Analysis of Absorptive Capacity in the Field of Tourism: Bibliometric Study of Theoretical Conceptual Evolution between 1996 and 2021

Análise da Capacidade Absortiva no Campo do Turismo: Estudo Bibliométrico da Evolução Conceitual Teórica entre 1996 e 2021

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ABSTRACT

Literature on absorptive capacity and related topics, such as knowledge sharing and transfer, has grown rapidly in several areas of knowledge. But this growth is still incipient in the field of tourism, even though it is a knowledge-based industry, which has processes

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for capturing information through interaction with the consumer, which makes it possible to share knowledge. From this, one can see the scarcity of studies on absorptive capacity, more specifically of studies that investigated the processes of acquisition, assimilation, transformation and exploitation of external knowledge in the field of tourism. The present study seeks to answer the following research question: how did the conceptual-theoretical evolution of the thematic absorptive capacity in the field of tourism occur in the period from 1996 to 2021, and what are the influences, existing currents and current fronts in the theoretical field, which study this theme? The study is carried out through a bibliometric analysis, as the use of this technique makes it possible to identify the development of a scientific field and reveals how its evolution has occurred over the years (Zupic & Cater, 2015). Among the five techniques of bibliometric analysis, the present study presents analysis of co-citation and bibliographic coupling, which are considered the main techniques of bibliometric analysis. We collected a sample of 273 scientific articles in the Web of Science (WoS) database on absorptive capacity in the field of tourism and, using the Vosviewer software, maps of co-citation and bibliographic coupling were performed. The main contribution of this study is exploratory. That is, in addition to mapping the theoretical-conceptual evolution, more specifically the main theoretical influences, existing theoretical currents and current theoretical fronts on the subject in the field of tourism, the study presents a starting point for future descriptive and causal studies, especially in the clusters formed in the bibliographic coupling map

Keywords: Absorptive Capacity, Tourism, External Sources of Knowledge, Bibliometric Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Absorptive capacity (ACAP) is a multi-faced concept, with several definitions in the literature, which share a common understanding: ACAP is a combination of efforts from the organizations with the purpose of acquiring and using external knowledge for the acquisition of a sustainable competitive advantage. It is about a multidimensional construct composed by four processes, being the acquisition, the assimilation, the transformation and the

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application of knowledge (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Zahra & George, 2002; Lane *et al.*, 2006; Lev *et al.*, 2009; Zhang *et al.*, 2019). The initial definitions related the absorptive capacity with the propensity of the company towards research and development (R&D), on the other hand the posterior definitions expanded the notion of absorptive capacity to the organizational and inter-organizational, going beyond the area of R&D (Tsai, 2001; Loureiro *et al.*, 2019; Zhang *et al.*, 2019).

The literature on the absorptive capacity and related themes, such as knowledge sharing, has spread exponentially in several areas of knowledge. However, despite its expansion, the theme is still incipient in the field of tourism. This is surprising, having at sight that the field of tourism is predominantly based on knowledge, with constant processing of information that are captured through the interaction with clients, enabling the reuse, storage, transference and production of knowledge (Lima *et al.* 2021; Noerchoidah & Harjanti, 2019; Enz & Way, 2016; Bezerra et al. 2016 Hallin & Marnburg, 2008). Despite the scarcity of publications on knowledge sharing in tourism companies, the few publications found focused on investigating the impact of internal sources of knowledge (Bontis *et al.*, 2015; Binder, 2019) and the impact of external sources of knowledge (Thomas & Wood, 2015; Hon & Lui, 2016) on the development of the companies.

The innovations which are resultant from the absorptive capacity of the organization play an essential role to competitiveness and to the success of the companies linked to the tourism sector (Binder, 2019; Enz & Way, 2016). The innovations in tourism are generally caused due to an intense human activity, in which collaborators in the line of front and consumers interact and are involved simultaneously in the process of elaboration and implementation of the innovations (Chang, Way & Cheng, 2018). However, there are few studies on such innovations of this field, Cadwallader *et al.* (2010) e Chang *et al.* (2011), for example, highlighted the essential role of collaborators who act in constant interaction with the clients (line of front) in the development and application of innovations, but did not investigate the four processes of the

absorptive capacity in the tourism industry.

The service provided in tourism organizations consist in the interaction between collaborators and clients, being that the execution or the delivery of a new service occurring in a joint form, being the client the essential part in the improvements which are implemented (Bezerra *et al*. 2022; Rios et al. 2021; Enz & Way, 2016). The innovations are possible through incremental or radical changes in products or services. In this sense, the tourism companies need to implement constant improvements in their services based on two main factors of innovation in services. The first refers to the role of collaborators who interact with the clients and the motivation of such collaborators in promoting improvements in the services (Hon & Lui, 2016). The second is related to the ability of the absorption of the organization to the acquisition, assimilation, transformation and application of knowledge (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Lowik *et al.*, 2012; Noerchoidah & Harjanti, 2019).

By analyzing the studies on ACAP in the field of tourism, it is observed that the few published studies neglect in investigation the four dimensions of the absorptive capacity that were presented in the model of Zahra & George (2002). Such model is composed by four processes that constitute the absorptive capacity, being them: the process of acquisition, assimilation, transformation and application of external knowledge. Therefore, the premise of this study is that the organizations which have such processes are able to promote innovations in higher degree when compared to those which are not capable of executing such processes. Previous studies, such as the one by Thomas & Wood (2015) stated that the organizations that act in the field of tourism are extremely dependent on the search of knowledge of exterior sources. This occurs due to the uncertainty of the tourism sector, to the intense competition between the companies and to the demands of the clients changing constantly.

The literature on ACAP in the field of tourism demands new studies which approach the four processes of ACAP's formation (Zahra & George, 2002), once that previous studies focused only on the process of acquisition of external knowledge, such as the study of Thomas & Wood (2015). From such

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context, this study aimed at answering the following research question: how did the conceptual-theoretical evolution of the absorptive capacity occur in the field of tourism and what are the influences, existing currents and actual front-sides in the theoretical field, which study such themes? And, therefore, the main purpose is to understand the conceptual-theoretical evolution of the absorptive capacity in the field of tourism. For this, we analyzed 273 documents from two bibliometric techniques: co-citation and bibliographic coupling (paring). We used the VOSviewer software to identify the theoretical currents, which allowed us to identify clusters and the borderline relations of the studies.

