



Strategic Development Associated with Branding in the Tourism Sector: Bibliometric Analysis and Systematic Review of the Literature between the Years 2000 to 2022

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Abstract: This study aims to identify research trends associated with the development of brand management in the tourism sector. To this end, bibliometric analysis has been carried out, using the R Core Team 20201-Bibliometrix software, on the scientific production, the most influential countries, authors, and journals, and the co-occurrence of keywords in the 1421 articles published to date in the Scopus database. This analysis was then complemented with a systematic qualitative evaluation using the PRISMA technique. The results obtained show the trend and impact of the literature published to date and the established and emerging research groups. Furthermore, they identify that research procedures related to brand communities, co-branding, brand architecture, positioning, and brand research in the tourism sector need to be strengthened. Therefore, this study identifies key research questions in a way that provides a planning framework for future research in this field.

Keywords: branding; brand value; tourism; bibliometrics



Citation: López-Rodríguez, C.E.; Mora-Forero, J.A.; León-Gómez, A. Strategic Development Associated with Branding in the Tourism Sector: Bibliometric Analysis and Systematic Review of the Literature between the Years 2000 to 2022. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 9869. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14169869>

Academic Editor: Anna Mazzi

Received: 29 June 2022

Accepted: 28 July 2022

Published: 10 August 2022

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1. Introduction

Brand management is a necessary process for positioning the tourism sector in destinations and organisations, being an essential factor in consolidating the demand for this economic sector [1–3], hence, the importance of knowing strategies that support branding specialists to consolidate tourism commercially [4]. The management of brands aimed at the commercial consolidation of organisations or destinations consolidates a valuable recognition for the tourist's consumption experience [5].

The image of a destination can be significantly improved through branding, even if it is a nation or country with negative perceptions [6,7]. Therefore, it is pertinent to recognise which trends are associated with scientific research articulated with branding and tourism, which is an economic activity that is constantly changing [8,9]. In this regard, it is pertinent to analyse the relationship of the elements of the management of brands associated with destinations and their incidence with tourists' perceptions. In this way, the strengthening of the image and brand awareness is achieved, factors that consolidate the value of the brand, that is, the set of strong, favourable, and unique associations that the brands have and that are present in the memory of tourists as consumers [10].

The brand's relevance to customers has been linked to various functional, emotional, and symbolic qualities, all of which are crucial when firms seek to build a high market orientation in today's competitive environment [11]. Therefore, a positive brand image is an asset for all companies, being an influential influencing factor in the purchase that affects the consumer's perception of the company and all the products it sells [12].

One of the main objectives of branding in organisations facing current commercial and competitive challenges is to build strong brands to obtain a competitive profile in the market for subsequent asset valuation [13], which is one of the main objectives of branding

in organisations facing current commercial and competitive challenges [3]. Hence, it is essential to review the academy's research on the relationship management of tourism brands [14,15].

Destination branding image significantly affects behavioural intentions towards tourism [16]. Therefore, identifying current trends in scientific development and brand management in the tourism sector is important for companies [17], as it will enable companies to consolidate customer relationships and strengthen their overall market orientation [18]. Consequently, this study aims to identify research trends associated with the development of brand management in the tourism sector and answer the following research questions: What are the research trends associated with the development of brand management in tourism? How has the number of articles published on the analysed topic evolved in recent years? Which channels (journals, articles and countries) are the most influential in research on sustainability education in tourism universities? And what are the research trends associated with the development of brand management in tourism?

To answer these questions, we conducted a bibliometric analysis, starting with a pool of more than 1421 published articles, and filtering this pool to find specialised works on the proposed topic. The use of this methodology responds to the fact that bibliometric studies are receiving significant attention from the scientific community [19,20] as they allow us to study the state of the art and the development trend of a research field [21]. In this way, academics can use this type of analysis to discover emerging trends in article and journal performance, patterns of collaboration among researchers, and explore the intellectual structure of a specific domain in the existing literature [22]. In addition, industry practitioners can use the results to identify the main branding strategies that tourism organisations have consolidated to reinforce their brands as one of their intangible assets.

2. Methodology

2.1. Execution of the Bibliometric Study

To consolidate the bibliometric study, we used the Scopus database, which is characterised by being one of the largest databases of abstracts and citations, with comprehensive global coverage and regional scientific journals and conference proceedings, and books and chapters. This ensures optimal quality of your security in the selection, review, and assessment of academic documents [23], and from which empirical exercises associated with branding have been developed [24–26].

The chronology of the analysis was executed from the year 2000 to 2022, having as a search strategy in said base the following: (TITLE-ABS-KEY (branding) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (tourism)) AND (EXCLUDE (DOCTYPE, "ed") OR EXCLUDE (DOCTYPE, "no") OR EXCLUDE (DOCTYPE, "tb") OR EXCLUDE (DOCTYPE, "le")) AND (EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR, 1999) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR, 1998) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR, 1994) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR, 1989)) AND (EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "BIOC") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "PHYS") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "CENG") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "PHAR") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "CHEM") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA, "NEUR")).

