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Paradigmatic Blue Economy Literature Review

Abstract

Blue economy is defined by the processes of utilization, preservation, as well as economic activities related to the oceans, seas, and coasts. It enables sustainable economic growth and development based on "blue resources" of developed and developing countries. The biggest challenge of blue economy is to understand and better manage the many aspects of resources found in the oceans, seas, and coasts. Blue economy should also support and further develop other existing sustainable development initiatives. Therefore, the focus of this study is on a new, insufficiently researched concept, more precisely the concept of blue economy, which is extremely important for the preservation of our planet. The purpose of this study is to present a paradigmatic detailed and systematic review of research on blue economy to identify new trends and reduce gaps in the literature.
For this study, a systematic quantitative literature review was used, including a total of 26 studies on blue economy. The articles included in the sample were obtained from global scientific online databases such as Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, Scopus, and Web of Science.
After retrieval, the selected articles were analyzed according to paradigm type, year of publication, geographical coverage, and type of research. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis, and the values obtained from each analysis were presented in absolute or relative values. After analyzing the articles according to the researched topics, a deep analysis of the content of factors contributing to memorable experiences was conducted to identify and select types of tourism.
The results of this study indicate that studies on blue economy started to appear in the global literature only from 2018. According to the conducted geographical analysis, it was found that there are currently no studies on blue economy conducted in Croatia. Further analysis revealed that most authors in studies on this topic used a quantitative research approach. The results of the paradigmatic analysis indicate that most studies on blue economy are of (post)positivist ideology.
The findings of this study offer theoretical implications for improving the understanding of the concept of blue economy, primarily by determining the works on this topic based on the paradigm type they belong. Also, the contribution of this research is reflected in the fact that it represents a pioneering effort in conducting a paradigmatic analysis of studies on blue economy.

Keywords Blue economy, sustainability, social paradigms, systematic quantitative analysis

1. Introduction

Blue economy refers to economic management of oceans and seas, as well as coastal resources, such as maritime transport, fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, mining, and energy. It includes economic benefits and values that cannot be traded on the market like other services or products, such as coastal and underwater protection, biodiversity, cultural-historical values, and carbon storage. Understanding how individuals, businesses, governments, and states make decisions about the use of oceanic and marine resources is the first step towards sustainability (Bertazzo, 2018).

The perception and understanding of blue economy depend on the diversity of perspectives and the benefits that each stakeholder considers according to their position, or the paradigm to which they belong. Paradigm refers to a set of assumptions and worldviews defined by perception that is common to a certain group of scientists within a research community (Given, 2008, p. 951). Each paradigm should be studied through its four fundamental aspects: (1) worldview, (2) epistemological stance, (3) shared beliefs of the research community, and (4) model of research (Sekol & Maurović, 2017, p. 14), as well as ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions. Ontology indicates how a researcher perceives the nature of reality, and seeks to answer the question "What is the nature of reality?" (Taylor & Medina, 2011). Epistemology raises the question "What is the connection between the researcher and the existing knowledge in the literature?", as a philosophical basis for the nature or theory of knowledge in various research traditions (Hoque et al., 2017, p. 103,286,305).

During the 20th century, scientists engaged in polemics over which paradigm is correct and tried to take superior stances over opponents. However, in the beginning of the 21st century, scientists realized that no paradigm can be primary, better, more significant, or superior (Taylor & Medina, 2011), as each expert chooses and applies different research methods depending on the paradigm they belong to, and is driven by the need for a different explanation of deviations that occur during scientific research to overcome the scientific crisis (Lukka, 2010, p. 111). In scientific literature, the following paradigms are most encountered (Park et al., 2020): (1) modernism - (1.1) positivism, (1.2) constructivism, (1.3) criticism, (2) postmodernism, and (3) transmodernism.

Since there is currently no research analyzing the paradigms of articles on blue economy, this study will contribute to reducing gaps, improving attitudes, knowledge of the issues, and highlighting the importance of the problem under investigation. The study is designed to thoroughly analyze articles on the topic of blue economy in the field of tourism and economics based on the theoretical knowledge on paradigms, which will be further described below, with a special focus on conducting a paradigmatic analysis (Table 1), geographical analysis (Table 2), and frequency analysis by year (Figure 3 and 4). The emphasis is on the qualitative approach, which allows for a deeper understanding of existing paradigms, the focus of scientists, and opens suggestions for future scientific research. The article is structured into four chapters: (1) introduction, (2) theoretical framework, (3) methodology, (4) analysis, (5) conclusion, and list of references.

