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Development of Marathon Tourism Publications Indexed in Wos and Scopus Databases: A Bibliometric Analysis

WOS ve Scopus Veri Tabanlarında Endekslenen Maraton Turizmi Yayınlarının Bibliyometrik Analizi

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ÖZET

Bu çalışma, 2000 ile 2025 yılları arasında maraton turizmi alanında yayınlanan bilimsel makaleleri bibliyometrik bir yaklaşımla analiz etmektedir. Web of Science (WOS) ve Scopus veri tabanlarından elde edilen 152 belge, R yazılımı kullanılarak yazar analizi, atıf analizi, dergi etkisi, ülke iş birlikleri, kavramsal yapı ve anahtar kelime eğilimleri gibi çok boyutlu teknikler kullanılarak değerlendirilmiştir. Bibliyometrik yöntem, literatürün nicel özelliklerini objektif olarak ortaya koyarken, alandaki akademik üretkenliği, iş birliği düzeylerini ve araştırma eğilimlerini görselleştirme fırsatı sunmaktadır. Bulgular, maraton turizmine olan bilimsel ilginin 2010'dan sonra kayda değer ölçüde arttığını, 2020'de zirveye ulaştığını ve multidisipliner içerikle zenginleştiğini göstermiştir. Kavramsal analizler, literatürün üç ana eksene odaklandığını ortaya koymaktadır: Mega etkinliklerin sosyal etkileri, turist davranışları ve bireysel spor deneyimi. Getz (2010) gibi çalışmalar, yüksek atıf oranlarıyla bu alandaki teorik çerçeveye şekil vermiştir. Ayrıca, ABD, Çin, Kanada ve Avustralya'nın merkezi aktörler olarak ortaya çıkışlarıyla uluslararası iş birliklerinin güçlü olduğu da belirlenmiştir. Araştırma, maraton turizminin sadece bir spor etkinliği olmadığını, aynı zamanda bölgesel kalkınma, sürdürülebilir destinasyon yönetimi ve sosyal entegrasyon gibi temalarla da yakından ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymuş ve gelecekteki araştırmalar için stratejik öneriler geliştirmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Maraton turizmi, bibliyometrik analiz, sürdürülebilir turizm, destinasyon pazarlaması.

ABSTRACT

This study analyzed scientific papers published in the field of marathon tourism between 2000 and 2025 using a bibliometric approach. The 152 documents obtained from the Web of Science (WOS) and Scopus databases were evaluated employing multidimensional techniques such as author analysis, citation analysis, journal impact, country collaborations, conceptual structure, and keyword trends using R software. Bibliometric methodology objectively reveals the quantitative characteristics of literature while providing the opportunity to visualize academic productivity, collaboration levels, and research trends in the field. The findings showed that scientific interest in marathon tourism increased significantly after 2010, peaked in 2020, and diversified with multidisciplinary content. Conceptual analyses revealed that literature focused on three main axes: the social impacts of mega events, tourist behavior, and individual sports experience. Studies such as Getz (2010) have shaped the theoretical framework of the field with their high citation levels. Additionally, it has been determined that international collaborations are strong, with the US, China, Canada, and Australia emerging as central actors. The research has revealed that marathon tourism is not only a sporting event but is also closely related to themes such as regional development, sustainable destination management, and social integration, and it has presented strategic recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Marathon tourism, bibliometric analysis, sustainable tourism, destination marketing

INTRODUCTION

Today, sports events have become important tools not only for promoting physical activity but also for the tourism sector (Gibson, 1998; Ratkowski & Ratkowska, 2018). Individuals are going beyond traditional sun-sea-sand tourism and opting for alternative types of tourism such as sports tourism, where they can be more active physically (Yıldız and Gürhan, 2020). Organizations held in various sports disciplines play an effective role in promoting destinations and economic development (Bahir et al., 2025). In this respect, sports tourism has become increasingly important and stands out among alternative types of tourism.

Sports tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism industry, with an annual economic volume approaching \$1 trillion (Papanikos, 2015). This growth is both encouraging individuals to engage in physical activities and transforming their travel motivations while turning sporting events into tourist experiences (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005). Within sports tourism, running races stand out, and among these races, marathons attract attention due to the number of participants and their economic impact (Atlas et al., 2018). In fact, the New York City Marathon broke records in 2024 with over 55,000 participants, surpassing the previous records set by the Paris and Berlin marathons (www.nycrr.org).

Marathon races, with a deep-rooted history extending from antiquity to the present day, are regarded as both a cultural and athletic heritage, and today they are considered significant sports tourism events that contribute substantially to regional economies (Zauhar, 2004; Gkarane & Vassaliadis, 2022). These events bring together thousands of participants and spectators, generating large-scale tourism mobility and supporting the development and visibility of host destinations (Chen et al., 2021). As a result, many cities host marathon events to enhance their brand value and position themselves as international centers of attraction. Cities such as London, New York, Boston, Chicago, Berlin, Tokyo, and Istanbul stand out as prominent destinations for global runners and tourists due to the prestigious marathons they organize (Malchrowicz-Mosko & Munsters, 2018; McAdams, 2007). On the other hand, even small-scale events such as the Médoc Marathon—held among the vineyards in the Pauillac commune of the Bordeaux region in France—generate significant tourism activity during the race days (www.marathondumedoc.com).

Marathon tourism provides significant economic benefits to destinations during the event as well as in the surrounding days, including the lead-up and aftermath of the race (Papanikos, 2015). The expenditures made by participants and spectators in areas such as accommodation, food and beverage, transportation, and shopping stimulate the local economy and positively influence the destination's image (Gratton et al., 2007; Gan et al., 2023). Such large-scale events are seen as a strategic tool for achieving sustainable development goals and constitute an important source of tourism revenue for both developed and developing countries (Chen et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2022).