In March 2022, the statistical procedure and analysis were carried out using the Bibliometrix tool (The R Project for Statistical Computing 4.1.1.), software that is based on flexible commands and is easy to update and integrate with other statistical packages, meaning it is ideal for the development of bibliometry as a dynamic science [27]. This analysis was complemented by the VOSviewer tool, a software based on the interface with significant graphic benefits [19,28].

2.2. Development of the Systematic Review of the Literature

We investigated branding methods related to the consolidation of commercial and client connections in the tourism sector as part of the systematic review of the literature. Using the PRISMA statement (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology, developed in 2005, has significant utility as a guide to ensure the integrity of research and reduce information biases, mainly when conducting systematic reviews and meta-analyses [29]. The survey of the scientific documents was carried out in March 2022 from Scopus based on the following search strategy: (TITLE-ABS-KEY (“branding strategies”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (tourism)) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, “SOCI”) OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, “ECON”) OR LIMIT TO (SUBJAREA, “ARTS”)) AND (EXCLUDE (DOCTYPE, “bk”) OR EXCLUDE (DOCTYPE, “tb”)), recovering 97 documents for the systematic review of the literature. Likewise, the inclusion and exclusion criteria for these documents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria of the systematic review.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Studies associated with the development of branding strategies.	Documents published before the year 2017.
Documents related to the Business subject, Management, Accounting, Economics, Econometrics and Finance, Arts and Humanities y Social Sciences.	Branding studies that are not related to the tourism sector.
Studies developed between the years 2017 to 2022.	Studies focused on the development of the country brand.
Publications that are developed in the tourism sector.	Duplicate documents in the database.
Theoretical and empirical studies.	Studies of the tourism sector do not focus on the recognition of branding.

Source: own elaboration.

Figure 1 describes the general process of applying the above criteria for the systematic review developed.

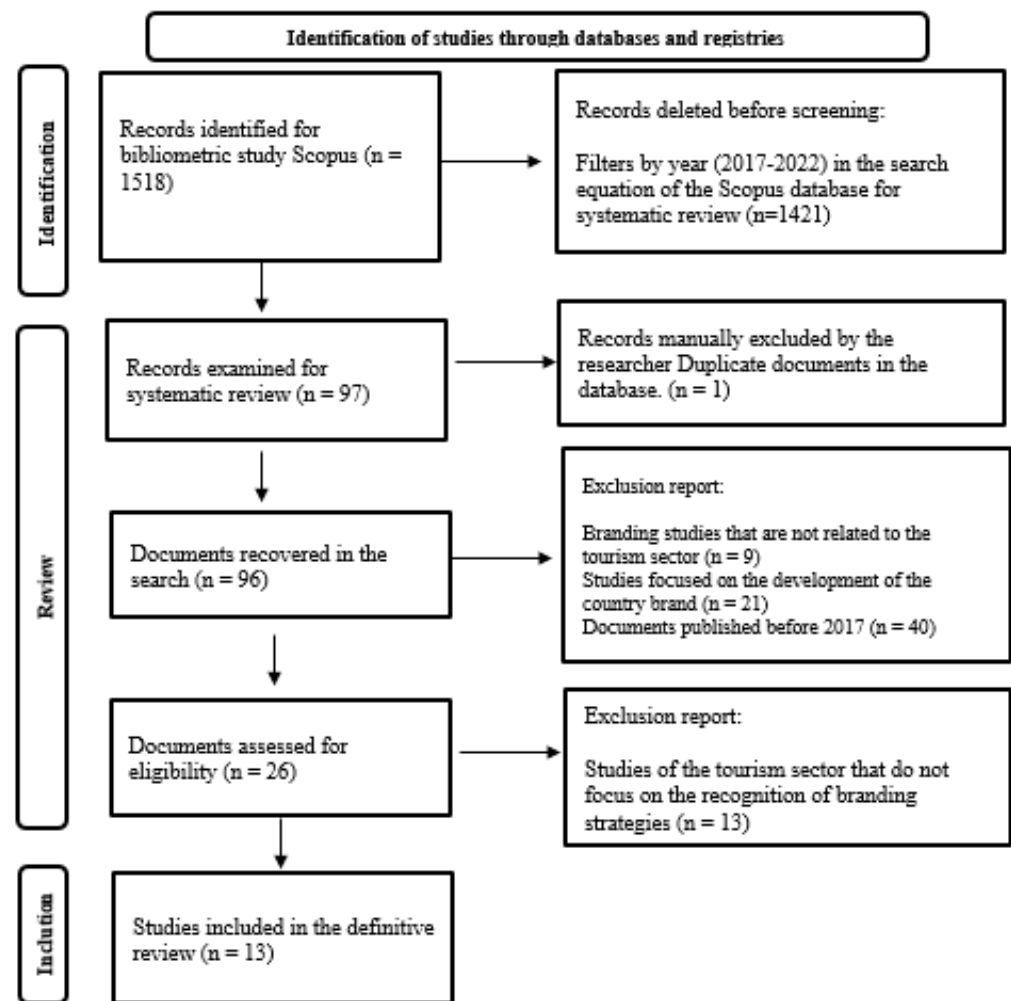


Figure 1. Flowchart PRISM by levels. Source: own elaboration.