2. Theoretical framework

The positivist paradigm dominated science for over a hundred and fifty years (Keeley et al., 1988). The ontology of the positivist paradigm tells us that society is organized by laws and can be predicted and observed, the scientist wants to measure variables, and observes the world through a one-way mirror (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In social sciences, such an approach is exclusive because it excludes the human factor and life experiences (Taylor & Medina, 2011), which leads to the conclusion that the scientist is only a controller of the research process itself. In the positivist paradigm, epistemology is an objective relationship between the researcher and the subject, where the researcher cannot influence the obtained results (Ponterotto, 2005). In the methodology of positivism, quantitative-statistical methods are used, and it is based on hypotheses with the characteristics of deductiveness and ethics, with distancing (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The most significant difference in the application of paradigms between positivists and other ideologies is the fact that, besides the aforementioned quantitative research, strict adherence to the hypothetical-deductive method, and the focus on checking hypotheses that can be converted into mathematical formulas that express functional relationships, thus, positivists distance themselves from the object of study, while other scientists participate at least partially in the research process (McGrath & Johnson, 2003).

When applying the interpretive (constructivist) paradigm, scientists change their research approach and oppose positivism, turning to values and ideologies that consist of multiple realities complex in human minds (Healy & Perry, 2000). Ontologically, there is no single truth, intending to see the world through the eyes of the subject, where the researcher must be a passionate participant in the interaction with the subject (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). The epistemology of the interpretive paradigm is inter-subjectivism based on understanding and knowledge of the other through the extended process of interaction, such as interviews and observation of participants, to present them as credibly and authentically as possible, while qualitative methods are mostly used in the research approach, and quantitative methods are also welcome (Healy & Perry, 2000, Richardson, 2000).

The critical paradigm contrasts with traditional theory, which is manifested in an ontological position that is historical realism, where the starting point is that reality is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values, which suggests that the epistemology is subjectivism based on phenomena in the real world and is related to ideologies (Cohen et al., 2017). The relationship between the researcher and the subject is interactive, acknowledging issues of power and trust. Asghar (2013) believes that scientists are not particularly linked to any research method, so they use qualitative, quantitative, or combinations of both methods, which leads to the conclusion that there is no concept of "methodology." Scientists of the critical paradigm are advocates of the bias of the system, and this subjectivity is particularly evident in the negative context of the social position of women and marginalized ethnic

groups, and scientific research should be conducted with the explicit aim of social change as an ultimate priority (Scotland, 2012). The critical paradigm gives rise to the sub-critical paradigm of feminism, which focuses on women in research, exploring women's life experiences, with the hope that research will contribute to understanding gender relations and knowledge, and enrich existing knowledge. The epistemology of feminism "gives voice to women" (Given, 2008).

Postmodernism is a paradigm that changes the view of all previous knowledge, which has been taken for granted without additional questioning of their truthfulness, denies absolute truth, and supports critical thinking, rejecting modernism, or materialism. Regarding ontology, realities are created, continuous changes occur, epistemology highlights subjectivism in that everything is relative, while methodology emphasizes new ways of acquiring knowledge and using different types of methods and data collection, where interpretive and critical methods come to the fore and are more suitable for studying plural societies (Best & Kellner, 1991). Postmodernism brings cultural changes, or cultural imperialism, which changes people's perception of existence, perception of the world and the environment, and re-examination of previous scientific knowledge (Watson, 2012, DeCarlo, 2018).

The latest paradigm, transmodernism, takes the best from the existing paradigms of modernity and postmodernism, and is structurally opposed to them. Ateljević (2009) shows the Modern (thesis) -> postmodern (antithesis) -> transmodern (synthesis) developmental transformation towards transmodernism, explaining how it represents a synthesis of modernist paradigms (positivism, constructivism, and criticism) and the postmodernist paradigm, wholly directed towards the future, with the establishment of moral norms on liberal, pragmatic, and pluralistic principles. The ontology of transmodernism emphasizes the destruction of materialism and the understanding that each participant is a small part of a large community, with epistemology suggesting that current knowledge creates new knowledge (Ivanović, 2015), and methodology uses a whole range of different methods aimed at bridging theories.

3. Methodology

Scientific literature was searched using the keywords "Blue Economy" and "Blue Growth" on online databases such as Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, Scorpus, and Web of Science. The criteria used in selecting publications were: (a) articles published only from 2018-2022, (b) articles that addressed the examination of Blue Economy and Blue Growth in economic and tourism research, and (c) articles written only in English and Croatian. While respecting the elimination criteria, a total of 103 articles were selected, and downloaded using the reference management software Mendeley, where all the articles were processed, read, and examined in detail to determine their match to the research topic. Out of the total of 103 articles, the final sample consisted of twenty-six articles, which fully met the criteria. The data for each article were

processed, including (a) the year of publication, (b) geographical coverage, (c) the research method, and (d) the paradigm to which they belong. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods in Excel and presented graphically. Regarding the paradigm membership, content analysis was used as a scientific research method (Sarantakos, 2005).

