

Transition from CSR to ESG in Tourism – A Bibliometric Analysis

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Background and Purpose: The study examines whether the growing popularity of the ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) approach could result in the decline or disappearance of the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) concept, which has encountered numerous challenges in practical implementation, and what the main sustainability issues are, helping to examine where the transition is, what elements already exist and where there are gaps. The question is analysed in the context of the tourism sector.

Methods: The empirical research methodology used is bibliometric analysis, which involves 924 studies using Publish or Perish (PoP) software and the PRISMA methodology.

Results: The analysis has explored the relationship between sustainability and tourism, as well as between tourism and ESG. The bibliometric maps reveal a strong relationship between CSR and ESG concepts in the study area.

Conclusion: The study highlights that ESG does not replace CSR but rather provides a measurement and framework for it to address its problems. In the tourism sector, the ESG field is dominated by the first 'E' pillar, meaning that sustainability is mainly focused on environmental and natural aspects, while social or even economic sustainability, and ethics are less prominent. The study provides suggestions for future research and useful information for policy makers, and tourism managers, organizations.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, CSR; Corporate social responsibility, ESG, Sustainability transition, Bibliometric analysis

1 Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on addressing the shortcomings and unanticipated negative effects of the CSR concept. Bajic and Yurtoglu (2018) and Bernardová et al. (2020) draw attention to the problem of measuring CSR in a heterogeneous or even particular way, which can obscure the real driver(s) of CSR. Bajic and Yurtoglu (2018) propose the ESG approach as a general measurement tool for CSR. Szczanowicz and Saniuk (2016) identified trends for improving CSR in the SME sector by examining CSR assessment and reporting models. The authors developed an assessment model based on monitoring and reporting ESG risks. In addition, some

studies have used ESG approximations or specific ESG databases to measure CSR performance, such as the Bloomberg ESG database (Wang et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2018).

What are the similarities and differences between CSR and ESG that could lead to the conclusion that ESG can solve the problems of CSR measurement and prevent colour washing (whitewashing, greenwashing, etc.) practices while being suitable for measuring CSR? ESG stands for Environment, Social, and Governance pillars, and primarily refers to a set of criteria that investors can use to make decisions. The aim of ESG is to enable organizations, such as companies, and countries, to shift from a short-term profit-maximizing mindset to a longer-term and ethical profit-maximizing one. Csapi and Balogh (2020) have shown that profitability and size can contribute to

competitiveness growth for SMEs, while ESG is playing an increasingly important role in the perception of companies. The three pillars of ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) have been present in CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) measurement solutions. ESG and CSR are similar in essence, but they are carried out by different groups of people. CSR describes a company's socially responsible commitment, efforts, and practices and is often used by the corporate side. ESG is a term used by asset managers and investors to assess corporate behaviour and identify financial risks and growth opportunities for companies. CSR and ESG are becoming cornerstones of corporate success by improving companies' reputation, innovation, risk management, and revenues (Godfrey et al., 2009; Porter & Kramer, 2011; Maletič et al., 2014; Sen et al., 2016). Although CSR is typically more readily adopted by foreign-owned enterprises, due to the various barriers that prevent it from being used by many SMEs, it is not an unattainable concept for SMEs. However, it should be noted that one of the key drivers of sustainability is the vision of the enterprise (Lesnikova & Schmidtova, 2020).

Although this paper does not cover all the problems related to CSR, it is important to note that consumers have become increasingly sceptical. CSR has been an unregulated field for a long time since its emergence in practice, with no accurate measurement and reporting standards. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO, 2010) introduced ISO 26000:2010 to clarify the practice of CSR. This standard lists several criteria and standards for socially responsible practices of public and private sector companies. However, CSR was perceived by many organizations as a new marketing communication tool with no real substance, causing the concept to erode. ESG presents an opportunity to renew and integrate previous content and concepts in a more verifiable form, primarily aimed at investors and decision-makers. While it may still influence consumer decisions, ESG's primary target group is investors, unlike CSR.