3. Results

3.1. Analysis of Bibliometric Indicators

The bibliometric analysis describes a total of 1518 published scientific documents, finding 1165 articles (77%), 46 books (3%), 163 book chapters (11%), 84 conference papers (7%), 7 conference reviews (0.05%) and 53 reviews (1.5%). There are 2765 authors, 391 developed publications individually (14%), and the remaining 2374 published in co-authorship with other collaborators (86%). A general collaboration index of 2.25 is identified, an index of 2.26 co-authors per document, and 0.549 papers per author. The average number of citations per document is 15.77, with an average of 1.8 citations per year for each of them, and 78,481 references were used.

The chronological analysis used in the bibliometrics shows a significant increase in the scientific production associated with the development of branding in the tourism sector, particularly from 2012 to 2021, thus evidencing an emerging scientific interest in developing studies related to this topic, as seen in Figure 2.

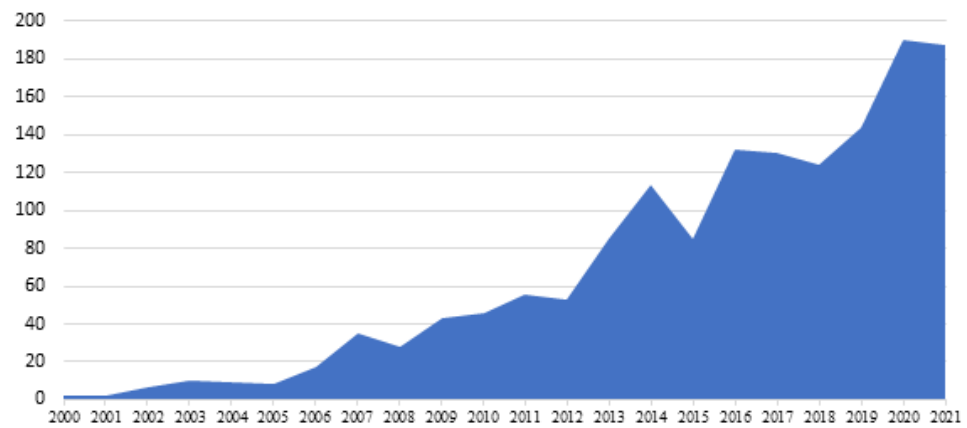


Figure 2. Annual production level. Source: own elaboration.

The countries with the highest scientific production associated with the subject of study are identified, finding in the first place the United States with 320 documents, followed by the United Kingdom with 219, Australia with 181, China with 150, Spain with 119, Indonesia with 109 and Canada with 77. In general, the geographical dispersion of these organisations indicates that the research and practice of analysing the contribution of sustainable tourism development to economic growth have attracted countries all over the world. However, we can observe that the most prolific countries are not necessarily also the most open to international collaborations. Therefore, the rest of the international countries need a greater contribution to this issue. The total number of citations by country was 3614 in the United Kingdom, 3334 in the United States, 2197 in Australia, 1414 in Canada, and 956 in China. However, on average, the Netherlands leads with 44.53, followed by the United Kingdom with 43.02, Canada with 38.22, Denmark with 35.83, and Australia with 29.29.

3.1.1. Productive Analysis of the Authors

In Figure 3, the authors have mentioned ten authors who have the highest level of scientific production associated with the subject of study; in this regard, four authors have reached nine publications. In first place is Eli Avraham, followed by Farai Chigora, Mihalis Kavartzis, and Steven Pike. Similarly, the fractional article level is shown. Each document is separated by the number of authors that contributed to the publishing. This list includes two authors: Eli Avraham and Michael Hall, who have a 5.50 rating. They were followed by Steven Pike, who arrived with 5.17.

