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## *NAUTICAL SPORTS TOURISM: AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT<sup>A</sup>*

### **TURISMO DESPORTIVO NÁUTICO: UMA ANÁLISE EXPLORATÓRIA SOBRE AS OPORTUNIDADES PARA DESENVOLVIMENTO FUTURO**

## *TURISMO NÁUTICO DEPORTIVO: UN ANÁLISIS EXPLORATORIO SOBRE OPORTUNIDADES PARA EL DESARROLLO FUTURO*

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**ABSTRACT:** Nautical tourism has become a very popular tourism niche either for practitioners or spectators. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, new concerns to tourists as well as different motivations to travel have emerged. In this context, the appreciation of simpler lifestyles, contact with nature and water and the practice of outdoors activities are the new trend in the post-COVID-19 world. Therefore, with the purpose to identify managerial, governmental and academic opportunities to develop this promising sector, a literature

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review on Nautical Sports Tourism was developed. Following a four stages bibliometric analysis (Database selection, search criteria, data selection and analysis of results), this study revealed that, although it regards a topic of considerable growing interest, there is still a long way for the nautical sports tourism literature research to reach its maturity. Regardless of the unquestionable relevance of the current publications, there is still a lack of specific theory development and framework propositions in the field of nautical sports tourism. Even so, it was observed that the combination of sports and tourism in nautical environments opens a myriad of possibilities for places willing to enhance their competitiveness, improve brand image and qualify and diversify the coastal infrastructures.

**KEYWORDS:** Nautical Tourism, Sports Tourism, Literature Review

**RESUMO:** O turismo náutico tem se tornado um nicho de turismo muito popular tanto para praticantes quanto para espectadores. Em razão do surto de COVID-19, surgiram novas preocupações para os turistas, bem como diferentes motivações para viajar. Neste contexto, a valorização de estilos de vida mais simples, o contato com a natureza e a água e a prática de atividades ao ar livre são a nova tendência no mundo pós-COVID-19. Portanto, com o objetivo de identificar oportunidades gerenciais, governamentais e acadêmicas para o desenvolvimento deste promissor setor, foi realizada uma revisão da literatura sobre Turismo Náutico Esportivo. Seguindo uma análise bibliométrica de quatro estágios (seleção do banco de dados, definição dos critérios de busca, seleção dos dados e análise dos resultados), revelou-se que, embora se trate de um tema de considerável e crescente interesse, ainda há um longo caminho para que as pesquisas na literatura do turismo náutico esportivo atinjam sua maturidade. Apesar da inquestionável relevância das publicações atuais, ainda faltam o desenvolvimento de teorias específicas e proposições de modelos no campo do turismo náutico esportivo. Ainda assim, observou-se que a combinação de esportes e turismo em ambientes náuticos abre uma miríade de possibilidades para destinos que pretendam aumentar a sua competitividade, melhorar a imagem de marca e qualificar e diversificar as infraestruturas costeiras.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Turismo Náutico, Turismo Esportivo, Revisão de Literatura

**RESUMEN:** El turismo náutico se ha convertido en un nicho turístico muy popular tanto para practicantes como para espectadores. Debido al brote de COVID-19, han surgido nuevas preocupaciones para los turistas, así como diferentes motivaciones para viajar. En este contexto, la valoración de estilos de vida más sencillos, el contacto con la naturaleza y el agua y la práctica de actividades al aire libre son la nueva tendencia en el mundo post-COVID-19. Por ello, con el fin de identificar oportunidades empresariales, gubernamentales y académicas para el desarrollo de este prometedor sector, se realizó una revisión de la literatura sobre Turismo Náutico Deportivo. Tras un análisis bibliométrico en cuatro etapas (selección de la base de datos, definición de los criterios de búsqueda, selección de los datos y análisis de los resultados), nuestro análisis reveló que, si bien este es un tema de considerable y creciente interés, aún queda un largo camino por recorrer para que la investigación en la literatura del turismo náutico deportivo alcance la madurez. A pesar de la incuestionable relevancia de las publicaciones actuales, aún falta el desarrollo de teorías específicas y propuestas de modelos en el campo del turismo náutico deportivo. Aun así, se observó que la combinación del deporte y el turismo en entornos náuticos abre un sinfín de posibilidades para los destinos que pretenden incrementar su competitividad, mejorar su imagen de marca y calificar y diversificar la infraestructura costera.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Turismo Náutico, Turismo Deportivo, Revista de Literatura

## INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the new coronavirus disease, officially reported by China to the World Health Organization (WHO) on 31st December 2019, has posed critical health, social and economic challenges worldwide (Mayer & Coelho, 2020). In the face of this global crisis, caused by a virus with a high speed of transmission and for which, at first, there was no vaccine nor treatment, governments worldwide had no other option but to close their borders, restrict people's movements and impose social distancing (Weed, 2020). Although such measures effectively slowed down the spread of COVID-19, they caused economic shocks across all industries, hitting hard the Travel and Tourism sector (T&T) (Sharma et al., 2021). By itself, in 2020, international arrivals dropped by 74% (when compared to 2019), representing an estimated loss of USD 1.3 trillion in export revenues, USD 3.4 trillion in global GDP, and around 120 million direct jobs at risk (UNWTO, 2021).