The study is structured into five sections. The first presents the introduction with a brief contextualization on the absorptive capacity, relevance and object of study. The following section exhibits the theoretical founding, with the discussion of the appearance, evolution and the main theoretical currents on the absorptive capacity. The third section presents the adopted methods, in addition to the methodological approach, the instruments of data gathering and the tools for the analysis of data. In the next section, the analysis and discussion of data is presented. And, at last, the fifth and last section presents the conclusion of the study, the management and theoretical contributions, in addition to the limitations and suggestions for future studies.

THEORETICAL REFERENCE

Absorptive capacity

The first definition of absorptive capacity (ACAP) was introduced by Cohen & Levinthal (1990), which defined ACAP as "the ability of an organization in acquiring, valuing, assimilating and generating new knowledge, with the purpose of obtaining a sustainable competitive advantage". The ACAP, in other studies, was understood as a broad group of essential abilities to code the tactical knowledge explicitly so that the

organization becomes able to use and remold such knowledge according to the environmental conditions (Mowery & Oxley, 1995; Zahra & George, 2002).

Despite the ACAP being a multi-faced construct, an expressive body of researchers state that it is about a specific type of dynamic capacities, being its concept inserted in studies which focused on dynamic capacities (Teece, 2007; Zollo & Winter, 2002). The dynamic capacities are understood as the management ability fo recombine and reconfigure the resources and the routines of an organization according to the pressures and environmental changes, therefore, being the absorptive capacity beneficial to the organization, mainly in dynamic and turbulent markets (Zahra *et al.*, 2006; Teece, 2007; Pisano, 2017).

The most influential study that states that the ACAP is a specific type of a dynamic capacity was developed by Zahra & George (2002). In this study, the authors presented a model that divides ACAP into two dimensions, being the potential capacities (PCAP), linked to the processes of acquisition of external knowledge and to the assimilation of knowledge by the members of the organization, and the realized capacities (RCAP), related to the transformation of the acquired and assimilated knowledge so that the organization is able to use and apply such knowledge, whether in the form of improvements, or in the creation of new products, services and processes (Gebauer *et al.*, 2012).

The potential absorptive capacity (PACAP) is referred to the ability of the company in mapping and acquiring external knowledge considered critical to the processes and operations of the organization. The routines of the acquisition of external knowledge have three essential characteristics, which are able to impact the absorptive capacity of the organization: intensity, speed and direction (Zahra & George, 2002; Gebauer *et al.*, 2012; Denicolai *et al.*, 2016). The assimilation understands the routines as processes of the organization that enable it to analyze, to process, to interpret and to comprehend the information obtained through external sources (Szulanski, 1996; Zahra & George, 2002; Gebauer *et al.*, 2012).

The realized absorptive capacity (RACAP) emphasizes the propensity of

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the organization in transforming such new knowledge in improvements in its operation and in implementing of innovations, the realized absorptive capacity is composed by two aspects, transformation and exploitation (Zahra & George, 2002). The transformation is responsible for developing and improving the routines which aid the combination of the existing knowledge and the knowledge acquired and assimilated by the organization (Zahra & George, 2002; Gebauer *et al.*, 2012; Denicolai *et al.*, 2016).

The exploitation is about the application of the knowledge and is related to the routines which enable the organizations to improve, broaden and to boost existing capacities or constructing new ones based on the incorporation of the acquired and transformed knowledge. However, the presence of such routines strengthen structural, systemic and processional mechanisms, which capacities the organizations in acquiring and sustaining the sustainable competitive advantages (Tiemessen *et al.*, 1997; Zahra & George, 2002; Salunke *et al.,* 2019). These two dimensions of the absorptive capacity that were introduced in the literature by Zahra & George (2002) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Dimensions of the Absorptive Capacity

Dimensions	Components	Role and Importance	Citations
Acquisition	• Previous investments • Previous knowledge • Intensity • Speed • Direction	• Scope search • Perceptive scheme • New connections • Fast learning • Quality learning	Boynton, Zmud, & Jacobs (1994); Cohen & Levinthal (1990); Keller (1996); Kim (1998); Lyles & Schwenk (1992); Mowery, Oxley, & Silverman (1996); Van Wijk, Van den Bosch, & Volberda (2001); Veugelers (1997)
Assimilation	Understanding	• Interpretation • Comprehension • Learning	Dodgson (1993); Fichman & Kemerer (1999): Kim (1998); Lane & Lubatkin (1998); Szulanski (1996)
Transformation	• Internalization • Conversion	• Synergy • Recodification • Bi-association	Fichman & Kemerer (1999); Koestler (1966); Kim (1997b, 1998); Smith & DeGregorio (in press)
Exploitation	• Use • Implementing	• Main competences • Resource capture	Cohen & Levinthal (1990); Dodgson (1993); Kim (1998); Lane & Lubatkin(1998); Szulanski (1996); Van den Bosch, Volberda, & de Boer (1999); Van Wijk, Van den Bosch, & Volberda (2001)

Source: Zahra & George (2002), Pág. 7

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The previous experience of the organization is understood as a precedent of the absorptive capacity, since the previous experiences of the organizations define the locus of the technology research of an organization, and, therefore, the organizations aim at references and information in areas where they were successful (Cyert & March, 1963; Christensen, 1997). Thus, the absorptive capacity is related to the organization memory (Walsh & Ungson, 1991), which refers to the repertoire of the knowledge from an organization (Herriot *et al*., 1985; Moorman & Miner, 1998; Zahra & George, 2002).

