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Examining recent research in the field of sharing economy in tourism: Bibliometric and content analysis

Abstract

Sharing economy has become a rather troublesome concept and business model in the process of tourism development during the recent years. Despite its undoubted economic benefits for service providers and consumers, there are numerous negative impacts which can be related to the sharing economy, ultimately leading to unsustainable tourism development on destination level. In general, sharing economy can be attributed numerous benefits, but in terms of tourism, it recently became closely related to the issue of overtourism, thus becoming one of the initiators of negative attitude of the local community towards the future tourism development. Therefore, the concept of sharing economy has been in the focus of numerous researchers during the last several years, with increasing number of papers being published since 2016. This research is focused on analyzing the evolution and importance of sharing economy within the tourism study. The focus is given to the bibliographic analysis of journal articles within the "sharing economy in tourism" search. Additionally, based on qualitative content analysis the aim is to identify current state of the research in this field and to determine research gap with respect to the issue of overtourism and to identify future research potentials.

Key words: sharing economy; tourism; Airbnb; bibliographic analysis; content analysis

1. Introduction

There are numerous reasons why sharing economy can be considered as a milestone in contemporary tourism development. Indeed, it has brought in significant changes into the accommodation sector and has affected quality of life of numerous local communities worldwide. It has added to the effect of gentrification in a number of destinations, along with other drivers of contemporary tourism development. Even though it has had positive impacts on, for instance, increasing accommodation opportunities for tourists or enabling locals to earn additional revenue, it has simultaneously enabled development of overtourism in numerous destinations. It is evident nowadays that tourism is quite under the influence of sharing economy. Moreover, its impacts are more complex than they would seem on the first glance. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyze the evolution and importance of sharing economy in the tourism study.

If sharing economy is analyzed solely through the prism of its impacts on contemporary tourism development, its primary role could be blurred. Namely, today its size has escalated, leading to occasionally uncontrollable effects. Merriam Webster (n.d.) defines sharing economy as an "economic activity that involves individuals buying or selling usually temporary access to goods or services, especially as arranged through an online company or organization". It is primarily related to travel and tourism, but can also be traced within other activities, either economic or social. Sharing economy can also be

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defined as "an economic model defined as a peer-to-peer based activity of acquiring, providing, or sharing access to goods and services that is often facilitated by a community-based on-line platform" (Investopedia, n.d.). The basic presumption of sharing economy lies in its ability to share goods and services without owning them. According to Marr (2016), in the future we will tend to be the owners of much less and will be willing to share much more. Indeed, it seems as though the issue of owning will become less important in the future, the focus will rather be shifted towards possibilities of sharing.

However, in terms of tourism, as Heo (2016) stated, sharing economy as a concept "blurred the boundaries between consumers and service providers as well as local residents and business entities in destinations". This has led to rather overwhelming impacts of sharing economy, primarily through extensive impacts on accommodation supply, but also to increasing possibilities of including properties on online platforms available for others to share. Today it is quite difficult to take a clear standpoint regarding the importance and effects of sharing economy on destination level. It is still not possible to say if the sharing economy is a ban or blessing for tourism, since it affects destinations and service providers to a large extent. However, it seems rational to claim that sharing economy had added to the increased impacts of excessive number of tourist arrivals in destinations. As claimed by Moreno-Gil and Coca-Stefaniak (2020), sharing economy has impacts on all segments of tourism supply – accommodation, transport, food and beverage, tour guides, etc. Furthermore, Goodwin (2017) clearly indicates that sharing economy, primarily Airbnb, is among key initiators of overtourism in destinations. Among the biggest and most negative effects he emphasizes problems in the housing market, which consequently forces up rents and displaces those with low income, ultimately creating disturbance in residential neighborhoods. As such, it is possible to conclude that sharing economy has had numerous effects on socio-economic characteristics of destinations. Nevertheless, at the same time, tourism demand was given much more possibilities for spending their vacation, depending on their budget, lifestyle, beliefs, etc.

Perkumienė and Pranskūnienė (2019) point out that the conflict between locals and entrepreneurs is often initiated with the imbalance of their interests. The third part of that relationship is given to tourists themselves. Since locals are often unsatisfied with consequences of sharing economy and its effects on their living conditions, they tend to express that with negative attitude towards tourism, which in turn leads to decreased level of satisfaction of all stakeholders involved in the process. Furthermore, Koens, Postma, and Papp (2018) claim that overtourism will not be solved by implementing technological or smart solutions alone. Namely, new technologies (among which sharing economy can be listed) tend to intensify specific issues of overtourism in cities.

