

Active seniors tourism: A bibliometric analysis in the past decade and future research agendas

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Abstract: Recognizing the importance of the active senior cohort (between the ages of 50 to 77) in tourism, this study systematically reviewed senior tourism research from 2013 to 2023 from Australian Business Deans Council-listed journals to identify key researchers contributing to the senior tourism discipline and trends to propose a future research agenda. The research revealed that the active senior demographic is a diverse group with different lifestyles, cultural backgrounds, health statuses, and financial resources, emphasizing that age alone is insufficient to provide a comprehensive understanding of senior tourism. The study also highlights emerging areas in senior tourism, such as artificial intelligence and social media, aligning with broader themes of innovation and dynamic capabilities that are associated with quality of life, leisure, and constraints. The findings underscore the importance of ongoing research and interdisciplinary collaboration for a nuanced understanding of the needs of active senior travelers. Key findings underscore the evolving research themes in senior tourism, emphasizing the importance of designing tourism products and destinations that cater to active senior tourists' specific needs and preferences. These outcomes are critical for enhancing the active senior tourism industry and ensuring fulfilling travel experiences for this growing demographic.

Keywords: active senior, bibliometric analysis, senior tourism, systematic review

1. Introduction

In recent years, academia has focused on studying tourism activities among the older population (Patterson & Balderas, 2020). This trend indicates potential growth of the senior economy consisting of individuals aged 50 and above by the end of the 21st century (McGuirk et al., 2022). The population of individuals aged 60 and older is growing at an unprecedented rate, with projections indicating that they will make up approximately 20% of the global population by 2030 (United Nations, n.d.; World Health Organization, 2022). Factors contributing to this demographic shift include healthcare quality improvements, healthy living advancements, increased life expectancy due to medical innovations, and sustained economic growth (Iancu & Iancu, 2020; Yeganeh, 2019).

The definition of “older adults” varies depending on the specific focus of a study and its disciplinary scope (Patterson, 2006). Terminology ranges from age-based categorizations—such as aging, aged, elderly, grey, mature, older, senior, and silver—to generation-based labels like baby boomers (born 1946 – 1964) and the silent generation (born before 1946). For example, Kim et al. (2022) defined an older cohort segment as individuals aged 50 and older in the context of healthcare and Medicare services in marketing. Similarly, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) proposed the age of 50 and older to define seniors (Patterson, 2006). Additionally, Möller et al. (2007) and Patterson (2006) identified an older cohort of individuals aged 55 and older in tourism and leisure, respectively. Additionally, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) categorized individuals aged 65 and above into the older population, in contrast to the working age group of individuals 15–64 years old (OECD, n.d.).

Despite these variations in age-based categorizations, the demographic group comprising early and late baby boomers (59–77 years old) and emerging senior members of Generation X (50–58 years old) as of 2023 represents a significant economic force. This study defines these age groups, ranging from 50 to 77 years old, as the active senior segment. These individuals prioritize personal and social well-being after years of hard work and this cohort represents an exceptional market that

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is frequently disregarded despite its significant economic potential. It is a 'hidden blue ocean' regarding spending habits and established social status (Pestana et al., 2020). The changing demographics of aging populations have significant implications for businesses and policymakers in developing effective strategic plans. This is particularly important when considering the distinctive life cycles of the active senior segment compared to younger groups (Patuelli & Nijkamp, 2016).

Strategic planning is crucial for addressing the unique needs of the contemporary older cohort within an evolving business ecosystem, particularly when considering sociodemographic factors in addition to life and role transitions (Yap & Kapitan, 2017; Zeithaml, 1985). For example, review studies on seniors' well-being in tourism underscored the multifaceted benefits of travel for older adults (Chang et al, 2022; Otoo & Kim, 2020; Pestana et al, 2020) and emphasized its role in promoting active aging and enhancing subjective well-being (Patterson & Balderas-Cejudo, 2023). In other words, tourism offers physical, psychological, social, and spiritual benefits that contribute to healthier lifestyles and improved mental health among seniors (Fan et al, forthcoming). Tourism is significantly impacted by demographic changes. Therefore, senior tourism and healthcare represent a segment with considerable growth potential (Kim et al., 2022; Patterson & Balderas-Cejudo, 2023). As societies age, the tourism industry needs to proactively adapt to the increased activity levels among older populations of different ages (Patterson, 2006). As such, the industry must anticipate and accommodate emerging trends and patterns specific to this demographic (Patterson & Balderas, 2020). For example, Globetrender (2017), a leading travel trend forecasting agency, reported that older travelers prioritize longer family-oriented trips over budget-conscious trips. In contrast, younger generations prefer more frequent but shorter and budget-conscious vacations. These findings suggest that the tourism industry must create and develop products and destinations that cater to the changing demands of older travelers, which differ from those of younger individuals (Bakucz et al., 2021; Patterson & Balderas-Cejudo, 2023).

To address these challenges, this study aims to achieve several objectives: identify the most influential researchers in senior tourism, provide insights into primary trends, and propose a future research agenda based on key publications from the past decade. A systematic review was conducted using bibliometric analysis to explore the relationships among important themes in academic research on senior tourism published between January 2013 and January 2023. This study aims to answer three research questions: 1) What have been the primary tourism research trends among active seniors over the past decade? 2) What are the emerging research themes and their interconnections? 3) What significant conclusions can be derived from highly cited papers?

2. Methodology

This systematic review aims to trace the evolution and key trends in senior tourism research over the past decade, with a particular emphasis on capturing the breadth and depth of this growing field. The comprehensive methodological framework adopted for this review ensured an insightful and holistic analysis of the subject.

The review focused exclusively on scholarly articles that specifically addressed aspects of senior tourism. This decision was made to provide a focused and in-depth exploration of the topic, filtering out peripheral or tangentially related studies. The review period spanned from January 2013 to January 2023, capturing recent and relevant developments in the field while providing a decade-long perspective on evolving trends. This selection from the last decade ensured that the findings remain relevant to the changing dynamics of senior tourism while acknowledging that, albeit valuable, earlier contributions fall outside the scope of this review.

2.1 Data collection and database selection

The Web of Science (WOS) was selected for its unique indexing criteria and extensive coverage, particularly in the social and natural sciences which offers valuable insights into overall

research on senior tourism. Publications in top-tier journals were considered to ensure the study's quality and relevance and relevant journals were identified based on their inclusion in the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) Journal Quality List. This is a highly regarded and frequently consulted resource in the academic community that provides a comprehensive ranking of journals across various disciplines, including tourism and hospitality. The analysis aimed to capture the most authoritative and influential research in senior tourism by examining articles from these high-tier journals focusing on active senior tourists.

