

# The Macro Context for Entrepreneurship in Tourism: A Review of Emerging Trends

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**Abstract:** Tourism has an enormous economic and employment potential, which, at least until 2019, encouraged many countries to develop their tourism offer and attract more tourists. Then the COVID-19 pandemic happened, and nowadays, Europe, the most important tourism destination in the world, faces a new war and refugee crisis. Tourism is an activity that propels the economy and job creation internationally; nevertheless, the activity is vulnerable to macro environment events. Both aspects are crucial issues for tourism entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is relevant to understand the emerging trends that entrepreneurs may face. Based on a systematic literature review, this paper aims to identify the major macro-environmental factors that impact tourism activity by answering the following research question: What contextual factors should entrepreneurs expect to impact their businesses? A systematic literature review was conducted in three steps: 1) selection of the relevant sources (on WoS and Scopus-indexed journals) using appropriate selection criteria that fitted the research questions; 2) assessment of the selected articles according to exclusion criteria to reach a final sample of articles; 3) full analysis of the base of final articles to identify emerging trends associated to relevant contextual factors. Results suggest that political-legal, technological, sociocultural, and sustainability-related factors have been the most relevant ones. This study has relevant contributions to practice since it highlights what entrepreneurs should expect from the macro environment. It also contributes to tourism literature by opening new lines of research and synthesising the trends impacting tourism activity.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Tourism, Hospitality, Trends, Macroenvironment, External environment

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the most important sectors of the global economy. In 2019, tourism accounted for 10.3% of the global gross domestic product (GDP) and around 10% of total employment (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022). Between 2016 and 2019, international tourist arrivals increased by 17 %, surpassing 1.4 billion in 2019 (UNWTO, 2020). This positive evolution has been interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had an enormous impact on tourism (Ahmad et al., 2022). According to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, tourism faced a decline in international tourist arrivals during 2020, between 58 % and 78 % compared to 2019, with a drop in direct tourism employment of between 100 and 120 million people (UNWTO, 2020). Nevertheless, the activity is recovering, and international tourist arrivals almost tripled from January to July 2022 (+172%) compared to 2021, meaning tourism recovered almost 60% of pre-pandemic levels (UNWTO, 2022).

It is expected that tourism activity continues to push the global economy; however, its vulnerability to macro environment events is undeniable. All this sanitary crisis confirmed tourism's vulnerability concerning disruptive occurrences (Aldao, Blasco and Espallargas, 2022). Consequently, tourism entrepreneurs must be aware of the tourism environment and understand the macro environment emerging trends, which motivated this research.

Based on a systematic literature review, this paper aims to identify the major macro-environmental factors that impact tourism activity by answering the following research questions: What contextual factors should entrepreneurs expect to impact their businesses?

In this paper, we start by highlighting the relevance of macro-environmental factors in the tourism environment and then present those usually considered relevant for entrepreneurial activity in tourism. In section 4, the

method used for the systematic review is presented. Section 5 is dedicated to presenting and discussing the results. The paper ends with the study's main conclusions, limitations and contributions.

## **2. Tourism and the Macro Environment**

Previous studies have emphasised the impact of the macro environment on the tourism value chain at several levels or dimensions, namely economic environment, political and legal environment, sociocultural environment, international environment, and infrastructure environment (Marin, 2015; Tohmo 2018).

Bianchi (2018) considers that open and stable political and legal institutions are critical for tourism organisations and the economy in general. Similarly, Ghalia, Fidrmuc and Samargandi (2019) refer that tourism is very sensitive to each country's legal system, specific policies and administrative structures.

Ha et al (2022) reinforce the importance of economic factors, namely growth rate, economic structure, and the exchange rate, that can affect organisations in general and tourism in particular. In this vein, several authors refer to the relationship between economic growth and the increase in tourism demand (Croce, 2018; MacNeill and Wozniak, 2018; Marin, 2015; Tohmo, 2018).

According to Jena and Dwivedi (2021), infrastructure is also crucial for tourism. Tourism depends on the network of roads and means of transport and depends on communication to ensure information between tourists and suppliers. To ensure the quality of tourism activity, electricity, water systems, and other infrastructures are necessary (MacNeill and Wozniak, 2018).

Sociocultural factors are also considered an important source of tourism development because they stimulate tourists to visit and discover different places (Ooi et al, 2015; Zhuang, Yao and Li, 2019). For Buckley, Guitart and Shakeela (2017), natural and cultural tourism resources are important factors since tourism is oriented to resources. Similarly, Fossgard and Stensland (2021) argue that tourism activities' scale, nature, attractiveness, and seasonality are related to tourism resources' volume, nature, and value.