ESG evaluates companies based on their environmental, social, and governance efforts, like CSR, but with a more integrated approach. The reporting of ESG scores has significantly increased in recent decades. According to the KPMG International Survey on Corporate Responsibility Reporting 2017, the reporting rate of N250 companies (the 250 largest companies in the Fortune Global 500) has remained stable at 90-95% over the past four years. For N100 companies, there is a steady catch-up, with a current rate of 75 percent (Cheffi et al., 2021).

The practical implementation of CSR and ranking based measurement of CSR performance have been imperfect, which has tarnished its reputation and called its credibility into question (Bernardová et al., 2020). The theoretical concept of CSR should not disappear but rather be renewed and reborn in a more reliable and credible form, eliminating the problems. This is where the concept

of ESG can be useful. The following analysis examines whether international literature supports our ideas and whether CSR is being replaced by ESG by narrowing the analysis to tourism industry.

2 Literature review

2.1 Tourism and ESG

Firstly, our study explores how ESG can be understood in tourism and how responsibility and sustainability are reflected in this sector. Tourism is a significant industry that promotes economic development and generates income in many countries. However, the rapid growth of tourism has resulted in negative impacts on the environment and host communities and societies (Forster, 1964; Pizam, 1978; Van der Borg et al., 1996; Fun et al., 2014; Baloch et al., 2023; Alamineh et al., 2023). It is important to note that ESG considerations are becoming increasingly important in the tourism industry, and businesses must take responsibility for their impact on the environment and society. The concept of sustainable tourism aims to mitigate negative impacts while promoting economic growth and preserving natural resources for future generations (Harris et al., 2012; UNWTO, 2017; Job et al., 2017; Fennell & Cooper, 2020; Peng, 2021). However, there is no uniform understanding of this concept.

The World Economic Forum Travel & Tourism Development Index 2021 (TTDI) represents the first indication of an ESG approach in the tourism sector. It enables sustainable and resilient development of the sector, marking a shift from the previous competitiveness-focused Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI). The TTDI index evaluates destinations based on five pillars: (1) enabling environment, which includes ethical tourism and economic sustainability, (2) policy and enabling conditions, (3) infrastructure, (4) demand drivers, which reflect social sustainability and destination stewardship, and (5) sustainability, with a focus on environmental sustainability (World Economic Forum, 2022). How can sustainable tourism be defined based on all of this? We are discussing a form of tourism that adopts a responsible approach to travel and seeks to reduce adverse effects on the environment while promoting cultural and social awareness, as well as contributing to economic development. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), sustainable tourism fully considers its present and future economic, social, and environmental impacts while also taking into account the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities (UNWTO, 2017).

Sustainable tourism has numerous benefits for local communities. These include preserving natural resources and cultural heritage, creating jobs, supporting local businesses, and generating income. Additionally, it can con-

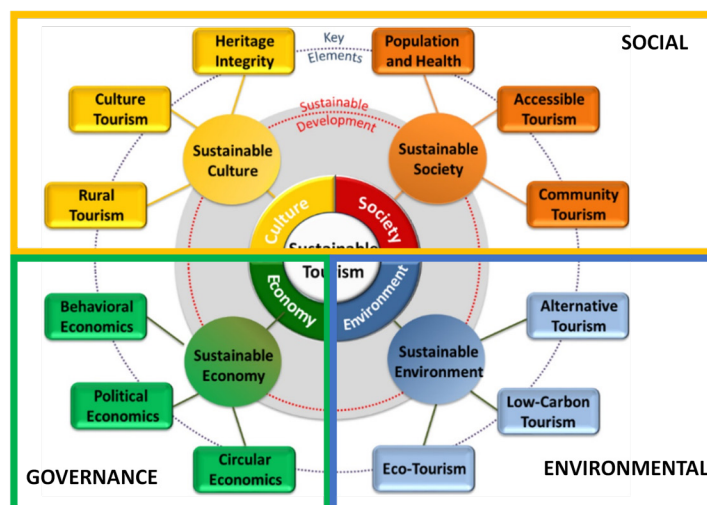
tribute to reducing poverty, improving living standards, and increasing social well-being. Sustainable tourism can provide environmental benefits, including biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, pollution and greenhouse gas emission reduction, and sustainable use of natural resources (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Neto, 2003; Jarvis et al., 2010; Harris et al., 2012; Saarinen, 2019; Fennell & Cooper, 2020). However, sustainable tourism faces several challenges, such as balancing economic development with environmental protection. The pursuit of economic growth may result in the exploitation of natural resources and harm to the environment, which can compromise the sustainability of tourism. Furthermore, the challenge of sustainable tourism lies in the lack of awareness and understanding among stakeholders and the general public, as well as the absence of clear metrics for measuring success. Addressing these issues will require a collective effort to increase awareness, promote education, and establish policies and regulations that promote sustainable tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; McMinn, 1997; Jarvis et al., 2010; UNWTO, 2017; Pan et al., 2018).