In addition, Google Scholar was used to verify each publication's citation counts. Google Scholar provides a comprehensive database that indexes scholarly articles, theses, books, abstracts, and court opinions on senior tourism from academic publishers, professional societies, online repositories, universities, and other websites. It is worth noting that Google Scholar updates its citation counts more frequently than Web of Science. Combining both databases ensures a comprehensive collection of high-quality publications and a thorough view of their impact of the selected publications on the academic community.

2.2 Keyword refinement and expansion

The search strategy utilized broad and commonly associated terms with senior tourism, such as 'senior,' 'silver,' 'elderly,' 'aging,' 'tourism,' and 'travel' (Otoo & Kim, 2020; Pestana et al., 2020). We used Boolean operators (e.g., AND, OR) to combine related terms rather than relying on exact phrase searches to ensure inclusivity and comprehensiveness. For example, instead of searching for the exact phrase "baby boomer travel trends," we used combinations such as "baby boomers" AND "travel" AND "trends." This approach minimized the risk of missing relevant studies due to variations in phrasing while capturing a diverse array of literature on the topic.

This decision was made to balance specificity and inclusiveness, acknowledging that exact phrase searches might overly narrow the results while broader combinations could introduce heterogeneity. The broader approach influenced the findings by allowing us to identify diverse themes and trends within the senior tourism literature. Additionally, specific segments within the active senior demographic were explored by including keywords like 'retirement tourism.' This term focuses on individuals who engage in tourism activities after retirement, a significant and distinct subset of the senior tourist population (e.g., Kazeminia et al., 2015; Patterson, 2006). Moreover, the term 'senior travel behavior' was included to understand the patterns and preferences in travel among the elderly. This keyword enabled the extraction of studies that explored active senior tourists' decision-making processes, preferences, and travel patterns. Furthermore, the term 'geriatric tourism' was employed to address the unique needs and accommodations for older tourists, such as accessible destinations and healthcare provisions (e.g., Alén et al., 2017; Nicolau et al., 2020). This keyword helped identify literature that addresses accessibility, healthcare requirements, and tailored services for elderly travelers. Finally, this study utilized terms such as 'baby boomer travel trends' to target research on specific generational cohorts within the senior demographic. This keyword helped identify studies that examine the travel behaviors, preferences, and tendencies of the baby boomer generation who represent a significant and influential segment of the active senior tourism market.

2.3 Inclusion criteria and screening process

The study used the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-analysis) procedure for systematic review studies in business and management (Donthu et al., 2021). This procedure involved identifying, screening, and applying inclusion and exclusion criteria and ensured a structured approach to the literature review. The review began with data collection from the Web of Science (WOS) database, focusing specifically on peer-reviewed articles. The decision to prioritize peer-reviewed articles was made to ensure high quality and credibility of the sources and excluded general travel studies, conference proceedings, theses, books, and abstracts, which may contain unqualified data. The screening process consisted of two-stages. The first stage

involved screening titles to quickly eliminate irrelevant studies that do not meet the review's objectives. The criteria for eliminating publications from the data set included publication quality, language, and time frame. In the second stage, a thorough examination of the abstracts was conducted to ensure they closely aligned with the review's objectives and criteria. Articles that did not meet the specific needs of the review were filtered out. If necessary, the full texts were reviewed to ensure the publications were qualified for the analysis.

Initially, 342 articles were identified and articles published in low-tier journals (C or not listed in the ABDC list), those outside the domain of travel, hospitality, or tourism, and articles written in languages other than English were excluded. This resulted in a refined list of 219 articles. For the final selection process, the review of abstracts excluded articles associated with leisure and dining activities that were not directly related to tourism or travel. If necessary, the full texts were reviewed. This comprehensive identification process resulted in a compilation of 110 articles, providing a solid foundation for a systematic review of the research trends in active senior tourism. A structured data extraction template was developed to ensure consistency in retrieving and recording relevant information from the selected studies. The template included fields for recording study objectives, research methodology (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods), population demographics (e.g., age range, cohort), geographic scope, key findings, and their relevance to the active senior cohort (ages 50–77). Each study was reviewed independently by two researchers using the template, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion to maintain reliability in the data extraction process. This approach ensured that all studies were analyzed systematically and consistently, minimizing the risk of bias in the review process. This step is critical for effectively synthesizing data while enabling clear comparison and analysis of the studies included in the review. Figure 1 in the accompanying document illustrates the entire strategy, from the initial identification of 342 articles to the final selection of the 110 articles for the systematic review.

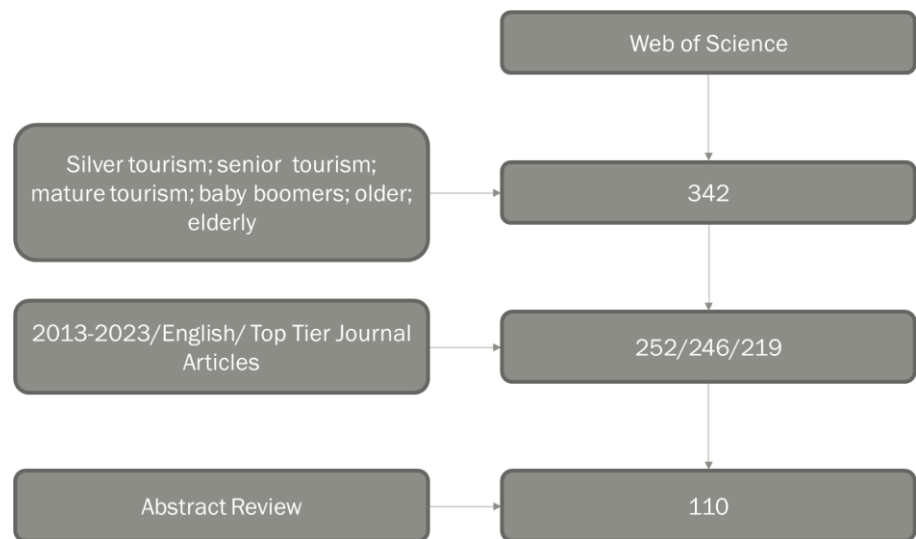


Figure 1. Flow diagram of the search strategy

2.4 Bibliometric analysis enhancement

Bibliometric analysis is a specialized form of systematic literature review known for its rigorous and transparent evaluation process (Koseoglu et al., 2022). This study specifically employed the Bibliometrix R software recommended by Aria and Cuccurullo (2017). The software is designed for comprehensive analysis in bibliometric studies, offering a range of functionalities. The bibliometric analysis involves various techniques, such as: (a) mapping citations to understand

the influence and reach of different works; (b) measuring productivity to gauge the output of researchers or institutions; (c) identifying co-citations to reveal relationships between different studies; (d) analyzing co-occurrences of scientific works to detect common themes or trends; and (e) establishing network connections among publications. These techniques collectively enhanced the depth and scope of the bibliometric analysis.