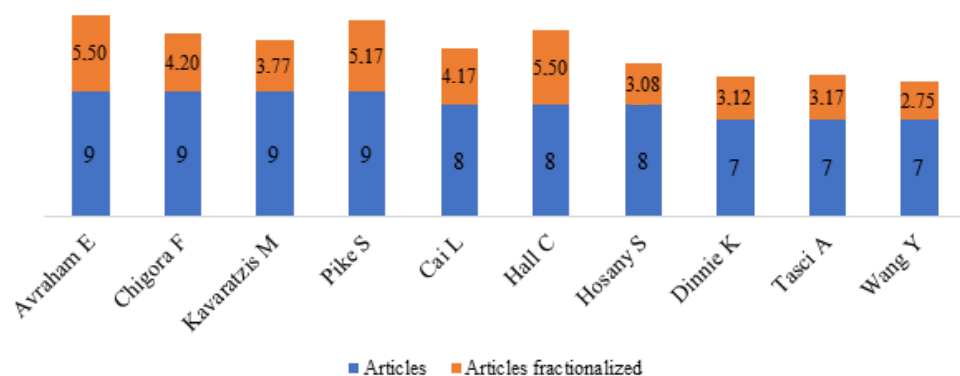


Figure 3. Authors with higher productivity. Source: own elaboration.

The above research resonance indices allow us to identify the most outstanding authors in a specific area of science; therefore, Table 2 lists the H-, G-, and M-indices of the most representative researchers. The H-index evaluates the scientific production of a researcher, a journal, or a country, generating a balance between the number of publications concerning

the citations received [30]. The authors of [27] determine that the G-index quantifies bibliometric productivity based on the publication history of researchers. On the other hand, the M-index represents the ratio of the H-index to the number of years that have passed since the author's first publication [24].

Table 2. H-, G-, and M-index of the most representative authors.

Autor	H_Index	G_Index	M_Index	TC	NP	PY_Start
Hosany, S.	8	8	0.471	1796	8	2006
Ekinci, Y.	3	3	0.176	968	3	2006
Cai, L.	7	8	0.333	818	8	2002
Pike, S.	8	9	0.444	707	9	2005
Ritchie, J.	2	2	0.111	585	2	2005
Uysal, M.	2	2	0.118	580	2	2006
Kavaratzis, M.	7	9	0.438	538	9	2007
Prayag, G.	4	4	0.25	491	4	2007
Blain, C.	1	1	0.056	474	1	2005
Levy, S.	1	1	0.056	474	1	2005

Note: TC: total citations; NP: number of publications; PY start: year of publication started. Source: own elaboration.

Another indicator that complements the author's analysis of the level of scientific production is the Lotka coefficient. It represents the frequency of the researchers' publication in various knowledge disciplines, from the inverse square law, where the number of authors published is certain, to establish a fixed percentage of articles regarding the number of authors who publish a single article [31]. Table 3 determines that 2348 authors have only generated the publication of a single document, 295 authors present two published documents, 66 with three documents, 30 with four papers, and 15 with five papers. Notable authors include Keith Dinnie, Asli Tasci, and Yao-Chin Wang, who have published seven papers. Sameer Hosany, Michael Hall, and Liping Cai, with eight publications each. Finally, the most outstanding and mentioned above are Eli Avraham, Farai Chigora, Mihalis Kavaratzis, and Steven Pike, who have generated nine publications.

Table 3. Lotka coefficient.

Written Documents	Number of Authors	Proportion of Authors
1	2348	0.849
2	295	0.107
3	66	0.024
4	30	0.011
5	15	0.005
7	3	0.001
8	3	0.001
9	4	0.001

Source: own elaboration.

3.1.2. Documents with Greater Visibility

Within the bibliometric analysis, it is pertinent to identify the documents that have the highest citation index, highlighting and recognising their contributions to the consolidation of branding for the strengthening of the tourism sector. Table 4 shows the documents with the highest citation level, highlighting their authors, the document's title, the total of its historical citations (TC), and the total citations it has received in the last year (TC per year).

Table 4. Most cited documents.

Reference	Document Title	TC	TC by Year
[32]	Cooperative branding for the rural destination.	555	26.43
[33]	Destination branding: Insights and practices from destination management organisations.	474	26.33
[34]	Destination image and destination personality: Applying branding theories to tourism places.	431	25.35
[35]	Destination personality: An application of brand personality to tourism destinations.	388	22.82
[36]	Measuring tourists' emotional experiences toward hedonic holiday destinations.	366	28.15
[37]	A closer look at destination: Image, personality, relationship, and loyalty.	309	30.90
[38]	Destination branding and the role of the stakeholders: The case of New Zealand.	304	15.20
[39]	The role of tourists' emotional experiences and satisfaction in understanding behavioural intentions.	257	25.70
[40]	Tourism destination branding complexity.	245	13.61
[41]	Using brand personality to differentiate regional tourism destinations.	195	12.19

Source: own elaboration.

3.1.3. Most Representative Journals

Figure 4 shows the journals with the most publications related to tourism branding, with Sustainability (Switzerland) in first place with 44 documents, followed by Place Branding and Public Diplomacy with 43, Tourism Management with 36, Journal of Destination Marketing and Management with 35, and African Journal of Hospitality Tourism and Leisure with 27 published documents.



Figure 4. Journals with the most significant number of publications. Source: own elaboration.