In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted not only the physical, but also the mental health globally. The subsequent lockdowns and livelihood losses, and the constant search for mental healing, have shown the value of slower and simpler lifestyles, including tourism (Cooper & Buckley, 2021). In this context Weed (2020) observed that the interface of sports and tourism could make significant contributions to outcomes and policy goals for wellbeing, physical health, and mental health. Additionally, a study developed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on COVID-19 impacts on the blue economy projected a growth in tourists' preferences for "coastal and rural areas in a quest for contact with nature, open air and water" (UNCTAD, 2020). Given that, nautical sports tourism has become a popular travel interest in the post-COVID-19 world.

Aware of the potential of nautical sports tourism for the T&T sector recovery, some regions worldwide have launched development projects to be prepared and attract such tourists. For instance, in partnership with the city hall of Niteroi (located in Rio de Janeiro state, Brazil), the Federal Fluminense University is implementing a project to map the offer and define the strategic path to develop nautical sports tourism in the region (<http://turismonautico.uff.br/>). Likewise, the Galician Association of Nautical activities is engaged in transforming the euro region of Galicia-Northern Portugal into a nautical educational, cultural, and sports destination (<http://aganplus.org/>).

Despite the fact that some researchers have made an effort to review the literature on nautical tourism (e.g. Vázquez, 2020; Vázquez et al., 2021), the specific topic of nautical sports tourism still lacks an analysis of the studies addressing this field. With the purpose to identify managerial, governmental, and academic opportunities to develop the promising sector of nautical sports tourism, literature review on the subject was developed.

Regarding the methodology, a four stages bibliometric approach was



implemented (Database selection, search criteria, data selection and analysis of results). The results pointed out that the combination of sports and tourism in nautical environments opens a variety of possibilities for destinations willing to enhance their competitiveness, improve brand image and qualify and diversify the coastal infrastructures.

## NAUTICAL TOURISM

With almost two thirds of our planet being covered with water, it is no surprise that the maritime surroundings have always been a major part of humankind history, whether as a source of food, a route for transportation or a place for sports, leisure and tourism (Luck, 2007). Over the past decades, with substantial discussion on the importance of the marine environment for human life and the need for sustainable use of natural resources, the concept of Blue Economy (BE) was created as an extension of the green economy (Smith-Godfrey, 2016). More specifically, BE regards the management and optimization of natural water resources (seas, oceans, rivers), considering its environmental and social dimensions to achieve sustainable growth (Kabil et al., 2021).

According to the (UNCTAD, 2020), coastal and nautical tourism is the largest of all Blue economy sectors and is an essential source of jobs, investments, and incomes for many countries. For instance, in 2019, the cruise industry added over \$154 billion to the global economy and created 1.8 million jobs around the world (CLIA, 2020). Likewise, only in the European Union context, recreational nautical activities created up to 234,000 jobs and generated € 28 billion annual revenue in 2016 (European Commission, 2017). Besides the direct socio-economic impacts, nautical activities offer many other opportunities to the development of the tourism sector, such as easy fit with other tourism packages, lack of seasonality, promotion of other services, and the incentives they provide to the qualification and diversification of the coastal infrastructures (González et al., 2015).

The nautical tourism can be divided into two main kinds: the Nautical Tourism based on recreational and sports activities and the Nautical Cruise Tourism. While the Recreational and Sports type is motivated by activities on or underwater, the main motivation for the cruising tourism is closely related to the ship itself, not to the water environment (Cavalheiro et al., 2021; Vázquez et al., 2021). Another substantial difference between these two segments is the issue of overtourism that can be caused by the giant cruise ships with huge capacity, not to mention the environmental impact of these vessels in terms of waste disposal (Capocchi et al., 2019).

It is worth to mentioning that, as recreational and sports nautical tourism and cruise tourism present diverse characteristics and motivations, the COVID-19

pandemic also impacted them differently. On the one hand, the coronavirus outbreak has turned the cruise segment upside down (Radic et al., 2020). In March 2020, all cruise operations were suspended worldwide, and the whole segment stood still until July when few ships resumed navigation in parts of Europe, Asia and the South Pacific (CLIA, 2020). On the other hand, the quest for outdoor experiences and contact with nature and water, after COVID-19 lockdowns suspensions, has renewed the popularity for recreational nautical activities. For instance, the boat rental market has expanded worldwide and presents an estimated growth rate of 5% per year, for the next five years (ReportLinker, 2020).

As many authors advise that the two nautical tourism types should be studied separately (Moreno & Otamendi, 2017), and the recreational nautical tourism is the one growing in popularity, the present study will address this promising segment. As such, from now on, every time we use the term nautical tourism we will be relating to the recreational and sports kind.

Although recreational nautical activity was initially and historically associated with higher social classes, nowadays such elitism can no longer be generalized (Chapapría, 2000). In fact, nautical tourism is poly-functional, comprising a wide and growing number of maritime activities (Luković, 2012). Such multifunctional nature makes it difficult for the scholar community to reach a consensus on the definition and scope of nautical tourism (Moreno & Otamendi, 2017). In addition, other terms, like maritime and marine tourism, have been used in the literature as synonyms of nautical tourism (Vázquez, 2020).