2.5 Synthesis of findings

Thematic analysis was employed to identify core themes and patterns within the literature on active senior tourism segments. This approach first synthesized the findings from individual studies, providing a comprehensive overview of the field. An in-depth analysis was conducted on the top 10 most-cited publications. This detailed examination is crucial for understanding the key evolution in active senior tourism, identifying gaps in the literature, and suggesting potential directions for future research. This approach involved conducting a broad thematic analysis with a focused examination of the most influential publications, which ensures a comprehensive understanding of the field's current state and developmental trajectory.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive analysis

This study conducted a performance analysis using descriptive data and network analysis through bibliographic-coupling data (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Table 1 summarizes the reviewed articles published between 2013 and 2023. One hundred and ten articles from 38 journals recognized in the ABDC list underwent bibliometric scrutiny. The articles were written by 245 authors, with 37.27% of the works (approximately 41) featuring international collaborations, while single-authored articles comprised only 10%. The 402 authors' keywords reflected a diverse range of research interests, and the field's intellectual depth is evidenced by the 4900 references cited, showcasing a vigorous exchange of scholarly insights. The average age of the documents was 4.2 years, which highlights the currency and ongoing evolution of the literature and suggests that the field is actively contributing to the development of new knowledge and responding to recent and evolving trends in senior tourism.

Table 1. Descriptive information of the reviewed publications

Timespan	Sources	Total Articles
2013-2023	38	110
Total Authors	Single-Authored Articles	International Co-Authorship
245	11	37.27%
Author's Keywords	Total References	Document Average Age
402	4900	4.2 years

3.1.1 The overall trend in senior tourism research

Figure 2 depicts a general increase in scholarly attention to senior tourism, with some fluctuations. A notable increase in publications was observed from 2019 to 2022 compared to the other years, which may highlight the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the field of senior tourism.

Table 2. Most Relevant Sources

Sources	# of Articles
Anatolia-International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality	12
Tourism Management	8
Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	7
Tourism Management Perspectives	6
Annals of Tourism Research	5
International Journal of Tourism Research	5
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	5
Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing	5
Journal of Travel Research	5
Journal of Vacation Marketing	5
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	4
Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism	4
Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change	4
Current Issues in Tourism	3
International Journal of Hospitality Management	3
Journal of China Tourism Research	3

Among senior tourism research articles, 7,370 citations were found across a diverse set of 2,216 sources in the 110 reviewed articles. Table 3 identifies the most influential sources, including those with over 100 citations, which account for 29.1% of the total citations. Tourism Management and Annals of Tourism Research contributed to 15.54% of the total citations (N=1,145), highlighting their substantial influence.

Table 3. Most Cited Journals

Sources	# of Citations
Tourism Management	630
Annals of Tourism Research	515
Journal of Travel Research	475
Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing	184
Current Issues in Tourism	130
International Journal of Tourism Research	106
Journal of Vacation Marketing	105

The results from Tables 2 and 3 indicate that these journals may have a specialization or a preferred status within the academic community for disseminating research in senior tourism. Additionally, Tourism Management and Annals of Tourism Research have a high number of citations, reflecting their authoritative status and central role in influencing the discourse on senior tourism.

3.1.4 Most relevant authors and most cited authors

This study analyzed the most relevant and cited authors, as shown in Table 4. The criterion for selecting the most relevant authors was those who published three or more articles, with the

most cited authors being cited 20 times or more. The publications from the most relevant authors comprised 66 articles, and the most cited works had 551 citations.

Among the most significant contributors to the senior tourism research are ‘Alen, E.,’ ‘Hwang, J.,’ ‘Dominguez, T.,’ and ‘Otoo, F.E.’ each with 5 to 6 publications. These authors frequently collaborated with others, indicating shared contributions (i.e., fractionalized counting divides credit among all contributing authors to ensure equitable representation of contributions). However, ‘Hwang, J.’ stood out with the highest fractionalized count of 2.83, indicating a substantial individual contribution to each publication. Similarly, ‘Huber, D.’ and ‘Lee, J.’ had high fractionalized counts of 2.00, indicating a more centralized role in their research outputs, likely due to less collaboration with others. The combined results reveal that knowledge production in senior tourism research is a collective effort characterized by varying degrees of partnership.

Table 4. Most Relevant and Cited Authors

Author	# of Articles	Articles Fractionalized	Author	# of Citations
Alen E	6	1.58	Alen E	76
Hwang J	6	2.83	Losada N	76
Losada N	6	1.58	Dominguez T	48
Dominguez T	5	1.25	Nicolau JL	39
Otoo FE	5	1.50	Huber D	35
Huber D	4	2.00	Lu JY	31
Kim S	4	1.17	Hyde KF	30
Lee J	4	2.00	Milne S	30
Lu JY	4	1.28	De Carlos P	28
Nicolau JL	4	1.00	Chen SC	25
Hung K	3	1.03	Hung K	25
Hyde KF	3	1.00	Shoemaker S	25
Milne S	3	1.00	Del Chiappa G	21
Pan Y	3	0.92	Jafari J	21
Pestana MH	3	0.92	Kazeminia A	21
Wen J	3	0.92	Wang KC	20

Among the most cited authors in senior tourism research, ‘Alen, E.’ and ‘Losada, N.’ stood out with 76 articles each, marking them as significant contributors to the field. This high citation count showcased their strong research focus and placed them at the forefront of senior tourism scholarship. The overall trend indicates that a small cohort of authors is the principal driver of research and discussion in senior tourism. These authors have made significant contributions to the literature, likely addressing various sub-topics within senior tourism and laying the groundwork for future studies. Their influential work is crucial in setting the research agenda, pinpointing new trends, and enhancing the understanding of senior tourism’s complexities, particularly within the active senior tourist segment.

