

Researching Slow Tourism: An Institutional and Spatial Map

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Introduction

- The 21st century is marked by the rise of tourism at an increasingly rapid pace.
- Discovering new destinations, spending quality time for a longer period, in the middle of nature, using local resources, contributes to sustaining the environment in the cleanest conditions.
- Forms of tourism less practiced before the COVID-19 pandemic, but which are more environmentally friendly, such as slow tourism (Klarin et al., 2024), have also taken off. Slow tourism supports sustainable tourism and reduces the high pace of tourism practices (Le Busque et al., 2022).
- Slow tourism becomes an alternative to mass tourism, the fast pace of everyday life and travel, but also contributes to reducing negative impacts that contribute to climate change (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020), (Serdane et al., 2020).
- Slow tourism is based on the slow food movement, which emerged towards the end of the 20th century in Italy to counteract fast food, especially in historical areas with a rich cultural heritage.

Review of the scientific literature

- Slow tourism, slow travel is a new tourism trend that is increasingly attracting the attention of practitioners and researchers alike.
- Recent studies address the slow movement in different aspects, from slow food to slow tourism, slow travel, slow city (Cittaslow), using as means of analysis different platforms such as social media or international databases for different types of publications.
- In this regard, through a bibliometric analysis, Krešić and Gjurasić (2022) tracked the evolution of slow tourism for the period 2011-2021, as well as research themes targeting slow tourism. The study focused on the trends that have manifested themselves in slow tourism by author and country over the last ten years. Mavrić et al. (2021) perform a bibliometric analysis on the contribution of countries, organizations, which have addressed slow tourism, using VOSviewer to highlight the trend of literature in this direction. The results of the research showed a remarkable increase in the number of publications on slow tourism.

Research methodology

- The present research seeks to explore the literature on slow movement through the application of bibliometric analysis.
- For this study, data was gathered from the Web of Science (WoS) database, specifically from the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), Conference Proceedings Citation Index-Social Sciences and Humanities, and the Book Citation Index-Social Sciences and Humanities, using "Slow Tourism, Cittaslow, Cittaslow Network, Slow Adventure, Slow Cities, Slow City, Slow Food, Slow Travel" as a search keywords in the title field.
- In analyzing the database that resulted we used a variety of tools like: Chat GPT, Excel, VOSviewer, Datawrapper, MonkeyLearn. These tools were used in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the research process. Each of these tools is valuable, as follows:
- Chat GPT: Chat GPT can assist in generating text, summaries, or responses, which can be helpful for analyzing and summarizing large volumes of text data from academic papers, abstracts, or other sources (Ortiz, 2023).
- Excel: Excel is a versatile tool for organizing, analyzing, and visualizing bibliometric data. It can help in managing citation data, creating tables, charts, and graphs to represent trends, collaborations, and other bibliometric indicators.
- VOSviewer: VOSviewer is a powerful tool for visualizing bibliometric networks, co-authorship networks, and keyword co-occurrence maps. It enables researchers to identify key trends, clusters, and relationships within a bibliometric dataset (van Eck and Waltman, 2010).
- Datawrapper: Datawrapper is useful for creating interactive and visually appealing charts and graphs based on bibliometric data. It can help in presenting research findings in a clear and engaging manner, enhancing the communication of research insights (Datawrapper, 2024).
- MonkeyLearn: Monkeylearn is a text analysis tool that can be used to extract insights, classify documents, and perform sentiment analysis on bibliometric data. It can automate the process of categorizing and analyzing large volumes of text data, saving time, and improving accuracy (MonkeyLearn, 2024).

Results and discussion

Publications per year

Figure 1 illustrates the growth in the number of research studies published over time on the topic of interest. A scan of papers listed in the Web of Science (WoS) database, using key words "Slow Tourism, Cittaslow, Cittaslow Network, Slow Adventure, Slow Cities, Slow City, Slow Food, Slow Travel", was conducted for the period between 1986 and 2024. Interest in the slow phenomenon began to significantly increase among researchers starting from 2008, reaching a peak of 253 publications in 2021.

EU Contributing countries to the slow phenomenon

The research results outline the geographical distribution of publications related to Slow Tourism, highlighting a significant concentration in European countries, with Italy, Germany, and Spain leading in the number of publications. This geographical analysis underpins the regional interest in "Slow current", particularly in areas rich in cultural heritage and gastronomic diversity Figure 2. This interest among European scholars is likely influenced by the European Union's policies on sustainable development, which aim to transform Europe into a premier sustainable tourism destination by enhancing its economic and employment contributions.