4. Results of the research

Descriptive statistical methods were used for data processing in the conducted research, based on which the results for: paradigm analysis (Table 1), geographic analysis (Table 2), and frequency analysis by year (Table 3) are presented below.

Table 1. Paradigmatic analysis of blue economy articles

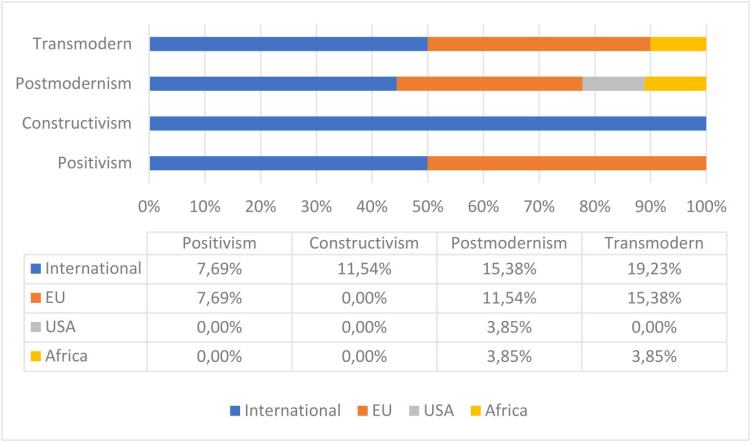
Paradigm type	**Resources**	***f***	**%**
Positivism	Garza-Gil,Varela-Lafuente & Pérez-Pérez 2018; Cohen et al. 2019; Kabil et al. 2021; Surís-Regueiro et al. 2021	4	15,38%
Constructivism	Tijan, Jović & Hadžić 2021; Lee et al. 2021; hall 2021	3	11,54%
Criticism	/	0	0,00%
Postmodern	Clark Howard 2018; Alempijević & Kovačić 2019; López-Bermúdez, Freire-Seoane & Pateiro-Rodríguez 2020; Campbell et al. 2020; Leea, Nohb & Khim 2020; Kovačić, Perinić & Kerčević 2021; Qi 2022; Shiiba et al. 2022; Niner et al. 2022	9	34,62%
Transmodern	Burgess et al. 2018; Reinertsen & Asdal 2019; Wenhai et al. 2019; Pafi, Flannery and Murtagh 2020; Choudhary 2021; Schutter et al. 2021; Estes Jr. Et al. 2021; Tirumala & Tiwari 2022; Pizzichini Andersson & Gregori 2022	10	38,46%
Total		26	100%

Source: Authors' research

Through the paradigmatic analysis of twenty-six articles on Blue Economy, it was found that there is a significant change in pragmatic thinking in science, i.e., how scientists are developing with the advent of newer scientific paradigms, which is reflected in the research results, where out of the analyzed articles, 34.62% belong to postmodernism, and 38.46% belong to transmodernism. When choosing the methodology, qualitative methods were slightly more represented compared to quantitative and mixed research methods, with an emphasis on content analysis and case studies. Positivism brings an objective, realism-oriented view in the articles, while transmodernism brings new visions and solutions for the applicability of Blue Economy at the global level, taking the best from all research regardless of their affiliation to other paradigms, while simultaneously accepting the established theses, setting new antitheses, and offering a new scientific reality as a synthesis. As Blue Economy is a concept that emerged in the last decade, and scientific research has been more present after 2018, there is scientific value in the possibility of comparing articles across all paradigms, opening space for new scientific knowledge.

The geographic analysis of the articles was conducted according to the types of research paradigms defined by the paradigmatic analysis - positivism, criticism, postmodernism, and transmodernism. Most of the research was conducted internationally regardless of the paradigm (53.85%), where authors use the opportunity of global research to contribute to global development. In Europe, 34.62% of research was conducted, focusing on specific countries that have seas and generate interest in the development and applicative possibilities of blue Economy, such as Croatia, Germany, Belgium, Norway, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, and Portugal. Positivism is equally present in international research and research conducted in the European Union, both at 7.69%, constructivism (11.54%) is exclusively related to international research, while postmodernism is present in the United States, where no other paradigm was recorded in the analysis. The African region is covered in postmodernism and transmodernism, both at the same percentage of 3.85%.