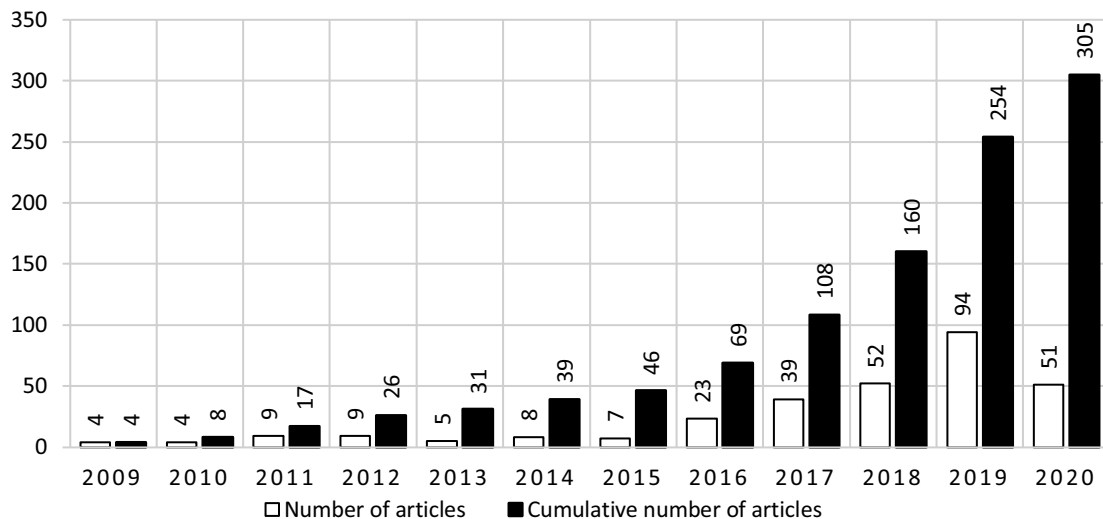
Additionally, it is possible to emphasize that sharing economy has also had impact on the growth of party tourism in destinations, even if such development model was not necessarily in the focus of stakeholders' interests. For instance, along with the growth of budget airlines and social media, sharing economy has led to diversification of tourism market, enabling party tourism to be introduced as a tourism product, occasionally disrupting local livelihoods (Pinke-Sziva, Smith, Olt, & Berezvai, 2019). In general, it is possible to argue that sharing economy, along with other factors, has influenced the increase in tourist numbers and consequently has had impact on temporal and spatial concentration of tourists in certain destinations. In such circumstance, an increasing engagement in tourism dominated activities occurred, resulting with overcrowding, most easily visible in destinations such as Barcelona, Berlin, London, Venice, Dubrovnik, etc. (Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019). A comprehensive analysis of how overtourism has been researched in current tourism literature is provided by Veríssimo et al. (2020), emphasizing that the term is dominantly given negative meaning and is dominantly caused by the emergence of sharing economy in all components of tourism supply.

The impact and importance of sharing economy have come into research focus in 2013, but have become more profound since 2016. On the other side, overtourism has come into research focus in 2017, with increasing number of papers being published since 2018. Based on the former findings, the main research questions of this paper are: *Does the research support the development and importance of sharing economy in tourism? Additionally, which areas are in the focus of researchers' interest?* Based on the bibliographic study and content analysis of published papers within this field, the aim is to provide an overview of the existing findings related to sharing economy, its importance and focus in contemporary research and to determine future potentials of research within this field.

2. Methodology

Before conducting the content analysis of chosen papers, the authors provide bibliographic analysis of journal articles within the "sharing economy in tourism" search. The data was collected from Scopus database on 24 February 2020. The search (title, abstract, key words) resulted with 305 articles for the period from 2009 until 2020. To get an insight into the research conducted in the field of sharing economy, the authors have used several criteria such as: publication year, research area and country/territory of the authors. The increasing interest and focus of the researchers on the sharing economy is evident from 2016 onwards. From 2016 until 2020 as much as 85% of the total number of analyzed journal articles were published. The number of articles almost doubled in 2019 in relation to 2018, as showed in Figure 1.

