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A Bibliometric Analysis on Sustainable Tourism Studies: A Review of 8 Years (2010-2017)

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find out the contributions of sustainable tourism studies to sustainable tourism literature. In order to achieve this aim, a detailed literature review was conducted using the criteria specified in the method section of the study and a total of 143 articles were investigated. As a result of the examination of these articles; the findings were classified under seven different headings. It was found that most of the investigated articles were published in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, especially in 2017. Furthermore, it was also found out that the number of articles using qualitative and experimental methods was higher, and that the case studies were most often conducted in Australia, USA and England respectively. Finally, the most frequently mentioned topics were found to be sustainable tourism practices.

Keywords: Sustainability, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Literature, Bibliometric Analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

The tourism is a sector which has continued to grow at a rate of over 4% per year on a regular basis in the last 7 years. From 2008 to 2016, the number of people participating in the international tourism movement increased by more than 300 million. In 2016, the number of those participating in the international tourism movement reached 1,235 million with an increase of 46 million (over 4%) compared to the figures in 2015. Moreover, while this growth is limited to 2% in developing countries, it is up to 5% in the destinations with already developed economic structures (Unwto, 2016). Tourism is a sector which may have negative effects as well as the positive economic effects.

Tourism is considered as a double-edged sword in the context of socio-environmental activities as it is seen as a tool in achieving sustainable development and as it has negative effects (Mowforth & Munt, 1998). Sustainable tourism emerged as a new term in the 1970s and 1980s, with the recognition of the adverse effects of tourism (Michalena, Hills & Amat, 2009).

Sustainable tourism deals with the problems regarding environmental degradation resulting from the intense tourism acts and the activities of tourism-related businesses (such as transportation, pollution, energy, water and waste consumption, supply strategies) and the adverse effects on the host communities. Successful implementation of sustainable tourism requires the cooperation of many stakeholders (public sector, accommodation operators, transport operators, restaurants, food suppliers, utilities, host communities and tourists) (Vernon, Essex, Pinder & Curry, 2005).

The purpose of this study is, within the scope of sustainable tourism, to show the contributions of studies conducted between 01.01.2010 and 25.12.2017 to sustainable tourism literature. The date range mentioned above was chosen to reveal whether sustainable tourism studies have brought a new term which defines or explains features related to sustainable tourism into tourism literature. In addition to that, there is not any study in the literature investigating the date range mentioned above and reporting the findings of sustainable tourism studies. In the literature part of the study, the term of sustainable tourism and its applicability are explained in a comprehensive way. In the methodology part of the study, the articles whose keywords are about "sustainable tourism" and that were published in the top-rated journals were examined, and the collected data were presented in tabular forms. Interpretation of the obtained data and relevant suggestions were presented under the result section.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sustainable Tourism

The concept of sustainability is grounded on the ideology of environmentalism emerging in the 1970s (Liu, 2003). At the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) held in 1972, environmental and sustainable development issues were dealt together. The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, also known as the Stockholm Conference, is the first major international conference on environmental issues (www.encyclopedia.com) that has produced concrete outcomes regarding how governments can cooperatively work to protect the environment.

In 1980, the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) published the World Conservation Strategy, a ground-breaking document that helped to define the concept of "sustainable development" and to shape the global protection movements of nature and sustainable development agenda (www.iucn.org). When it came to 1987, the sustainable development in the Brundtland Report was presented by the World Commission on Environment and Development and sustainable development was defined as the development meeting today's needs without ignoring the needs of future generations (World Commission on Environment & Development, 1987).

Twenty years after the first global environmental conference, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Brazil on June 3-14, 1992, set out the principles for sustainable development (United Nations, 1992). In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg revealed that the protection of the environment and the factors regarding economic and social development need to be evaluated together with sustainable development (www.mfa.gov.tr).