Marathon organizations create significant revenue growth in sectors such as accommodation, food and beverage, transportation, and shopping. From a social perspective, marathon tourism fosters community cohesion and encourages volunteerism, while culturally, it contributes to the promotion of local values. Environmentally, when planned in accordance with sustainability principles, these events stand out as nature-friendly activities. As a rapidly growing subfield of tourism, marathon tourism has been attracting increasing attention in academic literature and is being explored through various dimensions. This study investigates marathon tourism using a bibliometric analysis approach, aiming to contribute to the literature by presenting statistical data and tables that reveal academic productivity, trends, and research gaps in the field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marathon Tourism and Its Development

Sports events have evolved into tourism products that go beyond simply promoting physical activity (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2003). Modern tourists, who want to move away from the passive vacation mindset created by mass tourism, have turned to alternative forms of tourism that are more active (Ei & Karamanis, 2017). In this sense, participation in running races, and especially marathon events, has emerged as one of the most notable trends in recent years (Kennedy et al., 2019). Marathon races, which have a long history dating back to the ancient Olympics (Huggins, 2013; Kasimati & Asero, 2023), are not merely sporting events in contemporary tourism; they are important sports tourism activities that contribute to the regional economy, enhance the destination's brand value, and support local development (Mousavi et al., 2022; Raso & Cherubini, 2024).

Marathon organizations, which attract increasing interest in the context of sports tourism, are quite diverse with regard to participant profiles and the experiences they offer (Aicher et al., 2015; Hinch & Holt, 2017). These events have a multi-dimensional structure, with professional and amateur runners actively participating as competitors on the one hand, and spectators experiencing a tourist-oriented experience at the destination on the other (Aicher et al., 2015). Moreover, volunteers and support staff involved in the organization also constitute an important part of the process, thus creating a form of tourism that is not only race-focused but also focused on social interaction and community participation (Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018). Beyond individual health and competitive motivations, marathon tourism is fueled by elements such as destination exploration, cultural experiences, interaction with the local economy, and social engagement. Thanks to this multi-layered structure, marathons have secured a significant position in sustainable tourism strategies for today's destinations, both economically and socio-culturally (Aicher et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2021; Poczta & Malchowicz-Mośko, 2018).

City marathons, an important component of marathon tourism, transcend the realm of mere sporting events, attracting attention for their political, economic, and tourist qualities and creating synergistic effects in the cities where they are held (Kasimati & Asero, 2023; Koutrou & Kohe, 2025). The sports tourism resources of cities are considered a strategic factor in terms of urban growth and destination competition (Smith, 2010). The study conducted by Zheng et al. (2023) in China found that the development indices of 38 city marathons held across the country promoted urban growth. In this context, the Xi'an, Fuzhou, and Dalian marathons stand out as organizations with significant economic and tourist impacts. City marathons contribute to the sustainable development of cities by supporting economic revitalization, strengthening destination image, and improving urban infrastructure. In the future, a unified city marathon series is planned to be established in China by leveraging the economic and tourist potential of these events, and new projects that promote urban development are planned to be implemented (Zheng et al., 2023).

Marathon tourism provides significant economic and socio-cultural benefits to host destinations. Hawaii, traditionally seen as a “sea, sand, and sun” destination, has shifted its focus toward sports tourism. In 2004, the Honolulu Marathon attracted 25,000 participants, including over 17,000 from outside the state, generating substantial revenue through tourism-related expenditures (Agrusa, 2014). Similarly, the Pyongyang Marathon in North Korea, once closed to outsiders, was opened to over 200 foreign amateurs, positioning the event as part of the country's strategic tourism development and branding effort (Podoler, 2016). The RunCzech races in the Czech Republic, particularly the Olomouc Half Marathon, engage both locals and tourists, contributing to economic growth (Schwartzhoffová, 2015). In Indonesia, the Jakarta Marathon is a high-participation event that promotes both international and local tourism (Ferdian, 2023). China's Rizhao Marathon supports city branding while fostering social cohesion, environmental awareness, and short-term economic gains (Yang et al., 2020). Romania's EU accession boosted its sports tourism sector, with the Bucharest International Marathon attracting thousands and enhancing local economic vitality (Chivu, 2013). Although economic returns vary in the short term, marathons serve as long-term investments with positive social, cultural, and environmental impacts (Papanikos, 2015; Chivu, 2013).

Marathon Events as Tourism Products

The seasonal nature of tourism presents considerable financial challenges (Butler, 2001; Corluka, 2019; Higham & Hinch, 2002; Jang, 2004). To address this, the diversification of tourism products during the off-season has been emphasized (Figini & Vici, 2012). Hosting events during low-demand periods can help destinations balance tourist flows and mitigate the adverse effects of seasonality (Solberg & Preuss, 2007). In seasonal tourism destinations, the strategic use of sports events aligns with sustainability objectives (Flagestad & Hope, 2001). However, to maximize their benefits, such events must be integrated with other tourism products to foster local development and distribute tourism activity more evenly across the year (Gkarane & Vassiliadis, 2022).

Marathon tourism is a year-round tourism product of strategic value to local governments (Gkarane et al., 2025; Lin et al., 2022; Mazza, 2021; Morfoulaki et al., 2023). Its impact on local tourism performance is multifaceted, spanning the preparatory, event, and post-event phases (Gan et al., 2023). The promotional and logistical processes prior to the event lead into a peak of activity involving accommodation, consumption, and social interaction, while post-event experiences contribute to the long-term image of the destination (Alexandris et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2021; Page & Connell, 2020). Thus, marathons should be seen not only as sporting events but also as tools for sustainable tourism development (Gan et al., 2023; Malchowicz-Mośko & Poczta, 2018).

The organizational quality of marathons is central to marketing strategies for sports tourism (Mesci et al., 2021; Sudarmanto et al., 2025). Designing events with both athletic and tourist-friendly elements strengthen destination branding and product diversity. Offering authentic local culinary experiences enhances participant satisfaction and integrates marathons with gastronomic tourism (Chalip & Costa, 2005; Bertella, 2014; Lin et al., 2022; Radicchi, 2013). Customized souvenirs also contribute to a positive brand image (Lin et al., 2024). Marathon tourism quality can be elevated by incorporating ecotourism, thermal tourism, and nature-based recreation, making destinations more multidimensional (Lin et al., 2022). In China, government strategies seek to align national fitness and sports industry goals with urban tourism through marathons (Liu & Lu, 2023). These events promote sustainability, community, and loyalty, requiring effective management of service quality, image, satisfaction, and brand value (Jeong & Kim, 2020; Lin et al., 2025).