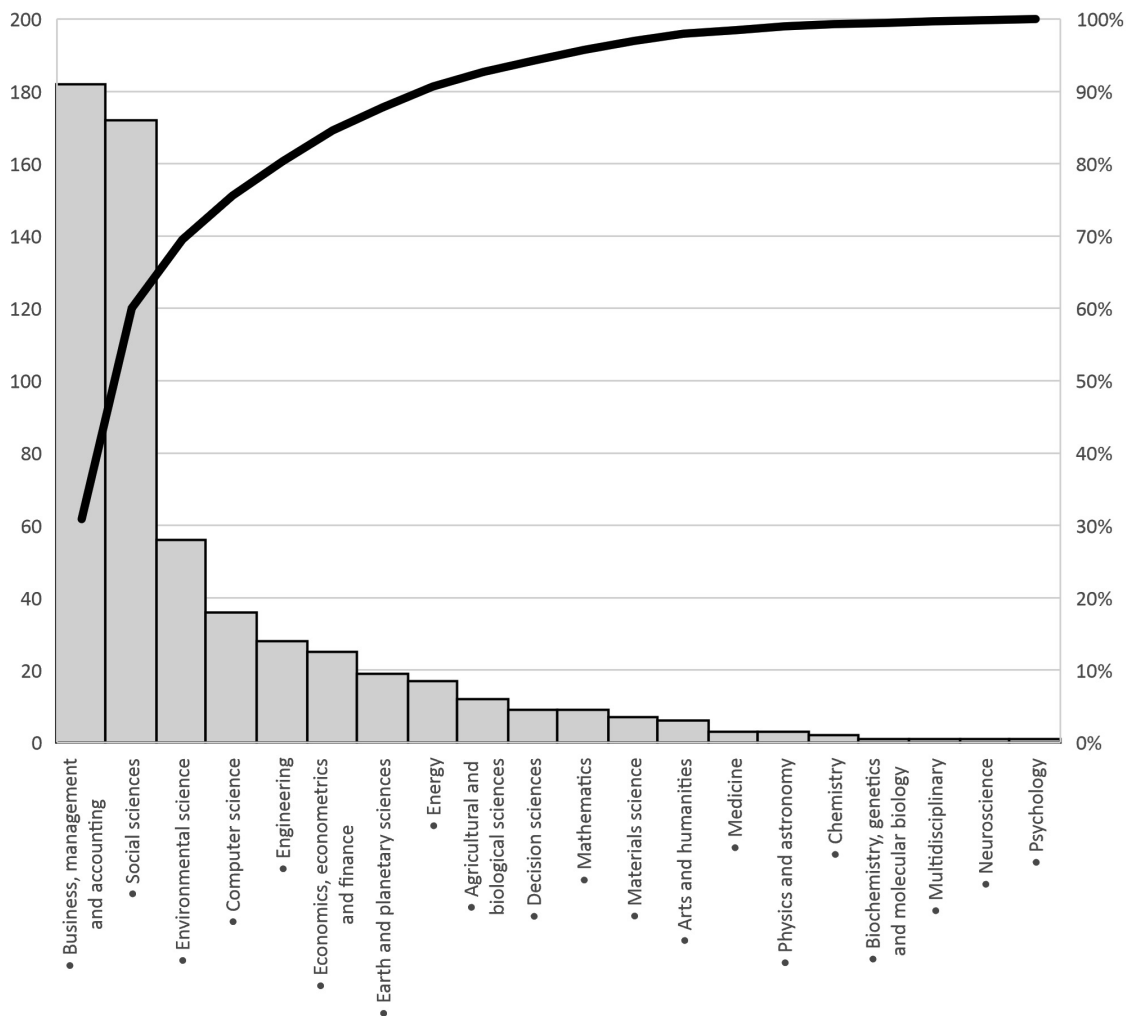
Figure 1
Articles on sharing economy from 2009 to February 2020 (inclusive)



Source: Scopus database.