Sustainable tourism emerged as a response and solution to the environmental, social and cultural problems that tourism caused in the 1970s (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Bramwell & Lane, 2012). However, it is observed that the tourism sector did not adopt sustainable development targets until the Rio +5 meeting in 1997 (Blancas, González, Lozano-Oyola & Perez, 2010). Sustainable tourism is defined as the protection of the natural resources (natural and artificial resources) for the benefit of future tourists and local people simultaneously with allowing today's people to benefit from them in a controlled way.

The development of sustainable tourism depends on meeting the following requirements (WTO, 1999 as cited in UNEP, 2003);

- Tourism resources - natural, historical, cultural and others – could be benefitted by today's people while preserving them for the use of future generations.
- Planning and management activities for the development of tourism should be carried out to prevent serious ecological or socio-cultural problems in the relevant region.
- The overall quality of the environment in the tourism zone should be maintained and improved when it is necessary.
- The level of tourist satisfaction must be preserved in order to maintain the attraction of destinations and to ensure the continuity of their commercial potentials.
- Tourism should provide a great benefit to all members of societies.

A tourism model should be set as part of government policy towards the planning of tourism based on sustainability, quality and diversity that can enhance the competitiveness of destinations. Sustainable tourism indicators obtained during the implementation of these policies can help to assess destinations and develop more appropriate policies based on the assessment accordingly (Blancas et al., 2010).

Sustainable tourism is a field of study that can reveal possible contributions of tourism as long as it is operational. Despite the increase in the number of publications in the field of sustainable tourism, it is one of the important criticisms claiming that the publications in the literature cannot come up with appropriate solutions to the problems regarding sustainability. The field is remarkable and interesting as it expresses the common problems of all mankind. So the question is not about if sustainable tourism is a necessity but rather it is about how it will be implemented.

Although many discussions have been made since the Brundtland Report, many questions still remain unanswered (McCool & Moisey, 2008) (such as how the environment will be protected and how equality of income distribution will be achieved). The concept of sustainability has often failed to go beyond being an interesting and valuable philosophical question of debate. In particular, field managers and non-specialist researchers who do not have enough information about the issue seem to abuse the issue. Indeed, it is important that the concept of sustainable tourism is expressed philosophically, its principles are emphasized, and its contribution to local people, tourists and tourism are often mentioned, but their reflections on the practice

are not at the same level. It is possible to claim that one of the reasons for this is not to look at the issue from the right point of view. One of the most important ways of achieving sustainability is to take the issue of field management and planning and consider them as an ongoing process rather than an ultimate goal. This process can be followed through indicators, measurements, inspections, and thus negativities can be eliminated if any interventions occur that may cause damage to sustainability. However, it is important that the decision-makers in touristic destinations need to be decisive, and they need to consider sustainable tourism as a management philosophy.

The World Tourism Organization developed indicators in the 1990s when field managers first worked to support the sustainable tourism management process. In 2004, a booklet on sustainable tourism indicators was published to guide destination managers (Sustainable Tourism Indicators & Destination Management Workshop, 2007: 4). Developing indicators and controlling tourism sustainability in this way is one of the most important ways to raise an early awareness of the potential drawbacks. It is also possible to find publications examining this topic in sustainable tourism literature (Aggyeiwaah, McKercher & Suntikul, 2017; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Dymond, 1997). In all of these studies, the common concern may be to turn sustainable tourism concept from a theoretical rhetoric into a principled application that really contributes to touristic regions.

RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this study is to find out the contribution of international studies conducted within the field of sustainable tourism to sustainable tourism literature. Among the researches, the studies (theoretical, case study) related to sustainable tourism were examined by analysing their contents. In particular, the studies coming up with suggestions for the implementations in the field were prepared in graphical form (demonstration of measurement indicators, guided through viable examples and able to guide truly sustainable tourism practices). The examined studies were analysed to find out the contributions of the studies to sustainable tourism literature by determining how much of them matches with one another, their specific contributions, how much of them is just a conceptual debate, and their contributions were discussed in detail.