The potential and realized absorptive capacity are influenced by social integration mechanisms, which operate to reduce the gap between the potential and realized capacity, expanding the abilities of the organizations in executing the processes of acquisition, assimilation, transformation and usage of the knowledge. Therefore, this way, they favor the knowledge sharing within the organizations, with routines of problem-solving, rotation of positions, quality circles, among others. Which means, the interaction between the collaborators provides an environment that stimulates the absorptive capacity of the organization (Zahra & George, 2002; Vega-Jurado *et al.,* 2008). The Practices related to both dimensions of the Absorptive Capacity are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Practices related to the two dimensions of the Absorptive Capacity

Knowledge Processes	Indicators and notions related to the constructs
Potential Absorptive Capacity - PACAP	

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Learning processes: Exploratory process of learning	— Opening to external sources of knowledge — Recognition of external sources of knowledge — Engagement in group projects of knowledge creation — Regularity of the meeting with external sources — Motivation to use external sources of knowledge — Identification of new knowledge in external sources — To generate information on the business environment relevant to new business opportunities — Acquisition of knowledge through several sources — Selection and retention of knowledge obtained through external sources — To classify and internalize the acquired knowledge
Assimilation learning processes	— Shared interpretation of the recently acquired knowledge — Discussion of the acquired knowledge — Obtaining the group comprehension of the acquired knowledge — Integration of new knowledge in the company's basis — Dissemination of new knowledge in all company — Using tools to disseminate knowledge in all the company
Realized Absorptive Capacity - RACAP	
Learning transformation processes	— Maintenance and re-activation of knowledge — Creation of new knowledge from the acquired knowledge — Reconstructing the acquired knowledge — Enabling the transfer and new associations related to knowledge — Discursive interpretation of knowledge — Aggregating new knowledge to the acquired knowledge — Constructive combination and re-combination of knowledge — Linking the existing knowledge with new insights
Exploratory learning processes	— Using knowledge in commercial applications — Knowledge application for commercial purposes — Launching innovations in the market — Conversion of innovation ideas in commercial applications — Using the generated and disseminated knowledge in market activities — To engage innovations of products and services — Commercial use of knowledge

Source: Adapted from Gebauer, *et al*. (2012)

METHODOLOGY

The study was developed through a bibliometric analysis. The use of such technique enables the identification of the development of a scientific field and reveals how the evolution of such scientific field has occurred throughout the years (Zupic & Cater, 2015). Bibliometry allows to identify the knowledge growth trend in a certain discipline, dispersion and obsolescence in scientific fields, authors and more productive institutes, and more used journals in the disclosure of researches in a certain area of knowledge (Zhu *et al*., 1999).

In the literature, five main techniques are found for the bibliometric analysis: a) citation analysis; b) co-citation analysis; c) bibliographic coupling (pairing); d) co-authorship analysis, and, at last, e) co-word analysis (Zupic & Carter, 2015). In this study, techniques of co-citation and bibliographic pairing – considered predominant techniques in the literature on the analysis of citations (Marshakova, 1981).

Both techniques are turned to the relations among the citations of studies and that are adopted in scientific studies for the mapping of a domain, searching to present the domains of the scientific communication reflected in

the scientific literature and in the connections of the researchers' citations (Börner; Chen; Boyack, 2003, Zupic & Carter, 2015). The scientific literature is understood as an objective manifestation, which represents a domain, as a result of the social activity of the research. This study will employ the technique of bibliographic coupling analysis and co-citation, figure 1 presents in an illustrated form both techniques.

Figure 1. Co-citation and bibliographic coupling
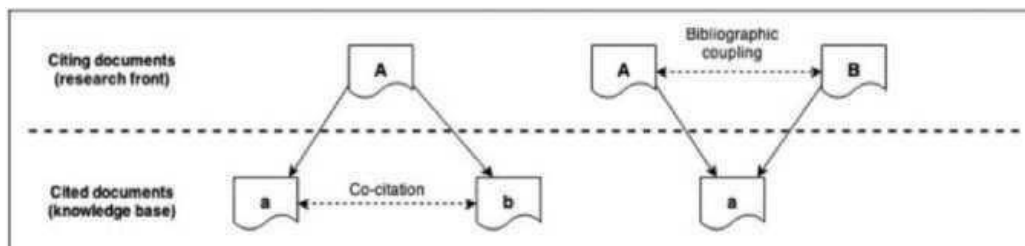
Source: (Zupic & Cater, 2015), Page, 6.

Several softwares are capable of analyzing citations, performing bibliographic coupling and analysis of co-words. Among the several tools, this study used the VOSviewer software. One of its advantages is its graphic exists in high resolution and its free access (Van Eck & Waltman, 2018). The design of the bibliometric study will be presented in Figure 4 and the selected data base for the search of publication was Web of Science (Wos). Such base was chosen by concentrating many studies on the theme and having global coverage, presenting the proposed subjects. Such base is also recognized by presenting a structure for analysis of information on the production of indicators, without having the need for major previous data manipulation (Pinto, Ferreira & Goulart, 2015).

For the selection of the articles of the sample, the terms "absorptive capacity" AND "tourism", "Knowledge transfer" AND "tourism", "innovation" AND "tourism" and "knowledge sharing" AND "tourism" were researched in the topic field (title, abstract and keywords) in the main research interface of the Web of Science data base. It is worth mentioning that we used the terms related to the ACAP to increase the strength o the study, such terms are considered essential to the four processes of the ACAP (acquisition,

assimilation, transformation and application). The initial results were of 390 articles, after the first step of the application of filters, in which we considered only articles, the sample was reduced to 290 articles. As follows, we selected only articles written in English, Portuguese or Spanish and, in such step, 17 articles were dismissed, reaching a final sample of 273 articles, which was used to elaborate the present study. The methodological design of the research is presented in figure 2.