Recently, Vázquez et al. (2021) analyzed the scientific production on nautical tourism since 1986. These researchers observed that the classification of nautical tourism encompasses a wide range of categories, for example: nature of the activities (recreational, sportive, labor); modalities (sailing, surfing, scuba diving, water skiing); geographical features of the water (seas, oceans, rivers, lakes); equipment to be used and so on. Moreover, regardless of the considerable array of definitions concerning "Nautical Tourism" Vázquez et al. (2021) have found a common ground on the literature they reviewed: the water is the main element in this practice and thus, the contact between the tourist and the water is a premise.

In addition to the search for outdoor activities in contact with water, Sports have become one of the most promising sector, with people growing concern for a healthy lifestyle (Yang et al., 2020). As proposed by Weed (2021), the sports tourism is fertile soil for increasing people's well-being. Thus, we focus our study on the nautical tourism with special interest in sports.



## NAUTICAL SPORTS TOURISM

Travelling to participate in sports or watching sporting events is one of the first tourism motivations recorded through human history. "As early as 900 BC the Greeks were travelling to take part in and watch the Ancient Greek Games" (Gibson, 1998, p.50). Later on, the Romans continued the travel element associated with sports (Weed & Bull, 2004). Famous for their sports spectacles that would pack entire coliseums the Roman Empire used such events to shift the focus of the populace away from their poor living conditions.

According to (Standeven, 1998), sports tourism needs to be understood as a two-dimensional concept: it is a cultural experience of physical activity (albeit sometimes vicariously as a spectator) integrally tied to a cultural experience of place. In the same line, Weed & Bull (2004) contributed to refining the sports tourism definition by adding people to the mix, as for many participants an important part of the leisure experience is the people with whom participation takes place. Therefore, they conceptualize it as "a social, economic and cultural phenomenon that arises from the unique interaction of activity, people and place" (Weed & Bull, 2004, p.37). Taking these two definitions into account, nautical sports tourism may be characterized as a unique interaction of people, activity and water.

With regard to the activity dimension of the sports tourism (e.g. kayaking, sailing, surfing etc), it may be formal or informal, competitive or recreational, actively or vicariously/passively participated in (Weed, 2009), as well as it might involve multi-sports or single-sport participation (De Knop, 1990). Many are the sports activities that can take place in a marine environment. In order to classify such sports, Li and Niu (2020) have proposed a framework with three categories: maritime sports tourism (parasols, sailboats, yachts etc.), coastal sports tourism (beach volleyball, coastal rock climbing, island exploration, etc.) and sports tourism in the sea (swimming, scuba diving, surfing, etc.). As the foundation of nautical tourism is strongly related to the water (Vázquez et al., 2021), nautical sports tourism activities can be organized into two of these categories: maritime sports tourism and sports tourism in the sea.

Regarding the people element, they might be competitors and/or co-participants. As explained by Weed (2005):

"For vicarious/passive participants, the people element is likely to be both other vicarious/passive participants (i.e., other spectators) and the active participants (i.e., competitors). Similarly, active competitors and co-participants may experience other people as active and/or vicarious/passive participants. Even activities that are sometimes participated in alone (e.g., mountaineering, running) are likely to involve other people because participants may reference their participation in terms of the subculture of the activity and thus experience a feeling of *communitas*." (Weed, 2005, p.233)

Furthermore, considering the interaction of activity, people and place,

Weed & Bull (2004) have suggested a typology of sports tourism as depicted on table 1.

**Table 1:** Types of sports tourism

Type	Definition
Tourism with sports content	Tourism that involves sport as an incidental activity rather than the prime purpose of the trip.
Sports participation tourism	Sport is the prime purpose of the trip.
Sports training	It comprises, quite simply, sports tourism trips where the prime purpose is sports instruction or training.
Sports events	It refers to tourism where the prime purpose of the trip is to take part in sports events, either as a participant or a spectator.

Source: Adapted from Weed and Bull (2004)

These five types of sports tourism can also be applied to the nautical context. For instance, several tourists of sun and beach tourism end up practicing some sort of nautical sports (W. Carvache-Franco et al., 2019), thus taking part in tourism with sports content. On the other hand, practicing a nautical sport, such as scuba diving or surfing, has been reported as some people's primary motivation for traveling (Geldenhuys et al., 2014; Scheske et al., 2019). As an example of sports training tourism, before the 2016's Olympic Games, several sailing teams have traveled to Rio de Janeiro to practice in the real setting of the games (Cavalheiro et al., 2021). Furthermore, some sailing events, such as the Volvo Ocean Race, attract millions of visitors to the host destination (J. Vieira et al., 2018). At last, the type of recreational sailing involving luxury motor yachts would fall into the luxury sports tourism (Weed & Bull, 2004).