Sustainable tourism literature is a vast field, so it is not possible to examine all the studies conducted in the field. For this reason, the relevant studies on the subject were limited under the following criteria. The

criteria for the inclusion of the articles in the literature on sustainable tourism are;

- to be published between 01.01.2010 and 25.12.2017,
- to be published in English,
- to be published in the journals of “Tourism Management”, “Tourism Management Perspectives”, “Annals of Tourism Research” and “Journal of Sustainable Tourism”
- to have “sustainable tourism” among the keywords,
- the subject is limited to “tourism, development of tourism, sustainable tourism and rural tourism”.

As a result of the search, a total of 143 articles with the above-stated characteristics were obtained. As a result of the examination of these articles; they were categorised under seven different main headings (charts) taking into consideration their common qualities. The titles of the categories are given below;

- Distribution of the articles by journals,
- Distribution of the articles by years,
- Distributions of the articles based on the adopted research method,
- Distribution of the articles based on the conceptual and practical characteristics,
- Distribution of the countries investigated as part of the case study,
- Distributions of authors based on the countries where they work,
- Classification of the studies based on their purposes and outcomes.

RESULTS

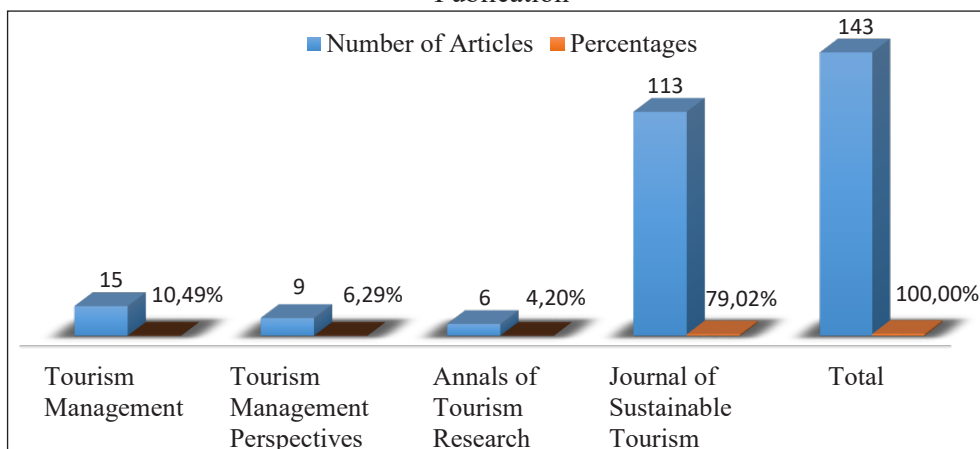
In Graph 1, the distributions of the articles published between 01.01.2010 and 25.12.2017 are presented based on the published journals.

When Graph 1 is examined; it is seen that 143 articles were published in total between 01.01.2010 and 25.12.2017. When the articles were evaluated in terms of the number of articles published, “Journal of Sustainable Tourism” was found to be the first with 113 articles, journal of “Tourism Management” was found to be the second with 15 articles, journal of “Tourism Management Perspective” was found to be the third with 9 articles and “Annals of Tourism Research” journal was found to be the fourth. Considering the criteria of the articles included in the study, it is not surprising that the “Journal of Sustainable Tourism” was the first.