Expectations and Motivations of Marathon Tourists

Tourism has been shown to enhance individuals' quality of life as a social phenomenon (Andereck & Jurowski, 2006; Moscardo, 2009; Ramkissoon, 2023). The rise of leisure activities has driven growth in the tourism sector (Williams & Shaw, 2009), with marathon tourism emerging as a notable form of sports-based travel that addresses physical, social, and psychological needs (Perić et al., 2016). Participation in marathons and street races has become a growing social trend (Nowak & Chalimoniuk-Nowak, 2015). Motivations behind marathon participation are multifaceted—encompassing socio-psychological, cultural, and physical dimensions—and are vital for destination marketing. Motivations such as social belonging, self-satisfaction, cultural curiosity, and physical challenge necessitate targeted promotional strategies and personalized communication. Runners' motivational differences, particularly between local and international participants, underscore marathons as key tools for destination branding. Cultural integration in events enhances appeal and fosters loyalty (Septiana et al., 2022).

Ensuring participant satisfaction is central to sustainable marathon tourism. Organizational success depends on managerial competence, effective planning, and stakeholder coordination (Chen et al., 2021). Recognizing diverse runner expectations—ranging from entertainment to escape—requires an experience-oriented approach, which boosts both destination image and repeat visits (Lin et al., 2022). Services along the route play a crucial role in shaping satisfaction. Offerings such as water, snacks, music performances, folk dances, and cheering groups contribute to morale and the overall event atmosphere. Shorter races also promote inclusivity and broaden participation, enhancing community pride and media exposure (Chen et al., 2021). Post-event evaluations and destination perceptions directly affect satisfaction and repeat intention (Zouni et al., 2021). The synergy between destination image and event image is vital for loyalty. Perceptions of venue quality, service, and organization significantly shape future behavioral intentions (Fam et al., 2020), while high service standards and a strong destination image yield long-term strategic advantage (Song et al., 2023).

Although studies have largely focused on mega-events like the Olympics, research on city marathons remains limited despite their substantial insights into spending and loyalty. Marathon participants tend to spend more and show higher revisit intention than spectators (Kruger, Saayman & Ellis, 2012), and satisfaction with the event strongly influences destination and event re-selection (Wicker et al., 2012). Regular marathon participants often form a distinct runner identity linked with motivation, discipline, and social belonging. This identity sets them apart from other tourists (Richard & Jones, 2008), with many extending their stay around race day, further boosting economic and cultural engagement with host destinations.

METHODS

Bibliometric method is a research approach based on the quantitative analysis of scientific publications and aims at revealing the structural characteristics of literature (Pessin, Yamane & Siman, 2022; Yan & Zhiping, 2023). This methodology encompasses methods such as author analysis, citation analysis, journal analysis, collaboration network analysis, and keyword analysis (Chen & Xiao, 2016; Ragazou et al., 2022). Bibliometrics provides a comprehensive framework for understanding academic productivity, scientific collaboration, research trends, and the developmental dynamics of literature. In recent years, the rapid increase in the number of scientific publications and easier access to large-scale bibliographic data sets have increased the importance of bibliometric studies (Donthu et al., 2021). Leading databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science provide rich data on academic publications, citation networks, and interdisciplinary interactions. These data can be analyzed using software such as R, Leximancer, and VOSviewer to visualize author collaborations, country- and institution-based

research productivity, interdisciplinary interaction networks, and thematic development areas (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

Bibliometric analysis reveals the current state of literature, while also contributing to the prediction of future research trends and strategic research planning (de Oliveira et al., 2019). The main advantages of bibliometric analyses are that they offer objective, data-driven evaluation, enable the measurement of publication performance, facilitate the identification of leading researchers and institutions, reveal research networks, and contribute to the shaping of scientific policies (Raman et al., 2024; Ullrich et al., 2022). For these reasons, bibliometrics has become a powerful methodological tool that is preferred in not only the social sciences but also many other disciplines such as medicine, engineering, natural sciences, and management (Passas, 2024).