Moreover, regarding the coronavirus pandemic impact on the types of nautical tourism, undoubtedly, the sports events were the most affected. In fact, as the COVID-19 outbreak grew, sports event hosts and administrators worldwide began to consider whether their events should be postponed or cancelled (Weed, 2020). The most remarkable example of the pandemic impact on the sports events market was the postponement of the 2020 Olympic Games, affecting not only economically by also psychologically the host community (Yamamura & Tsutsui, 2020).

In contrast, tourism with sports content and sports tourism participation might be more prized than ever before. In most countries around the world, no matter how severe the lockdown, some provision or allowance was made to allow some form of physical activity or exercise, given its importance for people's well-being (Weed, 2020). Additionally, during the confinement periods, it was also observed that the exercise and the place in which it is practiced impacted well-being, as exercising in natural open spaces was acknowledged more effective



than in urban areas (Cooper & Buckley, 2021). Additionally, well-being also seems to be linked to a sense of movement, no matter how small, and to places perceptually distinct from home (Su et al., 2020). Thus, it is no surprise that the demand for sports tourism is expected to grow, especially in rural and coastal areas (UNCTAD, 2020).

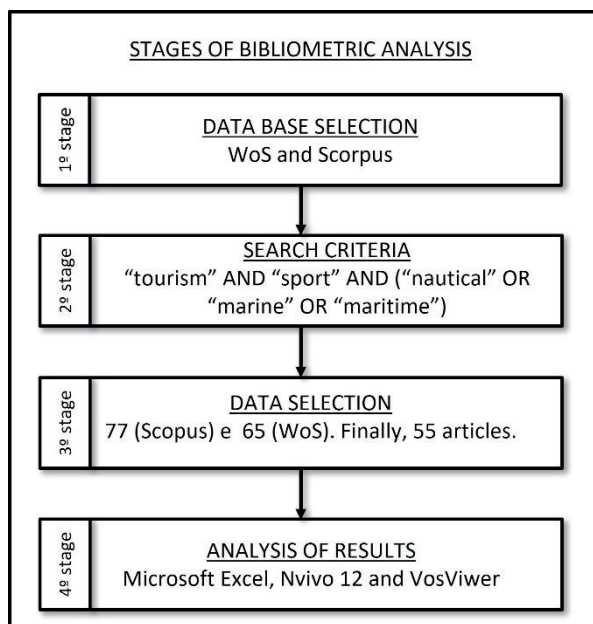
Given the clear potential of nautical sports tourism to recover tourism destinations worldwide, we seek to identify managerial, governmental, and academic opportunities for its development. To accomplish this purpose, we developed a literature review on the subject.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study concerns an exploratory analysis of the nautical sports tourism scholar, as it analyzes a topic on which there is little accumulated and systematized knowledge (Schlüter, 2003). The methods applied were a systematic literature review that is a formal, systematic, structured approach to reviewing all the relevant literature on a topic (Jiménez-García et al., 2020), followed by a bibliometric analysis, a technic used to measure the advances of science, identifying the paths taken by researchers, the productivity, and the quality researched so far (Nascimento et al., 2019).

The methodology followed a four steps approach (Vazquez, 2020): data base selection, search criteria, data result selection and analysis of results (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Methodological approach



Source: Based on Vazquez, 2020



Firstly, the data base selection was made. Web of Science (WoS) and/or Scopus are the two most acknowledged international databases (Vieira & Gomes, 2009). Therefore, the articles published in English until 2020 in these electronic journals portals were defined as the data base of this study. Data collection was implemented in March 2021.

Secondly, the search of documents was carried out using the terms “tourism” AND “sport” AND (“nautical” OR “marine” OR “maritime”), which should appear either in article title, abstract or keywords. The terms marine and maritime were included in the search because, as mentioned earlier, they are often used in the tourism literature as synonymous of nautical (Vázquez et al., 2021). While the query on Scopus resulted in 77 publications, on WoS we found 65 articles. After gathering all articles and removing repeated ones (those that were present in the two databases), keeping only one version of them, we end up with an initial sample of 92 studies.

Then, a pre-analysis of the 92 articles was carried out to filter and select those articles that have actually addressed the topic of nautical sports tourism and ensure that the searched terms were not only used as examples in the abstract. After this pre-analysis, we ended up with a final sample of 55 articles.

At last, we performed an analysis of the 55 articles with the aid of three softwares: Microsoft Excel, Nvivo 12 and VosViewer. Other than analyzing the network of keywords and the most relevant authors and journals, we have also observed the longitudinal evolution of the literature, the main studied destinations and types of activities covered in the article sample. These results are presented in the next section.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Publications' longitudinal analysis