3.2 Network analysis

In addition to the “science mapping” technique guided by Aria and Cuccurullo (2017), network analysis, which also emphasizes a ‘relational bibliometrics’ was also employed. This approach involved using multiple relational techniques to yield more comprehensive outcomes in systematic review studies (Koseoglu et al., 2022). Relational bibliometrics integrates descriptive analyses, a cornerstone of systematic reviews, with advanced relational analyses, enhancing the depth and scope of bibliometric reviews.

3.2.1 Three-Field plot analysis

This study further examined the relationship between sources, authors, and authors' keywords using a three-field plot analysis, as shown in Figure 4. This multidimensional approach revealed significant research clusters, influential authors, key topics, and leading journals in the senior tourism domain. The analysis indicated that some journals often publish articles from particular authors, indicating a connection between the authors' research interests and the journals' themes. While Table 2 highlights the most influential journals and their contributions, the three-field plot provides complementary insights by visually representing the interactions between 16 journals, 18 keywords, and 20 influential authors in the senior tourism field. The visualization of elements demonstrated connections that may not be immediately apparent in tabular or textual data, such as the alignment of certain authors with specific journals and thematic focuses. *Tourism Management*, for instance, is a popular publication outlet for authors such as 'Losada, N.,' 'Alen, E.,' and 'Dominguez, T.' who prominently contributed to the discourse on 'senior tourism,' 'seniors,' and 'senior travel.' These patterns underscore the journal's specialized focus areas, highlighting its role in addressing trending topics or research gaps within the domain.

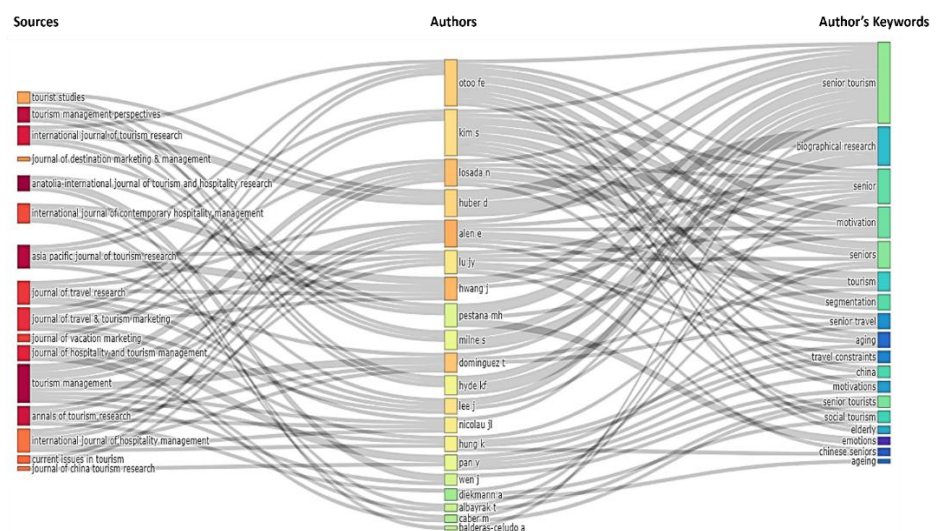


Figure 4. Three-field Plot

3.2.2 Co-word network analysis

Co-word network analysis identifies relationships between keywords provided by the authors of the reviewed articles. This method captures the thematic structure of the research field by analyzing the frequency and co-occurrence of keywords, revealing the primary focus areas and their interconnections. It was used to analyze and identify the intellectual landscape of the senior tourism research domain, specifically to capture potential behavioral dimensions in the active senior segment, including key patterns, trends, and thematic structures (Figure 5). Motivation is depicted as a large, centrally located node, highlighting its fundamental role in senior tourism and its significant connections to other major terms such as 'satisfaction,' 'quality of life,' and 'constraints.' Notably, 'motivation' and 'constraints' are located in the same cluster, indicating that they are often conceptually coupled and discussed within the same studies. Additionally, 'satisfaction' is the second-largest key node and is closely related to 'personality' and 'involvement,' indicating that personal traits and engagement in tourism activities significantly influence senior tourists' satisfaction levels. Furthermore, the term 'quality of life' is the third most prominent and is connected to several other terms that represent the overall well-being of senior tourists including 'health,' 'experiences,' 'benefits,' and 'leisure.' Intriguingly, smaller yet notable nodes like

‘innovation’ and ‘dynamic capabilities’ point to niche research areas that might be emerging or are less explored, which poise to gain prominence and aligns with the current artificial intelligence (AI) and social media trends associated with cutting-edge digitalized technologies. Finally, ‘word-of-mouth’ uniquely connects the ‘image’ sub-cluster, which is related to satisfaction, with the ‘perception’ and ‘intention’ sub-cluster, which is related to motivation. This relationship suggests that recommendations among senior tourists can significantly influence their perceptions and intentions to visit a destination, reinforcing the destination’s image through positive endorsements, potentially to the active senior segment.