VISUALIZATION AND ANALYSIS OF BIBLIOMETRIC FINDINGS

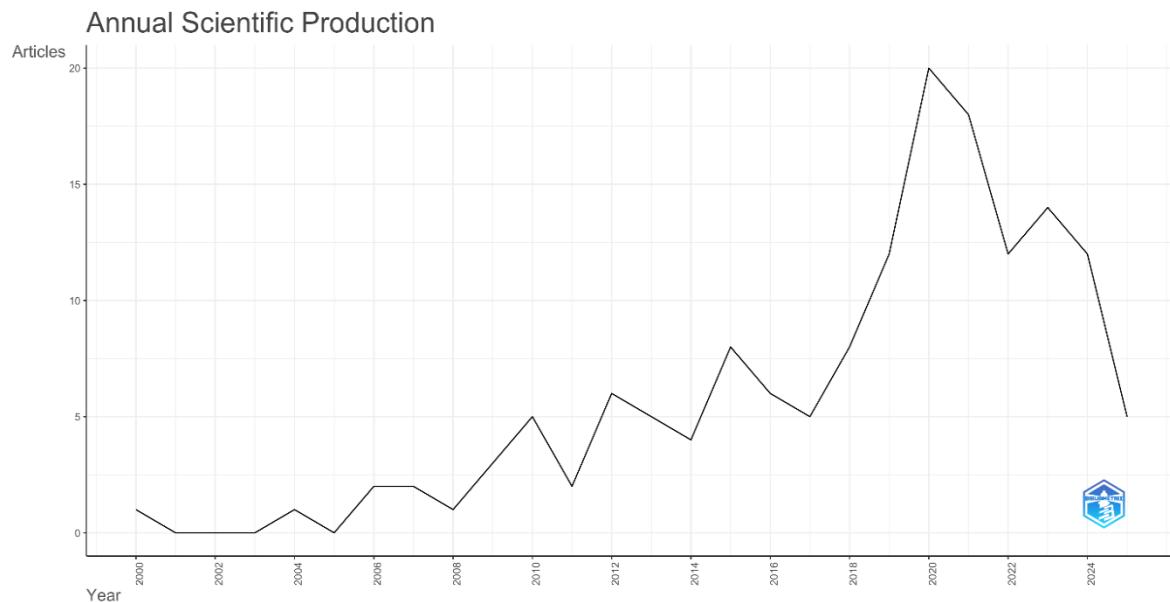


Figure 1. Annual Scientific Production

The graph shows the change in the number of scientific articles published between 2000 and 2025. Between 2000 and 2009, annual production generally remained between 0 and 2 articles, which may suggest that the subject was not sufficiently known in scientific communities or was not considered a popular topic. Nevertheless, a clear upward trend began in 2010. The emergence of a significant increase from 2010 onwards indicates that the topic has gained greater recognition and popularity among academic circles. The period between 2015 and 2018 stands out as a phase in which production accelerated further. The most dramatic increase occurred after 2018, with the number of articles reaching a peak of nearly 20 in 2020. This high level was maintained in 2020 and 2021. However, as of 2022, the number of publications began to decline, becoming even more pronounced in 2024 and 2025, with only 5 articles published in 2025. This situation can be explained by the research field reaching saturation, academic interest shifting to other themes, or a shift toward more specific topics. The graph clearly illustrates the trajectory of academic interest in the subject over time and provides a strong foundation for the literature reviews to be conducted in the study's conclusion section.

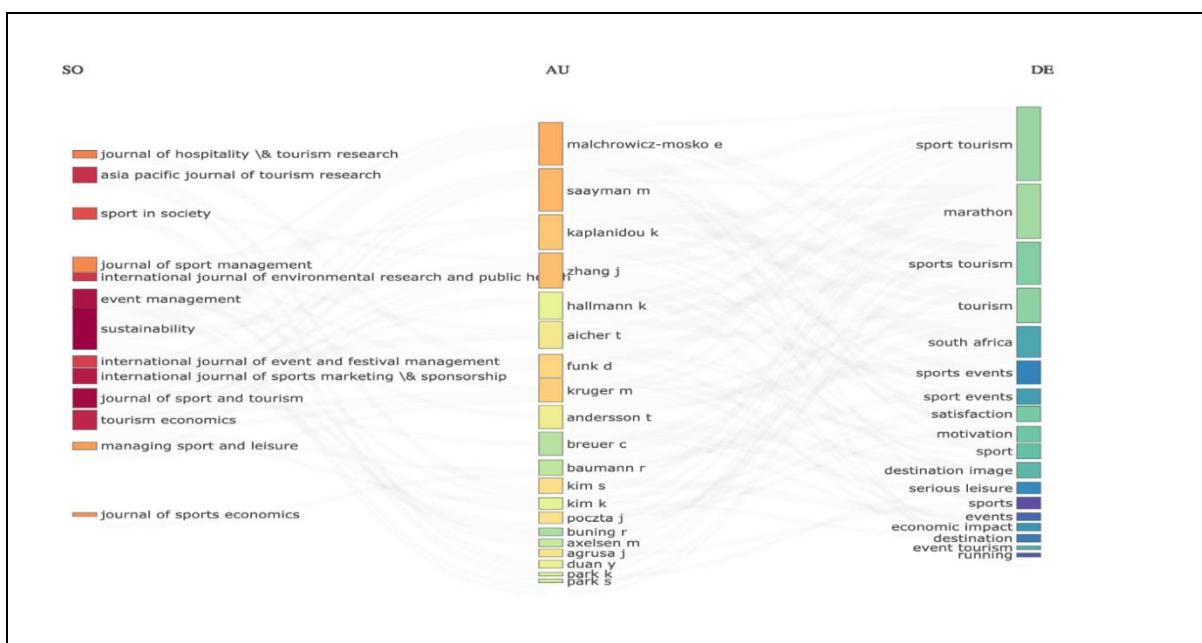


Figure 2. Trilateral Connection Map

This trilateral connection map visualizes the relationships between journals (SO), authors (AU), and research topics (DE) in the academic literature on tourism and sports. The map shows the connections between the journals in which authors have published and the key concepts they have addressed using colored bars and lines. The authors with the most contributions are Kaplanidou K., Funk D., Kruger M., Hallmann K., and Zhang J., who are often associated with concepts such as sport tourism, sports events, destination image, and motivation. In terms of journals, publications such as the Journal of Sport and Tourism, Sustainability, Sport in Society, and Event Management have strong connections with various authors. When examining key concepts, themes such as sport tourism, sports events, destination, satisfaction, and economic impact stand out, thereby defining the core research axes of the field. This structure reveals a multidisciplinary and thematically diverse literature, with authors clustering around specific journals and concept clusters.

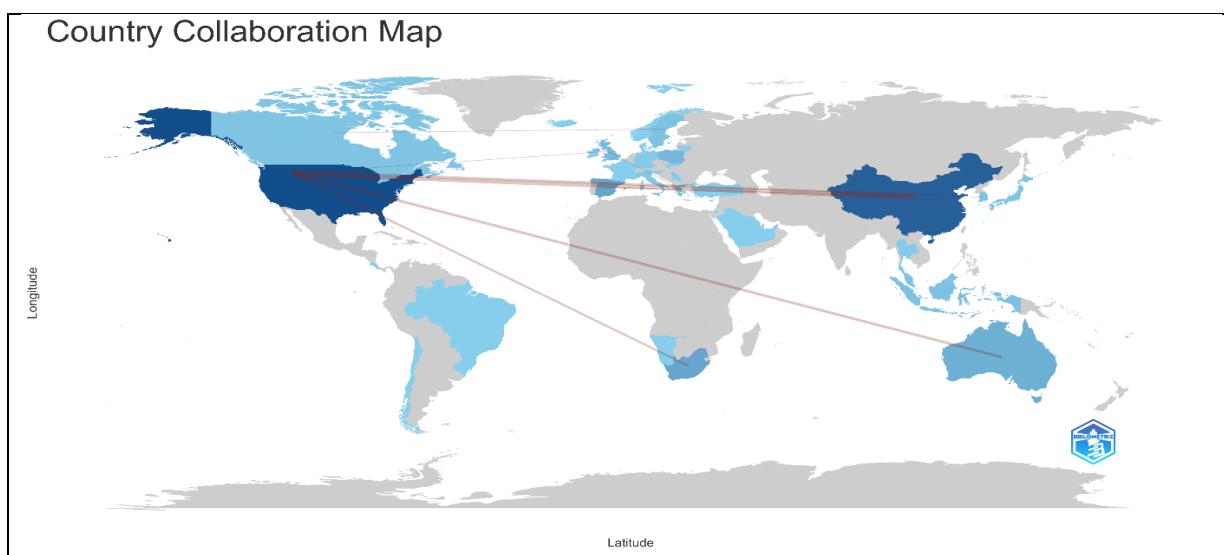


Figure 3. Country Collaboration Map

The “Country Collaboration Map” presented in the figure illustrates scientific collaborations between countries in the field of research, along with their geographical distribution. The countries shown in dark blue on