Analyzed articles were published in 157 different journals within 20 different research areas, which indicates that sharing economy is quite complex and multidisciplinary area. Research areas closely related to sharing economy in tourism involve environmental sciences, computer science and earth and planetary science. This outcome was rather expected, due to the fact that sharing economy in tourism is boosted by technology on the one hand, but also affects the nature to a large extent on the other. Nevertheless, more than one third of all articles is published in 13 journals (11 of them are tourism related, while 2 are published in the field of economy). All research areas with published articles on sharing economy in tourism are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Areas with published articles on sharing economy in tourism



Source: Scopus database.

When it comes to the authors' country/territory of origin, there are 60 different countries on the list. First eleven countries on the list account for more than 80% of all articles (United States (50), Spain (33), Australia (29), China (27), United Kingdom (27), Italy (20), Germany (16), Austria (14), South Africa (14), Netherlands (12) and Portugal (11)). Those countries represent leading receiving tourism markets on global level and have been significantly affected by the increasing impacts of sharing economy. Therefore, the interest of researchers from those countries corresponds with the increasing significance of sharing economy in those markets, especially within the accommodation sector.

Following the bibliographic analysis, the authors conducted citation analysis which resulted with 29 articles cited more than 30 times. This was the criteria for the sample selected for the content analyses, which "enables the researchers to uncover concepts, themes and relationship in the analyzed articles" (Krippendorff, 2012) and to provide valid and trustworthy results.

3. Findings

After the detailed insight into all 29 articles, 6 of them were excluded from further analysis as they have not been related to the sharing economy in tourism. Table 1 contains data about authors and title of the article, year of publication, name of the journal, number of citations in Scopus, geographic area of research, research subject, methodology and short overview of research results. The main conclusions of the analysis are discussed below.

Table 1
Top 23 most cited articles on sharing economy in tourism

No	Authors	Title	Year of publication	Journal	Citations in Scopus	Geographic area of research	Research subject	Methodology	Research results
1	Ert, E., Fleischer, A., & Magen, N.	Trust and reputation in the sharing economy: The role of personal photos in Airbnb	2016	<i>Tourism Management</i>	351	Israel	Airbnb	Exploring demand; primary research; on-line survey and experiment; regression	Based on the trust gained through host's personal photo, it is possible to increase the price of the listing and to expect it to be chosen. Additionally, the authors concluded that host's reputation does not influence listing price and/or likelihood of consumer booking.
2	Cheng, M.	Sharing economy: A review and agenda for future research	2016b	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	222	/	/	Secondary research; co-citation analysis; content analysis	This paper is based upon a thorough review of the sharing economy literature. Additionally, it adds to the knowledge about the sharing economy field.
3	Tussyadiah, I. P. & Pesonen, J.	Impacts of Peer-to-Peer Accommodation Use on Travel Patterns	2016	<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	189	USA and Finland	peer-to-peer accommodation	Exploring demand; primary research; on-line survey; factor analysis	Research results indicate that social and economic aspects of P2P accommodation affect the process of destination selection, increase travel frequency, duration of stay and quality and quantity of activities in destination.
4	Gutiérrez, J., García-Palomares, J. C., Romanillos, G., & Salas-Olmedo, M. H.	The eruption of Airbnb in tourist cities: Comparing spatial patterns of hotels and peer-to-peer accommodation in Barcelona	2017	<i>Tourism Management</i>	145	Spain	Airbnb	Analysis of data driven form Inside Airbnb; regression analysis	Research results indicate that Airbnb predominates around Barcelona's main hotel axis and hotels predominate in some peripheral areas of the city. Authors have found correlation between expansion of Airbnb in certain parts of the city and increase of tourism activity in that same areas.
5	Oskam, J. & Boswijk, A.	Airbnb: the future of networked hospitality businesses	2016	<i>Journal of Tourism Futures</i>	141	/	Airbnb	Scenario workshops; delphi panel; Global business Network ("scenario cross") method	Authors argue that protection of oligopolistic markets will slow down or even disable development of sharing economy; they propose more receptive policies.
6	Heo, C. Y.	Sharing economy and prospects in tourism research	2016	<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	105	/	/	Secondary research	The authors discuss current trends in the sharing economy field and its impacts on tourism development.
7	Germann Molz, J.	Social networking technologies and the moral economy of alternative tourism: The case of couchsurfing.org	2013	<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	98	/	Couchsurfing	Interview	This analysis emphasizes importance of trust and intimacy as a basis for engaging into moral economy.