Figure 2. Methodological Design of the Research
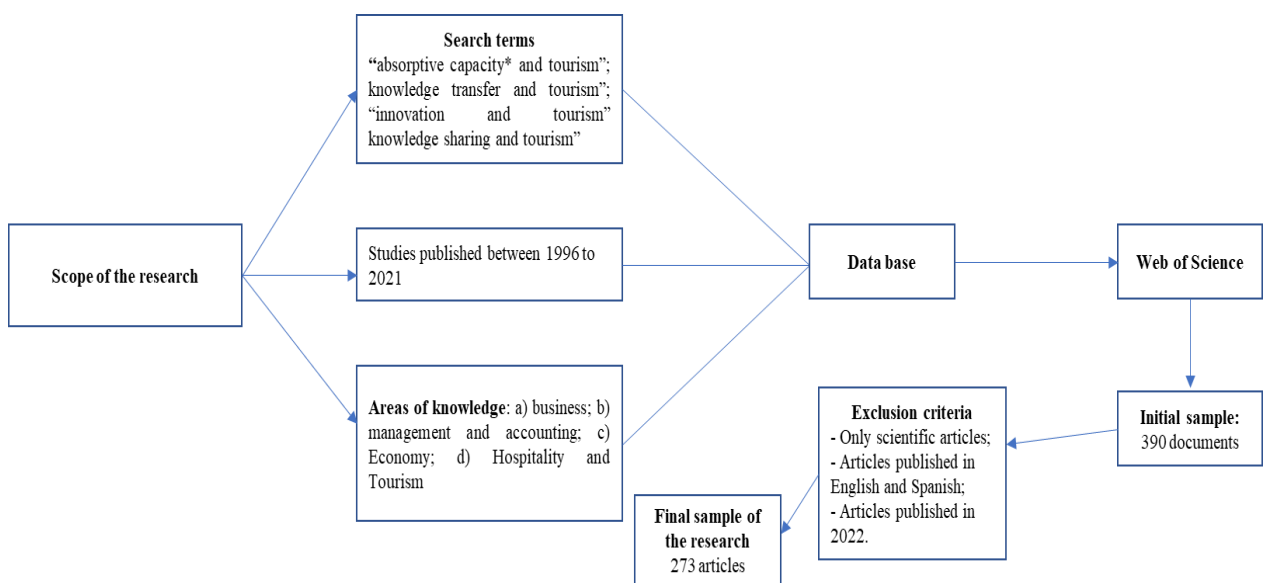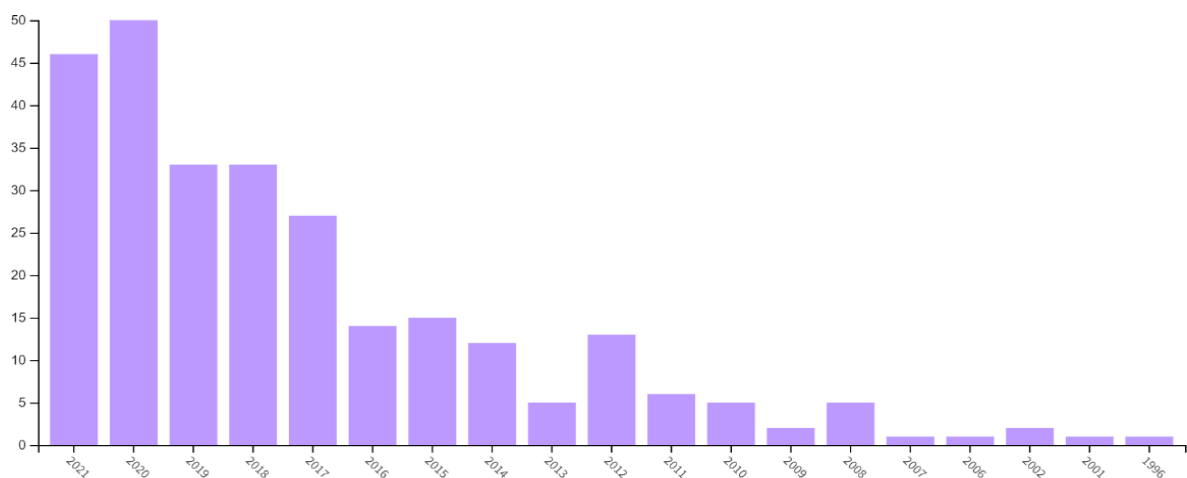

Source: The authors (2022)

The publications on ACAP in the field of tourism had its beginning in 1996. It can be noticed that from 2017 an exponential growth occurred in the studies on the theme, since the number of articles doubled that year, when compared to the year of 2016. The evolution in the amount of studies enables the statement that the ACAP theme in the field of tourism has awaken the interest of researchers. The evolution of the studies on the theme in the Web of Science data base is presented in Graph 1.

Graph 1. Evolution of the Studies on ACAP in the Web of Science Data Base

Source: The authors (2022)

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Co-citation analysis

The exploratory factorial analysis was performed (EFA), presented in Figure 3, with the software SPSS[22] to identify the components with proper factorial loads to the co-citation matrix. The structure of the matrix was elaborated through the Bibexcel software and, then, uploaded to the SPSS[22] to perform the EFA. One hundred studies, from the 273 of the final sample were selected to compose the co-citation matrix. The selection criteria was the amount of co-citations of the studies. To perform the EFA and after the elimination of the factors with presented cross load and low common factors, the KMO and Bartlett test was extracted to confirm whether the sample was appropriate. The obtained result was of 0.752 confirming that the sample is appropriate (Palant, 2007).

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The sample of 273 articles was uploaded to the Vosviewer software and were identified 15,593 quoted references. To enable the graphic view we considered only citations that had at least 5 co-citations, with this six clusters were identified. The clusters were analyzed to identify which theme approaches the results of the two main studies in each cluster, being presented as follows the 06 clusters found in this study.

Red Cluster: is the first and main cluster according to the software's metrics. The red cluster is the main one due to its order, based on its relevance. In our study, the red cluster was composed by 59 studies, having as main theme the role of the inter-organizational networks in knowledge sharing and the relation with the innovations of companies that work in tourism. The main study from such cluster was the one published by Baggio (2010), study whose strength was of a 571 link and 33 citations. The purpose of the study was to examine the nature of networks and how its analysis may lead light on the process of knowledge sharing once they try hard to innovate.

The second main study from the red cluster was the one published by Pavlovich (2003). It has the strength of a 288 link and was quoted 16 times by other studies from the cluster. Such study uses the theory of the networks to investigate how grouping of small companies within the inter-dependent systems may be self-governed and show how such process helps the destination in the tactical construction to a competitive advantage through innovation.

Green Cluster: is the second identified cluster in the study, this cluster is composed by 37 studies, and the theme investigated by these studies from such cluster is the importance of acquisition and assimilation of external knowledge to the innovation in organizations which act in tourism. The main study of such cluster was the one published by Hjalager (2010), whose study has the strength of a 981 link and was quoted 55 times by other studies from the sample. Its purpose was to perform a theoretical review from the innovation *drivers* in organizations that act in tourism, being the acquisition of external knowledge, according to the author's view an important factor so that tourism

organizations may develop innovations and consequently, build competitive advantage.