the map represent those with the highest level of collaboration in international publications. Accordingly, countries such as the United States (US), China, Australia, and Canada stand out as key collaboration actors in research outputs. Academic studies conducted in the US interact significantly with Asian and Oceanic countries. This situation demonstrates the US's central position within the global research network and its contribution to multinational scientific production. China also displays a strong collaboration profile in terms of both geography and number of publications. Australia occupies a prominent position on the map, particularly due to its connections with Asia-Pacific countries. The lines on the map represent direct connections between countries, indicating an increasing level of internationalization. This structure holds strategic importance for knowledge sharing, interdisciplinary studies, and the development of academic networks.

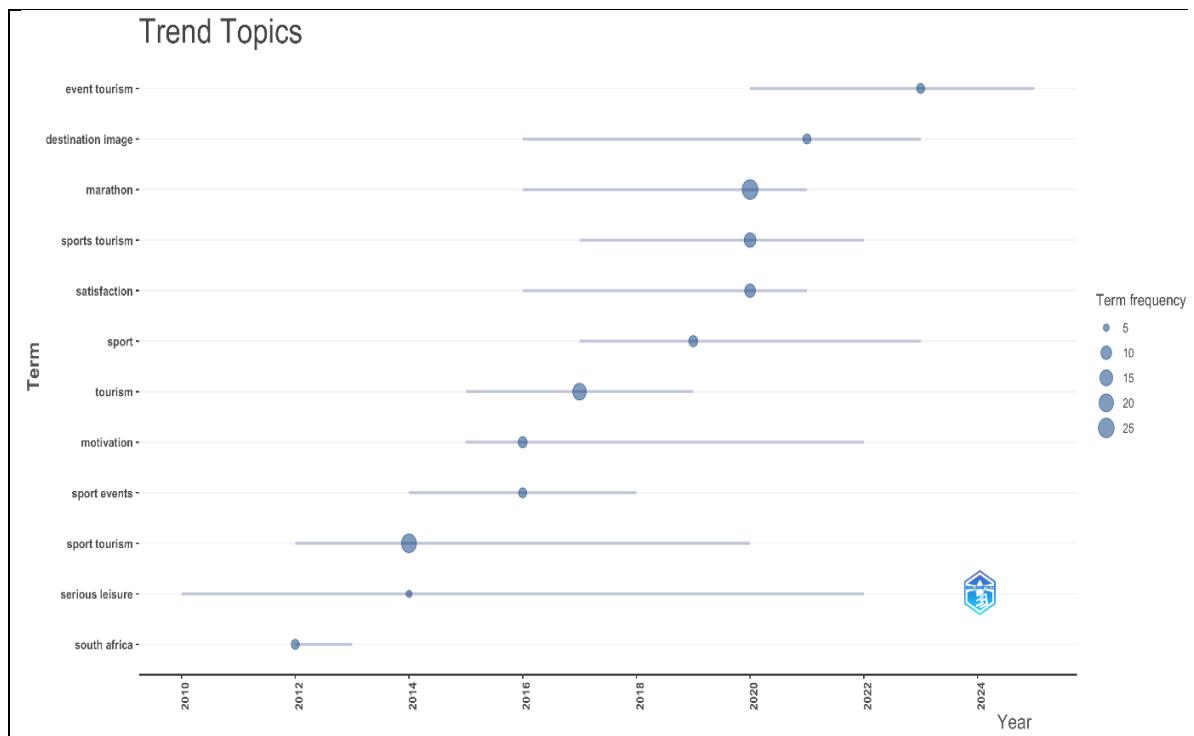


Figure 4. Trend Topics in the Field

The above figure shows the trends and usage intensity of concepts that stand out in academic studies in the fields of sports and tourism over the years. The duration of the terms is represented on the horizontal axis, while the frequency of use is shown by the size of the bubbles. According to the data, "sport tourism" has remained a constant topic of discussion since 2014 and has become a fundamental research axis in the literature. Terms such as "tourism," "motivation," "satisfaction," and "sport events" have come to the fore since 2016, bringing topics such as individual experience, participation motivation, and service quality to the forefront. In particular, "event tourism" and "destination image" are among the current topics that have attracted intense interest since 2020; this trend points to destination-focused marketing strategies and the increasing importance of tourist events. Concepts such as "serious leisure," "marathon," and "South Africa," which are seen in more limited time frames, represent studies that delve deeper into specific contexts. Overall, the graph shows an increase in thematic diversity in the literature and a shift in the focus of research toward event-based tourism, destination perception, and participant experience.