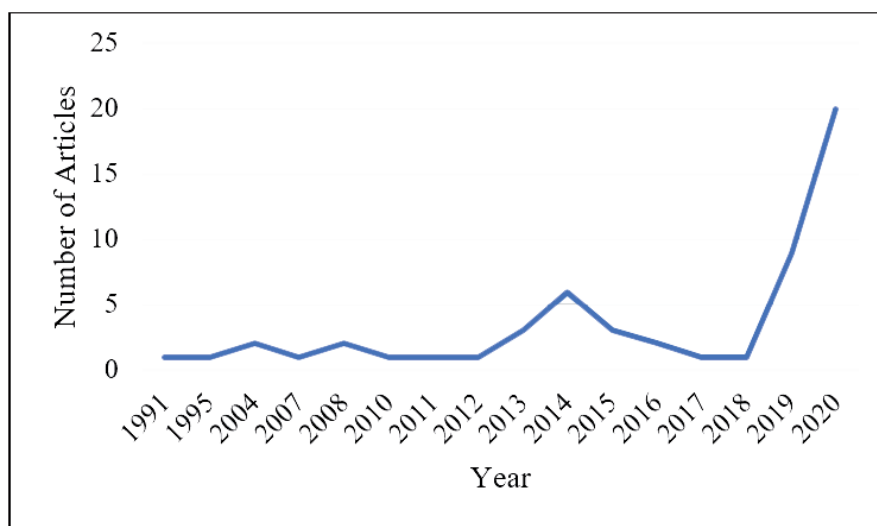
Given the exploratory nature of this study, we did not establish a time frame for the articles query. As such, it was possible to analyze the temporal evolution of research on nautical sports tourism. The oldest article from our sample was published in 1991. This pioneering research (Tatsuyuki-Shishido, 1991) analyzed a governmental plan for the development of Wakanoura bay, in Japan, as a marine recreation resort, namely Wakayama Marina City. One of the goals of such project was “developing the new Wakayama Marina City as a major sports center of the Prefecture by providing a large marina and a variety of other sports facilities to promote the use by youth from neighboring major cities as well as



regional population" (Tatsuyuki-Shishido, 1991, p.390).

Since 1991, the scholar production on nautical sports tourism has considerably grown, reaching its peak of annual publications in 2020, with 20 articles published. Thus, it is observed a soaring academic interest on this topic. Figure 2 shows the chronological evolution of scientific production on nautical sports tourism, considering the number of articles published.

**Figure 2:** Chronological evolution of the publication on Nautical Sports Tourism



Source: The authors (2021)

It is worthwhile mentioning that out of the 20 articles published in 2020, 13 were published in a special issue of the Journal of Coastal Research, entitled "Sustainable Development in Coastal Regions: A Perspective of Environment, Economy, and Technology", which might bias our analyses. However, this growing trend of publications concerning nautical sports tourism was also observed in 2019, when the number of publications increases considerably (9 articles), when compared to 2018 and 2017, with 1 publication each year.

#### Authors and source analysis

The analyses of the most prominent journals publishing articles on nautical sports tourism have shown that such literature has a quite sparse publication source. In fact, the 55 articles of our sample were published in 32 different journals. Hereafter, on table 2, are presented the journals containing more than one article addressing this topic.

**Table 2:** Number of articles published by journal

Journal	Number of Articles
Journal of Coastal Research	16
Tourism in Marine Environments	4
Marine Policy	3
Ocean and Coastal Management	2
Journal of Sustainability Science and Management	2
European Sport Management Quarterly	2

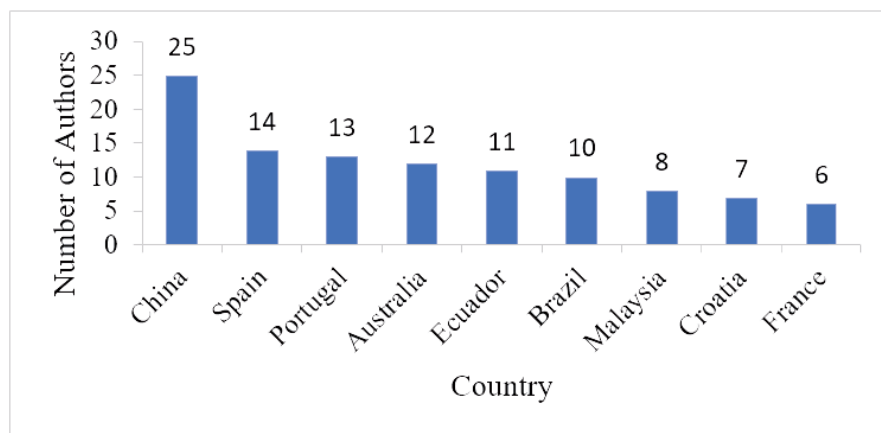
Source: The authors (2021)

Again, it is important to acknowledge that out of the 16 articles published on the Journal of Coastal Research, 13 were published in a 2020's special edition mentioned earlier.

In respect of the Authors, the 55 articles were written by 143 different researchers. In addition, we observed that most of these researchers had coauthored only one article, making it difficult to define the most relevant ones. The authors with the highest number of articles are the coauthors Mauricio Carvache-Franco, Wilmer Carvache-Franco and Ana Beatriz Hernandez-Lara, who have published 3 articles together (M. Carvache-Franco, Carvache-Franco, Carvache-Franco, & Hernández-Lara, 2020; W. Carvache-Franco et al., 2019, 2020).

Other than the number of articles, we have also analyzed the origin of the authors. Through our sample we have found authors from 26 different countries. However, we found that 75% of these authors were from only 9 countries, as depicted on Figure 3. As shown hereafter, China is the origin with the higher number of authors, 25.

