

# Overtourism in the Spotlight: A Bibliometric Analysis of a Concept at the Forefront of Debate

## Overtourism en el punto de mira: Análisis Bibliométrico de un Concepto en la Vanguardia del Debate

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### Abstract

This study examines the concept of “overtourism” arising from the intensification of urban tourism and its impacts on destinations. Through bibliometric methods—specifically performance analysis and scientific mapping—supported by the VOSviewer tool, the research analyses 433 academic articles to explore the scope, evolution, and key contributors to the scientific production on *overtourism*. The findings reveal a significant increase in publications between 2017 and 2020, followed by a slight contraction, with European countries—particularly Spain—leading in output. A group of 20 journals and 12 prolific authors stand out as central to the consolidation of the topic. The citation analysis reflects an uneven impact, typical of emerging research areas. The keyword co-occurrence analysis shows that the academic discourse has shifted from questioning the legitimacy of the term to exploring its dimensions and impacts—often assessed using digital tools and spatial methods. While some still view *overtourism* as a media construct, it is increasingly accepted as a conceptual lens for understanding the social, spatial, and environmental consequences of tourism growth in cities. The study contributes to the academic debate by offering a comprehensive mapping of the field and highlighting the growing relevance of *overtourism* in critical and sustainability-oriented tourism research.

**Keywords:** *overtourism*, urban tourism, bibliometric analysis, VOSviewer, co-occurrence

## Resumen

Este estudio examina el concepto de “overtourism” como resultado de la intensificación del turismo urbano y sus impactos en los destinos. A través de métodos bibliométricos —específicamente análisis de rendimiento y mapeo científico— y con el apoyo de la herramienta VOSviewer para la visualización de datos, se analizan 433 artículos académicos con el fin de explorar el alcance, evolución y principales contribuyentes a la producción científica sobre el tema. Los resultados revelan un notable aumento de publicaciones entre 2017 y 2020, seguido de una leve contracción, con los países europeos —especialmente España— liderando en volumen de investigaciones. Se identifican 20 revistas y 12 autores especialmente prolíficos que han contribuido de forma significativa a la consolidación del campo. El análisis de citas muestra un impacto desigual, propio de áreas de estudio emergentes. El análisis de coocurrencia de palabras clave indica que el debate académico ha pasado de cuestionar la legitimidad del término a explorar sus dimensiones e impactos, a menudo evaluados mediante herramientas digitales y métodos espaciales. Aunque algunos aún consideran el *overtourism* como una construcción mediática, va ganando aceptación como categoría analítica para comprender las consecuencias sociales, espaciales y ambientales del crecimiento turístico en las ciudades.

**Palabras clave:** *overtourism*, turismo urbano, análisis bibliométrico, VOSviewer, co-ocurrencia

## 1 Introduction

“Tourists go home”, “Why is it called tourist season if we are not allowed to shoot them?”, “Tourism kills the city”, are some of the graffiti and slogans that can be found in tourist destinations indicating the discontent with the tourism activity.

The impacts arising from interaction between tourism growth and the host destination have been debated for decades, but not with the intensity of recent years. Tourist massification has emerged with force in urban destinations in the twenty-first century, which are spaces that are particularly fragile due to the close coexistence between residents and visitors.

In this way, the use of the concept “overtourism” has become widespread: “the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors experiences in a negative way” (UNWTO, 2018, p.4). *Overtourism* is not only a problem of tourist saturation or a loss of competitiveness but extends to a broader economic sphere (monoculture, changes in commercial fabric), the social climate (employment, prices, habitability), the culture, environment and urban landscape.

The complexity and novelty of the phenomenon warrant continuous scientific review. Bibliometric analysis provides an objective approach to the analysis of the evolution of the studies and trends in a field. It implies the application of quantitative and statistical techniques to large volumes of bibliographic data (Donthu et al., 2021; Guzeller & Celiker, 2019; Leung et al., 2017). Sometimes it is complemented with scientific mapping techniques to frame the research, using network visualisation tools such as VOSviewer (Van Eck & Waltman, 2022).

Based on this idea, the objective of this research is to analyse the volume and characteristics of the scientific production on *overtourism*, which allows the concept to be studied through its thematic associations. This is achieved by means of performance analysis and bibliometric visualization techniques, exploring its co-occurrence with keywords, its positioning within thematic clusters, and its manifestation in different bibliometric characteristics.

## 2 The State of the Question

*Overtourism* is a recent term and, since its creation, many definitions have emerged although no clear or precise academic delimitation of the term has been established (Capocchi et al., 2019; Koens et al., 2018; Mihalic, 2020; Ray, 2021). Table 1 shows some of the definitions proposed in the academic literature.

**Table 1. Definitions of *overtourism* in the academic literature**

AUTHORS, SOURCE	DEFINITION
Goodwin, H. (2017), p.1	“Destinations where hosts or guests, locals or visitors, feel that there are too many visitors and that the quality of life in the area or the quality of the experience has deteriorated unacceptably. It is the opposite of Responsible Tourism which is about using tourism to make better places to live in and better places to visit. Often both visitors and guests experience the deterioration concurrently and rebel against it”
Koens et al., 2018, p.5	“[...] is actually an accumulation of different impacts and perceptions that relate both to tourist behaviour as well as actions by, and encounters with stakeholders as well as changes to the social, economic and physical environment.”
UNWTO, 2018, p.4	“The impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors experiences in a negative way”
Higgings-Desbiolles et al., 2019, p.1931	“[...] situation in which a tourism destination exceeds its carrying capacity – in physical and/or psychological terms. It results in a deterioration of the tourism experience for either visitors or locals, or both. If allowed to continue

	unchecked, <i>overtourism</i> can lead to serious consequences for popular destinations”
Milano et al., 2019c, p.354	“[...] the excessive growth of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas where residents suffer the consequences of temporary and seasonal tourism peaks, which have caused permanent changes to their lifestyles, denied access to amenities and damaged their general wellbeing”
Collins Online English Dictionary (Mihalic, 2020, p.6)	“The phenomenon of a popular destination or sight becoming overrun with tourists in an unsustainable way”
European Parliament's TRAN Committee (Mihalic, 2020, p.6)	“The situation in which the impact of tourism...exceeds physical, ecological, social, economic, psychological and or political capacity thresholds.”
Blanco Romero et al., 2021, p.350	“Situation of increasing tourist pressure on already overcrowded spaces and expansion of tourist activities in areas recently alien to the presence of visitors”

Source: author elaboration

*Overtourism* is conceived as a phenomenon or situation in a destination that implies the perception of a deterioration of the quality of life of the local population and the experience of the visitors. The majority of the cited authors focus on perception as a clear aspect for understanding the term (Goodwin, 2017; Higgings-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Koens et al., 2018; Milano et al., 2019b; UNWTO, 2018). From this point of view, *overtourism* is a matter of sensitivity and the subjective perception of the actors involved (Ray, 2021). In other words, it is a phenomenon associated with the habitability of a place in which visitors and residents interact (Milano et al., 2022). With respect to the latter, *overtourism* is largely focused on the well-being of the population, considered as the party that suffers the greatest consequences. In fact, the concept implies that the local community is becoming increasingly hostile to the forms of tourism that are imposed on them and reduce their quality of life (Higgings-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2019b; Phi, 2019). Mihalic (2020, p.4) refers to *overtourism* as a phenomenon that irritates stakeholders, “Growing tourism that neglects the interests of local residents necessarily leads to *overtourism*.” Therefore, the term is associated with social discontent, understood as an effect of excess tourism (Koens et al., 2018). The afore-mentioned academic definitions refer to an excess of both visitors and the incidence of tourism in the destination. The very term indicates a connotation in this respect, understood as tourism that surpasses what is considered as balanced or sustainable. However, although it is related to a high level of growth of tourists, the term does not only refer to the volume of arrivals. It can be manifested in small destinations with a slight increase in visitors or in areas able to cater

to a large number of arrivals. As Oskam (2020) states “If it is taken to simply mean “excessive tourism”, a number of questions remain indeed unresolved, such as ‘How many is too many?’, ‘How can this be determined?’”. These questions are explained because the behaviour of the tourists, their concentration, the location, the moment, the local culture and customs, the management capacity of the destination and the exploitation of the local resources also come into play (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Koens et al., 2018; Milano, 2018; Milano et al., 2022; UNWTO, 2018). Therefore, *overtourism* is not an exclusive and isolated problem of tourism. Tourists and residents share the space and services. So, addressing this matter is highly complex and should be treated integrally (UNWTO, 2018). It is a multidimensional problem that involves social, economic, physical and urban changes (Buitrago-Esquinas et al., 2023; Koens et al., 2018).