Number of citations over years

The line graph in Figure 3 provides a visual representation of the number of citations over a span of years, from 1991 to 2024. The data, as noted, is sourced from Web of Science (WoS). As observed over time there is a clear increasing trend in the number of citations over the years, starting from 1991. This suggests a growing body of work that is being referenced in academic or scientific research. The graph shows a peak around the years 2015 and 2021, where the number of citations reaches its highest point. This could indicate a particularly influential body of work published in previous years that has garnered a lot of attention. After the peak, there is a noticeable decline in citations. This drop becomes particularly steep in the year 2024. It's important to note that for the year 2024, the data is not complete, as the year is in progress. Despite the recent decline, the overall trend from 1991 to 2024 is upward, reflecting a long-term increase in the production and citation of academic works.

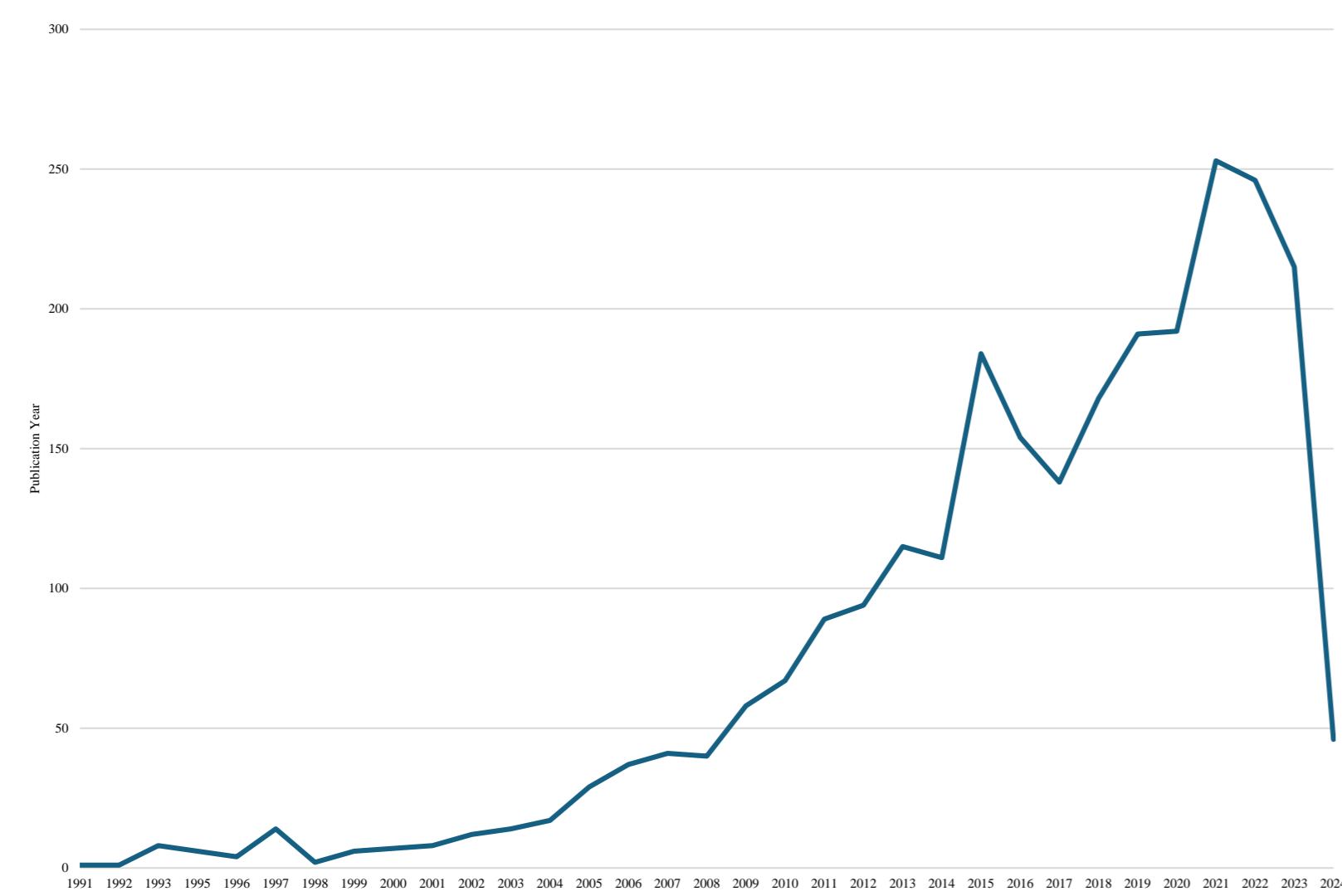


Figure no. 1. Publications per year
Source: made by authors based on data from WoS