Table 2: Geographic analysis of articles

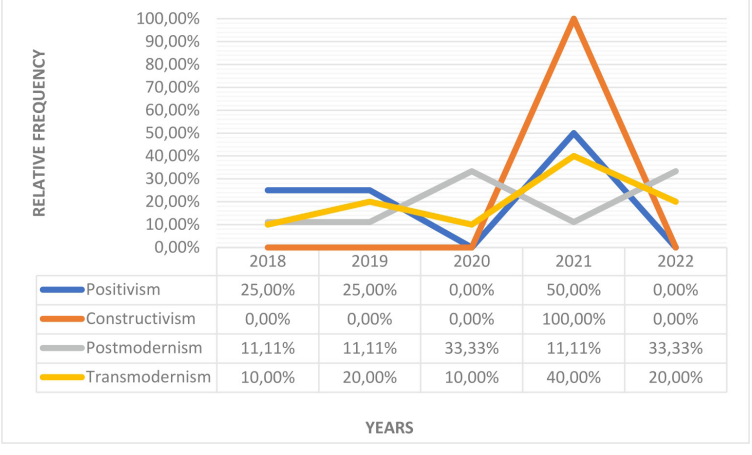


	Positivism	Constructivism	Postmodernism	Transmodern
International	7,69%	11,54%	15,38%	19,23%
EU	7,69%	0,00%	11,54%	15,38%
USA	0,00%	0,00%	3,85%	0,00%
Africa	0,00%	0,00%	3,85%	3,85%

Source: Authors' research

Through the frequency analysis by year, a trend, and an increase in articles on Blue Economy are visible each year. The conducted research shows that a significant number of articles started in 2021, where scientists recognized the political-economic influences of Blue Economy on economies, sustainable development, and local populations, and this trend continues in 2022. A significant increase in the number of articles was recorded in 2022 across all databases. The year 2021 represents the most prominent year in this research, accounting for 38.46% of selected articles in the sample.

Table 3: Analysis of relative article frequencies by year and paradigm



	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Positivism	25,00%	25,00%	0,00%	50,00%	0,00%
Constructivism	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	100,00%	0,00%
Postmodernism	11,11%	11,11%	33,33%	11,11%	33,33%
Transmodernism	10,00%	20,00%	10,00%	40,00%	20,00%

Source: Authors' research

Through the frequency analysis of articles (Table 3) considering the year and paradigm, the constructivism study was published only in 2021, unlike postmodernism and transmodernism, which are represented in each year from 2018 to 2022. Positivism appears in 2018, 2019, and 2021. These data are indicators of changes in the acceptance of ontology and epistemology in the scientific community, which directly leads to a change in the pragmatic approach to science and scientific research.

5. Conclusion

Paradigms play an important role in understanding the written scientific content, especially in the context of ontology, epistemology, and methodology. The way a scientist sees the world - ontology and the relationship between the researcher and the object of research - epistemology directly influences the choice of research methodology. As Blue Growth is becoming increasingly important in the implementation of national development strategies of countries with access to oceans and seas, twenty-six scientific articles on Blue Economy and Blue Growth were selected for this research. Through detailed analysis, it was determined that each author has their approach to the scientific problem, and based on this, they choose the research methodology with their position serving as a basis for determining the type of paradigm they belong. The results show that postmodernism and transmodernism approaches dominate, with the transmodernism paradigm being the most represented, followed by postmodernism, positivism, and constructivism scientific approaches. The critique paradigm was not represented in the sample. All further analyses were done based on the examples of positivism, constructivism, postmodernity, and transmodernism. Although the sample of articles for frequency analysis by year was taken from the period of 2018-2022, the results show that the highest number of articles was written in the last two years. The geographical analysis shows that articles were written covering the whole world, followed by the European Union, but it is noticeable that individual countries with economic interests in implementing the achievements of blue Economy were covered in the articles.

Given the results of the research that provided insight into published articles on Blue Economy and Blue Growth, certain limitations were noticed, which future research can eliminate. To obtain a larger sample and representativeness of the results, more databases can be included in the research, in addition to the used Scorpus, Google Scholar, and Emerald Insight databases. In line with this, it would be interesting to conduct a bibliographic analysis according to the journal name and the field of science that the journal mostly belongs to. The biggest limitation, or scientific constraint in this research, lies in the fact that there is not a significant number of articles in the fields of economics and tourism that belong to postmodern or transmodernism paradigms, leaving an enormous space for scientists to direct their research based on these ideologies, thus questioning, developing existing paradigms, and creating a

basis for further development of knowledge and insights related to Blue Growth and Blue Economy in the economic-tourism field, applicable both on the global-macro and local-micro level.

6. Contribution

The contribution of this research is of exceptional significance to scientists because based on the conducted analyses and obtained results, insight into the current paradigmatic structure of articles in the field of Blue Economy and Blue Growth can be obtained. The results of future research, particularly oriented towards postmodern and transmodern ideology, can provide better insight into the current state of implementation of development strategies in this field and provide guidance to responsible persons in both the public and private sectors on how to orient themselves and in which direction to start their future development efforts towards achieving long-term success that Blue Economy offers.

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