Another part of the literature addresses *overtourism* from the perspective of sustainability. In their definitions of *overtourism*, Higgings-Desbiolles et al., (2019) or the European Parliament (Mihalic, 2020) include the exceeding of the carrying capacity of the destination, on the understanding that once surpassed the tourism activity becomes unsustainable. After this point, the drawbacks of the tourism activity outweigh the benefits (Benner, 2020; Calle Vaquero, 2019). When there is *overtourism* in a destination, there is a rupture of the conditions necessary for the tourism activity to be satisfactory for all the agents involved (Milano, 2018). It is the complete opposite of sustainable tourism which contributes to improving the living conditions of the residents, prevents the deterioration of cultural and natural resources, being economically feasible and raising awareness among the demand regarding the problems of unsustainability (Blanco Romero et al., 2021).

In short, the term *overtourism* reflects the impact of tourism on cities and its residents and the challenges of growth in urban destinations. To sum up, Capocchi et al. (2019), define the phenomenon based on the connection of three areas: tourism growth, overcrowding of tourist flows and the governance of resources.

With respect to its genesis, the term “overtourism” is a neologism, but there is a lack of consensus in the scientific literature as to its origin. It was registered for the first time by the online travel journal Skift in 2016. Rafat Ali, the founder of this journal, defines himself as the creator of the term as an element of alarm. It was first used in an article on the impact of tourism in Iceland due to the strong reorientation of the country to cater to tourists (Ali, 2016). However, there are authors who defend the origin of the concept in the social network Twitter in August 2012 as *#overtourism*, within the context of social denouncement in certain massified destinations (Goodwin, 2017). There are also media that pinpoint its first use at the beginning of the 2000s, linked to the danger of exploiting resources in natural environments (Koens et al., 2018), or in 2001 in the Sydney

Morning Herald when it was used to refer to the growth of tourism in Pompeii (Milano et al., 2019a). It was not until 2017 when the UNWTO addressed *overtourism* in the World Travel Market as an international phenomenon, with its intervention “‘Overtourism’: growth is not the enemy, it is how we manage it”. It may be observed that a large part of the debate surrounding the problem has taken place outside of the academic field of tourism in the public domain (Benner, 2020; Capocchi et al., 2019).

Despite the lack of agreement in terms of the origin of the term, there are two aspects on which there is consensus among the experts: its theoretical roots and its dissemination.

The contemporary debate on the impacts of tourism and their effect on tourist destinations and the local communities is not new, as they have been widely studied in the literature since the 1960s, with no explicit reference to *overtourism* (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Capocchi et al., 2019; Mihalic, 2020; Milano et al., 2019b). Theoretical discourses addressing the problems of excessive tourism growth already exist: Doxey (1975), Pizam (1978), Butler (1980) or O’Reilly (1986). According to Koens et al. (2018, p.2), *overtourism* can be used as “a vehicle to recycle existing ideas”. In other words, it constitutes an old debate which has acquired new nuances. Milano (2018, p.552) cites Diana Dredge, who refers to the *overtourism* approach as “[...] a vintage wine in new bottles.”

Therefore, on a theoretical level, the debate on *overtourism* is not recent. What is new is the level of awareness of the possible harmful effects of tourism growth (Benner in Capocchi et al., 2019). The concern about the negative effects of tourism growth has multiplied because the problem has moved to the cities. As they are considered centres of power (economic political, media), the significance of everything affecting cities is amplified (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Fernández Tabales, 2020). Social networks have facilitated its expansion. It has become a popular and commercial term and has been contaminated by the media sensationalism that has promoted its use associated with other terms such as “tourismphobia” to describe the protest among residents to tourism growth (Blanco et al., 2021; Koens et al., 2018; Milano et al., 2019a; Milano et al., 2019c).

Although there is no single model of *overtourism* (Hidalgo Giralt et al., 2020), it is manifested in certain signs: a saturated infrastructure and overused resources, as they are consumed and shared by tourists and residents (Buitrago-Esquinas et al., 2023; Fernández Medrano & Pardo Rivacoba, 2016; WTTC, 2017); damage to nature and the degradation of its cultural attractions, in some cases leading to their trivialisation (Jover & Díaz-Parra, 2020a; WTTC, 2017); concentration and congestion in the principal tourist sites (Calle Vaquero, 2019); gentrification or a displacement of residents in the historical centres due to the tourism-real estate pressure (Fernández Medrano & Pardo Rivacoba, 2016; Guitart Casalderrey et al., 2018; Milano, 2018); and also the reorientation

of services that were originally designed for the local population towards the prioritisation of the visitors. Calle Vaquero (2019) and Milano (2019b) refer to a loss of identity and a universally homogeneous landscape in the form of “globalisation landscapes”.

They propose ways to counteract these impacts such as tourism degrowth (Fletcher et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2019a), regrouping strategies under the label 5D (deseasonalisation, decongestion, decentralisation, diversification and deluxe tourism) (Milano, 2018; WTTC, 2017); the creation of “honeypots”, places that are attractive to tourists that reduce the impact in surrounding areas (Goodwin, 2017, p.5); or ICT-based measures (Buitrago-Esquinas et al., 2023). The aim of these measures is to prevent or, at least, limit growth and the impacts that it has on the destination.

The incidence of these impacts on the space is not homogeneous but concentrated in specific areas. *Overtourism* occurs in a specific time and space. It generally tends to concentrate in urban centres. However, the current tourism pressure is characterised by the spread of tourism towards neighbourhoods that previously received very few visitors and have become part of the tourist area (Blanco Romero et al., 2021; Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019; Calle Vaquero, 2019; Milano, 2017). Furthermore, it is associated with a more prominent phenomenon in popular European cities (Koens et al., 2018; Milano et al., 2022). The problem has been made visible in cities such as Barcelona (Ardura et al., 2019; Mansilla, 2018; WTTC, 2017), Venice (Visentin and Bertocchi, 2019; Seraphin et al., 2018), Amsterdam (Gerritsma, 2019) or Dubrovnik (Camatti et al., 2020; Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019). However, excess tourism can affect any destination “if the balance between an optimum and excessive development is broken” (Milano et al., 2022, p.413).

There are several factors that explain tourist saturation. The bibliographic review has revealed a wide range of phenomena, the most named being: the use of the Internet which has promoted the disintermediation, with a high incidence of digital accommodation platforms (Buitrago-Esquinas et al., 2023; Calle Vaquero, 2019; Goodwin, 2017); hypermobility, which is the fruit of improvements in accessibility, particularly due to the increase in low-cost airlines and large cruises, with shorter trips, the lengthening of the tourist season and the concentration in space and time (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Goodwin, 2017; Milano, 2018; Milano et al., 2019b); new demand profiles, such as the expansion of the middle class in new developed countries and the incorporation of the millennial segment into their phase of greatest economic performance. This means that more people can afford to travel (Buitrago-Esquinas et al., 2023; Dickson, 2018; UNWTO, 2018; WTTC, 2017); the dissemination through social networks that accelerates the effect of imitation, pushing tourists to already overcrowded places and attractions (Benner, 2020; Capocchi et al., 2019; WTTC, 2017); as well as the orientation of public investment toward urban economic growth strategies, often under the guise of urban rehabilitation programs (Jover y Díaz-

Parra, 2020b); so too the global financialization of the economy, reflected in the internationalization of real estate markets and the transformation of housing into a financial asset (Blanco et al., 2021; Fletcher et al., 2019).