Sustainable or responsible tourism involves various elements that follow the principles of sustainable development and have a positive impact on the environment, local communities, and the economy. This definition is based on the works of Harris et al. (2012), Swarbrooke (2014), UNWTO (2017), Pan et al. (2018), and Gonda and Rátz (2023):

- Environmental sustainability involves minimizing the impact of tourism on the environment through sustainable practices such as reducing carbon emissions, conserving natural resources, and protecting biodiversity. Tourism businesses can achieve environmental sustainability by imple-

menting environmentally friendly policies such as energy-efficient operations, waste management, and water conservation.

- Social sustainability in tourism development involves promoting social equity, cultural diversity, and community involvement. Tourism enterprises can achieve social sustainability by supporting local businesses, promoting cultural awareness, respecting local customs and traditions, and involving local communities in decision-making processes.
- Economic sustainability involves ensuring that tourism generates economic benefits for local communities while contributing to the long-term economic development of the region. Tourism businesses can achieve economic sustainability by promoting sustainable employment, supporting local businesses, and investing in community infrastructure.
- Ethical tourism involves promoting ethical behaviour among tourism stakeholders, including tourists, tourism businesses, and local communities. Ethical tourism practices involve promoting animal welfare, respecting human rights, and ensuring fair labour practices.
- Destination Stewardship involves managing tourism development in a way that preserves its natural and cultural heritage. Tourism businesses can achieve destination stewardship by adopting sustainable tourism practices, such as reducing the impact of tourism on the environment and promoting the conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage.



Source: Pan et al. (2018, 454.) is supplemented by the authors' ESG categorisation

Figure 1: Classification of specific areas of sustainable tourism into ESG pillars

Instead of the broad and general approach, there is no consensus in the literature regarding the concept of sustainable tourism and its relationship to responsible tourism. Some approaches combine them as 'sustainable and responsible tourism' (UNWTO, 2012; Mihalic et al., 2021). Additionally, although sustainable tourism is dominant, 'green tourism' and 'ecotourism' are also used as synonyms (Mihalic et al., 2021; Saarinen, 2021). In our research, we examine these concepts separately in order to gain a comprehensive picture of this area of tourism. We use Pan et al.'s (2018) segments as a basis, we can identify the ESG elements - environmental, social, and corporate governance pillars - for tourism (see Figure 1). The E (environmental) pillar encompasses alternative and ecotourism, as well as carbon footprint reduction. The S (social) pillar includes elements related to culture and community, while the G (governance) pillar includes newer types of economic models, such as circular economy or behavioural economics.

In conclusion, sustainable tourism is a concept that promotes responsible travel, seeks to minimize negative impacts on the environment, and fosters economic development. It brings several benefits, including the conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage, the preservation of communities, economic model change, new governance mechanisms that create jobs, support local businesses, and generate income. After explaining the concept of sustainable tourism and the ESG pillars in tourism, we will compare the popularity of CSR and ESG in the tourism industry.

2.2 ESG and sustainability transition in tourism

The challenges posed by climate change and the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UN in 2015 are both driving stakeholders, including companies, to start a process of adopting a new approach to formulating their strategies and goals and to their day-to-day operations and decision-making. This practice reflects the growing recognition by companies that sustainable and responsible business practices contribute to long-term business value creation, risk mitigation and challenge management. At the same time, the need to move towards sustainability is not only emerging from the corporate side but is also being promoted and encouraged at various levels of government. The demand from government regulation, investors and other stakeholders has created the need for companies to demonstrate their ESG performance, and their corporate sustainability policy, which in the future will include both reporting and accountability.