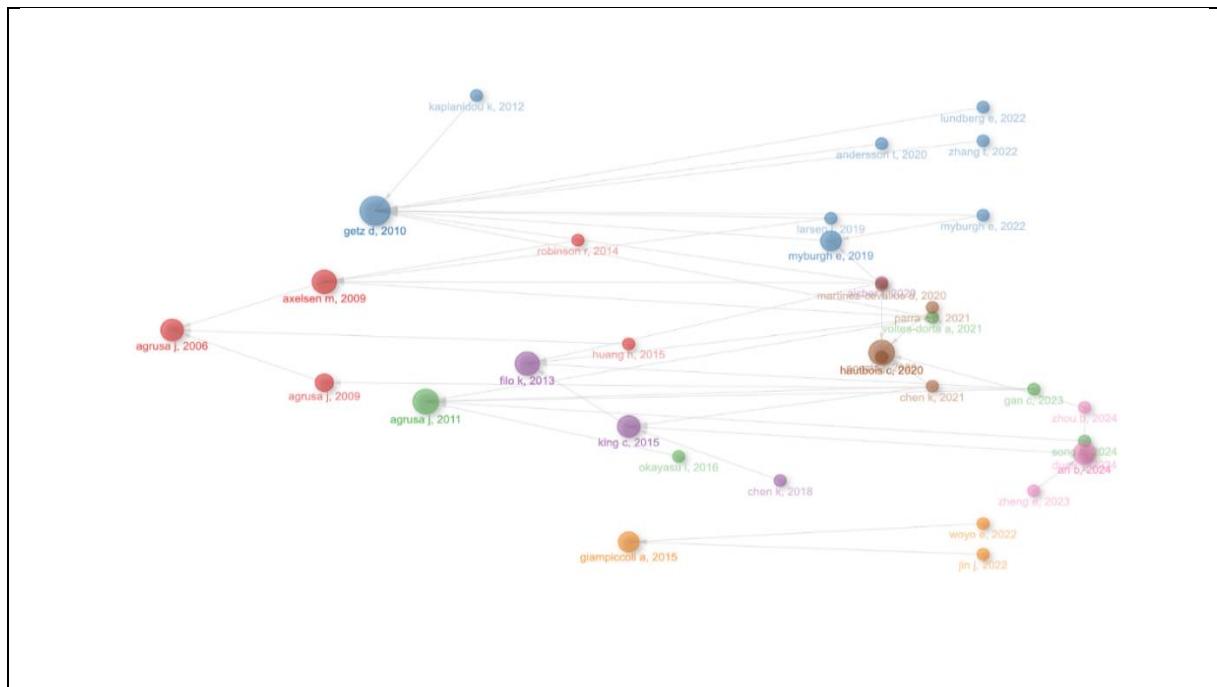


Figure 5. Historiograph

This bibliometric network map visualizes specific thematic clusters and levels of impact by analyzing citation relationships between papers in the relevant academic literature. Each node (point) on the map represents an academic paper, while the connections between nodes show the citations made between these papers. The size of the nodes indicates the number of citations received by the study, while the colors represent clusters that are similar in terms of content and context. The study by Getz (2010), located near the center of the map and shown in blue, plays a central role in the literature due to its high number of citations and its influence on other studies. Recent publications such as Lundberg (2022), Myburgh (2019, 2022), and Larson (2019), which are located around this study, represent the developments based on Getz's theoretical framework or methodological approach. Early studies in the red cluster, such as Agrusa (2006, 2009) and Axelsen (2009), stand out as pioneering references in the literature; this structure reveals the academic development line from the past to the present through direct citation relationships. On the other hand, the brown cluster developed around Hajibaba (2020) and the orange clusters formed by authors such as Giampiccoli (2015) and Woyo (2022) reveal the existence of alternative approaches and thematic deepening in the literature. In particular, the increasing diversity and interdisciplinary studies in recent years reveal that topics such as alternative types of tourism, crisis management, and social sustainability have come to the fore through new clusters that have become apparent on the map. In this context, the network map offers the opportunity to analyze theoretical developments, trends, and interaction networks in the field in a holistic manner.

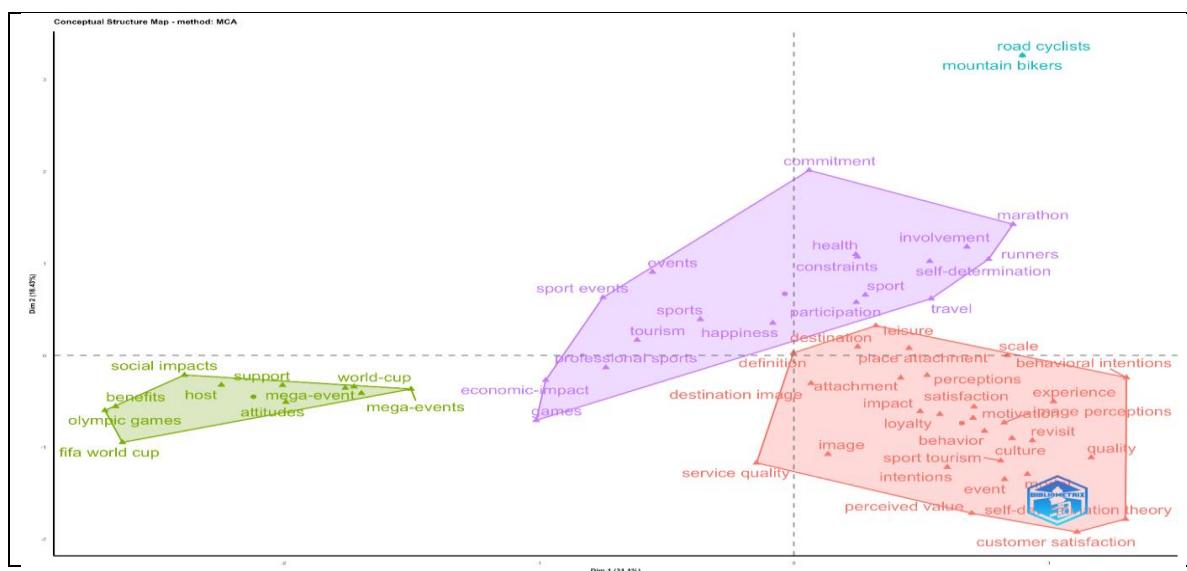


Figure 6. Conceptual Structure Map

The “Conceptual Structure Map” depicted in the figure visualizes conceptual clusters created using the multidimensional scaling (MCA) method. The map structurally divides the key concepts of the sports tourism-themed literature into three main clusters. The cluster shown in green in the lower left section of the map is centered around “mega events.” This cluster focuses on concepts such as the FIFA World Cup, Olympic Games, social impacts, benefits, attitudes, and support, representing studies that focus on the social and economic impacts of sports on the host country. The cluster indicated in red in the lower right section is concentrated around themes such as consumer behavior, service quality, and satisfaction. Concepts such as customer satisfaction, destination image, perceived value, loyalty, experience, and revisit intentions point to studies on destination marketing and tourist behavior. The cluster shown in purple in the upper section represents research focusing on individual sports experiences and psychological dimensions, with concepts such as commitment, participation, constraints, health, and self-determination. This conceptual framework clearly demonstrates that the literature in the field of sports tourism is concentrated around three main axes and highlights the possibilities for interdisciplinary research.