In summary, the different contributions suggest that *overtourism* is a multidimensional situation in which the intensity or management of tourism generates negative impacts on the liveability of the destination and the quality of life of the local population, while also deteriorating the visitor experience. Beyond the sheer number of tourists, the phenomenon stems from a combination of structural, social, and technological factors. From this perspective, *overtourism* is closely associated with the unsustainability of the tourism model when certain thresholds—whether physical, social, or symbolic—are exceeded, disrupting the balance between benefits and costs. Although the term initially emerged in a media context, it has been adopted in academic settings as a tool to highlight the limits of tourism growth and its consequences. The concept can be analysed through four key dimensions: perceived deterioration of local well-being and visitor experience, saturation of services and infrastructure, pressure on urban or natural environments, and social conflict resulting from touristification.

### **3 Sources and Methodology**

#### **3.1 Sources**

The research is based on the review of the scientific literature related to *overtourism*, using with a bibliometric analysis and VOSviewer. Two databases were used: the principal collection of Web of Science (hereafter, WOS) and Scopus. Both are considered the most widely used and reliable databases due to their integrity and scientific recognition (Cavalcante et.al., 2021; López-Bonilla et.al., 2020; Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). WOS uses more restrictive criteria for inclusion in journals but covers a longer time interval, while Scopus is the documentary database with the largest number of sources and its advantages include its easy navigation and access to cited documents (Granda-Orive et al., 2013). The WOS core collection has been exclusively used to apply the VOSviewer to complement the general analysis.

#### **3.2 Methodology: bibliometric analysis**

The research study is based on the bibliometric analysis and the VOSviewer tool for visualising the principal results (Figure 1).

The bibliometric approach is a quantitative analysis of the academic literature which is used to measure and evaluate the scientific production and its productivity of specific phenomenon in period of time and to determine the relationships between the constituents of the research

(Alonso-Logroño & Bautista-Puig, 2022; Jiang et al., 2019; Leung et al., 2017; López-Bonilla et al., 2020; Vlas & Lähdesmäki, 2023).

The first step was the formulation of several search criteria in the afore-mentioned databases (Scopus and WOS). A) publications containing the term “overtourism” or “over-tourism” in the title, abstract or keywords. B) only articles in the final phase or in press. C) the search period was established from the beginning of the coverage of both databases. The data were collected in August 2024.

Second, the data obtained from the search were exported as a tab delimited file, using the complete record and references option. A review was carried out and duplicates were eliminated using EndNote and Mendeley, reference management tools, and the information was processed in a new database, to which two bibliometric techniques were applied: a performance analysis to obtain productivity indicators (number of publications, journals, authors, institutions and countries) and impact indicators (number of citations per article, percentages of total citations, citations per year, number of citations per source); and scientific mapping to measure the relationships and patterns within the field of study. In the latter case, citation, co-authorship, keywords co-occurrence and bibliographic coupling techniques were used.

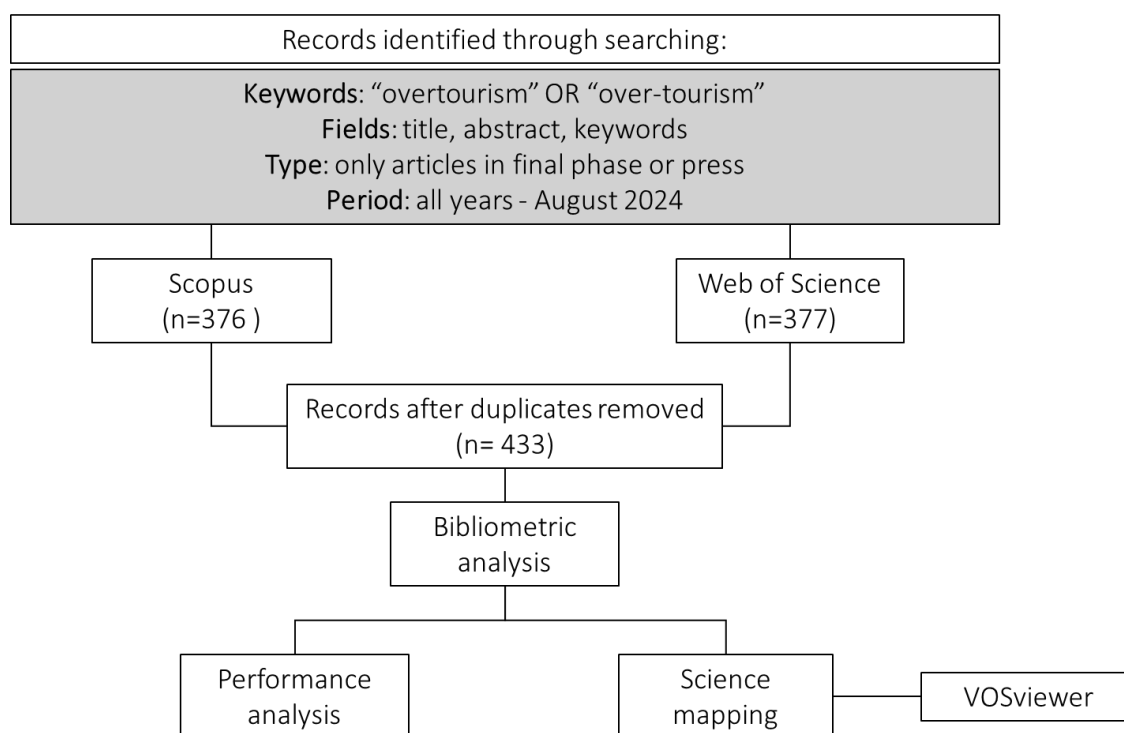
Citation analysis enables the scientific links between publications to be analysed, identifying the most influential in a research field. Co-authorship study identifies the social or relational interactions between authors and their affiliations, institutions or countries. Co-word analysis or keyword co-occurrence analysis identifies the most common terms between selected articles, focusing on the written content. This allows existing or future themes within the scientific panorama to be recognised. It assumes that words that frequently appear together are thematically related. Finally, bibliographic coupling reveals the similarity between publications based on the references they share. Two documents are considered bibliographically coupled if they cite the same third document, and the strength of the coupling increases with the number of shared references (Donthu et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2017; Leung et al., 2017; Ülker et al., 2023).

Complementary to this, VOSviewer was used to conduct a network visualisation analysis. Although various science mapping software tools are available, VOSviewer was selected due to its intuitive interface, its effective visualization technique based on similarities (VOS), and its broad compatibility with different databases, making it an accessible and robust tool compared to other alternatives (Donthu et al., 2021; McAllister et al., 2021). This is a scientific mapping software tool that enables the graphic visualisation of bibliometric networks (Cavalcante et al., 2021; López-Bonilla et al., 2020; McAllister et al., 2021; Van Eck & Waltman, 2010, 2022). To do this, the

database obtained after the search was introduced and graphs were created of the relationships between the variables.

Data cleaning was conducted by adding normalisation thesaurus files in text data in the VOSviewer tool in order to ensure the coincidence of the format of the two initial databases. A thesaurus file “is a text file that can be used to cleanse data by creating a map based on bibliographic or text data. The thesaurus file has two columns, a label column and a replace by column” (Van Eck & Waltman, 2022, p.43). In this way, duplicates and errors in the coding for the disambiguation of authors or institutions were eliminated — for example, variations such as “Adie, BA.” and “Adie B.A.” were unified under a single standard form, as well as institutional inconsistencies like “Ca Foscari Univ Venice” and “C’ Foscari University of Venice”. These corrections were made manually ensuring that each author and institution was consistently represented. Additionally, the keywords of the authors were standardised to make them coherent (singular/plural) and unified (synonyms or redundant terms). This involved grouping terms such as “residents” and “resident”, “historic center” and “historic centre”, or “coronavirus” and “covid-19” under one common label, thus preventing fragmentation in the keyword co-occurrence analysis. This normalization process enhances the reliability and clarity of the bibliometric maps by avoiding redundant nodes and misleading connections (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).”