According to the literature, internal or external drivers (Corporate Sustainability Performance (CSP) drivers), including the shift towards stakeholder-driven sustainability,

include socio-technical elements applied in the everyday work of companies, such as the combined application of individuals, institutions, resources and practices towards sustainable practices (Ferreira-Quilice et al., 2023). According to Popescu et al. (2022), the implementation of ESG practices requires social innovation, circularity and energy transformation. The shift towards an ESG approach is primarily driven by social and environmental issues, while economic issues should not be overlooked.

Sustainability reporting and ESG ratings are considered by some literature sources as the guiding and measuring tools for the transition to sustainability (Crifo et al., 2019; Pompella & Constantino, 2023). Among the external and internal drivers of the sustainability transition, Johnstone (2018) mentions social pressure as one of the external drivers and this approach is based on legitimacy theory and stakeholder theory. In addition, research on external drivers also uses institutional theory to explain corporate responses to these. In the case of internal incentives, signalling theory comes to the fore as it focuses on how companies manage information asymmetries related to sustainability issues (Ferreira-Quilice et al., 2023).

It is similarly inevitable that the tourism sector will align with ESG criteria. As Ionescu et al. (2019) and Bualay et al. (2022) have demonstrated, ESG factors exert a significant influence on the market value of companies in the travel and tourism industry. In order to facilitate a sustainable transition, it is therefore essential that the tourism sector develops in an adaptive and responsible manner. This transition will require a systematic approach and commitment from all levels of the organization (Bualay et al., 2022).

As in any other case, the leadership commitment and the engagement of stakeholders will be crucial in managing change (Benčič, 2006; Uran & Juvan, 2010). Senior management must demonstrate a strong commitment to ESG principles and sustainability goals. This includes developing a clear vision, allocating resources and providing guidance and support throughout the transition process. In the meantime, it is important to engage with internal and external stakeholders, including employees, local communities, government agencies, NGOs and investors. It is essential to ensure that ESG initiatives are in line with stakeholder expectations and address relevant issues. (Salvioni & Almici, 2020; Gonzalez-Porras et al., 2021)

Risk assessment and materiality analysis are also important steps in the transition. The international tourism demand might be influenced by countries' risk rating on ESG factors (Hassan & Meyer, 2022). The global pandemic has compelled the sector's stakeholders to adopt more efficacious crisis management strategies (Kukanja et al., 2020). These have included discourse on the transformative shifts occurring within the tourism industry, the identification of benchmarks, and the fortification of the sector's resilience. This process merits observation in the context

of sustainability transition, which is currently predicated on the concept of materiality assessment. This is the process by which industry must identify and respond to stakeholder expectations. (Guix & Font, 2022) The development of ESG policies, codes of conduct and guidelines is essential for the organisation to demonstrate its commitment to responsible tourism practices. This includes the setting of clear objectives, targets and performance indicators to monitor progress and measure impact (Ionescu et al., 2019).

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) and Green Transformational Leadership (GTL), which encompasses capacity building and training, are fundamental elements of the sustainability transition. These facilitate employees' comprehension of green, or in this case, ESG, matters and their role in implementing responsible tourism practices. Additionally, they affect employees' green or sustainable work behaviour, which entails the generation of ideas, initiatives, and solutions to advance sustainability goals. (Agrawal & Pradhan, 2023)

Finally, ESG considerations must be integrated into business processes, including strategic planning, decision-making, risk management, procurement, marketing and performance management. Key performance indicators (KPIs) for the transition should be identified, monitored, measured and reported on an ongoing basis. Leoni (2024) integrated ESG and organizational resilience (OR) in ESGOR matrix which introduces nine organizational typologies that determine various strategic possibilities of the organizations and the decision-making emphases in terms of ESG factors and OR components, as well as the organization's behaviour. Tourism organizations also need to monitor and measure ESG performance, collect relevant data to assess progress towards sustainability goals, and reports regularly in a transparent and accountable manner.