The study by Thomas & Wood (2015) is the second main study from the green cluster, which had as purpose to examine the influence of processes of acquisition and assimilation of external knowledge in the capacity of innovation in tourism. The authors affirm in such study that such processes are essential for the organizations to be innovative and as consequence, improve their financial performance.

Blue Cluster: the third main cluster from the co-citation analysis is the blue. It is composed by 35 studies and the theme of such studies investigated by this cluster was the importance of the clusters (geographic grouping of tourism companies) in the knowledge sharing and development of innovations in the field of tourism. The main study from this cluster was the one elaborated by Novelli, Schmitz & Spencer (2006), which has the strength of a 520 link and was quoted 27 times by other studies from the sample. The purpose of such study was to analyze the cluster (geographic concentration of companies) as a structure that offers the small-medium companies' innovative opportunities to operate in a competitive market in the tourism environment. The authors performed a relevant review of the literature on clusters and innovation in tourism businesses. However, the authors state in the study that the development of clusters should not be seen as a simple and spontaneous process due to the nature of the companies involved, but as a very complex process linked to a strong collaboration of stakeholders.

The second main study from this cluster was developed by Sintes, Cladera & Ros (2005). This study has the strength of a 401 link and was quoted 15 times by other articles from our sample. Its purpose was to present empiric evidences from the hotel activity to the innovation process from a representative group of hotels, to understand the characteristics and determinants of innovation from management decisions. Specifically, they analyzed the relation between the propensity to innovation and the hotel category, governance configurations, size and a group of variables capturing

the market conditions. In summary, such study analyzed the process of innovation in clusters of Spanish hotels.

Yellow Cluster: the forth cluster is the yellow, composed by 27 studies, which approach the effects of the social capital on innovations in tourism organizations, being the main study from this cluster the one developed by Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998). It is about a seminal and multi-disciplinary study on the importance of social capital in the development of innovation, such study has the strength of a 306 link and was quoted 16 times by other studies. This study states that the social capital enables the creation of a new intellectual capital; that the organizations, being institutional environments, are prone to the development of high levels of social capital; and that it is due to their more dense social capital, when compared to companies, within certain limits, that they have advantage on markets in the creating and sharing of intellectual capital.

The second most influential study from this cluster was developed by Omerzel & Jurdana (2016), this study has the strength of a 248 link and was quoted 11 times by other studies from the sample and proposes a method of classification and measure of the intellectual capital, highlighting the three following components: human capital, organizational capital and social capital. In other words, the purpose of the study was to explain the performance of innovation and the growth of the company, showing the importance of each dimension of the intellectual capital in a specific type of innovation (product, marketing and organizational).

Purple Cluster: the fifth cluster identified in the co-citation map is the purple one, composed by 19 articles. The studies of this cluster presented the seminal studies on the absorptive capacity and dynamic capacities. The most influential study from this cluster is the one developed by Cohen & Levinthal (1990), it has a link of 894 and it was quoted 63 times by other studies from the sample, it is about a seminal study that introduced the term absorptive capacity. It was stated in the study the importance of the company in recognizing the value of new external information and applying those to

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commercial purposes as it is essential to its innovating capacities. The second most influential study from such cluster was the one developed by Teece & Pisano (1997), which presented the concepts of the dynamic capacities, and a current of authors understands that the absorptive capacity is a specific type of dynamic capacity.

Light Blue Cluster: the light blue cluster is the sixth cluster identified in the co-citation analysis, formed by 14 studies. The theme of the cluster approaches is about the mechanisms and tools of the transference of knowledge and the importance of innovations in the field of tourism. More specifically, it analyzes the tools and mechanisms of transference of knowledge as communities of practice, inter-organizational nets, work mobility and inter-connected directorates.

The study of Shaw & Willians (2009) is the main study of the light blue cluster, this study has the strength of a link of 814 and was quoted 58 times by other studies from the sample. The purpose of this study was to review studies on transference of knowledge in the context of innovations, the authors emphasize in this study the analysis of the main mechanisms and conducts of transference of knowledge in the field of tourism and how such mechanisms approach the mechanisms and tools of transference of knowledge and the importance of innovations in the filed of tourism.

Figure 3. Exploratory Factorial Analysis (EFA) – Co-citation

| Matrix of rotation component						
Component						
Color of the Vosviewer Cluster	**Blue**	**Green**	**Light blue**	**Red**	**Yell ow**	**Purple**
Studies	**Factor 1**	**Fac tor 2**	**Factor 3**	**Factor 4**	**Fac tor 5**	**Facto r 6**
Baggio (2010)	0,793					
Beritelli (2011)	0,761					
Del Chiappa (2015)	0,758					
Presenza (2010)	0,756					
Cooper (2006)		0,760				
Cooper (2008)		0,694				
Hall (2008)		0,885				
Hjalager (2002)		0,785				

Hjalager (2010)		0,681				
Lane (2006)		0,517				
Thomas & Wood (2015)		0,685				
Jacob (2003)			0,780			
Martinez-Ros (2009)			0,813			
Nordin (2003)			0,820			
Novelli et al. 2006			0,788			
Orfila-Sintes (2005)			0,908			
Sundbo (2007)			0,834			
Nahapiet & Goshal (1998)				0,617		
Nonaka (1995)				0,467		
Omerzel (2016)				0,62		
Scott (2008)				0,791		
Barney (1991)					0,652	
Cohen (1990)					0,588	
Teece & Pisano (1997)					0,743	
Zahra (2002)					0,659	
Thomas (2012)						0,863
Weidenfeld (2010)						0,767
Shawa & Williams (2009)						0,725
Xiao (2007)						0,868
KMO and Bartlett's Test	0,752					
Variance by Factor	**41,37%**	**13,96%**	**8,58%**	**6,89%**	**5,93%**	**4,09%**
Explained Total Variance	**80,82%**					
Extraction Method: Analysis of the Main Component.						
Rotation Method: Varimax with Normalization of Kaiser.						