**Figure 1: Bibliometric analysis workflow**



Source: author elaboration

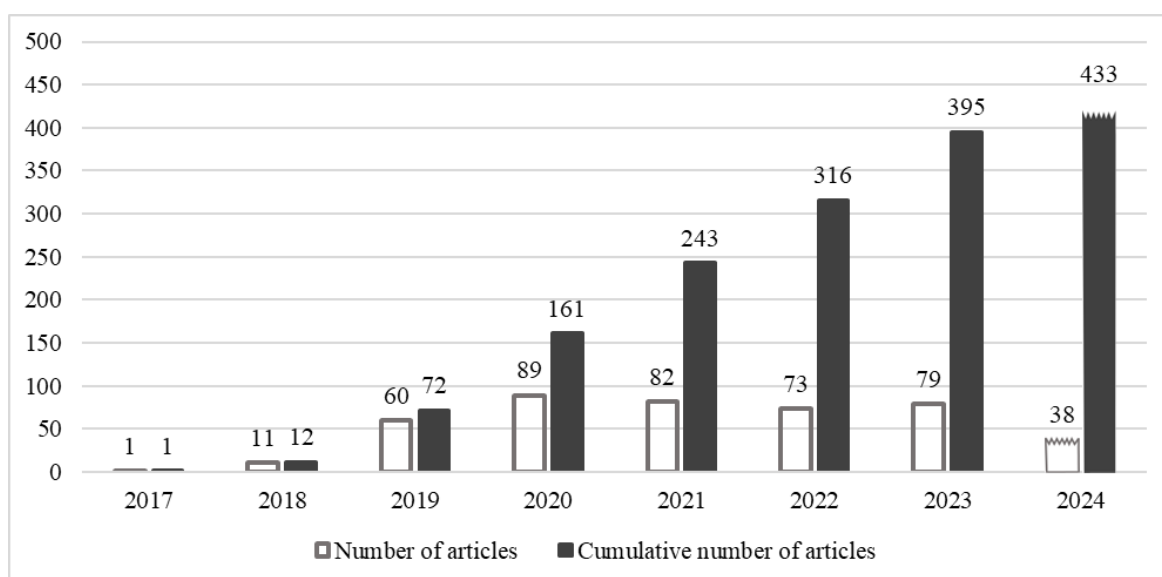
## 4 Results

### 4.1 Analysis of the evolution of publications

The academic search on *overtourism* has identified (to date) 433 articles published in indexed journals in Scopus and WOS. The term does not appear in publications in these databases until 2017. The first article was published in the Journal of Tourism Futures with the title “Understanding and overcoming negative impacts of tourism in city destinations: conceptual model and strategic framework.”

The number of publications has grown since then. Figure 2 shows the annual evolution of articles to date. An increasing trend can be observed in the scientific production in the subject in the first years after its launch. From only one article published in 2017 to 89 in 2020 when a maximum peak of contributions was reached. The largest number of publications was accumulated in the period 2020-2021 (40% of the production). However, a progressive decrease in publications can be observed since that period. It should be taken into account that the compilation of data was conducted in August 2024, so the data for the last year are not yet conclusive.

**Figure 2. Annual evolution of articles published on *overtourism* (data until August 2024)**



Source: author elaboration

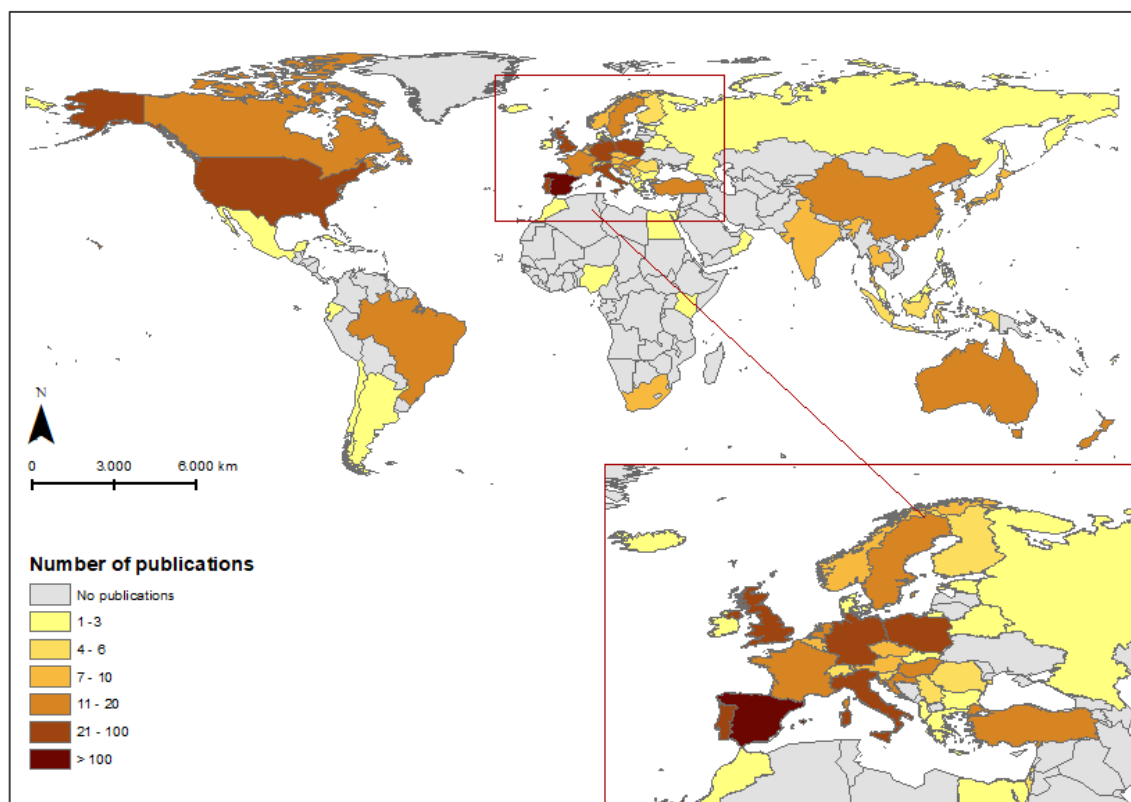
### 4.2 Geographic analysis of the authorship of publications

In terms of authorship the analysis of the authors' countries of affiliation reveals the global nature of the phenomenon under study. The compiled articles are distributed across 62 countries (Figure 3). A European hegemony can be observed in the scientific output, accounting for 70% of publications. Countries with 20 articles or more represent nearly half of the total (49%). Spain

leads the group appearing in 104 publications, followed by the United Kingdom and Italy, both present in 41 articles, and Poland with 35 documents.