Figure no. 2. Slow phenomenon preset in WoS on EU level.
Source: Made by authors using <https://app.datawrapper.de>

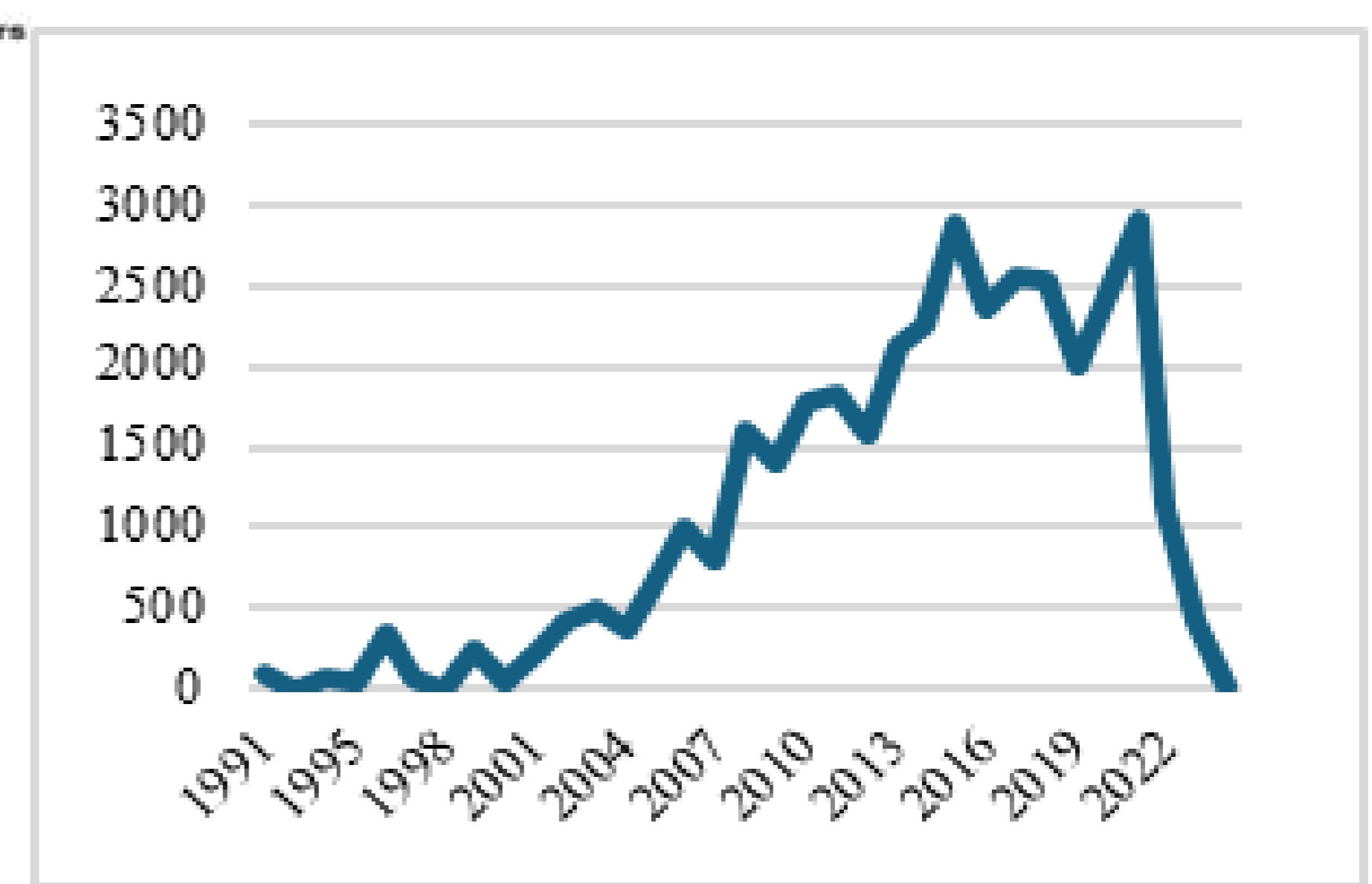


Figure no. 3. Citation per year
Source: made by authors based on data from WoS

Top 20 keywords encountered in indexed papers

To find out which are the most frequent keywords occurring in WoS index articles on the topic of slow movement, we used ChatGPT version 4. We asked the AI to list the top 20 frequent keywords contained in the database generated by WoS. The results are shown in Table No. 1.