By effectively managing the transition to responsible tourism and responsible organizational development, organizations can enhance their competitiveness, reputation and resilience, foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation, and contribute to the well-being of society and the planet. It is also necessary that the transition touches on all the pillars of ESG presented earlier, and in the following section we will use bibliometric analysis to examine which elements are more prominent and which are the more neglected areas.

3 Research method

Based on the literature review, we wanted to investigate two things. The first is whether CSR or ESG is dominant in the tourism sector, and the second is what the main issues are in terms of sustainability, which helps to examine where the transition is, what elements already exist and where there are gaps. The research questions are ad-

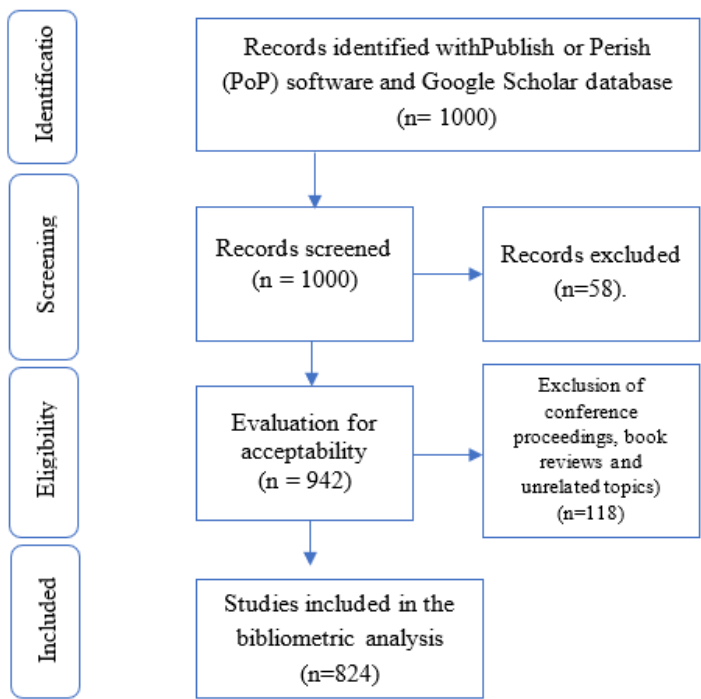
ressed through bibliometric analysis. Bibliometric analysis enables the discovery, processing, and analysis of large amounts of scientific data, illustrating the development of a given field and highlighting current research trends. Mukherjee et al. (2022) state that high-quality bibliometric analyses can advance a field by identifying research gaps and defining new research directions. To establish the basis for a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis, we used the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis) method (Moher et al., 2009). This method is widely used in the literature to ensure clear, objective, and transparent analysis.

The keywords were selected through the literature review and based also on Pan et al. (2018) classification. The following keywords were used in our search and were separated using a Boolean operator, i.e., if any of the following terms matched, the studies could be selected: 'sustainable tourism' OR 'green tourism' OR 'responsible tourism' OR 'ecotourism' OR 'cultural tourism' OR 'circular tourism'. Sustainable tourism was first mentioned in 1995 in the Charter for Sustainable Tourism at the first World Conference on Sustainable Tourism. However, some authors, such as Mihalic et al. (2021), attribute its appearance to the academic debate on the sustainability of tourism following the publication of the Brundtland Report. This study examines studies published between 1990 and 2023.

We used the Publish or Perish (PoP) software for scientometric analysis, which can also contribute to mapping a concept or related studies using other databases. The PoP software uses, among others, the freely accessible Google Scholar database, covering a wide range of scientific publications. Through the use of keywords, a detailed search can be initiated on Google Scholar within the specified time interval.