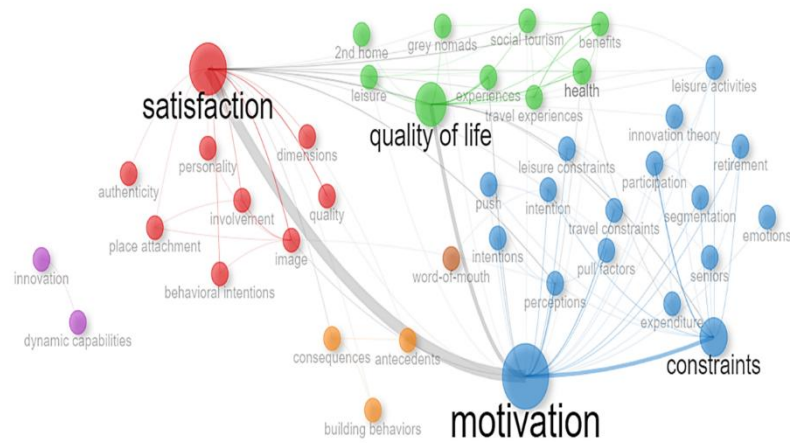


Figure 5. Co-word Network

3.2.3 Trend topic analysis

Figure 6 depicts the trend analysis of research topics and displays the distribution and frequency of key terms within senior tourism literature over time. Prominent central terms include ‘motivation,’ ‘satisfaction,’ ‘quality of life,’ and ‘constraints,’ which align with the co-word network results and confirm their significance in senior tourism research. Notably, the chronological analysis highlights the consistent prominence of ‘quality of life’ and ‘constraints’ throughout the timeline, reflecting their foundational role in the senior tourism literature. Additionally, the analysis revealed a shift in focus from pre-pandemic topics, such as ‘retirement,’ ‘leisure constraints,’ and ‘seniors,’ to post-pandemic themes that encompass ‘quality of life,’ ‘leisure,’ and the evolving interplay between ‘constraints’ and ‘leisure.’ These interconnected terms emphasize the growing focus on well-being and active engagement in tourism for senior populations. Emerging topics, such as ‘innovation’ and ‘dynamic capabilities,’ are also linked to the core themes of ‘quality of life’ and ‘leisure’ in the post-pandemic era, highlighting the potential to enhance active senior lifestyles (e.g., through physical assistive devices and community-based social media activities). Moreover, this shift reflects an increasing emphasis on well-being and experience-focused tourism, where AI and social media can play a critical role by offering personalized and immersive travel experiences tailored to the unique preferences of active senior tourists. The central terms, ‘motivations’ and ‘satisfaction,’ are transitionally connected to the different landscapes of topical trends. This transition suggests a shift in prioritizing well-being and life satisfaction in tourism for the active senior segment, indicating a changing research landscape.

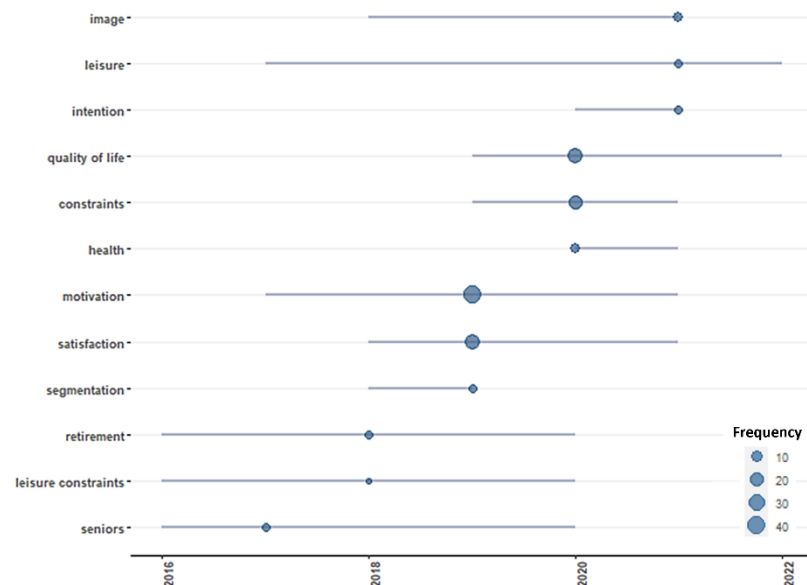


Figure 6. Trend topics

4. Discussion

This study presents a comprehensive systematic review analysis of 110 research articles on senior tourism based on the top-ranked journals among the ABDC-listed journals in the hospitality and tourism discipline between 2013 and 2023. The main theme findings indicated a consistent increase in research on senior tourism over the past decade, accompanied by diverse sub-dimensional thematic focuses that reflect the evolving socioeconomic *mise en scène*.

The recent demographic shift in the aging population has reinvigorated research on senior tourism, as the active senior segment suggested. This shift is characterized by the retirement of the late baby boomers and the approaching fifties of the majority of Generation X (González et al., 2017). Along with socio-environmental changes such as the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, and technological advances, this milestone in the market segment of the aging population has generated considerable academic interest regarding its impact on senior tourism (Patterson & Balderas, 2020), focusing more on their behavioral aspects as active senior tourists. The findings are consistent with this prominent change in the demographic structure and socio-environmental factors, evident in the corpus of senior tourism research.

4.1 Summary of findings

Our findings revealed several common themes within the active senior tourism segment over the past decade. First, past studies have generally focused on understanding the motivations, behaviors, experiences, and constraints of senior tourists (e.g., González et al., 2017; Hung & Lu, 2016), which applies to characterizing the active senior tourism segment. Among these research foci, the study of motivations plays a pivotal role in illustrating the adapted travel motives after the drastic change in living environments (i.e., pre-pandemic vs. pandemic and post-pandemic eras) related to the key themes.

Second, research has explored factors influencing seniors' travel decisions, considering their characteristics, social context, and tourism industry dynamics (e.g., Alén et al., 2017; Nicolau et al., 2020). For example, the findings illustrated distinct travel patterns and preferences among active senior tourists, such as a preference for cultural experiences, a slower pace of travel, and a strong desire for comfort and safety.

Third, research has emphasized the active role of seniors as consumers and decision-makers in the tourism market (e.g., Xiang & Qiao, 2023), highlighting the potential for targeted marketing

strategies and policy interventions to enhance senior travel experiences that contribute to the growth and sustainability of the senior tourism market (i.e., the active senior segment). The tourism industry must recognize and embrace these emerging trends to remain competitive and attract senior travelers. This means that a more nuanced segmentation of the aging population based on age-related events (e.g., health, retirement, and empty nester) should be considered to develop customized targeting strategies.

Fourth, conceptualizing the active senior tourism segment poses a significant research challenge. For instance, the demographic of active senior tourists includes individuals aged between 50 and 75 who represent three distinct generational groups: early Gen Xers, early baby boomers, and late baby boomers. As a subset of the active senior tourism segment, these older adults have unique characteristics, travel interests, and preferences. It is important to note that mere age-based and/or generational categorizations are insufficient to understand this heterogeneous group because they differ in lifestyle, cultural background, health status, and financial resources (Kelly & Kelliher, 2022). Factors such as healthier lifestyles and medical advances have contributed to an increase in life expectancy, with projections suggesting that individuals in their 50s will live up to 100 years in developed countries. This widening spectrum of active seniors requires re-evaluating research methods to study their travel-related perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors effectively.

Finally, senior tourism is strongly influenced by various contextual factors, such as cultural, social, and economic aspects, as well as government policies, regulations, and healthcare services in different countries and regions. Conceptualizing active senior tourism is complex due to the heterogeneity of the active senior population, evolving definitions, dynamic tourism landscape, interdisciplinary nature of the field, and contextual variations. Addressing these challenges requires ongoing research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a nuanced understanding of active senior travelers' diverse needs and preferences within different contexts.