Table 5 shows the journals with the most citations in the studied topic and their relationship with their H-, G-, and M-indices. Tourism Management is first with 2360 citations,

followed by Journal of Travel Research with 2183, Journal of Destination Marketing and Management with 1202, Journal of Vacation Marketing with 1056, and Annals of Tourism Research in fifth place with 979 citations.

Table 5. Journals with the highest citation level.

Journal	h_Index	g_Index	m_Index	TC
Tourism Management	23	35	1.35	2360
Journal of Travel Research	15	20	0.83	2183
Journal of Destination Marketing and Management	16	34	1.45	1202
Journal of Vacation Marketing	16	24	0.70	1056
Annals of Tourism Research	9	10	0.43	979
Journal of Business Research	9	9	0.53	803
Journal of Place Management and Development	11	22	0.79	656
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	14	22	0.88	630
Place Branding and Public Diplomacy	13	23	0.87	601
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	10	16	0.53	589

Source: own elaboration.

3.1.4. Bibliographic Coupling

Bibliographic coupling is a mechanism to visualise specific thematic areas, allowing one to explore the literature produced and consumed in a scientific community [42]. In this way, Figure 5 highlights the presence of four clusters of authors with a representative co-citation among them. The first (blue) is dominated by Mihalis Kavaratzis, Annette Pritchard, Eli Avraham, and Gregory Ashworth, authors who have established names for themselves by addressing difficulties around brand management in cities and tourism locations [43–47]. The second cluster (green) contains more representation of Michael Hall, Donald Getz, Patrick Butler, and Scott Cohen, who have tackled tourism marketing management and sustainable destination development [48–51].

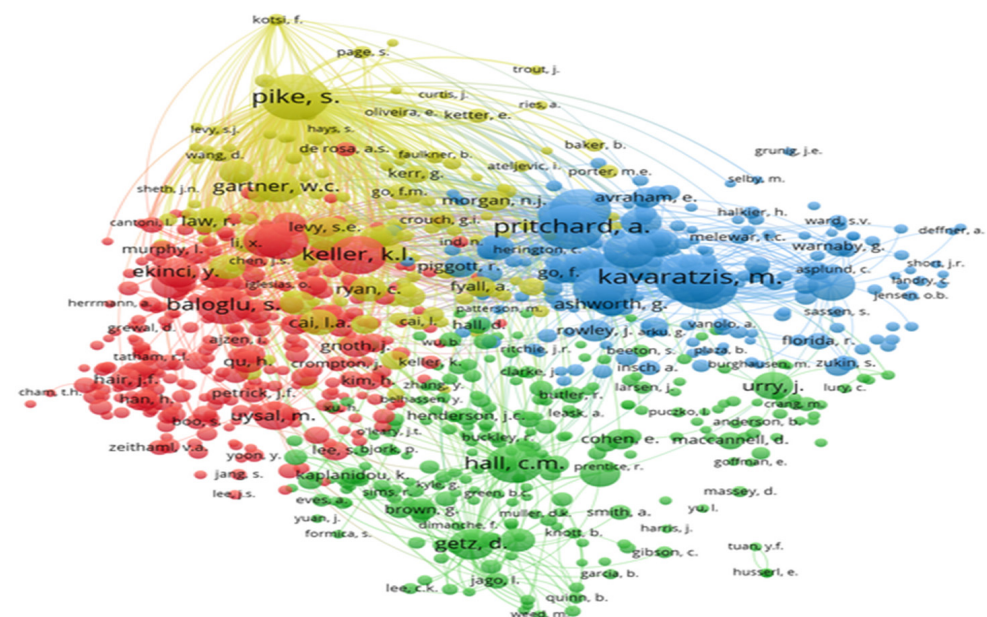


Figure 5. Co-citation of authors. Source: own elaboration.

Thirdly, the cluster (red) consolidated by Kevin Keller, Seyhmus Baloglu, Yuksel Ekinci, and Ülke Evrim Uysal has stood out for deepening the lines of Destination Planning