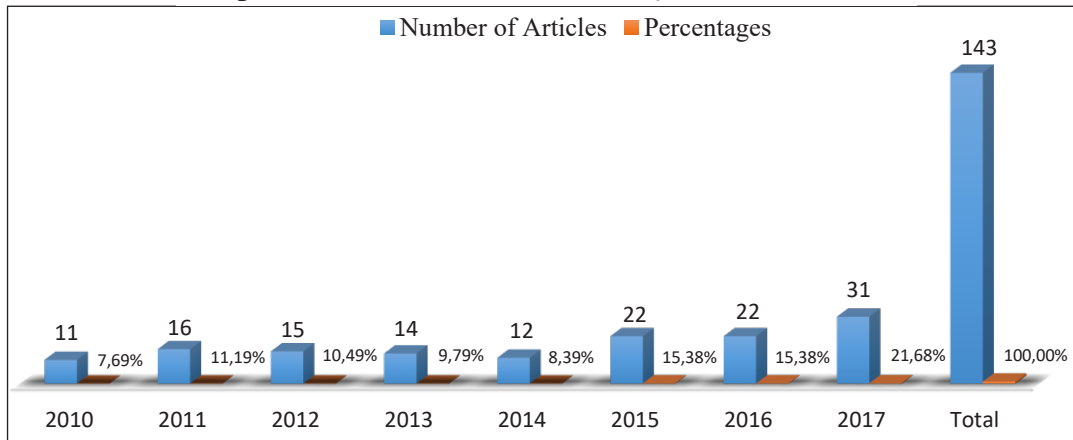
The distributions of the articles included in the study according to the years of publication are presented in Graph 2. Considering the information presented in Graph 2, it is seen that 11 articles were published in 2010, 15 articles in 2011, 15 articles in 2012, 14 articles in 2013, 12 articles in 2014, 22 articles in 2015, 22 articles in 2016 and 31 articles in 2017. Therefore, although the year when the most articles were published was 2017, 2010 was the year when the minimum number of articles was published. It is seen that there is not much difference in the number of articles published between 2010 and 2014, but there has been an increase in the number of articles since 2015.

The distributions of the articles examined in the study based on the research methods adopted are presented in Graph 3.

Graph 1: Distribution of the Articles According to the Journals of Publication



Graph 2: Distribution of the Articles by Year of Publication

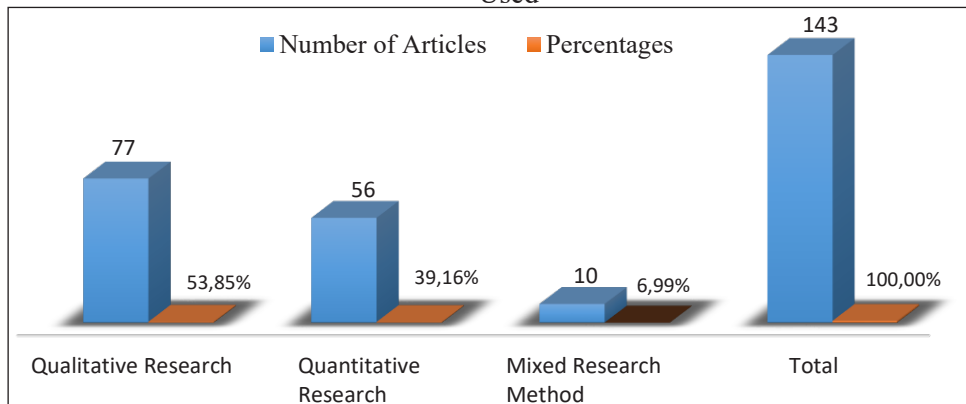


The articles examined in the study were classified as those adopting qualitative, quantitative and mixed (both quantitative and qualitative) research methods. Under the light of the information in Graph 3; it is seen that 77 of the examined articles used qualitative methods, 56 of them used quantitative methods and 10 of them used mixed research methods.

Of the 143 articles examined in the study, 56 of them were found to be conceptual and the remaining 87 were to be experimental.

The distributions of the articles included in the study based on the countries where they were conducted as case studies are presented in Graph 5.

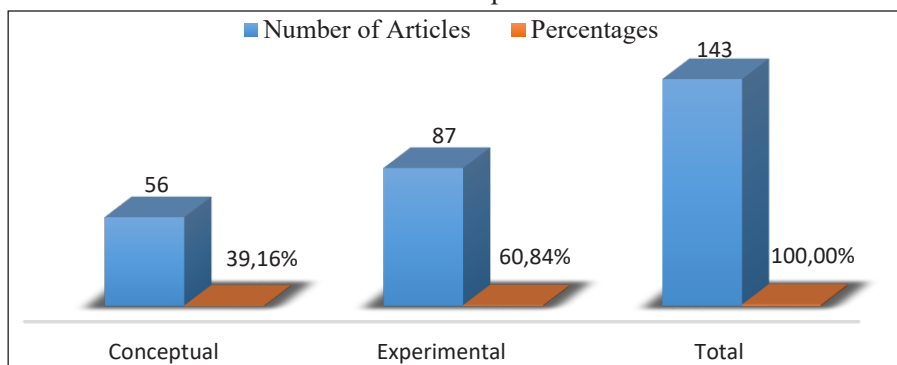
Graph 3: Distribution of the Articles According to the Research Method Used



The distributions of the examined articles based on if they were experimental or conceptual studies are presented in Graph 4.