Source: SPSS (2022)

Figure 4. Map of Co-Citation -Vosviewer
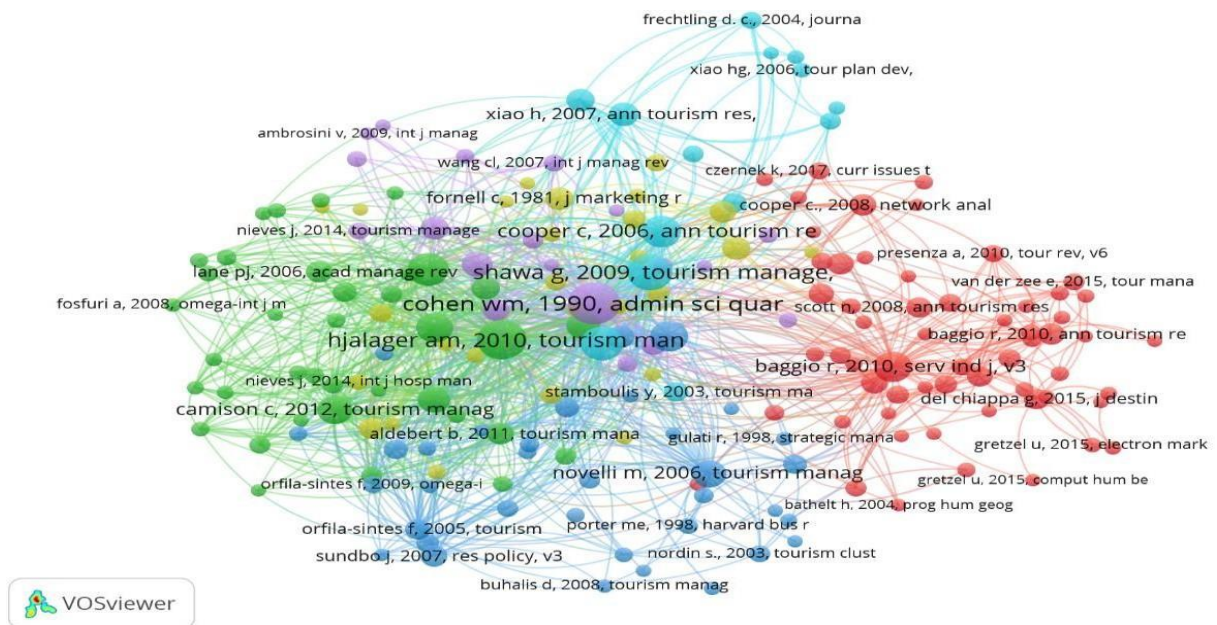
Source: The Authors (2022)

Analysis of bibliographic coupling

The exploratory factorial analysis (EFA) was also performed, presented in Figure 5, as support to the software SPSS[22] to identify the components with the proper factorial load in the bibliographic coupling matrix. The matrix was elaborated in the software Bibexcel and imported to the SPSS[22]. One hundred and seven studies were selected to compose the matrix from the 273 studies of the final sample of the study. Factors that presented cross load were excluded from the study according to the guidance of Hair et al. (2005), which guides to exclude factors that present load under 0.5 in one factor. Two factors presented commonality below 0.5 and were excluded from the analysis. At last, the test of KMO and Bartlett was extracted to show whether the sample as appropriate, the result of ,0857 states that the sample is satisfactory (Palant, 2007).

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Red Cluster: the red cluster is the main cluster identified in the map of bibliographic coupling, composed by 27 studies, the theme of such studies from this cluster is the role of the dynamic capacities in the innovation in companies form the field of tourism. The most influential study from this cluster was developed by Camison (2012), it has the strength of a link of 489 and it was quoted 198 times by other studies from the sample. This study, in particular, analyzed the dynamic capacities and the development of innovations and metrics of measuring innovation. The second most influential study of this cluster was the one elaborated by Nieves & Haller (2014), which has the strength of a link of 276 and it was quoted 117 times by studies of the sample, being its purpose to investigate the possible precedents of dynamic capacities in the hotel industry. The analysis of the authors provide empiric evidences of the role of knowledge in the obtention of the dynamic capacities of the sector.

Green Cluster: the second most important cluster is the green one, composed by 22 studies, the studies of such cluster focused their attention in analyzing the role of the interoganizational networks in the sharing of knowledge and the relation with the innovation of companies who act in tourism. The most influential study from this cluster was developed by Baggio (2010), it has the strength of a link of 183, it was quoted 159 times by other studies and the purpose was to examine the role of interorganizational networks in the sharing of knowledge and in innovation of tourism companies. The second most influential study was elaborated by Del Chiappa & Baggio (2015), it has the strength of a link of 66 and it was quoted 146 times and the purpose was also to examine the influence of interorganizational networks in the innovation based on knowledge sharing.

Blue Cluster: the third identified cluster was the blue one, composed by 20 studies, the theme analyzed by such cluster is the importance of the acquisition of external knowledge and the cooperation between the

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stakeholders. The most influential study from this cluster was developed by Czernek (2014), it has the strength of a link of 500, it was quoted 39 times and the purpose was to identify the characterize determinants in the transference and absorption of knowledge resultant from the specific characteristics of tourism, as well as to indicate its main consequences to the cooperation between the stakeholders. The second main study from this cluster was developed by Nieves & Meneses (2018), it has a link of 411 and it was quoted 22 times by other studies and the purpose was to identify the role played by external sources of knowledge and the intraorganizational collaborations (collaborators) as determinants in the innovation of hotel companies.

Yellow Cluster: the fourth cluster, composed by 17 studies, the theme of such studies was to examine the role of collaboration among the stakeholders in sharing of external knowledge in tourism companies. The studies of such cluster encompass the absorptive capacity as a specific type of dynamic abilities, but emphasize only on the processes of acquisition and assimilation of external knowledge. The most significant study of this cluster was the one developed by Werner *et al.* (2015), it has strength of link of 307 and it was quoted 28 times by studies of the sample. Its purpose was to analyze the processes of knowledge sharing and the acquisition of external knowledge in the context of mega-sports events. The second most influential study of such cluster was developed by Alford (2018), it has a link of 261 and it was quoted 11 times. Its purpose was to understand the main factors that affect the collaborative innovation in an organization of managing destinations from a perspective of sharing knowledge.