Table 1 Continued

No	Authors	Title	Year of publication	Journal	Citations in Scopus	Geographic area of research	Research subject	Methodology	Research results
8	Liang, S., Schuckert, M., Law, R., & Chen, C.-C.	Be a "Superhost": The importance of badge systems for peer-to-peer rental accommodations	2017	<i>Tourism Management</i>	82	China	Airbnb	Regression models	Research results indicate two main characteristics of the "Superhost" badge – firstly, it attracts more positive ratings and secondly, guests are keen to spend more money on such accommodation.
9	Gant, A. C.	Holiday Rentals: The New Gentrification Battlefield	2016	<i>Sociological Research Online</i>	82	Spain	Airbnb	Secondary data (Airbnb and Inside Airbnb); primary research; case study; survey	The research indicates negative effect of sharing economy, reflected in the displacement effect. Additionally, as residents move out, tourist investors become the only buyers.
10	Tussyadiah, I. P. & Pesonen, J.	Drivers and barriers of peer-to-peer accommodation stay—an exploratory study with American and Finnish travellers	2018	<i>Current Issues in Tourism</i>	76	USA and Finland	peer-to-peer accommodation	Exploring demand; primary research; on-line survey; factor analysis	This research emphasized that two factors initiate the use of P2P accommodation – social appeal and economic appeal. The barriers emphasized in the article include issues of trust, efficacy and familiarity with the system, and cost.
11	Mody, M. A., Suess, C., & Lehto, X.	The accommodation experiencescape: a comparative assessment of hotels and Airbnb.	2017	<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	70	USA	Airbnb	Exploring demand; primary research; on-line survey; structural equation modeling	The authors emphasize that Airbnb outperforms the hotel industry in dimensions of serenity, localness, communitas and personalization.
12	So, K. K. F., Oh, H. & Min, S.	Motivations and constraints of Airbnb consumers: Findings from a mixed-methods approach	2018	<i>Tourism Management</i>	68	USA	Airbnb	Exploring demand; primary research; qualitative and quantitative; focus groups; on-line survey; PLS	The results of this particular study suggest variables for better understanding of the overall attitude toward Airbnb.
13	Karlsson, L., Kemperman, A., & Dolnicar, S.	May I sleep in your bed? Getting permission to book	2017	<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	46	Australia	Airbnb	Primary research; research of tourism supply; online questionnaire; the dependent variable – choice of a booking request	Results of the study revealed quite high percentage of booking rejection; majority of hosts have rejected actual booking requests through peer-to-peer networks.
14	Forno, F. & Garibaldi, R.	Sharing Economy in Travel and Tourism: The Case of Home-Swapping in Italy	2015	<i>Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism</i>	45	Italy	Home-swapping	Primary research; research of tourism supply; online questionnaire; research of motivation of home-swappers	This study emphasizes that, while budget concern is a key variable of the increase of home-exchange tourism, such way of travelling attracts specific and defined interests and lifestyle and relies heavily on the question of trust.
15	Postma, A. & Schmuecker, D.	Understanding and overcoming negative impacts of tourism in city destinations: conceptual model and strategic framework	2017	<i>Journal of Tourism Futures</i>	43	Germany	Airbnb	Secondary research; research of tourism supply and demand; developing conceptual model	This study deals with impacts of potential aspects of visitor pressure in city tourism.