4.2 Concluding Remarks

This study additionally identified the top 10 most cited publications in senior tourism research from the Google Scholar database (as of June 5, 2023), focusing on ABDC-listed journals, and analyzed their key themes to provide more comprehensive and constructive coverage for future research topics and agendas. In addition, this study also collected the three existing systematic review studies regarding senior tourism research from 2013 to 2023. By incorporating widely recognized and diverse sources, this integrative approach enabled the validation of research themes and provided a robust academic consensus on their relevance. This, in turn, enriches the development of a comprehensive and forward-looking research agenda. The top 10 most cited publications and three existing systematic review studies are listed in Table 5, with key findings in Table 6.

Table 5. Most Cited Publications and Systematic Review Publications

Top 10 Most Cited Publications

(1680 times cited in total, ranging from 114 to 228 times per article)

1. Chen, S. C., & Shoemaker, S. (2014). Age and cohort effects: The American senior tourism market. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 48, 58-75. (228 times cited)
2. Alén, E., Nicolau, J. L., Losada, N., & Domínguez, T. (2014). Determinant factors of senior tourists' length of stay. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 49, 19-32. (220 times cited)

3. Kazeminia, A., Del Chiappa, G., & Jafari, J. (2015). Seniors' travel constraints and their coping strategies. *Journal of Travel Research*, 54(1), 80-93. 191 (191 times cited)
4. Hwang, J., & Lee, J. (2019). A strategy for enhancing senior tourists' well-being perception: Focusing on the experience economy. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 36(3), 314-329. (172 times cited)
5. Pestana, M. H., Parreira, A., & Moutinho, L. (2020). Motivations, emotions, and satisfaction: The keys to a tourism destination choice. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 16, 100332. (165 times cited)
6. Lu, J., Hung, K., Wang, L., Schuett, M. A., & Hu, L. (2016). Do perceptions of time affect outbound travel motivations and intention? An investigation among Chinese seniors. *Tourism Management*, 53, 1-12. (154 times cited)
7. Huber, D., Milne, S., & Hyde, K. F. (2018). Constraints and facilitators for senior tourism. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 27, 55-67. (146 times cited)
8. Kim, M. J., Lee, C. K., & Bonn, M. (2016). Social capital and altruism affect seniors' revisit intention to social network sites for tourism-related purposes. *Tourism Management*, 53, 96-107. (145 times cited)
9. Alén, E., Losada, N., & de Carlos, P. (2017). Profiling the segments of senior tourists through motivation and travel characteristics. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 20(14), 1454-1469. (145 times cited)
10. Losada, N., Alén, E., Domínguez, T., & Nicolau, J. L. (2016). Travel frequency of seniors tourists. *Tourism Management*, 53, 88-95. (114 times cited)

Three Literature Review Publications

1. Chang, L., Moyle, B. D., Dupre, K., Filep, S., & Vada, S. (2022). Progress in Research on Seniors' well-being in tourism: A systematic review. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 44, 101040.
 2. Otoo, F. E., & Kim, S. (2020). Analysis of studies on the travel motivations of senior tourists from 1980 to 2017: Progress and future directions. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 23(4), 393-417.
 3. Pestana, M. H., Wang, W. C., & Parreira, A. (2020). Senior tourism—A scientometric review (1998-2017). *Tourism Review*, 75(4), 699-715.
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Table 6. The Key Findings of the Top 10 Cited Publications

Lead author, Year, Source	Target Pop.	Method	Key findings
CHEN SC, (2014). Annals of Tourism Research	Americans	Mail survey (Time series)	- The applicability of life cycle and continuity theories to the senior travel market is significant. - Age effects are more effective than cohort effects in explaining group differences. - The average age of the senior travel market is expected to rise. - The notion of "young seniors" (55 to around 60 years) as non-seniors may be redefined.
ALEN E, (2014). Annals of Tourism Research	Spanish	Telephone survey	- Several factors positively influence the length of stay of Spanish seniors' trips, including age, motivation to visit friends and relatives (VFR), climate attribute of the destination, staying in a holiday apartment or second home, traveling alone, traveling with IMSERSO(Institute for the Elderly and Social Services) which extend their stays and adjust seasonal tourism demand, and engaging in activities such as shopping, organized day trips, and physical/sports activities.
KAZEMINIA A, (2015). Journal of Travel Research	Seniors	Content analysis (websites & blogs)	- Interpersonal constraints, particularly the fear of losing the company of friends and relatives, prominently influence travel decisions and preferences. - Seniors prioritize emotionally meaningful goals in their travel choices, emphasizing the importance of spending time with loved ones. - Seniors negotiate and overcome structural constraints, except in extreme cases, by simplifying their decision-making process, relying on heuristics and past experiences, and utilizing brand-related risk reduction strategies such as purchasing packaged tours.
WANG J, (2019). Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing	Koreans	Onsite survey	- Four sub-dimensions of the experience economy (education, entertainment, esthetics, and escapism) contribute to increased well-being perception in the senior tourism industry. - Well-being perception significantly affects consumer attitudes toward a brand, attachment, and loyalty. - The effectiveness of advertising plays a moderating role in the relationships between the

			sub-dimensions of the experience economy and well-being perception.
PESTANA MH, (2020). Journal of Destination Marketing Management	Seniors visiting Lisbon	Onsite survey	- Satisfaction partially mediates the effect of motivations and emotions on intentions to revisit or recommend a place. - Previous experience moderates the effect of satisfaction on intentions. - Customer satisfaction should be the ultimate goal for businesses in senior tourism. - Advertisements depicting happy life events may be effective in attracting senior visitors. - Positive emotions positively affect satisfaction and intentions to revisit or recommend a place. - Motivations are correlated with and influenced by satisfaction and age in senior tourism.
LU JY, (2016). Tourism Management	Chinese	Onsite survey	- Spontaneous, present-focused seniors represent a valuable travel market, while future-focused seniors present a mixed impact on travel experiences ('++ self-fulfillment' and 'knowledge enhancement' & - 'escape') - PTP and FTP steer travel intention through varying motivation dimensions, with PTP impacting through sensation seeking and self-fulfillment and FTP through self-fulfillment and knowledge enhancement. - Knowledge enhancement is the primary travel motivation for Chinese seniors.
HUBER D, (2018). Tourism Management Perspective	Germans	In-depth interview	- Seniors play an active role in shaping their travel patterns and have consistent personal preferences over time. - Seniors negotiate their tourism behavior as active creators. - Health, emotional state, and social relationships influence seniors' tourism participation.
KIM MJ, (2016). Tourism Management	Koreans	Online survey	- Social capital, strongly influenced by bridging social capital, followed by bonding social capital, has a significant and positive impact on both common bond and shared identity attachment, with a slightly stronger effect on common identity attachment than on common bond attachment. - Altruism, determined by general altruism, followed by indirect and direct altruism, has a significant positive effect on common bond and