Purple Cluster: the fifth cluster identified in the study, composed by 16 studies, the studies belonging to the cluster investigated in their studies the theme collaboration of stakeholders in knowledge sharing in tourism clusters (geographic group of companies) and the impacts on the innovation of companies belonging to the group. The most important study of such cluster was developed by Novelli *et al.* (2006), it has a strength link of 193, quoted 430 by other studies, its purpose was to analyze the knowledge sharing and the

collaboration of stakeholders on the processes of innovation in tourism companies of the United Kingdom. The second most important study was written by Liu *et al*. (2019) who proposed a new integrated model that combined the concepts of network bonds (for example, political bonds and commercial bonds), the organization of critical internal attributes (such as social capital, human capital and ability to innovate) and the analysis of how such critical attributes influence the performance of the organization and the competitive advantage.

Light Blue Cluster: the sixth cluster identified in this study is the light blue, composed by 15 studies, the theme analyzed in such cluster is the role of the transference of organizational knowledge in tourism companies and the effects on the development of indicators of sustainability and social innovation. The most influential study of this cluster was elaborated by Ruhanen (2008), it has strength of link of 159, it was quoted 79 times by other studies and the purpose was to examine the transference of academic knowledge on the sustainability to the practice of the tourism public sector. The second most important study from such cluster was elaborated by Font *et al*. (2021), it has the strength of a link of 204, it was quoted 10 times by other studies and the purpose was to evaluate the impact of the sustainable tourism indicators on the destination's competitiveness, for this, the authors evaluated how the organizations acquire external knowledge to implement and use the indicators of sustainable tourism to take political decisions.

Orange Cluster: the seventh cluster is composed by 14 studies, being the analyzed theme the importance of the acquisition and assimilation of external knowledge to innovation in organizations that act in tourism. The main study from this cluster was published by Thomas & Wood (2015), the strength of link of the study is of 461 and it was quoted 87 times by other studies. The purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of the processes of acquisition and assimilation of external knowledge in the innovation of companies in the field of tourism, the authors state that such processes are essential for the organizations to be innovative and consequently amplify their

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competitiveness. The second most influential study of such cluster was developed by Roman *et al*. (2015), it has strength of link of 431 and it was quoted 67 times by other studies. The purpose was to analyze the effects of the processes of acquisition and assimilation of knowledge in the innovation ability in the hotel industry in Andalusia (Spain), the influence of such results on the profitability in such companies.

Brown Cluster: this cluster was the eighth identified in our analysis, it is composed by 14 studies and it is focused on the theme of scientific research development in innovation in the field of tourism. The cluster is formed by articles of systematic review of literature and theoretical studies on the evolution of researches in innovation in tourism. The main study of such cluster was written by Omerzel (2016), it has the strength of link of 854 and it was quoted 174 times by other studies. It is about a systematic review of literature of the state of the academic research on the innovation of tourism, the authors present different approaches of research and perspectives on tourism innovation. The second most important study from such cluster was published by Hjalager (2002), it has strength of link of 207 and it was quoted 83 times by other studies, being the main purpose to provide a systematic and analytic concise collection of 100 innovations that were not specifically invented for tourism, but, however, affected tourism in a meaningful way.

Lilac Cluster: the last cluster identified in our analysis was the lilac, composed by 5 studies, the analyzed theme is the importance of the transference of transborder knowledge in innovations in tourism companies, the main study of such cluster was written by Weidenfeld (2003), it has the strength of a link of 230 and it was quoted 88 times by other studies. The article examines the role of transference of tourism knowledge and of the innovation in the context of European systems of regional transborder innovation. The second most important study was written by Makonnen *et al*. (2018), it has strength of link of 162, it was quoted 36 times in other studies and its purpose was to analyze the role of the collaboration between companies and the transference of transborder knowledge in tourism innovation in the frontier

between Finland and Russia.

We present in figure 5 the factorial exploratory analysis of the bibliographic coupling performed by the Software SPSS and in figure 6 the graphic map of bibliographic coupling elaborated in the Vosviewer is presented.

Figure 5 – Exploratory Factorial Analysis – Bibliographic Coupling

| Matrix of rotation component									
Component									
Color of the cluster - Vosviewer	Yellow	Purple	Green	Brown	Orange	Red	Lilac	Light blue	Blue
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8	Factor 9
Liu (2018)						0,867			
Thomas & Wood (2014)			0,871						
Thomas & Wood (2015)					0,886				
Font et al. (2021)								0,737	
Liu & Nijkamp (2019)				0,807					
Weidenfeld (2013)					0,763				
Camison et al. (2016)			0,518						
Werner; Dickson; Hyde (2015)					0,707				
Hjalager (2015)									0,534
Del Chiappa & Baggio (2015)			0,469						
Weidenfeld (2010)						0,925			
Alford & Jones (2020)				0,822					
Camison (2017)									0,719
Hjalager (2002)				0,693					
Novelli & Spencer (2006)								0,763	
Farsani et al. (2014)	0,638								
Nieves & Haller (2014)						0,832			
Thees et al. (2020)		0,427							
Pongsathornwiwat et al. (2021)	0,901								
Heidari et al. (2021)		0,834							
Do et al. (2021)	0,755								
Ali et al. (2020)		0,870							
Mariani & Baggio (2020)	0,813								
Wong & Lai (2018)		0,823							
Chhabra (2019)		0,700							
Cakar (2018)	0,807								
Czernek (2020)	0,711								
Chang; Wang & Lin (2017)							0,735		
Jacob & Groizard (2007)	0,665						0,412		
Makkonen et al. (2018)							0,817		
Liu; Chang & Fang (2020)	0,691								
Alford & Duan (2018)	0,758								
Nieves & Diaz-Meneses (2018)									0,440
Makkonen et al. (2018)									
Thomas & Ormerod (2017)			0,646						
Pace & Miles (2020)					0,849				
Ruhanen; Saito & Axelsen (2021)			0,918						
Ruhanen (2008)								0,529	
Vidal-Salazar et al. (2012)		0,717							
Garay; Font & Moliner (2017)			0,601						
Variance by Factor	**26,26%**	**16,17%**	**6,45%**	**5,17%**	**4,84%**	**4,33%**	**3,74%**	**3,14%**	**2,61%**
Total Variance Explained	**72,71%**								
Teste de Spherecity and of Bartlett	**0,857**								
Method of Extraction: Analysis of the Main Component.									
Method of Rotation: Varimax with Normalization of Kaiser.									