**Figure 3:** Origin of Authors



Source: The authors (2021)



### Textual analysis and keyword trends

After a quantitative textual analysis of all 55 articles, we observed that the most repeated words are: tourism (n = 3709), marine (n = 2009), management (n = 1071) and development (n = 1065). These findings suggest that most of the studies in our sample were developed with a managerial perspective. In addition, the exhaustive repetition of the word development might suggest that these studies sought to analyze the tourism, the community or the nautical activity development.

A word cloud (figure 4) with the 500 most repeated words was arranged with the Nvivo 12 software for visualization purposes.

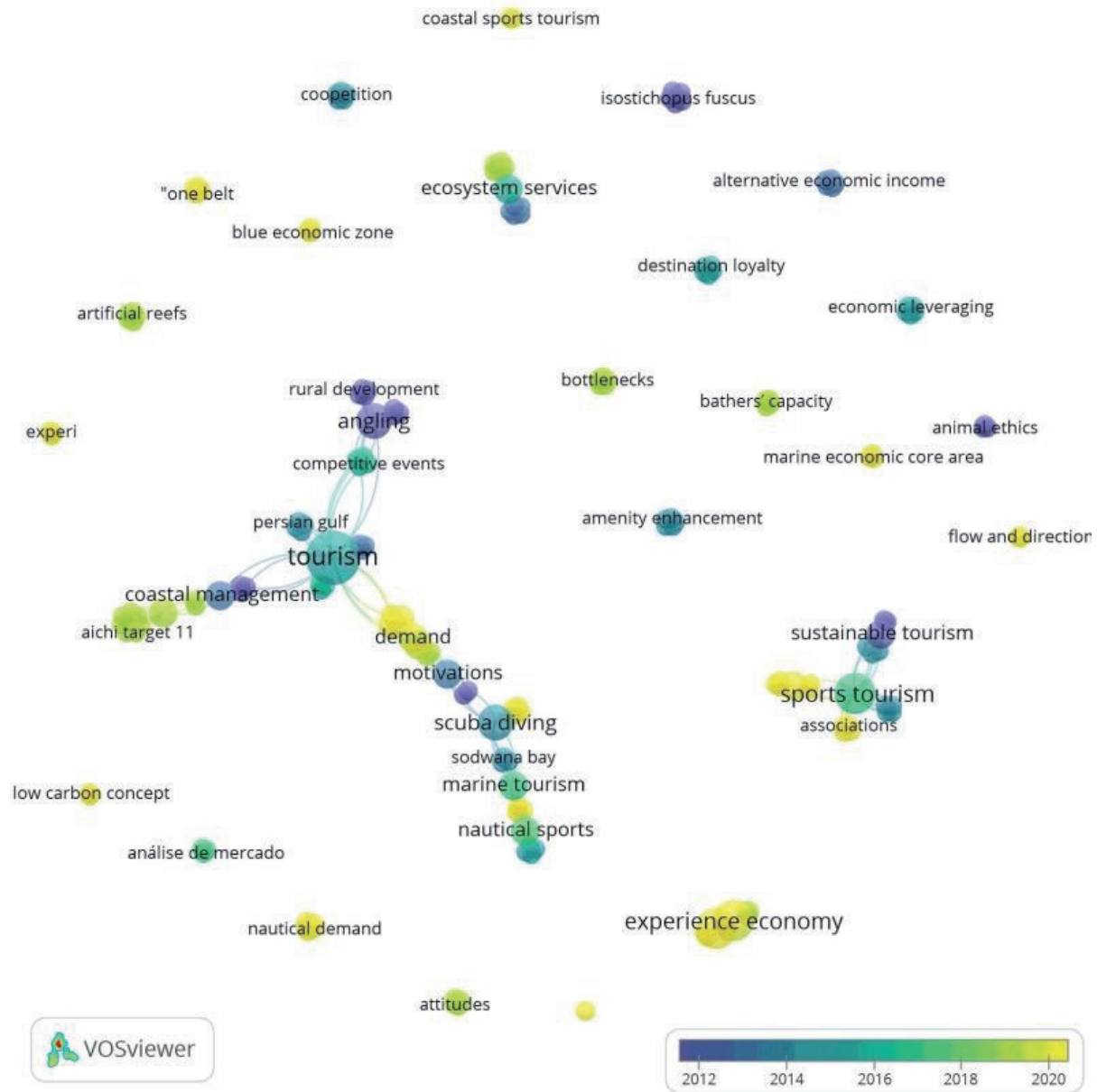
**Figure 4:** Word Cloud – 500 most frequent words



Source: The authors (2021)

By analyzing the keywords of these articles, we identified the most commonly used terms have been identified and the most current trends related to emerging areas of interest in nautical sports tourism are also revealed. A trend graphic (figure 5) was elaborated with VOSviewer software, which uses a color scale that goes from blue (less recent terms) to yellow (more recent terms).