Finally, as more countries participate in tourism activities with globalisation, this pushes for trends such as peace, cooperation, and development (Awedyk and Niezgodna, 2016). On the other hand, as Tolkach and Pratt (2019) refer, unpredictable international financial fluctuations, natural disasters, local wars, ethnic and religious conflicts, subversive interventions, or terrorism dominate international tourism.

## **3. Tourism Entrepreneurship and the Macro Environment**

The literature points out five main macro-environmental factors relevant for tourism entrepreneurs: government intervention, sustainability, sociocultural factors, economic factors and technological innovation.

Regarding government intervention, some authors stress the relevance of the effects of government and public initiatives on entrepreneurship and destination development, the impact of tourism-related public policies, and the benefits of establishing clusters for small business development in a tourist destination (Cobo-Soler et al, 2018; Ndou, Mele and Del Vecchio, 2018).

Some authors study sustainability's relevant relationship with destination competitiveness (Musavengane, Siakwah and Leonard, 2019) and the importance of cooperation between tourism firms and critical stakeholders to enhance social sustainability (Năstase et al, 2010).

Several authors investigated the challenges facing indigenous entrepreneurs in tourism (Chili and Mabaso, 2016; Kawharu, Tapsell and Woods, 2017). Some of these studies revealed the role of sociocultural values in facing challenges and crises in the entrepreneurship context. Others emphasise internet access, wholesaling, financing systems, and business education determinant to support private enterprises, referring to a correlation between social-cultural factors and entrepreneurship development.

Regarding economic factors, it is relevant to consider the dependence of entrepreneurs on funding, the difficulty in accessing initial capital, and the importance of informal micro-finance institutions in funding small tourism firms (Laeis and Lemke, 2016).

Finally, innovations provide important opportunities and challenges for tourism entrepreneurs (Surugiu and Surugiu, 2015). For these authors, examples are the use of social media for supporting marketing strategies or social networks to adjust the business to consumers.

Thus, both general and entrepreneurship tourism literature seem to converge on the key factors to consider when characterising the macro environment for tourism entrepreneurship: political/legal, economic,

sociocultural, and technological factors, sustainability and infrastructure, all of which may have national and international dimensions. However, a more thorough and systematic review of recent literature will allow for gathering more detailed information on the macroenvironmental context for tourism and hospitality businesses.

#### 4. Method

A systematic literature review broadly followed the guidelines proposed by Templier and Paré (2015) to ensure systematicity and process transparency. Templier and Paré's (2015) guidelines are compatible with literature review guides in the tourism and hospitality field, such as PRISMA (Moher *et al.*, 2009). The process suggests six steps: (1) formulating the problem, (2) searching the literature, (3) screening for inclusion, (4) assessing quality, (5) extracting data, and (6) analysing and synthesising data.

The search process was based on automatic search (Webster and Watson, 2002; Kitchenham and Charters, 2007) in two electronic databases, Scopus and Web of Science. The following combination of keywords guided the search on articles' titles: (challenge\* OR trend\* OR opportunities\* OR threat\*) AND (hospitality OR tourist\* OR hotel\*). The following criteria guided the search process: year of publication (from 2008 onwards); type of document (journal articles and reviews); subject area (all academic knowledge fields, given the exploratory character of this study and the multitude of fields with potential impact on tourism and hospitality); and, language (English).

Four-hundred and eighty-nine articles (489) resulted from Web-of-Science and one thousand three hundred and twelve (1312) from Scopus. After removing the repeated articles, a total of one thousand four hundred and thirty-six (1436) studies were identified.