Table 1 Continued

No	Authors	Title	Year of publication	Journal	Citations in Scopus	Geographic area of research	Research subject	Methodology	Research results
16	Wegmann, J. & Jiao, J.	Taming Airbnb: Toward guiding principles for local regulation of urban vacation rentals based on empirical results from five US cities	2017	Land Use Policy	43	USA	Airbnb	Secondary research; research of tourism supply; analysis was focused on multicity comparison	This study focuses on introducing new regulations and enforcement mechanisms which would enable that benefits of urban rental are greater than its negative consequences.
17	Bridges, J. & Vásquez, C.	If nearly all Airbnb reviews are positive, does that make them meaningless?	2018	Current Issues in Tourism	42	USA	Airbnb	Secondary research; research of both supply and demand; analysis of 400 publicly available reviews posted on Airbnb.com; content and language analysis of reviews	This study emphasizes that the high star ratings do not contain enough data for making an informed choice, adding to the importance of individual reviews as a better tool for decision-making process.
18	Cheng, M.	Current sharing economy media discourse in tourism	2016a	Annals of Tourism Research	40	/	Airbnb, Uber	Research note	This study re-examines traditional roles of tourists and locals and puts them in the context of sharing economy.
19	Cheng, M. & Foley, C.	The sharing economy and digital discrimination: The case of Airbnb	2018	International Journal of Hospitality Management	40	/	Airbnb	Research note	The focus of this study is to relate to the issue of digital discrimination as compared to the overwhelming growth of the sharing economy and its impacts.
20	Martín Martín, J. M., Guaita Martínez, J. M., & Salinas Fernández, J. A.	An Analysis of the Factors behind the Citizen's Attitude of Rejection towards Tourism in a Context of Overtourism and Economic Dependence on This Activity	2018	Sustainability	38	Spain	/	Primary research; research of tourism supply (including local community); semi-structured face to face interviews to residents and quantitative interview to inhabitants	This study focuses on negative attitude towards tourism development expressed by residents living in rented apartments and have been influenced by the increasing rental prices.
21	Richard, B. & Cleveland, S.	The future of hotel chains: Branded marketplaces driven by the sharing economy	2016	Journal of Vacation Marketing	37	/	Airbnb	Secondary research; research of tourism supply; developing scenarios	This study emphasizes that offering a differentiated product in the sphere of sharing economy stands as an opportunity for traditional hotel chains to increase their market share.
22	Tussyadiah, I. P. & Park, S.	When guests trust hosts for their words: Host description and trust in sharing economy	2018	Tourism Management	34	USA	Airbnb	Secondary research: research of tourism supply; text mining techniques	The focus of this study was to identify patterns in host self-presentation by focusing on the words they use to describe themselves.
23	Johnson, A.-G. & Neuhofer, B.	Airbnb – an exploration of value co-creation experiences in Jamaica	2017	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	31	Jamaica	Airbnb	Secondary research; research of tourism demand; a qualitative enquiry through an online content analysis	As the demand for Airbnb services increases, this has effect on local community's earnings, employment and socio-cultural exchange.

Source: Scopus database.

Based on this analysis, it is possible to draw several conclusions about recent findings on sharing economy in tourism. Firstly, the majority of research (57%) is focused on secondary sources, mostly on publicly available reviews of different sharing economy platforms, which dominantly includes Airbnb and Inside Airbnb. Furthermore, Airbnb is in the focus of large number of papers, which is to a certain extent expected outcome, as accommodation is in the focus of sharing economy in tourism and Airbnb has a dominant role. According to PwC report (Osztoivits, Kőszegi, Nagy, & Damjanovics, 2015), in 2015, every day as much as 140 000 people booked accommodation through Airbnb, "making it one of the largest providers of holiday accommodation in the world, valued at 24 billion dollars, overtaking the Marriott hotel chain, which has been valued at 21 billion dollars". Since its launch in 2008, Airbnb has registered an increase from 500 000 to 4 million users (in 2011 and 2013, respectfully). If one would analyse the number of papers focused on researching the Airbnb and its impacts on tourism development, a number of different researches could be addressed (among the most cited ones, e.g. Guttentag, 2015; Bae, Lee, Suh, & Suh, 2017; Cvelbar, Grün, & Dolnicar, 2017; Paulauskaite, Powell, Coca-Stefaniak, & Morrison, 2017; Priporas, Stylos, Vedanthachari, & Santiwatanana, 2017; Adamiak, 2018; Gunter & Önder, 2018; Dogru, Mody, & Suess, 2019; Heo, Blal, & Choi, 2019; Oklevik et al., 2019; Cheng & Jin, 2019). This proves the growing importance of Airbnb and its impacts in different destinations worldwide.