Figure 5: Trends in keywords



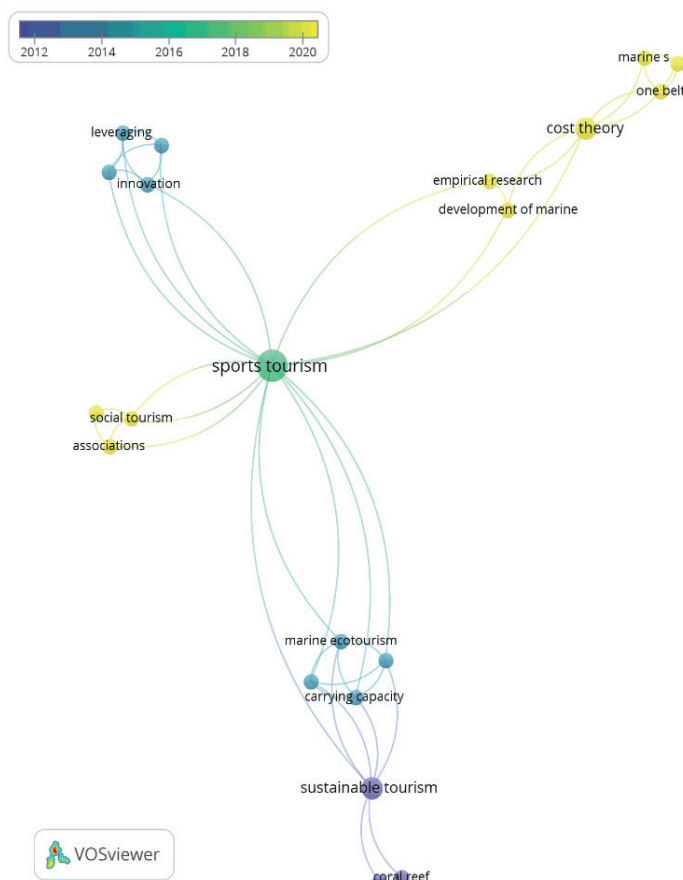
Source: The authors (2021)

Figure 5 comprises analyses of 185 keywords, showing a lack of concentration in the terms used. Even though, it is possible to observe a more recent concentration in keywords related to coastal management, cost theory, competitive events, demand, blue economic zone, experience economy, sports tourism, and sustainable tourism, among others.

Taking the specific cluster of sports tourism (a group of 21 keywords) to a closer analysis, the most prominent terms used are directly related to sustainable tourism, marine ecotourism, carrying capacity, innovation (in blue and purple variations), social tourism, association, development of marine and cost theory, as depicted in figure 6.



**Figure 6:** Trends of Keywords Related to Sports Tourism



Source: The authors (2021)

The presence of the terms “cost theory” and “one belt one road strategy” linked as a trend of research suggests an economical and managerial perspective of nautical sports tourism literature, at a local, regional, national and international levels (M. Carvache-Franco, Carvache-Franco, Carvache-Franco, Hernández-Lara, et al., 2020; Z. Li & Niu, 2020). On the other hand, however, the prominent keywords “social tourism” and “association” linked, demonstrates the great complexity of touristic system and the concern of the research regarding sustainable development.

### Types of sports (activities)

As explained earlier, the nautical sports tourism may be characterized as a unique interaction of people, activity and water. Hence, one of the topics of interest of our analysis was the type of nautical activities already explored by the literature. Among the 55 articles, 20 addressed a specific sport, as portrayed in table 3. Moreover, fishing was the activity most researched, with 7 articles.

**Table 3:** Articles addressing a specific activity

Sport	Articles	Sum of articles
Fishing	(Bull, 2007; Freire et al., 2016; Pawson et al., 2008; Schuhbauer & Koch, 2013; Szylyan, 2004; Waldo & Paulrud, 2012; Wood et al., 2013)	7
Scuba Diving	(Anuar et al., 2020; Cater, 2008; Davis & Tisdell, 1995; Geldenhuys et al., 2014; Seaman & Depper, 2019)	5
Surfing	(Hume et al., 2019; Ponting & O’Brien, 2014; Rendle & Rodwell, 2014; Scheske et al., 2019)	4
Sailing	(Jones & Navarro, 2018; Philippe, 2020; Rahman et al., 2020)	3
Canoeing	(Correia & Sebastião, 2017)	1

Source: The authors (2021)

Although other articles did not address a specific sport, they mentioned sundry activities that can be performed in the nautical environment. All these activities are exposed on the word cloud below (figure 7).

**Figure 7:** Nautical Activities Word Cloud



Source: The authors (2021)

In fact, in figure 7, it is possible to observe activities belonging to both Li and Niu (2020)'s categories: maritime sports tourism (e.g., sailing, kayaking, banana boating, jet skiing) and sports tourism in the sea (e.g., snorkeling, swimming, surfing, body boarding).

### Contexts analysis

At last, we observed that most of the articles were theoretical-empirical studies applied to a specific city or region. Over the 55 publications, 45 addressed a specific destination. Furthermore, places from 23 different countries were studied by these articles. The country most researched was China. In Table 4 we



compile the countries contemplated by these studies and the number of articles that addressed them.