			identity attachment, with a greater impact on common bond attachment. - Common bond and common identity attachment significantly and positively influence revisit intention, with the attachment being more influenced by social capital. Altruism has a greater impact on common bond attachment, while common identity attachment is more affected by social capital. - Revisit intention is highly influenced by common identity attachment.
ALEN E, (2017). Current Issues in Tourism	Spanish	Telephone survey	- Five differentiated market segments were identified among seniors: women of advanced age traveling for health reasons, off-season holiday trips, visiting family or friends or staying in a second residence, short work-related travel, and travel for holiday and cultural purposes. - Motivational factors influenced seniors' travel behavior, with work-related travel more prevalent among younger, employed men and retired individuals attracted to attractive landscapes, events, and convenient shopping options. - Word of mouth was a prevalent source of information for the oldest seniors. - Seniors with lower education levels relied more on travel agents for trip planning, and those who used more sources of information devoted more time to destination activities. - The oldest seniors and retired individuals enjoyed longer stays, and those with lower education and income levels showed a greater propensity for bus travel due to cost considerations.
LOSADA N, (2016). Tourism Management	Spanish	Telephone survey	- Women travel more than men, suggesting that the travel industry needs to cater to women, considering their longer lifespan, economic independence, and safety concerns. - Affordable trips can boost year-round senior travel. - The industry should offer shorter, flexible trips to accommodate time-constrained seniors, particularly women.

These studies are primarily concerned with understanding the motivations, behaviors, experiences, and constraints that affect senior tourism, which is generally consistent with the overall findings of the 110 reviewed in this study. Despite some common themes, these studies shed light on how seniors (i.e., active senior tourists) make travel decisions given their characteristics, social context, and industry dynamics. For example, the research generally emphasized the active role of seniors as consumers and decision-makers within the tourism industry. It also highlights the potential of targeted marketing strategies and policy interventions to enhance seniors' travel experiences and contribute to the growth and sustainability of the active senior tourism market. This study extracted the future research agenda, which was compiled and summarized based on the ten most cited and three systematic review papers. The future research agenda can be divided into two main categories: methodology and subject matter (Table 7), which can help improve the methodological rigor of research and expand the scope of future studies.

Table 7. Future Research Agenda from the Most Cited and Systematic Review Publications

Methodology

- 1 Employ qualitative research methods to enhance our understanding of the various dimensions of seniors' well-being in tourism.
- 2 Develop a multidisciplinary framework to clarify seniors' well-being in tourism and identify pertinent well-being dimensions.
- 3 Multi-location study on senior leisure travel preferences.
- 4 Comparative analysis of senior and non-senior travel preferences.
- 5 Longitudinal study on senior tourist behavior.
- 6 Narratives from diverse sources to understand senior tourists' constraints and experiences.
- 7 Include non-Western perspectives and cultural influences in research on tourism and seniors' well-being.

Subject Matter

- 1 Impact of changing lifestyles and retirement on senior travel.
- 2 Investigate seniors' risk attitudes regarding travel.
- 3 Well-being perception in various sectors of senior tourism.
- 4 Psychological and behavioral dimensions of senior tourism.
- 5 The impact of time perspectives on seniors' travel behavior.
- 6 Social dimensions of tourism across cultures – Explore beyond hedonic well-being to include eudemonic aspects like self-growth and personal meaning.
- 7 Investigate the factors and impacts of seniors' tourism well-being, including gender differences and travel types.
- 8 Seniors' travel motivations include destination appeal, knowledge seeking, socialization, novelty, rest and comfort, and escape.
- 9 Focus on knowledge-seeking as a key, underexplored factor in senior travel research.

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- 10 Investigate the rising demand for authenticity and its impact on seniors' tourism experiences, including heritage, craftsmanship, and food origins.
 - 11 Study seniors' growing use of social networks.
 - 12 Ensure balanced gender representation and acknowledge the senior group's diverse perceptions of well-being and travel behaviors.
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In terms of methodological advances, these studies suggest that future research should focus on enhancing understanding through qualitative research methods, developing a multidisciplinary framework to elucidate active senior well-being, conducting multilocation studies of leisure travel preferences, comparing travel preferences between active seniors and non-seniors, investigating active senior tourist behavior through a longitudinal study, exploring narratives to understand constraints and experiences, and incorporating non-Western perspectives and cultural influences.

Regarding the subject matter, these studies suggest that future research should focus on several specific areas, including the impact of changing lifestyles and retirement on senior travel, seniors' attitudes toward risk, perceptions of well-being in different sectors of senior tourism, the social, psychological, and behavioral dimensions of active senior tourism, the impact of time perspectives on seniors' travel behavior, cultural influences, knowledge-seeking, the demand for authentic experiences, active seniors' use of social networks, as well as balanced gender representation and diverse perceptions of well-being and travel behaviors within the active senior segment.

The future research agenda suggests methodological advances such as using qualitative research methods and developing multidisciplinary frameworks. Moreover, future research should focus on investigating the impact of lifestyle changes, understanding perceptions of well-being, and examining the underlying dimensions from psychological, behavioral, and social perspectives.

In addition to the findings from the reviewed articles, the most cited publications in the Google Scholar database, and three systematic review studies, this study underscores the evolving research agenda in active senior tourism that reflects contemporary changes in demographics, economics, social structures, and market demands. The emphasis on these aspects is partly influenced by the retrospective nature of bibliometric analysis, which, while informative, has inherent limitations. Recognizing the field's interdisciplinary nature, the study points to two emerging yet underexplored areas for future research in active senior tourism: the integration of AI and the use of social media. These contemporary issues, which align with the broader themes of 'innovation' and 'dynamic capability' shown in Figure 5, are poised to become central themes in future research. This prospective focus on AI and social media underscores the drive to harness technological advances and digital platforms to enhance the active senior tourism experience, offering new avenues for innovation and adaptive strategies in this dynamic field.