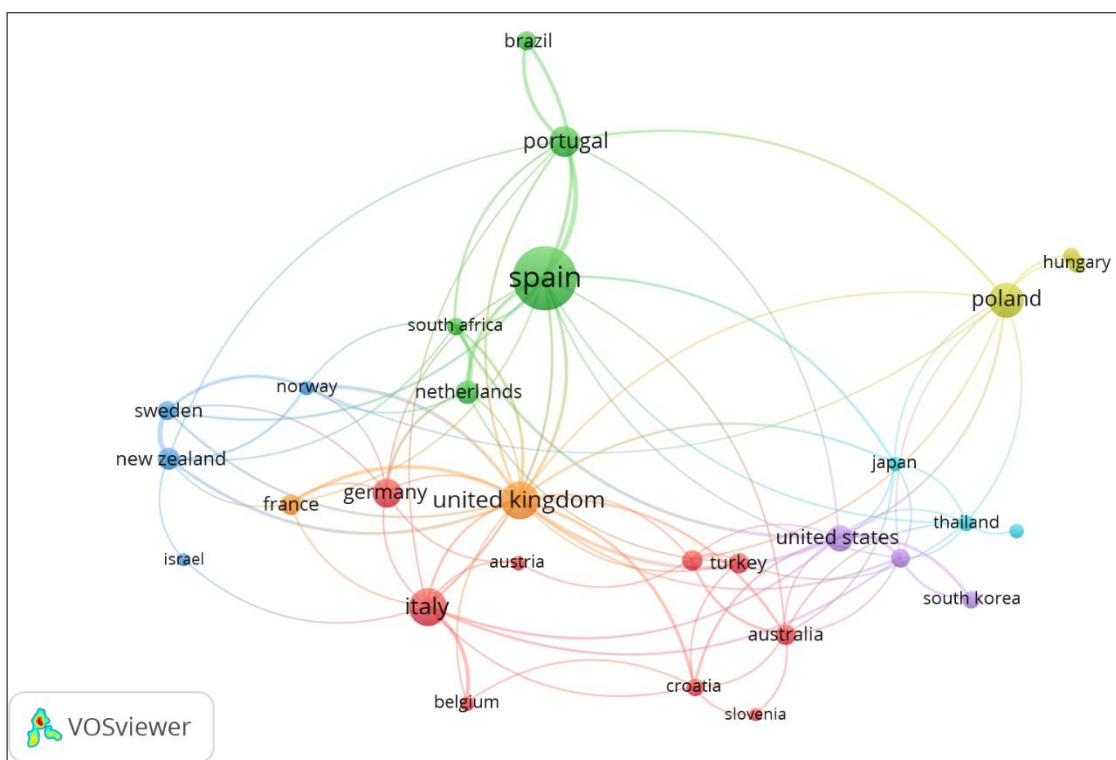
Furthermore, through this analysis, it is possible to determine the co-authorship between countries. Figure 4 shows the relationships between the countries that have published at least six articles related to *overtourism*. The size of the nodes reflects the number of documents published, the lines indicate co-authorship links between countries and the colours represent the belonging to a cluster (Cavalcante, et al, 2021; López-Bonilla, et al., 2020). Of all of the countries, about half (29) meet the threshold established. Spain's central position can be observed, which means that it is interconnected with the other groups of countries in the elaboration of the publications. Spain and United Kingdom have a relationship with all of the seven co-authorship clusters that appear on the map. Although a large volume of production is concentrated in Europe, strong transnational cooperation between the countries can be observed.

**Figure 3. Distribution of the scientific production on *overtourism***



Source: author elaboration

**Figure 4. Co-authorship map by country through VOSviewer (6 or more documents)**



Source: author elaboration

### 4.3 Analysis by journal and institution

The 433 articles analysed have been published in 155 different journals, of which about 67% have only published one article on the topic studied (Table 2). On the following level, and with some difference, 22 journals published two articles. The rest of the documents are distributed equally among the journals that published three (4.5%), four (1.9%) and five (3.2%) publications. However, there is a considerable number of journals (15 with almost 10% of publications) that tend to address this topic with six or more articles published.

**Table 2. Productivity of journals in publications on *overtourism***

Production volume per journal	Journals	% of 159
1 article published	103	66,5%
2 articles published	22	14,2%
3 articles published	7	4,5%
4 articles published	3	1,9%
5 articles published	5	3,2%
6 or more articles published	15	9,7%
Total	155	100,0%

Source: author elaboration

Table 3 shows the journals most frequently used for publishing articles on *overtourism*. These ten sources together represent around half of the total of the sample (46%). The journal

“Sustainability” is in first place in terms of the number of articles with 67 publications. However, it should be noted that this journal publishes a very high number of articles each year on a wide range of subjects. It is followed by “International Journal of Tourism Cities” (27 articles), the “Journal of Sustainable Tourism” (26 articles) and “Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes” (17 articles).

**Table 3. Journals with seven or more articles published**

Ranking	Publication by journal	Nº of articles	% of total
1	Sustainability	67	15,5%
2	International Journal of Tourism Cities	27	6,2%
3	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	26	6,0%
4	Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes	17	3,9%
5	Current Issues in Tourism	14	3,2%
6	Tourism Planning and Development	13	3,0%
7	Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles	11	2,5%
8	Tourism Economics	8	1,8%
9	Tourism Geographies	8	1,8%
10	Annals of Tourism Research	7	1,6%

Source: author elaboration

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that, among the journals with the highest productivity in the subject matter, only one admits articles in other language other than English (Spanish), the “Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles”. English language sources are predominant, in those included in the table but also in the total sample.

In the study of the organisations related to the topic of study, the database identifies a total of 431 institutions. The most prolific institutions in the subject are shown in Table 4, specifically those that have published seven or more articles (30% of the total). The top two universities responsible for 16 publications each are the University of Malaga (Spain) and the University of the Balearic Islands (Spain), followed by the Complutense University of Madrid (Spain, 15 articles). The strong presence of Spanish universities should be noted, with up to seven among the most productive

**Table 4. Institutions with seven or more articles published**

Ranking	Organisation/Institution	Country	Nº of articles	%
1	University of Malaga	Spain	16	3,70%
2	University of the Balearic Islands	Spain	16	3,70%
3	Complutense University of Madrid	Spain	15	3,46%
4	University of Alicante	Spain	9	2,08%
5	University of Canterbury	New Zealand	9	2,08%

6	University of Johannesburg	South Africa	9	2,08%
7	Lund University	Sweden	8	1,85%
8	Silesian University of Technology	Poland	8	1,85%
9	University of Granada	Spain	8	1,85%
10	Autonomous University of Barcelona	Spain	7	1,62%
11	University of La Laguna	Spain	7	1,62%
12	University of Lisbon	Portugal	7	1,62%
13	University of Winchester	United Kingdom	7	1,62%

Source: author elaboration

In addition to co-citation and co-authorship analyses, a bibliographic coupling analysis of sources and institutions was performed to reveal the journals and organizations that share a common intellectual base in the field of *overtourism* and to measure the strength of the connections between them.

At the journal level, the results show four distinct clusters. A central cluster is formed by “Sustainability”, “Journal of Sustainable Tourism”, and “Annals of Tourism Research”, indicating that these journals frequently publish articles citing a similar set of references. Other smaller clusters group regional or specialized journals, reflecting thematic niches within the broader *overtourism* research landscape.

At the institutional level, bibliographic coupling reveals several well-defined clusters. Spanish institutions, including the University of Malaga, Complutense University of Madrid, University of Valencia, and University of Santiago de Compostela, form a prominent cluster. Additional clusters include institutions from Northern and Central Europe and Asia, highlighting the global distribution of research grounded on similar literature.

#### 4.4 Analysis by author

The following analysis addresses the production by author. A total of 927 contributing researchers are represented in the articles related to *overtourism*.

Table 5 lists the most productive authors in terms of total publications, with five or more articles published. The authors appearing account for approximately one-sixth of the total of the sample (16%) and are responsible for 70 articles. Seraphin H. from the Oxford Brookes Business School is the most prolific on the topic analysed (nine of the 433 articles identified). This author is followed by the eight and seven studies by Szromek A.R. and Hall C. M. respectively. Notably, Spanish institutions play a prominent role within this group: four of the eight authors with five publications are affiliated with universities in Spain.