**Table 4:** Number of Articles by Country

Number of articles	Country Studied
8	China
5	Ecuador
4	Portugal
3	Croatia, France, USA
2	Australia, Malasia, Spain
1	Brazil, Fiji, Iran, Japan, Malta, Mexico, New Zeland, Peru, Chile, South Africa, Marroco, Sweden, Taiwan, Uk, Uruguai

Source: The authors (2021)

## DISCUSSION

The results presented here have shown that the publications on nautical sports tourism are quite sparse in terms of authors, source and focus. Such scattered nature suggests that this literature is not mature enough so as to have a collaborative scholar community engaged in studying this field. Nonetheless, we have observed that the academic interest on the topic has consistently displayed an upward trend, especially over the last two years, with 29 articles published in 2019 and 2020.

In fact, these most recent articles have often acknowledged the growing interest on the nautical sports tourism, not only by researchers but also by tourists. For instance Hu and Yang (2020) highlight that the nautical sports tourism is developing rapidly under the dual pursuit of leisure tourism and sports fitness. Likewise, Z. Li and Niu (2020) argue that marine sports tourism has become a new tourism hotspot, which is willing to help tourists experience a new way of life, including experiential, entertaining, and challenging. Moreover, Zhao and Lv (2020) defines nautical sports tourism as a new sunrise industry, as sports tourists deeply love marine sports.

Furthermore, the authors also justify the increasing interest on nautical sports tourism due to the many benefits that this sector might bring. As observed by Marušić et al. (2020), this sector plays a significant role in job creation and growth in the blue economy, and it has substantial qualities for sustainable socio-economic development. Indeed, throughout the literature review, we came across various positive impacts that may result from a well-developed nautical sports tourism initiative such as: enhancement of destination competitiveness (Wang, 2020), improvement of regional brand image (Shao & Sun, 2020), qualification and diversification of the coastal infrastructures (Lam González et al., 2015), fostering



social interaction (Pereira et al., 2015), enhancement of environmental concerns (Philippe, 2020), among others.

In addition to positive impacts, some studies have also highlighted the challenges and critical issues for the adequate development of nautical tourism with special interest in sports. For example, Liu et al. (2020) called attention to the need of skilled labor. According to these authors, the human resources of marine sports tourism industry are relatively scarce, and the professional standard of both quality and level, of managers and practitioners, is low, which leads to weak environmental and market awareness. Additionally, other concerns such as the dependence on suitable climate conditions (Shao & Sun, 2020), the possible threats it may inflict to local folks and culture (H. Li et al., 2020), the need to ascertain destinations carrying capacity (Basterretxea-Iribar et al., 2019), and the challenge of organic developing the marine tourism economy and marine ecological environment (Liu et al., 2019) are also mentioned.

In respect of the scopes of the studies analyzed, we observed a concentration of contextual and case studies. Essentially, most of this literature addressed development initiatives and happened or potential impacts of nautical sports tourism in a specific region. As explained by Walsham (1995), any phenomena in the social sciences should be viewed as “tendencies”, which are valuable in explanations of past data but are not wholly predictive for future situations.

Regarding the nautical sports activities, although the articles from our sample specifically addressed only 5 types of activities, a big variety of them are mentioned in both Li and Niu (2020)'s categories (maritime sports tourism and sports tourism in the sea). Still, none of the articles analyzed proposed a comparison between these sports nor appointed those that attracted more tourists. In addition, the Weed & Bull (2004)'s typology of sports tourism is not addressed nor mentioned by this articles.

## **FINAL REMARKS**

This study was developed to identify managerial, governmental, and academic opportunities related to the nautical sports tourism sector, aiming to rebuild and prepare destinations to resume tourist activity sustainably. Our appreciation of the literature, combined with the rising public interest in external activities in contact with nature and water, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaves no doubt that the nautical sports tourism is a remarkable field with many development opportunities.

Regarding managerial and governmental opportunities identified in this



study, we envision that the combination of sports and tourism in marine and coastal environments opens a myriad of possibilities, with many sub segments of activities, for places willing to enhance their competitiveness and public welfare, taking advantage of their distinctive nautical culture. Notably, those destinations with a solid nautical sports culture, including a history of outstanding athletes, well-known competitors and events, will have the chance to lead the trend, if the right investments are made in human resource development and nautical infrastructure.

Considering the academic opportunities exposed, our analysis also revealed that there is still a long way for the nautical sports tourism literature research to reach maturity. The studies are contextual, still fragmented and disperse, and there is a lack of models that can be replicated, which prevents comparisons among destinations and practices from being made. We also observed that the existing literature fails to integrate the findings and theoretical perspectives of nautical tourism and sports tourism. Therefore, there is an opportunity for further studies to focus on the qualitative aspects of theories and concepts of nautical tourism and sports tourism.

Finally, the contributions made in this article are not without its limitations. The literature analyzed here encompassed articles, written in English, from academic journals, available in the Scopus and Web of Science databases. Future research can extend the search of studies addressing nautical sports tourism to other bases and sources, such as books, book chapters and conference proceedings. Moreover, the literature in other languages should also be explored (e.g. French and Spanish) given the tradition of some European countries on nautical activities.

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