It was stated that 87 articles out of the investigated 143 articles were experimental (see Graph 4). Under the light of the information in Graph 5, when the

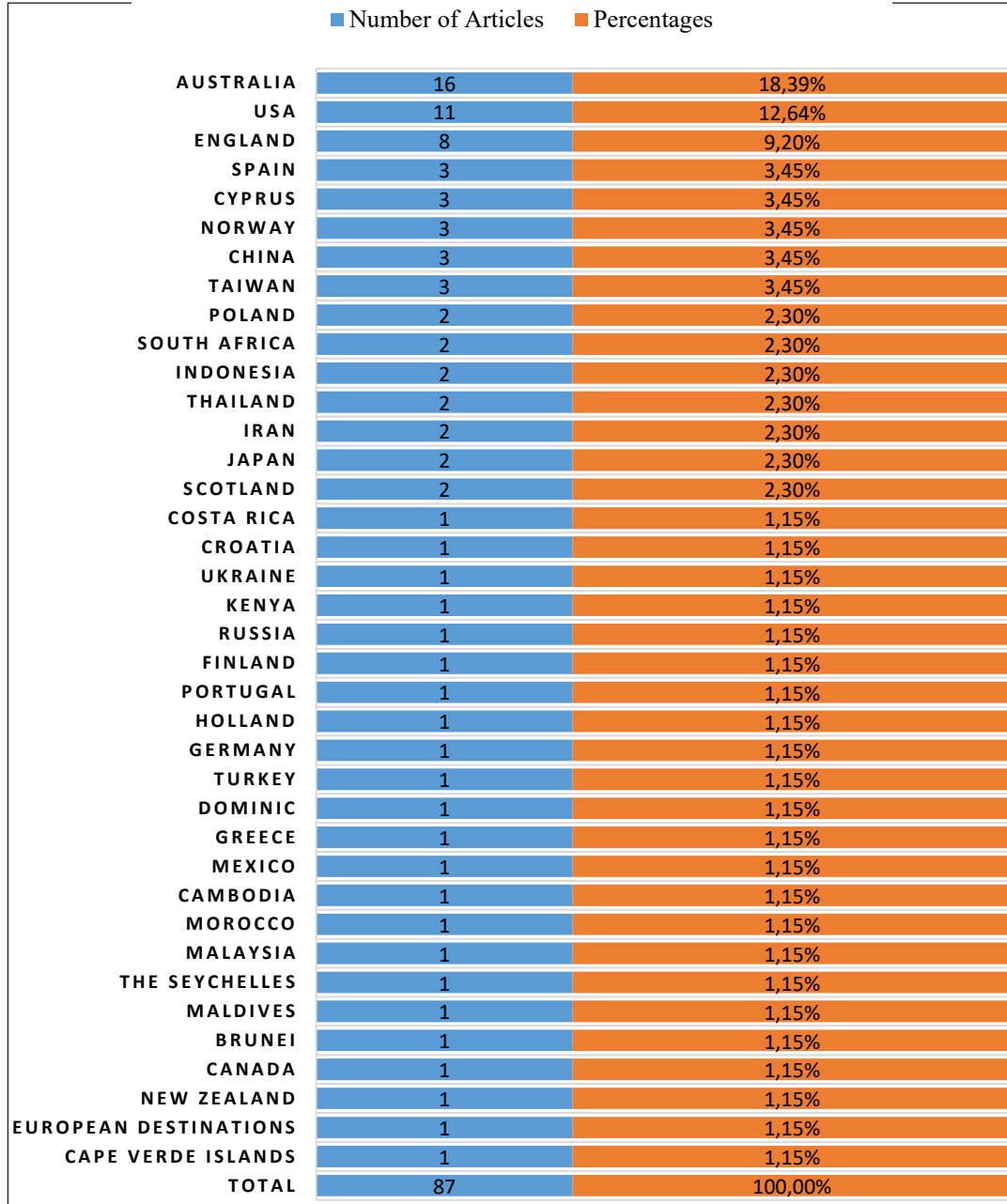
Graph 4: Distribution of the Studies Based on Being Experimental or Conceptual