**Table 5. Authors with five or more articles published and their affiliation**

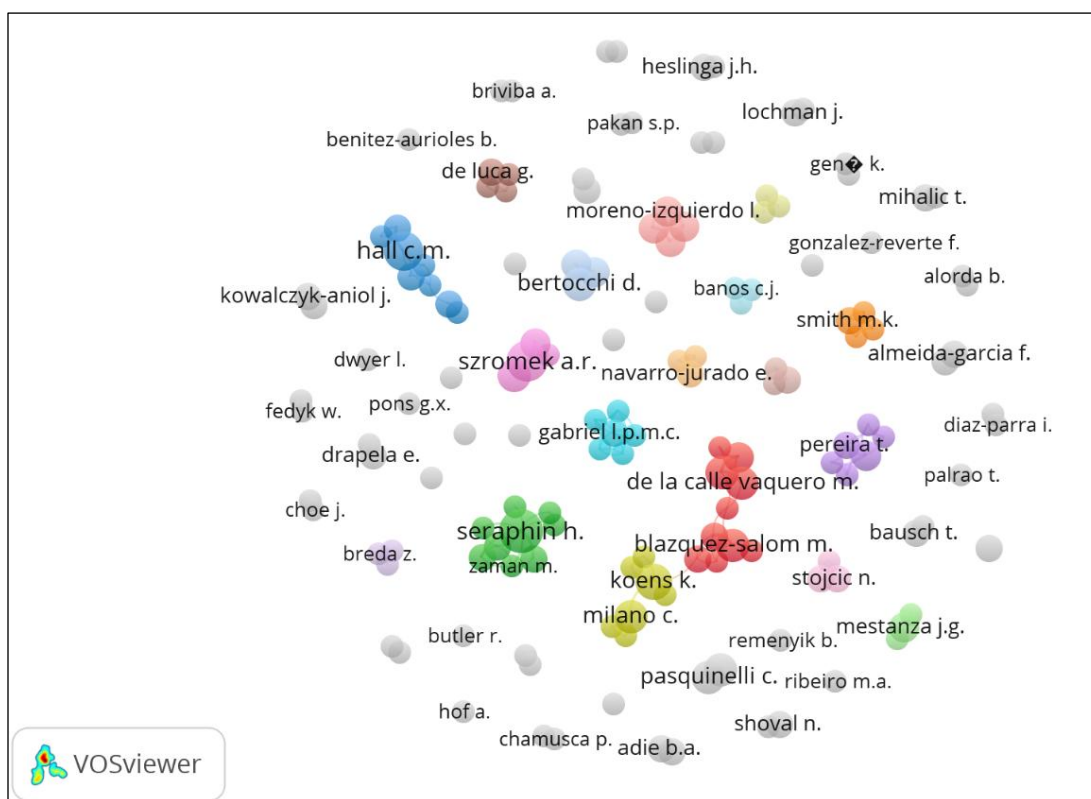
Ranking	Authors	University	Country	Articles published	%
1	Seraphin H.	Oxford Brookes Business School	United Kingdom	9	2,08%
2	Szromek A.R.	Silesian University of Technology	Poland	8	1,85%
3	Hall C.M.	University of Canterbury	New Zealand	7	1,62%
4	Koens K.	Breda University of Applied Sciences	Netherlands	6	1,39%
5	Bertocchi D.	Ca' Foscari University of Venice	Italy	5	1,15%
6	Blázquez-Salom M.	University of the Balearic Islands	Spain	5	1,15%
7	Calle Vaquero M.	Complutense University of Madrid	Spain	5	1,15%
8	García-Hernández M.	Complutense University of Madrid	Spain	5	1,15%
9	Milano C.	University of Barcelona	Spain	5	1,15%
10	Pasquinelli C.	University of Naples Parthenope	Italy	5	1,15%
11	Trunfio M.	University of Naples Parthenope	Italy	5	1,15%
12	Żemła M.	Jagiellonian University	Poland	5	1,15%

Source: author elaboration

Another aspect to analyse within the authorship is the collaboration between authors. Specifically, 80% of the articles of the sample (351) have been written by two or more academics. The publications with two and three authors stand out, representing 30% and 26% of the total, respectively. It is worth mentioning the cooperation between up to seven, eight, even nine authors on five occasions.

The VOSviewer tool has been used to map the analysis of the collaboration between authors through joint publications. Those authors with two or more articles published (151) have been taken as a sample. VOSviewer identified up to 60 groups that indicate different patterns of collaboration (Figure 5). The joint size of the sample shows the number of authors who have collaborated with each other, the most relevant being headed by Calle Vaquero M. (10 authors), Seraphin H. (9), Hall C.M. (8) and Koens K. (7).

**Figure 5. Analysis of co-authorship with two or more articles**



Source: author elaboration

#### **4.5 Analysis by citation**

It is currently considered that “analysis of article citations is the most widely used method of assaying the impact of authors, journals and articles” (Cavalcante et al., 2021, p.10), so that the most important articles in the field of research can be identified (Cavalcante et al., 2021; Jiménez-García et al., 2020).

First, in terms of the level of impact (Table 6), an irregular distribution can be observed between the intervals and the concentration of articles in the group with 6-24 citations is noteworthy (35%). The proportion of papers that have been cited more than 100 times does not exceed 4% of the total, while at the opposite end of the scale, up to 59 documents have not been yet cited. It should be remembered that the subject matter is very new in the academic literature (2017) which influences a generally low citation volume.

Table 7 provides a detailed list of the most cited documents, specifically those that have over 200 citations (only 1.15% of all the publications). The article that has been cited the most times (502) is titled “Is *Overtourism* Overused? Understanding the Impact of Tourism in a City Context” written by Koens K., Postma A. and Papp B. It was published by the journal *Sustainability* in 2018 and has received, on average, around 72 citations per year.

These findings also relate to the most frequently cited journals. Once again, “Sustainability” has received the greatest number of citations (2.004; 22%). It is followed by “Journals of Sustainable Tourism”(1.796), which has nearly three times as many citations as the third most cited source, the “International Journal of Tourism Cities” (608).

**Table 6. General structure of citations**

Number of citations	Number of articles	% articles
≥200	5	1,15%
100-199	12	2,77%
50-99	26	6,00%
25-49	58	13,39%
06-24	151	34,87%
01-05	122	28,18%
No citations	59	13,63%
<b>Total</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: author elaboration

**Table 7. Most cited documents (200 citations or more)**

Title	Authors	Journal	Total citations	Citations /year*
Is <i>overtourism</i> overused? Understanding the impact of tourism in a city context	Koens K., Postma A., Papp B. (2018)	Sustainability	502	71.7
Degrowing tourism: rethinking tourism	Higgins-Desbiolles F., Carnicelli S., Krolkowski C., Wijesinghe G., Boluk K. (2019)	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	344	57.3
<i>Overtourism</i> : residents' perceptions of tourism impact as an indicator of resident social carrying capacity - case study of a Spanish heritage town	Muler Gonzalez V., Coromina L., Gali N. (2018)	Tourism Review	257	36.7
<i>Overtourism</i> , optimisation, and destination performance indicators: a case study of activities in Fjord Norway	Oklevik O., Gössling S., Hall C.M., Steen Jacobsen J.K., Grøtte I.P., McCabe S. (2019)	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	203	33.8
Understanding and overcoming negative impacts of tourism in city destinations: conceptual model and strategic framework	Postma A., Schmuecker D. (2017)	Journal of Tourism Futures	202	25.3

Source: author elaboration

## 4.6 Analysis by topic

As explained in the methodology, another commonly used technique in bibliometrics is keywords co-occurrence.

Across the total sample, 1.068 keywords have been identified, of which 810 appeared just once, that is, 76%. On the other hand, 28 terms (3%) were found in 10 or more articles and only eight (0.7%) appeared more than 20 times. The word *overtourism* is by far the most used to refer to the topic analysed, appearing in 294 articles. This is followed by “sustainable tourism” (58), “urban tourism” (41) or “sustainability” (39).