Source: The Authors (2022)

Figure 06 – Map of Bibliographic Coupling - Vosviewer

Source: The authors (2022)

CONCLUSIONS

The performed bibliographic analysis enabled to identify through the map of co-citation the intellectual structure that guides the evolution of the studies on absorptive capacity in the field of tourism. Such technique resulted in the identification of six clusters of co-citation, the most important cluster analyzed the role of dynamic capacities in the innovation of companies in the field of tourism. The second most important cluster on the map of co-citation analyzed the importance of the acquisition and
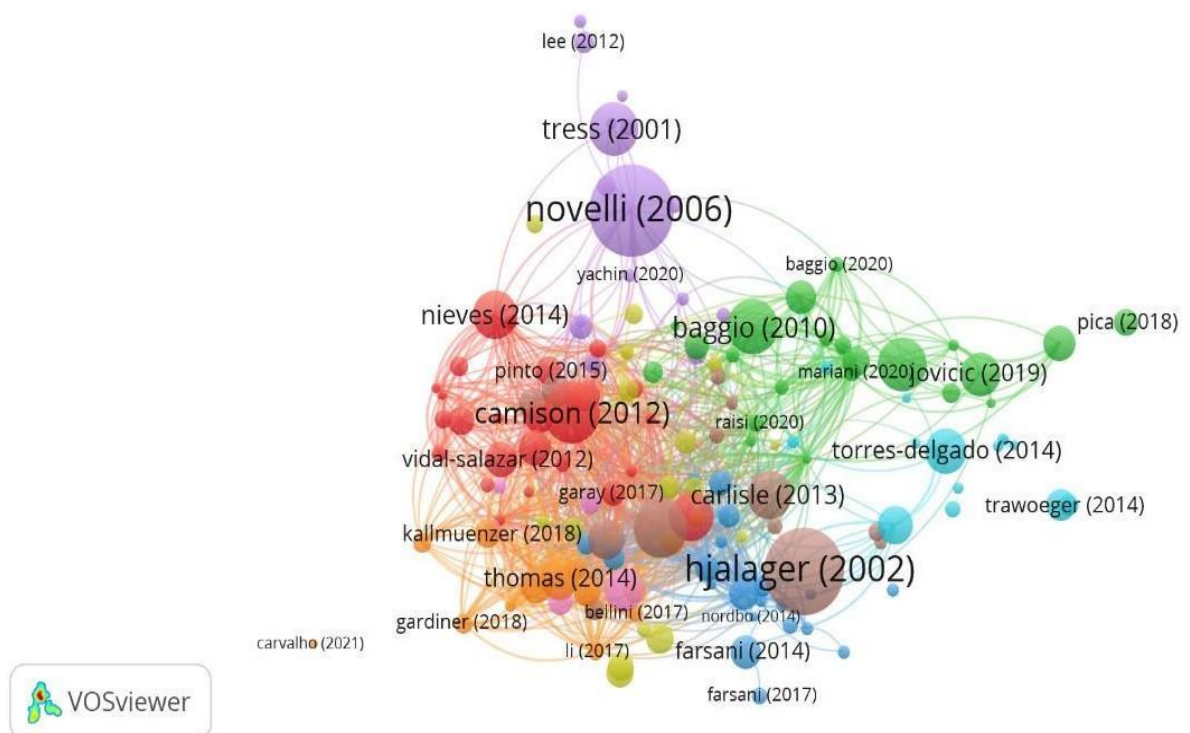
assimilation of external knowledge for the innovation in organizations that act in tourism.

The third cluster in the map of co-citation investigated the theory of networks to identify as groups of small companies within the interdependent systems that may be self-ruled. In addition, it shows how such process helps

the destination in the tactical construction for the competitive advantage through innovation. The other cluster identified in the analysis of co-citation were focused on the themes: the effects of the social capital on the innovations in tourism organizations, seminal studies on the absorptive capacities, dynamic capacities, mechanisms and tools of transference of knowledge and importance in innovations in the field of tourism.

The bibliographic coupling performed identified nine clusters on themes of absorptive capacity that are focused on the field of tourism. The first cluster focused more studies and consisted of the analysis of the role of dynamic capacities on the innovation in companies of the field of tourism. The second cluster emphasizes the analysis of the inter-organizational networks in knowledge sharing and the relation with the innovation in companies that act in tourism. The third cluster investigate the importance of the acquisition of external knowledge and cooperation among the stakeholders.

The other clusters of the coupling analysis are focused, respectively, on: (i) to examine the role of collaboration among the stakeholders in the sharing of external knowledge; (ii) the collaboration of the stakeholders in the knowledge sharing in tourism cluster (geographic group of companies) and the impacts on the innovation from the companies belonging to the group; (iii) the role of the organizational knowledge transference in tourism companies and the effects on development of indicators of sustainability and social innovation; (iv) the importance of acquisition and assimilation of external knowledge for the innovation in organizations that act in tourism; (v) development of scientific research in innovation in the field of tourism; and at last (vi) to examine the importance of the transference of the transborder knowledge in innovations in tourism companies.

The present study presented the theoretical-conceptual evolution of the theme absorptive capacity in the field of tourism and identified, through bibliographic coupling, the borders in the areas of the studies with the approached theme, as well as trends of researches on the absorptive

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capacity in tourism. The main contribution of this study is of exploratory character. It is about a graphic mapping of the theoretical-conceptual evolution, its main theoretical influences, existing theoretical currents and current theoretical fronts on the theme of ACAP in tourism. It also presents a starting point for future descriptive and casual studies , mainly, in clusters formed in the map of bibliographic coupling.

The study has some limitations. The first refers to the chosen data basis Web of Science (WoS), since despite the high rate of overlapping regarding the data basis Scopus, it is recommended that future studies focus on studies of both basis for a deepen analysis. Another limitation regards the method, the bibliographic analysis, that despite being a tool to identify the theoretical evolution of the ACAP theme in the field of tourism, it does not allow examining in a deep way as it occurs with processes of absorption and use of external knowledge in tourism organizations. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies perform systematic reviews of literature, mainly in areas identified in bibliographic coupling, since the identified clusters in this map approach studies trends and the borders of knowledge of the ACAP theme in the field of tourism.

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