countries where the articles were written as case studies were examined, Australia was found to be the first country with 16 articles, the USA was the second with 11 articles and England was the third with 8 articles.

with 30 article authors, England was the third with 24 article authors. These three countries were followed by Spain, Canada, Norway, China, New Zealand, Germany and others in turn. When the information in Graphs 5

Graph 5: Distribution of the Countries Investigated within the Scope of Case Study



The distributions of the authors of the articles examined in Graph 6 are shown based on the countries where they are working.

According to the information in Graph 6; it could be said that 143 articles examined were conducted by a total of 185 researchers. Additionally, Australia was the first with 44 article authors, the USA was the second

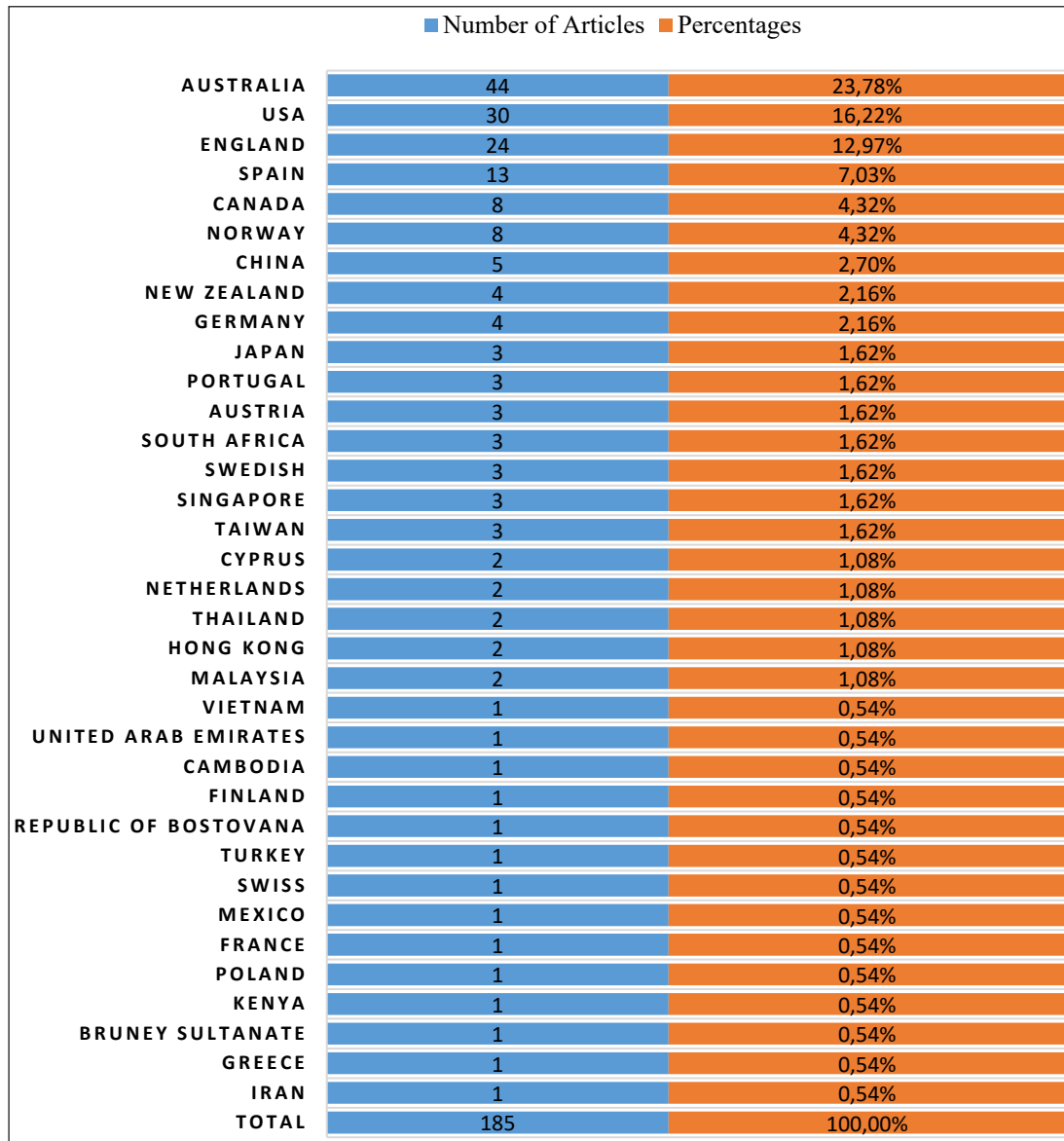
and 6 are considered together, it could be seen that the first three countries in the rank are the same.