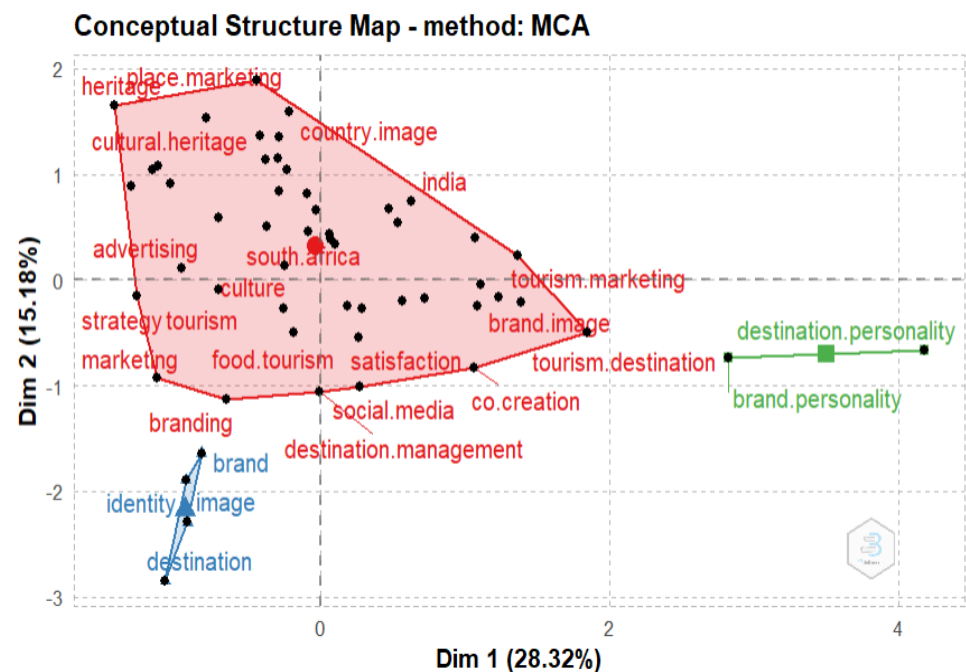


Figure 7. The conceptual structure of the study. Source: own elaboration.

4. Qualitative Systematic Review

Within the PRISMA protocol, 97 documents were initially considered, of which 40 were deleted due to being published before 2017. Reading the titles and abstracts meant that 42 papers were discarded. This is because addressing studies of branding that are not related to the tourist sector ($n = 9$), research focused on the development of the country brand ($n = 21$), duplicate documents in the database ($n = 1$), and studies of the tourism sector were not directed to the recognition of branding strategies ($n = 13$); in this way, a total of 13 effective documents were obtained as a final result. Table 6 lists the authors, objectives, methods, and main branding strategies of the 13 documents that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria in the tourism sector.

Table 6. Qualitative systematic review.

Reference	Objective	Method	Branding Strategies in the Tourism Sector
[59]	Consolidate brand management from a tourism perspective, especially in the way tourists consume a destination.	To compare tourists' movement patterns with brand boundaries and new partnership activities, "on-site" surveys and significance approaches were used.	Brand creation, managing to consolidate brand equity from the gap between the projected identity of the destination and the image that tourists perceive of it. This study uses GIS techniques to compare tourist travel patterns with brand boundaries and new cooperative initiatives.
[60]	Discuss the political and administrative implications, define a common brand strategy, and reinforce the principles of smart and participatory governance principles.	The creation of a destination audit, accompanied by an online co-analysis survey, determines the relative relevance of high-level features related to wellness tourism resources.	A participatory process was developed to co-create a brand strategy. The most essential attributes of the brand are the ability to adapt to the strategic priorities of the organisation and the ability to integrate the value proposition of tourism companies. A stakeholder-based participatory process was developed to co-create a branding strategy, involving a destination audit supported by an online conjoint analysis survey to discover the relative importance of 'high-level' attributes associated with Kerala's wellness tourism resources.
[61]	Exploring online brand advocacy in the context of a tourism destination.	A qualitative content analysis analyzed an extensive data set of user-generated content on the social network Twitter from hashtags.	Through the lens of social influence theory, it explores how locals and foreign tourists talk about Australia as a destination brand on social media.
[62]	Examine how informality is used in brand urbanas y su impacts tourism development.	A documentary review was carried out, and Entrevista semi-structured on-site and focus groups.	The local government has used informality to build a brand identity in the creative economy. Informality is not seen as a problem but has the potential to empower disadvantaged citizens to get involved in the local development agenda by fostering the creative economy and tourism. The brand of 'creative kampong' is used to reflect that deprived communities residing in the kampongs can participate in the local development agenda for promoting the creative economy.
[63]	Identify the composition and structure of the brand experience in luxury hotels.	This study examines the relationship between brand experience through surveys with convenience sampling. An exploratory factor analysis was performed to explore the dimensionality of each concept of the brand experience.	Consolidation of the brand experience in the hotel business due to increased consumer loyalty based on the customer experience, which influences the brand image creation. Marketing management recognises that understanding brand experience is critical for developing service products.
[64]	To develop a proposal for the consolidation of the segmentation of the tourism market from the different cultural perspectives associated with the perception of the brand.	Virtual surveys were carried out in different cities and countries to know the brand's perception of the destination through sampling by country quotas.	To propose brand strategies, the multi-segment value proposition should be prioritised by target groups by country of origin. This is due to the different brand perceptions, personalities, and market positioning.

Table 6. Cont.