Given the large number of articles that resulted from the search process, we decided to apply quality criteria in this phase to reduce the number of articles to analyse. The quality of the studies identified was assessed by two criteria (Menon *et al.*, 2022): (1) to consider only articles published in scientific journals classified in the first or second quartiles of Scimago Ranking; (2) to apply a cut-off point, combining publication year and the number of citations. The inflexion points of the number of citations, considering the year when citations increased significantly, and the average number of citations per year were identified separately for articles published in Scopus and Web-of-Science. In the set of articles retrieved from the Scopus database, all articles published until 2014 (inflexion point) with less than 14 citations (average of citations per year) were excluded. In the Web-of-Science set, all articles published until 2015 (inflexion point) with less than 23 citations (average of citations per year) were also excluded. In the end, eight hundred and forty-two (842) articles were selected for analysis.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were identified (Kitchenham, 2004; Kitchenham and Charters, 2007; Templier and Paré, 2015) to screen the articles identified in the previous phases. Five marketing and tourism specialists read the articles' abstracts to apply the inclusion criterion based on relevance to the research objective and considered only articles in which the study referred to factors impacting the tourism and hospitality sector. Also, they classified the three hundred eighty-five remaining articles into six categories according to the nature of the factors impacting the tourism and hospitality sector: political-legal, technology, sociocultural, sustainability, economic, and general trends in tourism and hospitality. Exclusion criteria were applied by reading the full article by the research team and were based on aspects such as the primary focus not being tourism and hospitality or the context of the application being too specific (region, type of product or service). After this process, the final number of articles to include in the review was fifty-eight (58).

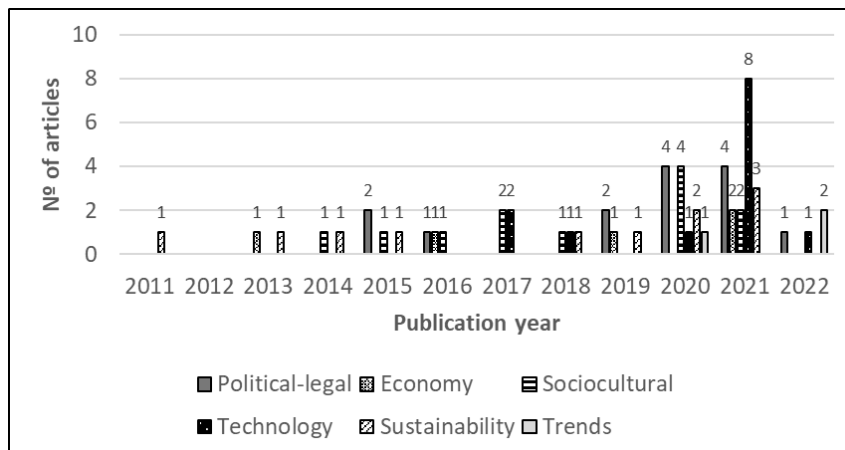
#### 5. Findings and Discussion

The 58 articles in this review may be organised according to the following macro-environmental factors: political-legal (14), technology (13), sociocultural (12), sustainability (11), economic (5) and general trends on tourism and hospitality (3) (Table 1). The factors identified in this review are similar to those usually identified as affecting tourism markets and related entrepreneurial activity (e.g., Cobo-Soler *et al.*, 2018; Marin, 2015; Musavengane, Siakwah and Leonard, 2019; Ndou, Mele and Del Vecchio, 2018; Tohmo, 2018). The small number of articles on the economic factor is due to most studies retrieved from the databases focusing on the impact of tourism on the economy and not the impact of the economy on tourism. Therefore, those articles were outside the scope of our review and were excluded.

**Table 1: Number of Articles by Factor**

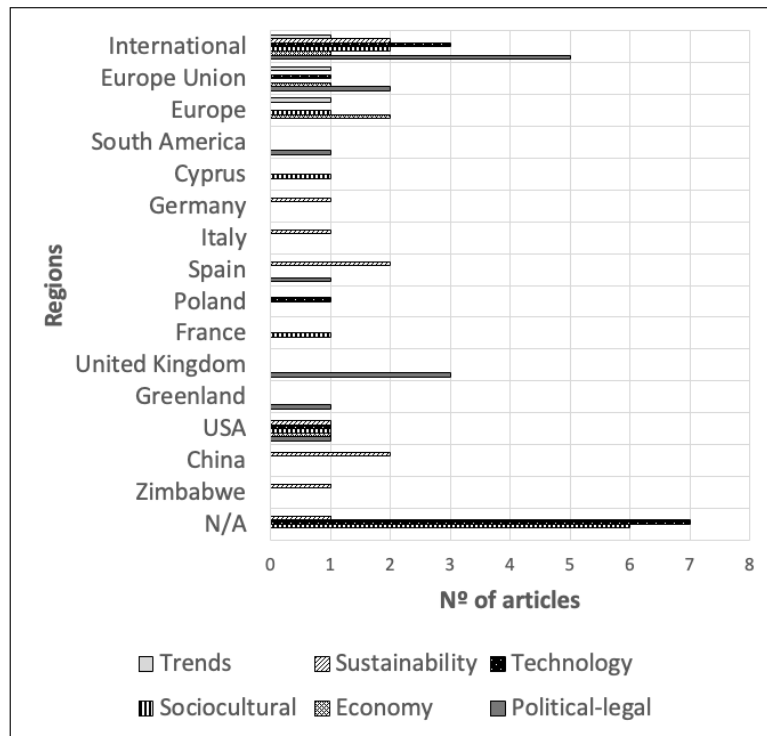
Factor	Absolute frequency	Percentage
<b>Political-Legal</b>	14	24 %
<b>Economic</b>	5	9%
<b>Socio-cultural</b>	12	21%
<b>Technology</b>	13	22%
<b>Sustainability</b>	11	19%
<b>Trends</b>	3	5%
<b>Total</b>	58	100%