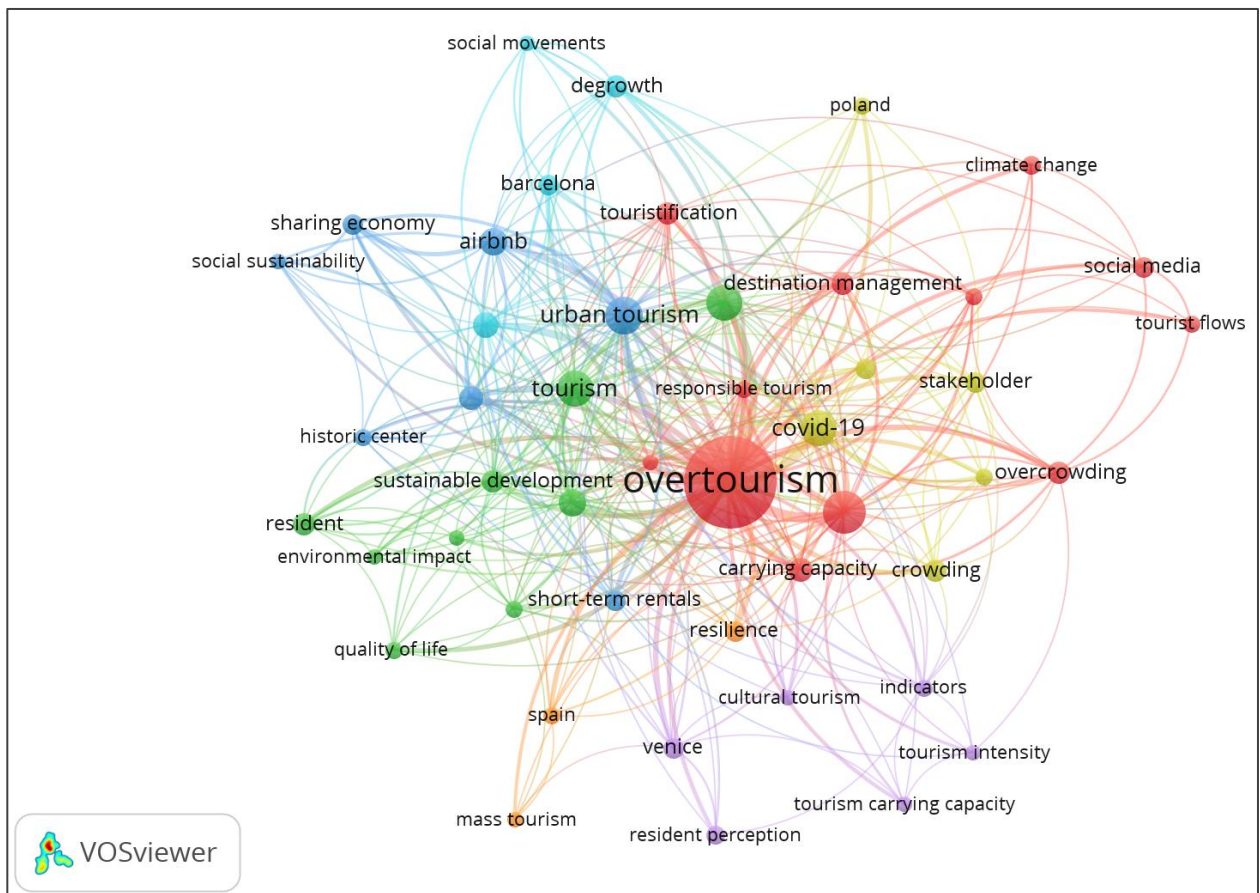
In the keywords co-occurrence map (Figure 8), the most frequent keywords with at least six co-occurrences have been identified and analysed. Three elements may be observed on the map: nodes, links and colours. “The size of the nodes shows the frequency of each of the keywords obtained, the links show the co-occurrence relationships between two terms (the more they appear together, the thicker their connection) and the clusters (colours) indicate the affinity between the themes” (Alonso-Logroño & Bautista-Puig, 2022, p.200).

Regarding the creation of this latter, the VOSviewer tool uses a Visualization of Similarities (VOS) mapping technique. Therefore, the visual analysis groups the keywords into seven clusters according to their likeness. These recurring associations among concepts indicate the main research lines on the topic and allow the identification of intellectual nodes around which the academic debate has been structured in recent years:

- Red cluster: central conceptualization of the term. This group is led by the central term “overtourism,” together with ideas that help to understand the concept such as “touristification” “carrying capacity” or “overcrowding”.
- Green cluster: local reactions and sustainability. Composed of terms such as “sustainability”, “resident”, “quality of life” or “environmental impact”. This group focuses on the local impacts of tourism on communities and environment.
- Yellow cluster: pandemic-related impacts and responses. Led by the keyword “Covid-19” and other issues arising from the pandemic as “undertourism”, “stakeholder”, “tourism policy”. It reflects the impact of the pandemic on tourism flows and policy responses.
- Blue cluster: Urban tourism and collaborative economy. This group highlights terms such as “urban tourism”, “Airbnb” or “gentrification”. It shows the link between *overtourism*, urban transformation and digital platforms.

- Purple cluster: Case studies and tourism intensity. Includes terms such as “Venice”, “indicators” or “tourism intensity”, pointing to case-based research focused on measuring tourism pressure in emblematic destinations.
- Light blue cluster: Tourism and social conflict. Comprises terms such as “tourismphobia”, “social movements” or “Barcelona”. It is associated with societal responses to tourism development.
- Orange cluster: Territorial and institutional focus. Features keywords such as “Spain”, “mass tourism”, or “resilience”.

**Figure 6. Keywords co-occurrences map with a minimum of six occurrences**



Source: author elaboration

When the previous graph (keywords) is represented diachronically (Figure 7), the most recent topics of interest (in yellow) can be distinguished from the pioneer subjects (in blue).

In recent years, a noticeable shift has occurred in the focus of research topics related to *overtourism*. Initially, academic interest was predominantly centred on managing the phenomenon from a supply-side perspective, addressing issues such as “visitor management”, “accommodation”, and “resistance”. This was followed by growing concern for environmental matters, including “climate change”, “environmental impact”, and “sustainability”.



## 5 Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the bibliometric analysis of *overtourism* reflect the relevance of the phenomenon and its interdisciplinary nature in terms of both its topics and its authors and affiliations.

Regarding the compilation of articles, some authors differ in the choice of database (WOS and Scopus) due to their similarities in terms of their content (Granda-Orive et al., 2013; Hernández-González et al., 2016; Mongeon & Paul-Haus, 2016). In this study, there is a high degree of overlap between the two databases, specifically 73% of the publications. However, 13% (56) are exclusive to Scopus and another 13.2% (57) are only registered in WOS. Therefore, by combining the two, 57 more articles have been analysed that would have been rejected if only one source was used.

It has been observed that the term emerged and consolidated when the intensity of the tourism phenomenon arrived in the cities. This was a manifestation of the twenty-first century, unlike the mass tourism saturation of the twentieth century. This reality is not unrelated to the hegemony of urban environments as seats of political, media, economic and social power, therefore conflicts within them are amplified.

With respect to the origin of the term, the results show that it was included in the academic field in the year 2017. However, other sources indicate that it emerged much earlier (at the beginning of the 2000s or in social networks between 2012 and 2016). This reaffirms the lack of consensus as to its genesis. Analysis of the annual evolution of publications on *overtourism* (Figure 2), reveals a strong increase in its use since its emergence in 2017, driven by the trending-topic effect that the concept has acquired, becoming a buzzword in that year (Milano et al., 2019c). It became popular and attractive to the extent that there are articles that included the term in their title without discussing it substantively (Muler-González et al., 2018). The idea pointed out by Milano et al. (2019a, 2019c) on the reinforcement and sensationalist dissemination of the term through the media is confirmed. Other authors, such as Calle-Vaquero (2019) or Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie (2020), also attribute the growing popularity of the concept to the media, with Vargas-Sánchez (2020) even identifying social networks as one of the catalysts of *overtourism*. Media sources often employ the concept in a generalized and unsystematic manner, applying it to a wide range of manifestations—such as rising housing costs, tourismphobia, or the overcrowding of heritage sites—as well as to tourism contexts with very different dynamics (urban areas, coastal zones, protected natural areas, etc.) (Phi, 2020). This semantic ambiguity distinguishes the term's academic use, which is analytical and clearly defined, from its media use, which is more diffuse and sensationalized.