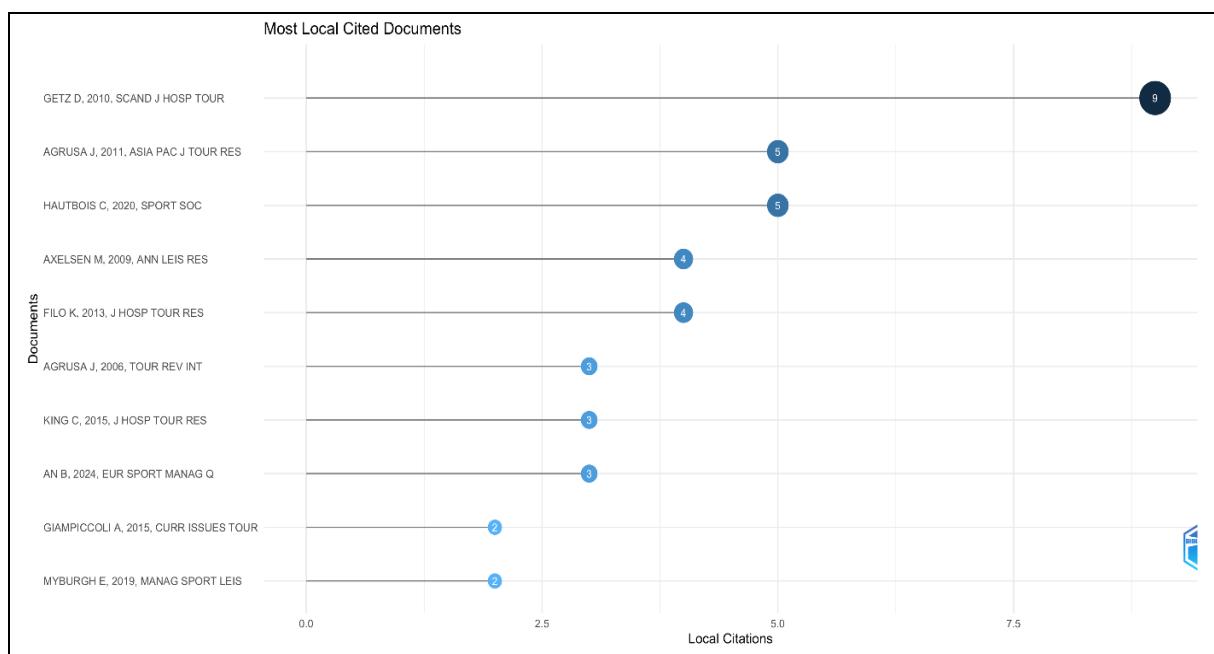


Figure 7. Most Local Cited Documents

This figure shows the documents with the highest number of local citations in the relevant field. The term “local citation” refers to the number of times a study has been cited by other studies in the dataset used in the analysis. The study with the highest number of local citations in the figure is Getz (2010), which clearly demonstrates its central position in the literature with a total of 9 citations. This study is followed by Agrusa (2011) and Hautbois (2020), each with 5 citations, which are among the influential contributions in the field. The studies by Axelsen (2009) and Filo (2013) are also notable sources, each with 4 citations. Also on the list are studies by Agrusa (2006), King (2015), and an (2024), each with three citations, while Giampiccoli (2015) and Myburgh (2019) have two citations each. This distribution shows that certain studies are heavily referenced in the literature, which includes both theoretical and applied perspectives, and that they shape the theoretical foundation of the field. In particular, the clear superiority of Getz's study demonstrates that it forms a strong foundation in the fields of sports, event, or tourism management.