Analysing the distribution of articles by macro-environmental factors over the years, there has been a concentration in recent years. This concentration is more pronounced for the following factors: technological (mostly related to digital transformation), sociocultural (many focusing on covid-19), and political/legal (with an emphasis on geopolitical aspects and economic-social policies). Sustainability, focusing on the problem of climate change and environmental deterioration, has a more balanced distribution of articles over the period under analysis. The absence of articles on the economic factor before 2013 is worth noting, considering the financial and debt crisis that affected most economies in 2008 and the following years. The trends aim to put into perspective the evolution and impact of macro factors on tourism and consequently the three articles focus on the last two years. (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Number of Articles by Factor and Year**

Although most studies address an international context at the continental or the European Union level, there are also national-oriented studies, especially in the USA and UK. These articles mainly relate to the political-legal factors (specific institutional and regulatory contexts) and sustainability (effects on tourism destinations) (Figure 2). This result is similar to Bianchi (2018) and to Ghalia, Fidrmuc and Samargandi (2019), who highlight the role of political-legal institutions for tourism, and to Musavengane, Siakwah and Leonard (2019), that claim the relevance of sustainability for destination competitiveness.



**Figure 2: Number of Articles by Factor and Geographic Region**

*Legend:* "NA" group refers to all articles whose studies are not empirical (e.g., literature review)

Regarding the type of studies, quantitative studies (28) and literature review studies (16) predominate. Qualitative studies are fewer in number (eight). There are also two conceptual studies and four mixed-methods studies. The economic factor is studied based only on quantitative studies. The remaining factors are studied using all types of studies, except mixed studies for social and technological factors and conceptual studies for political-legal factors and sustainability (Table 2).

**Table 2: Number of Articles by Factor and Type of Study**

Factor	Literature Review	Conceptual	Qualitative	Quantitative	Qualitative & Quantitative
<b>Political-legal</b>	3	0	4	6	1
<b>Economy</b>	0	0	0	5	0
<b>Socio-cultural</b>	4	1	2	5	0
<b>Technology</b>	6	1	2	4	0
<b>Sustainability</b>	3	0	0	7	1
<b>Trends</b>	0	0	0	1	2

The lack of conceptual papers is worth noticing, suggesting the need for further theoretical development in this area of tourism studies. When referring to tourism and hospitality entrepreneurship, Fu et al (2019) have suggested that it "is currently rich in practice but poor in theoretical development" (p. 2).

The main themes by factor were identified. In the political-legal factor, the most discussed topics are those related to geopolitics/political and institutional instability and local politics (Table 3). Geopolitical risk and political instability affect the destination's long-term investment prospects and deteriorates its image and reputation (Demiralay & Kilincarslan, 2019; Wernick & von Glinow, 2012). Local policies aimed to ensure that tourism development and management practices are environmentally, culturally, and economically sustainable (e.g. Brendehaug et al., 2017; Guo et al., 2019; Neto, 2003).

**Table 3: Number of Articles by Main Topic in the Political-Legal Factor**

Main topic	Absolute frequency	Percentage
Geopolitical	3	22%
Economic policy	1	7%
Local policy	3	22%
Participatory policy	1	7%
Political and Institutional instability	3	22%
Regulatory environment	1	7%
Sustainable tourism policy	2	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100%</b>

The economic crisis is the most discussed subject in the economic factor, followed by the financial crisis, economic growth and macroeconomic factors (Table 4). Given the damaging effects of economic crises, such as the 2009 crisis, numerous research papers have analyzed its multiple consequences in the tourism and hospitality sector (e.g., Khalid et al., 2020; Papatheodorou et al., 2010; Smeral, 2009). From an entrepreneurial perspective, one must register the lack of studies concerning financing issues (Laeis and Lemke, 2016).