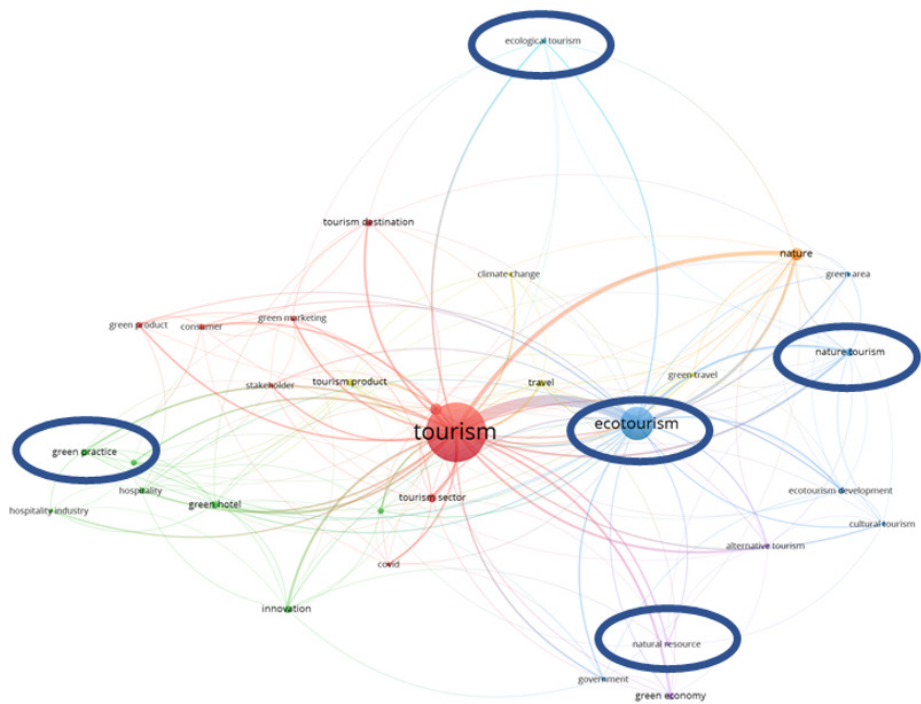
However, the only disadvantage is that during this period, we can only collect and examine the first thousand hits. Running the search under the conditions above allowed for creating a sample of 1000 elements, but its review is necessary as part of the PRISMA method. The PoP software and Google Scholar search do not allow for the inclusion of non-English language studies in the sample, and only focus on studies published in scientific journals. Therefore, we conducted a review and removed studies that were not written in English based on their titles, as well as book excerpts, book reviews, and conference papers. As a result, we narrowed down the original sample of 1000 elements to 824 studies.

The PRISMA method can be divided into four steps (Figure 2):



Source: the authors’ own editing

Figure 2: PRISMA Research Process Flow Diagram



Source: own construction with the Vosviewer program

Figure 3: The bibliometric map of responsible or sustainable tourism

5 Discussion

The research paper offers insights into the growing popularity of the ESG approach, which could result in the decline or disappearance of the CSR concept and the existing and lacking practices to support ESG transition in tourism. The shift towards ESG in corporate strategy and day-to-day operations is also reflected in our research, with a growing role for green and sustainable practices in tourism and a shift towards sustainable development with a focus on environmental sustainability.

The bibliometric analysis revealed that environmental considerations are already present in the sector. It can be observed that tourism organizations are paying increasing attention to reducing their environmental footprint, and related measures such as energy efficiency, waste reduction and the promotion of environmentally friendly transport options are becoming increasingly popular. Furthermore, there is a growing number of sustainable tourism practices that aim to minimize negative impacts on natural habitats, wildlife and ecosystems while promoting conservation and biodiversity conservation.

However, the elements of the other two pillars are less emphasized. Regarding social responsibility, it is evident that there is a need to increase efforts to support local communities, preserve culture and ensure fair labour practices. While these issues are partially reflected, there is a clear opportunity to enhance the sector's commitment to these values. Investing in community engagement initiatives would not only support local economies, but also respect indigenous rights and traditions.

The governance pillar, which also encompasses accountability, is the least developed of the three pillars in the tourism industry. It is therefore imperative that good governance practices become an integral part of the industry, emphasizing transparency, accountability and ethical behaviour. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to develop and adopt ESG policies, codes of conduct and guidelines discussed in the transition chapter, to introduce responsible management structures and to communicate and report information about their ESG performance.