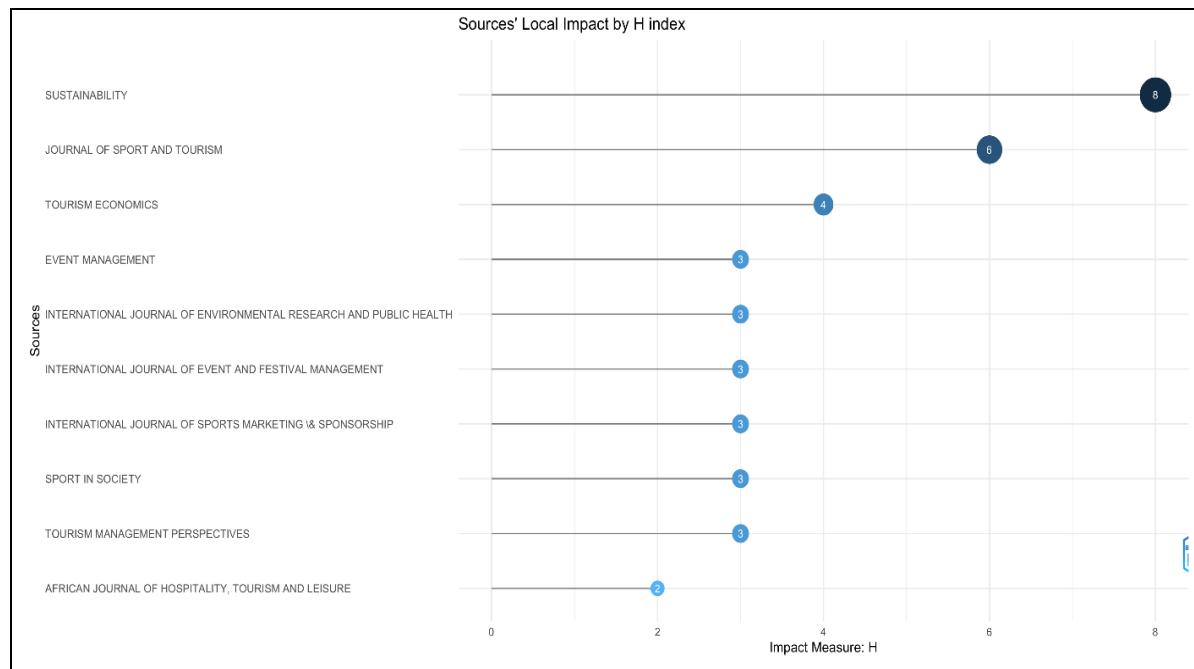


Figure 8. Sources' Local Impact by H Index

This graphic displays the local impact level of academic journals in the relevant field according to the H-index. The H-index is a measure that takes into account both the productivity and citation impact of a journal. According to the graphic data, Sustainability magazine has the highest impact level with an H=8 value, reflecting the magazine's intensive scientific contribution to the field. The Journal of Sport and Tourism ranks second with an H-index of 6, followed by Tourism Economics (H=4) and Event Management (H=3). Additionally, journals such as the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, the International Journal of Event and Festival Management, and the International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship also stand out with an H-index of 3. This table shows that nature, sports, event, and health-based tourism studies are produced through multidisciplinary sources. In particular, the high impact level of sustainability and sports-focused journals indicates that these themes are a priority in current tourism research. The local H-index distribution provides important clues about the academic trends in the field.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzed scientific publications in the field of marathon tourism between 2000 and 2025 using a bibliometric approach based on the data obtained from the Web of Science (WOS) database. The findings reveal that the field has attracted increasing academic interest over the years and has become increasingly multidisciplinary. Graphical analysis results show that scientific production related to marathon tourism was quite limited at the beginning of the 2000s but gained momentum, especially after 2010. The significant increase in the

number of articles observed since 2018 demonstrates that this topic is now being addressed not only in terms of its sporting dimensions but also in relation to a wide range of sub-themes such as destination marketing, city image, health, local economy, sustainability, and social impact. The peak in publication numbers in 2020 also suggests that the post-pandemic focus on healthy living, outdoor activities, and individual sports has sparked scientific interest. However, the decline observed in 2023 and beyond may be related to the field approaching saturation, the failure to establish new conceptual frameworks, or a shift in researcher interest toward other subthemes.

A total of 152 papers analyzed within the scope of the study were published from 93 different sources and written by 396 different authors. In this respect, it is possible to conclude that marathon tourism research is an area open to interdisciplinary collaboration. The average of 3.19 co-authorship rate per document reveals that the field is suited to collective work, while the international co-authorship rate of 28.29% confirms global research interest. However, the fact that there are only 23 single-authored studies shows that individual academic production is limited and that most studies are network-based or project-oriented.

The distribution of article types indicates that research outputs are largely comprised of scientific articles in academic journals (n=118). But when the book chapters, conference papers, and review articles are also taken into account, it's evident that knowledge production in this field is spread across different academic platforms. This highlights that the topic of marathon tourism isn't limited to just tourism or sports literature but also draws contributions from different disciplines such as urban planning, sociology, business, and public health.

The documents in the marathon tourism literature receive an average of 17.94 citations, and the average age of each document is 6.71, indicating that this literature maintains both its relevance and academic impact. Based on a total of 6,608 references, these studies have a solid knowledge base and provide a rich foundation for future studies. Additionally, the use of 486 author keywords and 365 Keywords Plus terms demonstrates the conceptual diversity of the literature and the broad thematic framework within which the analyzed studies are addressed.

In light of these findings, it is possible to conclude that marathon tourism is not merely a sporting event, but rather a multidimensional phenomenon that influences city identity, destination branding, social integration, and local development. The increase in literature supports academic interest in these topics. Yet the decline observed in recent years also indicates that researchers need to engage in more in-depth studies and interdisciplinary integration.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Certain limitations of this study should also be taken into consideration. Firstly, since the bibliometric methods applied are based solely on a specific data set and do not focus on qualitative content depth, the findings obtained reveal the structure of the literature from a more quantitative perspective. Furthermore, considering only studies published in English and excluding local databases may result in a limited overall view. Focusing solely on publication formats and numerical trends without conducting content analysis makes it difficult to examine the relationships between conceptual frameworks in depth. In future research, the use of qualitative data analysis, case studies, and multi-method approaches will enable more comprehensive and explanatory results to be obtained.

The findings of this study indicate that the literature on marathon tourism has an increasingly broad structure that is open to interdisciplinary collaboration. However, future research should prioritize the depth and thematic diversity of research content rather than focusing solely on the increase in the number of publications. Particularly, multidimensional topics such as sustainability, environmental impact, local community participation, destination management, and the role of marathons in the context of health and well-being could be addressed in greater detail.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to increase comparative studies covering different geographical contexts. Most of the research conducted so far has focused on marathons held in major cities. However, the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental impacts of marathon organizations held in small-scale and rural areas have not been sufficiently analyzed. This situation prevents the true potential of marathon tourism from being fully realized and hinders a thorough understanding of the relationship between marathon tourism and rural development. In this regard, analyzing the effects of rural and small-scale marathons will demonstrate that marathon tourism is not only a city-centered activity but also a tool that contributes to rural development.

In this sense, infrastructure investments related to marathon tourism have been observed to have multiple benefits, such as improving transportation options, increasing accommodation capacity, and raising the national

and international recognition of the destination, especially in underdeveloped regions. At the same time, these investments have positive effects in terms of promoting local products and developing regional gastronomy; therefore, marathon tourism can be considered a strategic element that supports regional development.

Future academic and applied studies will not only contribute to the literature on marathon tourism but also enable the development of locally based tourism policies. Specifically, the empirical analysis of micro-level psychological variables such as the socio-demographic profiles of marathon participants, their travel motivations, behavioral patterns, experience satisfaction, and destination loyalty will both increase academic depth and facilitate the development of targeted strategies for practitioners.

Moreover, the effects of new-generation communication tools such as media representations associated with marathon tourism, digital marketing strategies, and social media interactions on the sector are important areas that should be considered in future studies. Such analyses will contribute to understanding the digital dimension of the tourist experience and reconstructing marketing strategies.

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