**Table 4: Number of Articles by Main Topic in the Economic Factor**

Main topic	Absolute frequency	Percentage
Financial crisis	1	20%
Economic growth	1	20%
Macroeconomic factors	1	20%
Economic crisis	2	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>

The millennial generation, environmental behaviours, covid-19 stand out within the sociocultural factor (Table 5). There is a growing interest in generational analysis in tourist literature, in which millennials are considered an important segment (Jamal & Newbold, 2020; X. Li et al., 2013). Environmental sustainability is the foremost topic in the contemporary tourism and hospitality industry, thus there is an increasing attention to environmentally sustainable behavior as an essential research topic in this field (Dong et al., 2020; Garvey & Bolton, 2017). Since the Covid-19 pandemic health crisis, practitioners and researchers have carried out studies aimed at identifying major impacts on tourist behavior and consumption patterns (Aldao et al., 2022).

These results highlight the focus on sociocultural issues on the demand side, not just on the supply side (i.e., cultural resources; e.g., Chili and Mabaso, 2016; Kawharu, Tapsell and Woods, 2017).

**Table 5: Number of Articles by Main Topic in Sociocultural Factor**

Main Topic	Absolute frequency	Percentage
Students' travellers	1	8%
Consumer behaviour	1	8%
Covid-19	2	17%
European Millennials	2	17%
Environment (sustainable behaviour/eco-friendly/pro-environmental)	3	25%
Market segmentation	1	8%
Lifestyle	1	8%
Demographic changes	1	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

In the technological factor, mobile technology predominates, followed by big data, robotic technology, and digital transformation (Table 6). The number of articles on technology suggests the relevance of this macro environment factor as a relevant trend that entrepreneurs should be concerned with. According to Stankov and Gretzel (2020), "tourism has been quick to jump onto the emerging Industry 4.0 trend, embracing increased technological development" (p. 478).

**Table 6: Number of Articles by Main Topic in Technological Factor**

Main Topic	Absolute frequency	Percentage
Mobile technology	3	19%
Big data	2	13%
Robotic technology	2	13%
Self-service technology	1	6%
Blockchain technology	1	6%
Digital marketing tools	1	6%
Digital transformation	2	13%
Information and communication technology	1	6%
Virtual Reality	1	6%
Social media	1	6%
Shared economies	1	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100%</b>

Concerning sustainability, climate change stands out, with environmental management by hotels occupying the second place (Table 7). Many tourism destinations owe their popularity to their climates. Thus, climate change is likely to have a significant impact on the demand for tourism in the future (Pulido-Fernández et al., 2019). The concern of hotels with environmental management is not surprising since the sector is one where the relationship between sustainability and operation is crucial (Kim, Barber and Kim, 2019).

**Table 7: Number of Articles by Main Topic in Sustainability Factor**

Main topic	Absolute frequency	Percentage
Natural disasters	1	9%
Climate Changes	4	37%
Hospitality (Proactive environmental management activity)	3	27%
Hospitality (Guests' pro-environmental behaviours)	1	9%
Nature-based tourism	1	9%
Smog pollution	1	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 6. Conclusion

Based on a systematic literature review of 58 articles, this paper aims to characterise the main macro-environmental factors impacting tourism and hospitality. Results suggest that political-legal, technological, sociocultural, and sustainability factors may be the most relevant ones for entrepreneurs in tourism and hospitality. More specifically, within political/legal factors, the literature highlights the relevance of geopolitics/political and institutional instability and local politics. Concerning technology, the focus is on mobile technology, followed by big data, robotic technology, and the digital transformation of the industry. The most relevant sociocultural factors have been those related to covid-19, as expected, but also generational issues and the environmental awareness of consumers. Under the sustainability umbrella, climate change and environmental management in hospitality have been the most relevant topics.

Despite its limitations that one may find in any review paper and are usually concerned with inclusion and exclusion criteria, this paper brings significant contributions to theory and practice. In the first case, the paper identifies the main concerns of recent literature regarding the macro environment and tourism, also highlighting the main gaps, such as the relatively lower number of papers on the economic perspective and the lack of conceptual papers. Future papers should address these gaps. In the second case, this paper organises the information, suggesting the main categories that entrepreneurs must consider when studying the macro environment of their businesses.

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