Reference	Objective	Method	Branding Strategies in the Tourism Sector
[65]	To explore the effectiveness of a destination's brand strategy through a tourist awareness assessment model.	Development of a longitudinal case study with two phases: the first began with interviews with visitors to the tourist site. The second included a correlation analysis of the brand's effects and a regression based on the visitors' attitudes. The analysis was performed using SPSS.	The educational level and the tourist's occupation significantly influence their attitude towards brands, where those with an international presence have greater exposure and effectiveness than national ones. In this way, the tourist brand value is consolidated from the brand awareness and perceived quality. The study focused on the effectiveness of the brand and management system of Wulingyuan through the survey of visitors. It was found that international brands had a higher exposure and effectiveness than domestic brands.
[66]	Explore innovative tourism branding versus the communication of values, benefits, and relevant industry attributes.	Semiotic analysis of two sites related to intelligent tourism. The research interprets the visual and verbal signs related to the brand.	The findings highlight how the brand elements integrated into the websites communicate and strengthen the brand identity and associations, facilitating the interpretations of intelligent tourism. How brand elements embedded in websites communicate brand identity and facilitate interpretations of smart tourism.
[67]	To examine the role of creativity and innovation as essential attributes of intelligence in the branding of cities and destinations.	A qualitative and logical-deductive approach was developed from case studies in Milan (Italy) and Tomsk (Russia).	The authors emphasise the importance of intelligent destination brand strategies based on people's participation, creativity, and innovation as drivers of smart urban development as a branding strategy. Conceptual support for the notion of smart destination branding is provided by discussing the relationship between creativity, innovation and technology as determinants of the smartness concept applied to destination branding and marketing.
[68]	Analyze the brand awareness strategies used by the Kuya Maranggi water park.	A mixed methodology uses in-depth interviews, observation, documentation, and surveys to generate a triangulation with the data obtained.	The investigation reveals that the Kuya Maranggi water park is successfully creating brand awareness in the vicinity of Purwakarta and other parts of West Java, emphasising building activities for brand recognition and remembrance.
[69]	To test the applicability of the brand's interaction and the theory of perceived quality in the formation of trust in the tourist brand.	Application of surveys and in-depth interviews, from which a conceptual model was consolidated. Such a model was tested using structural equations.	The findings reveal that perceived quality and interaction with the brand generate trust in consumers, becoming critical in establishing an emotional (affective) commitment between the client and the hotel brand. The study also suggests that the emotional commitment of customers helps them become brand advocates, strengthening brand loyalty as a factor of brand equity.

Table 6. Cont.

Reference	Objective	Method	Branding Strategies in the Tourism Sector
[70]	To examine passengers' perceptions of Tom Jobim-RIOgaleão International Airport's brand strategies and their impact on their consumer experiences.	A semi-structured interview was conducted with the airport branding manager, and questionnaires the form were completed through virtual surveys.	The results showed that the new airport management company has been using tourism brand strategies associated with brand awareness, from the ability to identify and remember the brand in the market, mainly from isotypes, logos, and corporate colours.
[71]	Analyze how the Balkan countries consciously build their brands in health tourism through their online communication.	Structured content analysis was used as a research methodology through expert evaluation.	For the brand positioning process, the unique values must be identified and thus focus on developing products related to the target group. Brand building is developed from the positioning of this through segment-based communication. Balkan countries build their brands in health tourism through their online communication.

Source: own elaboration.

5. Discussion

This research presents a structured review of the literature that studies research trends associated with the development of brand management in the tourism sector. Bibliometric studies on brand management are found in previous literature [72–74]. However, bibliometric analysis has not been completed that relates brand management and tourism, and analytically and objectively identifies emerging works, authors, and research groups.

The analysis presented here is in line with previous research by [75] as it shows that research on branding in tourism has expanded both in volume and scientific impact, as evidenced by the growing number of articles published on this topic. Authors Farai Chigora, Mihalis Kavaratzis, and Steven Pike have the largest number of publications. Other authors also have a high number of publications, such as Eli Avraham and Michael Hall. However, as the field continues to mature, numerous authors are joining this line of research. As a consequence, the number of citations is progressively increasing in recent years, which shows the current importance of the relationship analysed. It is now considered an essential topic in the marketing literature [76], with 2754 authors publishing 1518 articles over more than 20 years, of which more than half appeared in the last 6 years.

Furthermore, our analysis of the geographical dispersion of publications showed that the United States has the largest number of works, followed by the United Kingdom, Australia, China, Spain, Indonesia, and Canada. These results are in line with previous studies by [77,78] in demonstrating how the continued globalisation presented by the topic under study attracts diverse target audiences. Consequently, tourism destinations need different marketing strategies to gain a competitive advantage and reputation [74,79].

On the other hand, the keyword analysis indicates a remarkably high presence in the literature published so far. Therefore, as in the previous study by [80], our study evidences the importance of considering sustainability in future analyses of branding in tourism. This is because the growth of tourism demands new environmentally conscious branding strategies [1,10]. Thus, the results obtained are in line with the previous study by [80] in suggesting future lines of research on the impact of sustainable tourism on branding.