In recent years, however, there has been a slight decline in the appearance of the term in the analysed literature. As previously noted, the term *overtourism* gained wide academic and media diffusion around 2017, when the phenomenon it describes became a visible and shared concern in numerous cities around the world. This alignment between the rise of the phenomenon and the emergence of the term contributed to its rapid adoption and popularization. Nevertheless, as with other concepts in the social sciences, the novelty that initially drove its success tends to fade over time. In this regard, it is possible to speak of a certain terminological fatigue or loss of academic appeal, partly due to the normalization of the phenomenon and partly to the proliferation of alternative terms addressing similar dimensions, such as “touristification”. The latter has gained ground in more recent literature, showing more sustained growth despite having been introduced much earlier (in 1993). Therefore, the relative decline in the academic use of *overtourism* may be interpreted as the result of a combination of factors: the loss of its novelty factor, a shift in research focus toward more specific or analytically robust concepts, and a certain everyday familiarity with the term.

Based on the literature review, this study proposes a conceptual framework of *overtourism* as a multidimensional phenomenon. Four fundamental dimensions are distinguished through which the phenomenon can be analysed and operationalized: (1) a social dimension, referring to the perceived deterioration of local well-being and quality of life, and of the visitor experience; (2) a functional dimension, linked to the saturation of services and infrastructure; (3) an environmental dimension, associated with the pressure exerted on urban or natural environments; and (4) a relational dimension, reflected in the conflicts and social tensions arising from touristification processes. This classification provides a structured framework that integrates both academic and media conceptualizations of *overtourism*, while also offering an analytical tool for future research to systematically compare the manifestations of the phenomenon across different destinations.

Despite its popularity, *overtourism* is not yet widely accepted term in the academic literature. Koens et al., (2018, p.9) consider it primarily a media concept that can be replaced by other more neutral terms such as “visitor pressure”, “acceptable levels of change” or “carrying capacity”. Is it a new phenomenon or a new term? Milano et al. (2022) argue that it is neologism in its early phases of being defined rather than a new concept. Benner (2020), Cappochi et al., (2019, 2020), Wall (2020), Ray (2021), Calle-Vaquero (2019), Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie (2020), Papathanassis (2020) all maintain that the phenomenon is not innovative in the academia. In the words of the latter: “The *overtourism* phenomenon and the questions it raises are as old as they are persistent” (Papathanassis, 2020, p.12). At the other end of the scale, Buitrago-Esquinas et al. (2023), Mihalic (2020) or Nilsson (2020) advocate for the term. According to these authors,

although its roots are highly consolidated in the academic literature, the term has new relevant nuances and, thus, should be introduced into the academic field as a new framework of analysis.

In conclusion, addressing the question posed earlier, the results suggest that, despite its popularity, the use of the term *overtourism* is showing a slight downward trend while remaining imprecise and subject to a certain degree of conceptual ambiguity. *Overtourism* implies the existence of a threshold or optimal level of tourism for each destination. However, this assumption is challenging to define objectively and universally. In other words, who can determine with certainty that a destination has entered a phase of tourism saturation? And based on what criteria can one define the threshold that separates an acceptable level of tourism intensity from an excessive one? These questions likely have no single or scientifically precise answer, which has fuelled debates around the validity and applicability of the term, as previously discussed. However, this does not mean that the negative impacts of tourism or the phenomenon itself are coming to an end. This fact, together with the ongoing controversy surrounding its use, indicates that the concept is still evolving and requires further time for the development of a coherent theoretical framework (Żemła, 2024).

The study of the authorship, countries and institutions reveals a strong presence of Spanish universities and authors, exceeding typical representation in other fields of knowledge. It is widely acknowledged that Spain is a global power in the field of tourism and, moreover, one of the territories where processes of touristification have manifested most intensely in recent years, especially in urban areas (Blanco-Romero & Blázquez-Salom, 2023). Similarly, there is a strong European hegemony in the publications. Spain, United Kingdom and Italy head the ranking of the most prolific countries in the subject matter. This is not surprising as, according to the bibliographic review (Koens et al., 2018; Milano et al., 2022; Żemła, 2024), *overtourism* is manifested and studied to a greater extent in European cities. This is corroborated with the identification of terms among the keywords with more than five co-occurrences such as: “Barcelona” (12), “Venice” (12), “Spain” (9), “Poland” (9), “Europe” (5) among others.

In relation to the sources, Cavalcane et al. (2021) suggest that a journal can be considered as being specialized in a problem or issue if it publishes five or more articles related to it. Accordingly, currently there are 20 journals with a special focus on the phenomenon of *overtourism*. Nevertheless, it has been shown that it is a complex term and does not only appear in journals specifically related to tourism but also in others addressing environmental and technological engineering (“Engineering Journal”), economic aspects (“Local Economy”), geographical themes (“Investigaciones Geográficas”) or even biological matters (“Environments”). In this respect, the

most cited journals are related to sustainability (“Sustainability”, “Journal of Sustainable Tourism”).

It is important to mention the case of journals like “Sustainability” because of its markedly difference with respect to the rest of the sources in terms of the number of articles published and the number of citations received. As previously explained, this is due to the high number of monographs published annually by the journal. However, in recent years this new model of publishing has generated a strong debate and has led some authors to consider it as predatory publishing (Oviedo García, 2021).

In the same way, the keyword co-occurrence analysis has revealed that *overtourism* is associated with sustainability aspects with recurring terms such as “sustainable tourism” (58), “sustainability” (39), “sustainable development” (15) or “social sustainability” (6). This analysis has also studied the diachronic word interrelationship (Figure 7). Although the topic is presented in blue (principally addressed in previous studies), this does not imply that it is no longer researched. In general, it means that, on average, the attention has now shifted to other topics. The opposite is also true: studies on Covid-19 emerged in 2020-2021, however, in 2022, despite the academic boom and what it meant at the time, it has become a temporary trend. Even so, when searching, “Covid-19” is still the fourth most recurring keyword. Likewise, normative approaches and institutional responses from public administrations are notably underrepresented, suggesting an emerging or insufficiently explored line of research.

Finally, the citation review reveals a substantial number of articles that have not yet been cited (59) or that have low visibility (273 articles with 1–25 citations). According to Jiménez-García et al. (2020), this could be due to the fact that the documents are not interesting or because they have been published very recently. This second option could justify the small number of citations of the articles published in 2023 and 2024 (the last two years), 85% of which have fewer than five citations.

Limitations have been detected in conducting the bibliometric analysis. Beyond the meticulous data-cleaning process required, the VOSviewer tool slows down the analysis, as it is necessary to reload the data and restart the process each time the search parameters are changed. Another limitation of the study concerns the selection criteria. On the one hand, the type of publication, as only the category “articles” has been taken into account, excluding “book chapter”. On the other hand, the selection of only two databases (WOS and Scopus), excluding other known databases such as Google Scholar, due to the use of less restrictive criteria in the selection of journals and publications.

The main problems identified are related to the lack of clarity of the term and its conceptual extension beyond its impact on tourism. Much of the literature addresses *overtourism* from the perspective of sustainability. The analysis indicates that the use of new technologies seems to be the direction in which the research in the scientific panorama is heading. This could correspond to the entrance of a new phase in the scientific treatment of the phenomenon in which once the problem has been identified and conceptualized, the emphasis shifts to attempts to measure it, the comparison of cases and the ranking of causative factors. The latter are aspects for which the use of ICTs is essential.

Based on the literature reviewed, *overtourism* can be understood as a multidimensional situation of tourism unsustainability, in which the intensity or management of tourism deteriorates the liveability of destinations, the quality of life of the local population, and the visitor experience. However, it is a new concept, open to debate and discussion in the international literature. This debate will be conditioned by the dynamics of the events in reality and the capacity of governments and societies to respond to them.

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