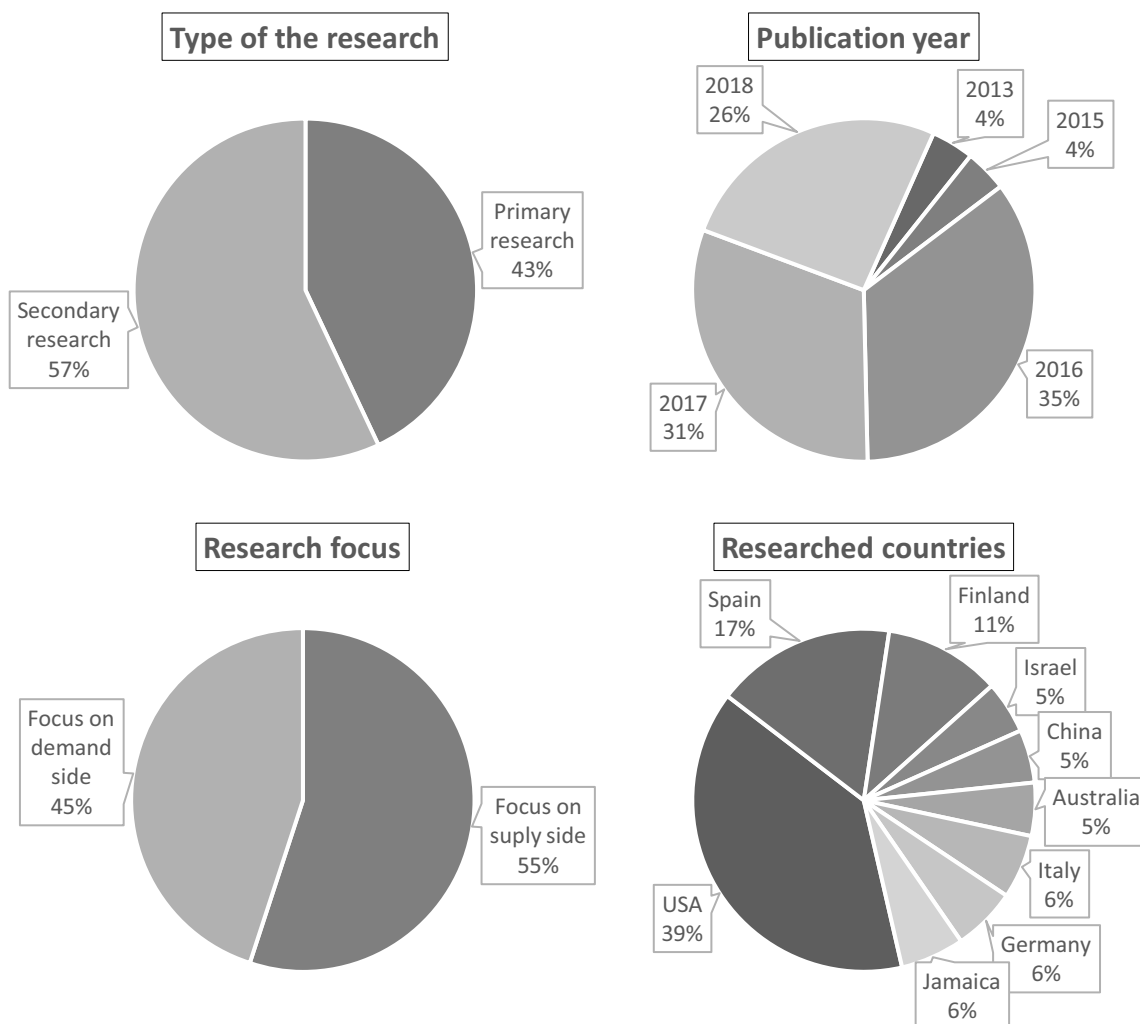
The focus of analysed researches is oriented more on the supply side of the market (55%), but demand is also represented in the research. When analysing the content of the papers, it is possible to outline four areas which are in the focus of researchers:

- 1) Information communication technology
- 2) Consumer behaviour in sharing economy in tourism
- 3) Stakeholders in destination
- 4) Legal aspect of sharing economy in tourism.

Information communication technology (1) is one of the drivers and main elements of sharing economy in tourism. Therefore, it is one of the main research areas within the field. The majority of the IT research connected with sharing economy is based on secondary research, since the usage of IT provides creation of numerous databases. Provided results create a base for further development of IT solutions within sharing economy in tourism. Digital platforms are often used for the research on *consumer behaviour in sharing economy in tourism (2)*. Within this frequently researched area, researchers are focused on advantages and disadvantages of sharing economy for tourists, as well as on effects of sharing economy on travel behaviour, length of stay, activities in destination, etc. Supply side research is focused on *stakeholders in destination (3)*. Interrelation between hotel accommodation and peer-to-peer accommodation provides insight into the effects of sharing economy on hotel accommodation in destinations, as well as into differences between their business models. As already emphasized, sharing economy has been among the key initiators of overtourism in destinations. As such, it has had significant impact on the quality of life of the local communities in destinations. Recent studies within this field shift focus on local communities as a result of the increasing level of awareness about negative aspects of sharing economy in tourism, before all gentrification. Forth area of the research that can be emphasized involves *legal aspect of sharing economy in tourism (4)*. Countries are trying to find a balance to enable development of sharing economy on the one hand, but also to preserve traditional service providers in the destination on the other.

