guest

relations, employees adept in business communication, financial experts, and general managers. Consequently, the spectrum of employment opportunities, spanning various career levels, flourishes within the tourism sector (Lyon & Hunter-Jones, 2019).

Case studies have already demonstrated the alignment of SDG 8 with job creation and economic growth, as evidenced in locales like Iceland, where a significant portion of new job opportunities stems from traditional functions within the tourism services sector. Moreover, this correlation extends to workers engaged in the construction of hotels and visitor infrastructure, thereby fostering an increase in employment within the construction sector catalyzed by tourism activities (Cook, Saviolidis, Davíðsdóttir, Jóhannsdóttir & Ólafsson, 2019).

In specific domains such as the sharing economy and emerging forms of accommodation like Airbnb, tourism demonstrates its capacity to create flexible job opportunities that supplement residents' incomes. With the rapid advancement of online services, many individuals transitioning into Airbnb hosting have seized the opportunity to establish themselves as professional hosts, generating rental income as their primary source of livelihood (Chen, Cheng, Edwards & Xu, 2020). However, this trend can bolster neoliberalism and capital at the expense of sustainable development.

Cultural heritage presents another avenue through which tourism can advance SDG 8 and the 2030 Agenda. Given that heritage sites can serve as tourism attractions, providing income opportunities and employment for local residents, promoting cultural tourism emerges as a means of fostering economic development by creating jobs and contributing to GDP growth (Xiao et al., 2018). Nonetheless, striking a balance between economic exploitation and heritage preservation poses a significant challenge. This is where SDG target 8.9 becomes pivotal, as it endeavors to promote sustainable tourism by fostering job creation and supporting local culture and products. By minimizing adverse impacts on heritage sites while simultaneously fostering income generation and economic development, this target aims to navigate the delicate balance between economic interests and heritage preservation (Xiao et al., 2018).

Aligned with SDG target 8.9, tourism plays a significant role in supporting rural practices by facilitating the purchase and sale of locally sourced agricultural products and integrating gastronomy as a key revenue stream (Diaz-Sarachaga, 2020). This dynamic fosters job creation and drives economic growth in rural areas. Concerning local cuisine, there are reports from volunteers associated with international student hosting organizations in Brazil and Portugal engaging in academic tourism, which underscores the link between target 8.9 and



culinary experiences. These volunteers participate in tastings of traditional products and promote local culture through the celebration of country-specific gastronomy (Pinto & Câmara, 2020). Thus, the study reveals that beyond job creation, SDG 8 advocates for the consumption of locally sourced products, fostering sustainable economic growth by embracing practices that empower local enterprises and sustainable goods.

Therefore, we acknowledge the significance of SDG 8 and its targeted initiatives, combined with tourism, in advancing the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. Recognizing tourism's active role in the production chain, which generates job opportunities across various sectors, secures livelihoods, generates revenue, and bolsters economic development in host locations, tourism emerges as a key driver of SDG 8.

Nevertheless, the bibliometric analysis conducted here underscores the significance of tourism in relation to SDG 11 and SDG 12, as these two objectives are referenced six (6) times each in publications linking the Sustainable Development Goals to tourism. SDG 11 emphasizes sustainable cities and communities, while SDG 12 focuses on responsible consumption and production.

Commencing the examination with studies pertaining to SDG 11, it is supported by specific targets and indicators aimed at eradicating slums, mitigating urban sprawl, and ensuring universal access to sustainable urban transportation, thereby underscoring the crucial role of cities in the forthcoming years (Petti, Trillo & Makore, 2020). According to the literature, SDG 11 intersects with tourism notably through target 11.4, which endeavors to intensify endeavors to protect and preserve the world's cultural and natural heritage. This involves establishing a global financial framework to safeguard heritage through collaborative efforts between public authorities and private organizations (Petti et al., 2020).

Understanding the pivotal role of heritage tourism in attaining this Sustainable Development Goal is crucial, given that heritage is widely regarded as a crucial catalyst for sustainable development (Xiao et al., 2018). With SDG 11 focusing its endeavors on the preservation of world heritage, it contributes significantly to shaping a future characterized by more sustainable cities and communities.

In addition to its emphasis on cultural and natural heritage, SDG 11 aims to foster personal connections, trust, and community bonds that bolster sustainability from a social standpoint (Richardson, 2015 apud Chen, Cheng, Edwards & Xu, 2020). Alongside the contributions of SDG 8 to heritage, the targets of SDG 11 illuminate the pivotal role that world heritage can play within this sustainable development framework (Petti et al., 2020).

In this context, SDG 12 prioritizes responsible consumption and production patterns, representing one of the few SDGs explicitly acknowledging the role of tourism. It positions the tourism industry as a vanguard capable of spearheading global transformation toward more sustainable practices (Boluk, Cavaliere & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2019). Indeed, there are already companies within the tourism sector striving to align consumption and production with more sustainable practices, particularly within the catering and hotel sectors.

A study on the so-called "green" or sustainable hotels in Egypt (Abdou et al., 2020) revealed that the majority of surveyed managers concurred that their priorities aligned with sustainable plans. They increasingly embraced sustainable practices and integrated sustainability into their hotel planning cycles. The study further indicated that hotels had begun measuring the quantity and composition of waste from each department, opting to purchase food in bulk to minimize excessive packaging. Additionally, they promoted sustainable public procurement practices, including the use of green products and locally sourced food, contributing to waste reduction through the principles of the 3 Rs (reduction, reuse, and recycling) (Abdou et al., 2020).