In conclusion, it can be stated that integration into the business strategy is important. ESG considerations are becoming increasingly integrated into the fundamental business strategies of these tourism companies. However, for the time being, they are often focused on appearing in one element at a time. It is crucial to recognize that sustainability is not only a moral imperative, but also a business necessity for long-term success. In response to demands for greater transparency and accountability on ESG issues from investors, consumers and regulators, companies in the tourism sector are incorporating sustainability goals into their operations and decision-making processes.

In the process of transitioning to an ESG framework,

CSR can serve as a valuable starting point. Companies can build upon their existing CSR practices and enhance them, thereby supporting the integration of ESG principles into their corporate strategies. The more rigorous framework can also help to address the shortcomings of previous CSR initiatives. Given that CSR does not disappear, it represents a valuable foundation for a more responsible transition. The knowledge accumulated during this process can be leveraged by the organization in the ESG review process. CSR activities can continue to exist and find their place in the ESG framework and reporting system.

6 Conclusion

Our study uses bibliometric analysis to investigate whether CSR is still the dominant focus in tourism or whether ESG is emerging as a new priority. The study analysed 824 papers using the PoP software and PRISMA methodology. The results indicate that the environmental and natural resource aspects of tourism are currently the most prominent. The results indicate that sustainability and sustainable development are becoming more significant in tourism, including ecotourism and responsible tourism. The link between ESG, CSR, and corporate social responsibility not only remains but has emerged as a distinct cluster and the strongest of the six identified.

This suggests that CSR will continue to exist but will have a new position and function within ESG. It is probable that the experts who predicted that ESG will function more as a measurement and evaluation tool, as a framework, will be correct. Meanwhile, CSR, which has not been able to fulfil this role, or rather has been lacking in this aspect, can support ESG efforts providing appropriate content, activities, and action plans to address the weaknesses and gaps identified by ESG assessments. ESG and CSR can complement each other in the life of companies. The link between ESG and tourism results in a strong focus on natural resources and environment in the ESG approach. However, the social, cultural, economic, and ethical elements of sustainable tourism are less popular. This leads to a more prominent emphasis on Pillar E, which pertains to the natural environment, in publications. This emphasis on Pillar E is not surprising, as it is observed in most sectors. Pillar S and especially Pillar G are much more neglected, while playing a critical role in terms of the transition.

The results of our study provide important information on the transition to ESG principles in the tourism sector - existing and neglected areas and topics - represents a fundamental shift towards more sustainable, responsible and ethical practices. The integration of ESG criteria into all aspects of the organization's operations is a key aspect of responsible tourism organizational development. This encompasses environmental protection and community involvement, as well as governance and accountability. By

meeting ESG criteria, tourism organizations can promote sustainable development, mitigate negative impacts and contribute positively to the well-being of both communities and the planet.

However, like any research, also our research has limitations. The most significant limitation is that it was not possible to analyse specific practical applications, but the topic was investigated through studies and academic papers, which are typically based on practical examples, cases, and interviews with tourism actors, stakeholders. Consequently, the practice of the sector appears indirectly. Accordingly, we posit that the initial findings and conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. However, further examination of the potential shortcomings in the ESG elements outlined here is necessary. This can be achieved through qualitative or quantitative primary research, such as case studies, interviews, questionnaires, or text mining. This will enable the exploration of the ESG elements in practice and the identification of any gaps. This will provide a comprehensive understanding of the transition and its current organizational challenges.

The bibliometric analysis presented in our study also has limitations. The bibliometric analysis requires open access to data, data quality correction and consideration of differences between bibliometric databases. Google Scholar, as the most comprehensive source of free bibliographic data available, provided a reasonable basis for conducting the research. However, the PoP software was used to analyse a sample of only 1000 items, which required further adjustments. Increasing the sample size would help to get a more accurate picture of the transition to sustainability. However, in addition to extending the sample, the use of other databases or an extension of the current one would also help to identify the sustainability in the sector.

Finally, in order for the transition and responsible, integrated ESG practice to appear as soon as possible, it is crucial to recognize that sustainability is not merely a moral imperative but also a fundamental business requirement for long-term success. To this end, further research is required to substantiate this assertion and inform the attitudes and behaviours of those involved in the sector.

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