Figures 3, 4, 5 & 6

Analyses of research type, focus, publication year and researched countries for the top 23 most cited articles on sharing economy in tourism



Source: Scopus database.

In the bibliographic analysis, the authors have emphasized significant increase in the number of articles published since 2016. If analyzing the most cited articles, the situation is quite similar. Articles published in 2016, 2017 and 2018 account for 92% of all citations. It is possible to expect that in few years' time, articles published in 2019 and 2020 will have a large share on most cited articles list. Namely, this field of study is growing rapidly and increasing number of researches is being published regularly (e.g. Andreu, Bigne, Amaro, & Palomo, 2020; Batle, Garau-Vadell, & Orfila-Sintes, 2020; Belarmino & Koh, 2020; Chica-Olmo, González-Morales, & Zafra-Gómez, 2020; Dogru et al., 2020a; Dogru et al., 2020b; Dogru et al., 2020c; Gunter, Önder, & Zekan, 2020; Marques & Gondim Matos, 2020; Mody & Hanks, 2020).

Although some of the researches include worldwide data, nevertheless majority of primary research is focused on specific area or county. Within the most cited articles, almost 40% of them refer to the

USA, with Spain and Finland also having significant share (17% and 11%, respectfully). These results are expected, due to the fact that in the USA and Spain sharing economy in tourism is well developed and therefore it attracts the researchers' attention.

When referring to the research questions, it is possible to conclude that research conducted in this field has been corresponding with the growing importance of sharing economy in tourism. Namely, with increasing number of accommodation providers being included on different platforms related to sharing economy, the consequent increasing number of tourist arrivals is causing numerous changes on destination level. Therefore, recent research in sharing economy is becoming more focused on the issues of local communities and the changes in the quality of their lives caused by the sharing economy.

4. Conclusion

The concept of sharing economy has been applied to tourism and was developed within tourism beyond the expected outcome. Therefore, the impacts on destination level have exceeded to a certain extent the management potentials. In such environment it is somewhat expected that the interest of researchers in this field is increasing rapidly. The focus of this study was placed on the content analysis of "sharing economy in tourism" search in Scopus database in the period from 2009 to 2020. The search resulted with 305 published articles and among them, 23 with the highest citations were chosen for the content analysis.

Based on the research results, it is possible to conclude that majority of research within this field was published since 2016, which was rather expected, due to the increasing importance of Airbnb as one of the most commonly researched examples of sharing economy in tourism. Another outcome of Airbnb being in the focus of research is related to two most dominant markets placed in the center of the research – USA and Spain. Research areas focused on the issues of sharing economy in tourism are environmental sciences, computer science and earth and planetary science. Since sharing economy is focused on online communication and developing different platforms that would enable easier and more accessible exchange, the presence of this area in computer science is expected.

Research is dominantly focused on four different areas - information communication technology, consumer behaviour in sharing economy in tourism, stakeholders in destination and legal aspect of sharing economy in tourism. Overall, it can be concluded that sharing economy in tourism is rather interesting and profound research field. On one side it provides numerous potentials for tourism supply and demand to get involved in the exchange process, bringing benefits to both sides. On the other side, however, it has put a lot of burden on the local community, especially on those who are not directly involved in tourism exchange process. As elaborated in the paper, the negative aspect of sharing economy in tourism is related to the increasing number of service providers in tourism destinations, which reflects to the decreasing prices of goods and services, enabling exceeding number of tourists to visit different destinations. This can lead to overcrowding and consequently can be a cause of overtourism in destinations. Therefore, it is crucial for researchers in this field to focus more intensively on its impacts on the local communities and their quality of life.

The limitation of this research arises from including only one database, Scopus. However, since this database includes most relevant and reliable scientific journals, it could be argued that this limitation did not diminish findings of this particular research.

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