When the studies conducted in the field of sustainable tourism were examined in line with their objectives, three categories were obtained as a consequence of these examinations. The categories obtained are as follows;

- a) Those that are dealing with sustainable tourism literature as a new term (16%),
- b) Those that evaluate tourism practices in terms of sustainable tourism or those that evaluate sustainable tourism practices (66%),
- c) Others- those making a comparison, those reviewing developments in sustainable tourism literature, etc.- (18%).

To give an example (16%) for the first category, particularly the studies examining the concepts covered in the tourism literature with regards to sustainable tourism, Bowers’ (2016) concept of “eco-museology” can be a good example to consider. In this study, the potential of eco-museum to support sustainable tourism was examined. Tan & Law (2016) examined the concept of “learning-mobile learning” in terms of visitor education. Canavan (2017) tried to explain how

Graph 6: Distribution of the Authors According to the Countries



It is also possible to see the main focus of the studies conducted in recent years. Most of the articles (66%) are in the form of evaluation of the convenience of the tourism practices to the principles of sustainable tourism and the outcomes of sustainable tourism. Most of these studies are seen to have been conducted as case studies.

the nature of tourism influenced narcissism behaviour by taking the concept of “narcissism” as a psychological concept. It is possible to say that such concepts reveal new perspectives in terms of sustainable tourism literature.

Articles in the second category have the largest share. Dredge & Whitford (2011) attempted to reveal stakeholders' contributions to the debates regarding sustainable tourism; Marshall (2012) discussed sustainable heritage tourism in the context of the "Inanda Heritage Route" in South Africa; Mustika, Birtles, Everingham & Marsh (2013) discussed the tourist experience of the dolphin watching industry in Lovina (Bali, Indonesia) within the context of sustainable tourism.

Under the "other" category, which is the third category, there are studies such as comparative studies and article reviews which are not found to be suitable for the first two categories. The research conducted by Melissen & Koens (2016), discussed the collaborations that should be in scientific research in order to make the relevant applications more successful. Aggyeiwaah et al. (2017) attempted to find out the effective indicators for monitoring the sustainable tourism process. Matarrita-Cascante, Brennan & Luloff, (2010) examined the term of "sustainability" as a new term in the context of local society through community agencies. Bojanic's (2011) study conducted in 120 countries to examine environmental sustainability.

DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The world is rapidly becoming a place where people experience difficulty in access to available sources. The increase in the population, the diversification of human needs, human being's habit of consuming more and more has brought about many problems such as pollution, destruction of nature, sustainability of natural resources. Of course, one of the fields that claim to find solutions to these problems is sustainable tourism literature. Each of the studies on sustainable tourism is important in this sense.