Table 1. List of the top frequent key words encountered in WoS on the topic of slow movement

List of Key Words	List of Key Words	List of Key Words
Community Engagement	Travel Behavior	Eco-Friendly Practices
Heritage Preservation	Environmental Impact	Local Economy
Tourist Satisfaction	Local Culture	Travel Motivations
Sustainable Practices	Tourism Marketing	Cultural Preservation
Rural Destinations	Destination Branding	Slow Food Movement
Economic Growth	Tourist Experiences	Tourism Strategies
Quality of Life	Social Sustainability	

Source: List generated by ChatGPT based on the analysis of database downloaded from WoS

Top 10 topics debated in the articles that have connection with slow movement.

To complete this endeavor, we used ChatGPT version 4. Prior we saved the abstracts for all 2568 papers in one document and after we used Chat GPT to extract the 10 most discussed topics from this document.

- Principles of Slow Tourism
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Cittaslow Movement's Impact
- Cultural Heritage and Preservation
- Environmental Sustainability Practices
- Importance of Local Gastronomy
- Community Engagement in Tourism Development
- Economic Benefits for Local Communities
- Tourist Satisfaction and Behavior
- Marketing Strategies for Slow Tourism

Top key connectors for Slow Food, Slow Tourism, Sustainability

- In order to do this analysis, we used VOSviewer as a tool to identify the top connected topics for three of the two most important components of the Slow movement - "Slow Food" and "Slow Tourism" - and one element that is at their core "Sustainability". The results are presented in Figure 4.
- From the output of VOSviewer, we can deduce that sustainability is a common thread that links the concepts of Slow Food and Slow Tourism, with various research topics deriving from this central concept. This reflects an integrated approach to studying these movements, emphasizing the importance of sustainability in their development and implementation.

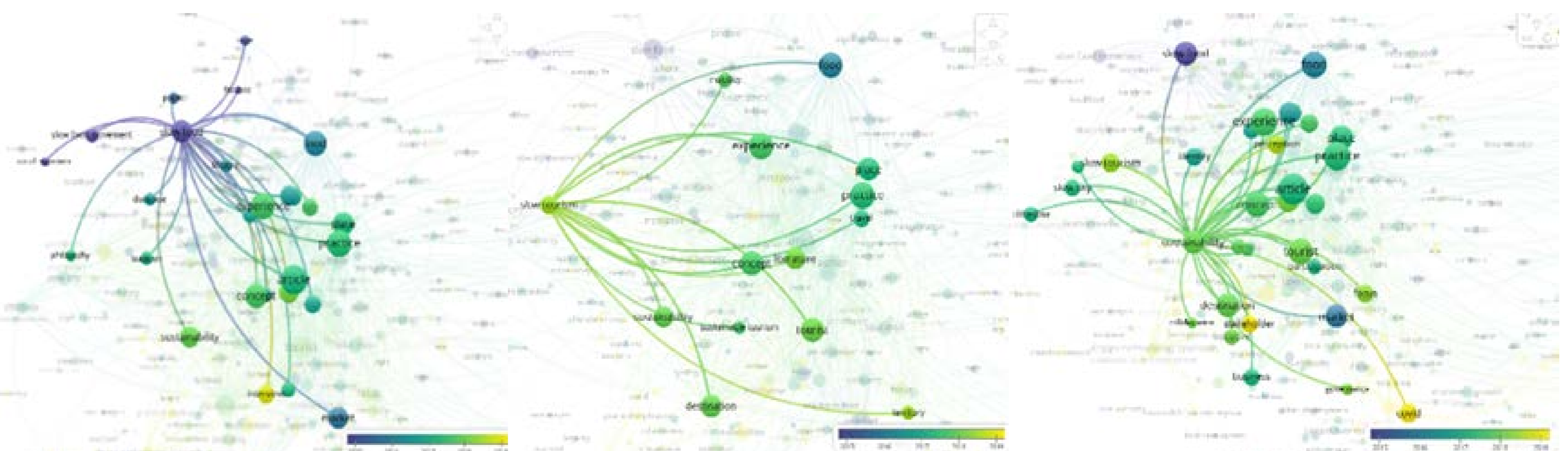


Figure no. 4. Key connectors for Slow Food, Slow Tourism and Sustainability when analyzing the articles indexed in WoS
Source: Made by authors using VOSviewer

Conclusions

- The study offers a comprehensive exploration of slow tourism through a bibliometric analysis, highlighting the increasing academic interest in this area, especially against the backdrop of changing tourism dynamics influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Key findings from the analysis reveal that there is a notable increase in publications and research on slow tourism, suggesting heightened scholarly and practical interest. This trend underscores the shift towards more sustainable, environment-friendly, and culturally immersive travel experiences.

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