Finally, the qualitative analysis carried out allowed us to conclude that the strategic development of branding in the tourism sector has been consolidated from various scenarios, including place marketing [40,57], gastronomic tourism [16,18], tourism brand management [44,49,54], and the personality of fate [35,37]. In them, the brand value components proposed by [10,81] have been preponderant in the studies raised by [59,65,66,69], particularly by empirically analysing the awareness, quality, associations, loyalty, and brand image from the perspective of the tourist.

6. Conclusions, Implications, and Limitations

Brand management is considered an essential factor in consolidating and positioning the tourism sector in destinations and organisations. However, it should be noted that the development of branding strategies aimed at the tourism sector as a thematic research cluster presents a certain level of scarcity in the literature. Therefore, this study supports new evidence in the literature, as, through an analysis of 1421 papers, it identifies the most productive journals, institutions, and countries as assessed by the number of highly cited articles. Similarly, the results of this analysis identify established and emerging areas of research, which can serve as a guide for future lines of research.

6.1. Main Findings

Firstly, our results show that brand management research is an emerging area in need of further research development. Similarly, our results conclude that 85% of the authors have only one publication in this area, so future studies and specialised work in this field should be encouraged. These articles were mostly published in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, China, and Spain, so there is a need to promote and carry out research in more countries to encourage the internationalisation of the subject

analysed. Research is more impactful when it covers a wide geographical area and presents global results. Therefore, these results are valuable for finding research, journals, and other predominant themes over various periods in the domain of brand management in tourism.

On the other hand, an extension of the results developed in this study seems necessary. The keyword analysis indicates that the high presence of sustainability-related terms in the published empirical literature is remarkable. The location of these terms on the map suggests that the dimensions of tourism branding as a sustainable trend are a current need. Consequently, further research in this direction would identify many other sustainability-related contributions to the topic under analysis. However, future research in this area will result in a broader set of articles that will then require innovative bibliometric analysis tools and approaches.

Finally, the qualitative systematic review using the PRISMA methodology showed how important it is to build tourism brands based on the consolidation of brand equity concepts, particularly those related to destination identity and the image that tourists have of them. In addition, other factors contribute to the strengthening of brand attributes that allow it to be integrated with the value proposition of companies in the sector. Loyal consumers and the defence of the destination brand highlight these aspects as recognition, the prospects of the tourism product, its positivity, and the exchange of experiences. These variables constitute the brand image, being considered the imagination that consumers develop as a function of the brands to connect with their business performance and their ability to create value, thus establishing emotional and affective commitments between the client and the hotel brand.

6.2. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The results of this study have important implications for the tourism sector, as they promote greater awareness of the importance of branding strategies in this sector. Some of the issues that arise from this finding are first, the importance for future researchers to identify gaps in the proposed conceptual frameworks and to explore the theories that are needed to expand knowledge about brand management in the tourism sector. Secondly, this analysis certainly argues for geographical diversity in tourism brand management research. This geographical diversity is important as regions differ in their cultural, sociological and demographic impact. Finally, the results of this study have implications for research as they promote policies to stimulate sustainability in tourism brand management. In this sense, it is necessary to use more effective statistical models that allow adequate decision-making with a high impact on the final results.

From an empirical perspective, the results of this study have practical implications for brand managers and policymakers concerned with the analysis of branding development in the tourism sector who wish to have a comprehensive overview of the scientific literature produced so far. In addition, researchers can use the results of this study to better address future studies by considering proposed avenues for future research.

6.3. Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its many advantages, our study has some limitations, which can be considered as a scope for future research. Firstly, although this study considered many factors for the bibliometric analysis, factors related to the hotel sector as a whole were not considered. Future research can focus on these issues and present more network diagrams for a more comprehensive investigation. In addition, future researchers may consider extending the study period to present a more complete understanding of this topic.

On the other hand, from the results of this study, it is possible to identify some of the most productive and influential research on brand management in the tourism sector in terms of journals, countries, articles and authors. However, a major limitation is that they provide only a general orientation, and there are several influential pieces of research in this field that have not been included in this paper. Consequently, it would be of great interest to extend the results of this study with other databases such as Web of Science and

Google Scholar, among others. Moreover, from the other side, it should be noted that the methodological process addressed in this study has led to results of a rather qualitative nature. Future research should therefore adopt a more quantitative approach.

Author Contributions: This study has been designed and performed by all the authors. J.A.M.-F. collected the data and C.E.L.-R. analysed the data. The introduction and literature review were written by C.E.L.-R. and J.A.M.-F. The research methodology, initial data statistics, data analysis, bibliometric analysis, discussion, and conclusions were written by C.E.L.-R. and J.A.M.-F. Finally, A.L.-G. revised, adapted the manuscript and made all changes and revisions proposed by the reviewers. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios-UNIMINUTO for the financial support for the development of the research project called “The role of women as traditional cooks in Bogota’s tourist market places” from which this item is one of their products.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Scopus database.

Acknowledgments: The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the anonymous reviewers and the editors for their truly valuable comments.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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