In this study, four of the most internationally cited journals (143 articles) published in the field of sustainable tourism in the last seven years (2010-2017) were examined and the contributions of the scientific researchers were attempted to be evaluated. In the field of sustainable tourism, it is observed that most of the articles were published in the "Journal of Sustainable Tourism" as expected.

When the publications were evaluated by years, the increase in the number of publications revealed that there has been an increasing interest in sustainable tourism literature. The reason for that increase could be the rise in the number of academic conferences held on sustainability or sustainable development. The fact that the sustainability of natural resources is a common problem for many fields of study as well as tourism

could lead researchers to the investigation of the subject of sustainability to find out a permanent solution. It could also be said that the diplomatic meetings held and making explanations by political leaders could make researchers tend to focus on sustainability.

It has been observed that, with the increase in the studies on sustainable tourism, the studies tend to use qualitative research methods. Also, it was found out in the examined studies that the number of the experimental studies exceeded the others. Additionally; in the study, the countries which conduct most studies within the scope of the case study were found to be Australia, USA and England respectively.

A total of 143 articles were found to have been conducted by the 185 researchers in total. When the countries where the researchers are working were taken into account, it was seen that Australia, USA and England were the first countries. At this point; it was observed that the rankings in the case study countries and the first three in the rankings regarding the authors by countries were found to be the same. Most of the research was found to have examined the sustainable tourism practices or to have examined the practices in destinations under the light of the principles of sustainable tourism. The frequency of such studies may significantly contribute to sustainable tourism practices, but it is necessary for the authors of the studies to share the results of their research findings with destination managers and stakeholders. Otherwise, the evaluation levels of the results obtained will decrease.

Ruhanen, Weiler, Moyle & McLennan (2015) examined the trends and patterns in the field of sustainable tourism research over the past 25 years. As a result of their study; the vast majority of the studies were found to be case studies and empirical ones. Therefore, it could be suggested that the results of this study are similar to the findings of Ruhanen et al. (2015), but differed from it in the number of empirical studies.

Molina-Azorín & Font (2016) examined the articles published in the field of sustainable tourism research in the journal of JOST over the last 10 years with the use of content analysis. As a result of their study; the number of qualitative studies was found to be more. It could be stated that it presents similar findings with the results of this study in the use of qualitative research methods.

The studies in the field of sustainable tourism were examined within the scope of their objectives and results. A great majority of these studies (66%) was designed in a way that evaluates the tourism practices, the suitability of tourism practices to the principles of

sustainable tourism or the outcomes of the sustainable tourism practices in tourism destinations. The suggestions developed under the light of the findings of this research are as follows:

- Increasing the number of case studies as well as diversification of such studies across the country may be more useful in terms of the validity and feasibility of the suggestions presented in the literature.
- It could be more contributing for the case studies in the literature to be designed in a way to shed light on innovative, creative and reasonable sustainable tourism practices as well as examining the outcomes of the practices regarding sustainable tourism.
- Sustainable tourism researchers may be better designed at exploring the best ways in which these practices can be easily comprehended and adopted by the local population as well as criticizing the existing practices in the literature
- Suggestions and implementations that are to be developed or proposed in sustainable tourism research should attempt to meet the needs of a destination and local people rather than being a product of comparison among studies.
- In the sustainability practices presented in the research, putting local people in the centre of the events as much as possible can minimize potential conflicts between tourists and local people.
- The sustainable tourism indicators set out by the World Tourism Organization seem not to be studied much in the field research. A limited number of studies have examined the usefulness of the indicators. Further field studies are suggested on the efforts of periodic use of the indicators and their results

Finally, the most important problems are the removal of the sustainable tourism concept from the frequently used political discourse to the operational dimension. The discussion of the concept is easy to be theoretically discussed, but such discussion may not serve the actual purpose. The main purpose could be considered to protect the resources in the world and transfer them to the future generations as they are, to eliminate the inequalities in the welfare level of the society, and it can also be considered as the purposes of the sustainable tourism principles. In order to achieve this, there is a great benefit in conducting feasible research to provide solutions to certain problems to some extent.

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