4.3 The current trends and their impacts on senior tourism research in the future

The senior tourism publications reviewed in this study did not identify some critical tourism trends that may impact active senior tourism in the future. Active senior tourism may change significantly, driven by technological advances, travel patterns, and demographic behavior changes. Understanding these changes is critical to shaping the future research agenda and understanding the direction of active senior tourism. The integration of AI-based technologies and the increasing

engagement of active seniors with social media are two key areas that present both challenges and opportunities for enhancing the tourism experiences of the active senior demographic.

In the active senior tourism segment, AI technologies are proving to be a powerful catalyst for increasing productivity, mainly through their application in administrative tasks and customer support. In particular, the role of AI extends to social media platforms and instant messaging apps, where chatbots are increasingly used to improve customer engagement and support (Lučić, 2022). AI devices are broadly categorized into task-oriented and social-oriented types and are central to enhancing tourists' experiences. Understanding the psychological underpinnings that drive the use of task-oriented AI devices is critical for active senior travelers and allows for a more tailored approach to meet their needs (Yang et al., 2022). Furthermore, active seniors' decisions to adopt AI-powered services in tourism and hospitality are influenced by several factors, including perceived usefulness, ease of use, attitude, cost, and technology knowledge (Ho et al., 2022). Given the importance of these factors, researchers need to explore the interplay between these elements and the adoption process of advanced technologies. Such an exploration is essential to improve the travel planning experience for active senior tourists, making it more meaningful and effective.

In the evolving landscape of senior tourism, the intersection of digital technology and the unique needs of the active senior population is becoming increasingly crucial. A recent 2022 report by the Pew Research Center showed a significant increase in smartphone ownership and social media usage among seniors (Faverio, 2022). Along with this trend, the active senior population is increasingly turning to social media platforms such as Facebook for health-related information, which has been particularly pronounced during events like the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift highlights the central role of social media in disseminating information relevant to senior tourists (Hermann & Govender, 2022). Beyond information dissemination, digital platforms play a critical role in alleviating seniors' feelings of isolation, thereby supporting their social and emotional well-being—a key component of active senior tourism (Das, 2023). It is also important to understand the factors influencing active seniors' use of social media, such as perceived usefulness and ease of use. Insights into these factors can guide the development of more effective marketing strategies tailored to senior tourism (Ugalde et al., 2023), especially for the active senior segment. Therefore, future research should focus on these evolving trends and their potential impacts, which could significantly shape the landscape of senior tourism and ensure that it adapts and remains relevant in the digital age.

As the global population evolves, particularly with the growth of the active senior segment, the tourism industry is experiencing a notable shift. This shift is characterized by a growing preference for longer stays and slower travel, especially among retirees seeking immersive experiences that allow deeper engagement with local cultures and lifestyles. This trend is consistent with slow travel, unlike traditional, fast-paced tourism. The key to this shift lies in the need to improve the quality of life of active senior international travelers, a critical aspect in examining how tourism services impact the quality of life and intent to return. Essential factors include medical/public health services, geographical features, and service quality at tourist destinations (Wongcharoenkul & Suntrayuth, 2023). At the same time, it is vital to understand active seniors' travel needs regarding their health and financial status. Research in this area should examine why active seniors may forgo tourism, with comparisons across regions (Przybysz & Stanimir, 2022).

In addition, examining the impact of tourism on seniors' health and mortality risks can provide insights into the intrinsic drivers of active aging tourism by exploring how active seniors' characteristics and strengths relate to tourism value (Qiao et al., 2022). It is also critical to identify the attributes that make a destination active senior-friendly. Factors such as facilities, accessibility, and safety services significantly predict varying degrees of active seniors' travel intentions to these destinations (Leong et al., 2022). Furthermore, exploring middle-aged tourists' perceptions of potential senior-friendly destinations can provide valuable insights into the evolving needs of future

seniors as an active senior segment (Wee et al., 2022). In conclusion, the increasing preference for more extended stays and slower travel among senior tourists opens new avenues for research and development in the tourism industry. Future research should focus on understanding this demographic's specific needs and preferences, including their health, financial situation, and desired experiences, to better serve this growing active senior segment.

4.4 Study limitations

While this systematic review provides comprehensive insights into the trends in senior tourism research over the past decade through a robust methodological framework and an extensive dataset, it still has a few limitations. First, one limitation is the scope of the review, which was limited to articles listed in the Web of Science and the ABDC Journal Quality List. While this selection criterion ensured the quality and relevance of the included studies, it may have missed important findings from studies published in other journals or databases, especially those that are less well-known or emerging. In addition, the reliance on bibliometric analysis and keyword searches may have inadvertently omitted relevant articles. This issue stems from the dynamic nature of research language and terminology, where variations in keyword usage may cause relevant studies to be missed.

One limitation of this review is the exclusion of studies comparing multiple generational cohorts, such as baby boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. While such studies might offer valuable insights into inter-generational differences and broader tourism trends, their scope often lacked a targeted emphasis on the active senior cohort (ages 50–77). This exclusion allowed for a more focused exploration of research specific to active seniors but may have restricted the identification of cross-generational themes. Future research could address this gap by incorporating multi-generational analyses to complement findings specific to active seniors. Another limitation is the temporal scope of the review, which covers a decade of literature. While this provided a comprehensive overview, it may not have fully captured the most recent developments in the rapidly evolving field of senior tourism, especially among active senior tourists. This issue is exacerbated by the inherent lag in academic publishing, where current trends may not be visible in the literature for years after their initial emergence. In addition, the review focused primarily on peer-reviewed journal articles, excluding other forms of scholarly contributions such as conference papers, books, and dissertations. These sources may offer alternative perspectives or innovative approaches not yet prevalent in journal publications.

Furthermore, while the retrospective nature of the bibliometric analysis used in this review provides valuable historical insights, it is another limitation as it may not adequately predict future trends or emerging research areas. This is particularly pertinent in fields influenced by rapid technological advances and changing demographic patterns.

Finally, the methodological rigor of the bibliometric study in its quantitative analysis of the systematic review did not extend to the qualitative aspects of the research papers. This means that the depth of analysis, the context of the findings, and the nuances of the different research methodologies employed in the studies were not fully considered. This suggests the need for a more qualitative or mixed methods approach in future reviews to better capture the richness and diversity of research in senior tourism and scrutinize the active senior segment.

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