In the area of catering, certain restaurants actively support SDG implementation, utilizing food as a means to unite and empower communities while educating them on environmental impacts and sustainability practices (Boluk et al., 2019). Consumers also play a role in advancing sustainable agendas by patronizing establishments that endorse the SDGs and incorporate sustainable practices into their operations. This underscores the notion that consumption habits and identity play pivotal roles in integrating sustainability into tourism (Boluk et al., 2019).

Interestingly, European countries generally exhibit higher scores in terms of achieving most of the SDGs, except for SDG 12, whereas African nations indicate lower performance in achieving most of the SDGs, with the exception of SDG 12, which boasted the highest score compared to other regions (Rodríguez-Díaz & Pulido-Fernández, 2020). This suggests that responsible production and consumption practices are prioritized in countries that are not necessarily at the epicenter of the global system. This discovery is significant and prompts the question of which sustainable practices are financially beneficial for businesses, especially considering that those identified in hotel related studies also lead to cost savings and facilitate the communication of "green practices" to consumers. This raises suspicions that the focus of such actions may be more financial than sustainable. However, it is also crucial to acknowledge that implementing new processes may be easier for relatively new businesses compared to those operating in more traditional tourism settings, such as

those in Europe.

Based on the findings from the publications, Sustainable Development Goals 8, 11, and 12 garnered the most attention in the studies analyzed, as mentioned earlier in this section. Given the depth and complexity of these studies, it was decided to delve into these three goals more intensively rather than discussing all the SDGs identified, respecting the constraints of space. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that SDG 10 appeared three times, focusing on reducing inequalities in the tourism sector. This indicates that there are already initiatives and movements aimed at ensuring fair labor practices, equitable wage rates, and minimum wages for workers in the tourism and hospitality sector (Boluk et al., 2019), who are increasingly confronting the injustices and inequalities inherent in market economies (Cohen & Kietzmann, 2014 apud Chen, Cheng, Edwards & Xu, 2020).

In relation to the other Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs 4, 5, 13, and 17 were mentioned twice in the analyzed publications, while SDGs 6, 7, 9, 14, and 15 were addressed in just one article each. From this analysis, an important research outcome can be inferred, focusing on the idea previously discussed throughout the text that the SDGs defined by the UN related to tourism are 8, 12, and 14. However, despite being indicated by the UNWTO, SDG 14 was not found in the scientific field, being addressed in only one publication that relates coastal and marine tourism as an economic and social benefit for the sustainable use of marine resources (Henderson, 2019).

Finally, considering the timeframe in which the SDGs were established in 2015 to be achieved by 2030, as well as the period during which this research was conducted (2021), it is essential to address the global COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences. In order to do so, we have utilized a document that will likely be referenced in future scientific publications on the SDGs and Tourism: the report published by the UN on policies related to the transformation of tourism based on COVID-19, entitled "Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism". This document estimated a catastrophic loss of 100 to 120 million jobs directly related to tourism, indicating that the most vulnerable individuals in the sector were women, young people, and migrant workers (UN Sustainable Development Group, 2020). Thus, it is possible to conclude that although the pandemic has affected everyone, it has disproportionately impacted those segments of the population who already face greater difficulties in the job market due to their gender and nationality.

The document also highlights the role of the pandemic in slowing progress toward several Sustainable Development Goals, threatening to increase poverty (SDG 1) and inequality between and within countries (SDG 10),

jeopardizing tourism's contribution to gender equality (SDG 5), as well as the SDGs directly related by the UN-WTO to tourism (8, 12 and 14) (UN Sustainable Development Group, 2020). However, the pandemic comes at a decisive moment to align efforts working on the SDGs and tourism to ensure a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future (UN Sustainable Development Group, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

Tourism presents a conducive environment for building the processes and implementing the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a systemic activity, sustainable tourism endeavors not only to thrive economically but also grapples with the challenge of upholding social dimensions in parity, necessitating responsible and dedicated actions. In essence, given that the SDGs embody a global agenda focused on people, the planet, prosperity, peace, and partnerships, it becomes strategic to integrate tourism into more goals, thereby reaching a wider array of destinations and organizations, including small and medium-sized entities, which are pivotal to tourism yet distant from the intricacies of the SDGs.

This article sought to explore the interaction between tourism and the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals by examining specialized scientific literature. Through the analysis of articles correlating tourism with the SDGs, it was observed that the literature underscores the association of tourism with 13 of the 17 SDGs outlined in the 2030 Agenda. Additionally, it was noted that while tourism is predominantly associated with SDGs 8, 12, and 14, the SDGs that chiefly underpin discussions pertaining to tourism within the scientific community do not include SDG 14, as indicated by the UNWTO, but rather SDG 11. Ultimately, it is inferred that the correlation between tourism and the SDGs, as delineated by the UN, appears cursory, considering the extensive potential through which tourism can contribute.

Nonetheless, this article faced research limitations due to the scarcity of studies linking tourism with the SDGs at the time of its execution. Given that this is an emerging topic not yet widely embraced by the scientific community, the scope of available publications on this subject was constrained. Undoubtedly, further and more comprehensive insights will emerge through subsequent rounds of bibliometric studies, wherein the investigation may be broadened by expanding the databases examined or even through a continuation of this same study with fieldwork.

Considering the time-bound nature of the goals set forth by the UN, it is advisable for studies to be continually updated to gauge the progress of discussions, particularly in light of unforeseen events such as crises or pandemics, which could impede the attainment of

these goals. Moreover, we propose the development of indicators that correlate the SDGs with national tourism initiatives, aiming to underscore Brazil's contribution to achieving the SDGs through tourism. Subsequent studies could then make this data more accessible to stakeholders.

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