

A Bibliometric Analysis of Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Development: Trends, Themes, and Research Gaps

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Abstract

This study presents a bibliometric analysis of academic publications on the subjects of sustainable tourism and sustainable development, aiming to reveal the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and research trends within the field. Additionally, this study aims to identify gaps in the literature, guide future research, and contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through the tourism sector. Articles on "sustainable tourism" and "sustainable development" retrieved from the Web of Science database were included in the analysis. The annual number of publications, three-field plot, most relevant authors, author impact, most relevant journals, journal impact, most relevant institutions, publication distribution by country, most cited articles, word cloud, thematic map, co-citation network, co-occurrence keywords, and international collaborations were examined. A total of 1,296 articles

indexed in the Web of Science between 1992 and 2025 were analysed using the Biblioshiny package within the RStudio software. The findings indicate a significant increase in academic interest in this field, particularly after 2019. Authors such as Wang Y., Li Y., and Hall C. M. stand out, while Journal of Sustainable Tourism and Sustainability were identified as the most prolific journals. The results show that themes such as governance, environmental indicators, and community-based tourism are prominent, while climate change, CO₂ emissions, and digital transformation have emerged as rising topics.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Sustainable Development, Bibliometric Analysis, Research Trends.

JEL Codes: Z32, Q01, Q56

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1. Introduction

Sustainable tourism is one kind of tourism that satisfies local needs as well as those of present visitors without endangering the capacity of next generations to satisfy their own needs (Amerta et al., 2018). In tackling important problems, including environmental damage, climate change, and socioeconomic inequality, sustainable tourism has become more relevant worldwide. This kind of tourism aims to strike a balance between consumption, transformation, and sustainable use of resources rather than only preserving natural resources (Liu, 2003).

Three main aspects define sustainable tourism: environmental, socio-cultural, and financial. Environmentally, it emphasises the best application of resources and the preservation of ecological processes. Socially, it underlines the preservation of regional culture, the enhancement of intercultural understanding, and the enhancement of community welfare. Economically, it seeks to guarantee fair income distribution, so reducing poverty, and so contribute to long-term benefits (Amerta et al., 2018; Streimikiene et al., 2021).

Sustainable development and tourism are rather closely related. Often considered as the useful implementation of sustainable development ideas inside the travel industry is sustainable tourism (Ali & Frew, 2013; Haid & Albrecht, 2021). In this sense, Gössling and Hall (2006) underlined the need to include sustainable practices into tourism operations to avoid negative effects on ecosystems and underlined how directly tourism is linked to global environmental changes.

Sustainable tourism policies have to be totally included in national and international sustainable development strategies if we are to guarantee that the goals of global development are reached (Yfantidou & Matarazzo, 2017). Academic interest and research output in this area have clearly increased as sustainable tourism—especially in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—becomes ever more important.

Considering these factors, this study aims to conduct a bibliometric analysis of academic articles on sustainable tourism and sustainable development. Through this analysis, the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and research trends in the field will be revealed. The study is expected to provide insights that will guide future research and contribute to achieving sustainable development through the tourism sector.

2. Literature Review

The conceptual foundations of sustainable tourism were established in the late 1990s. Hunter (1997) introduced the idea that sustainable tourism should be viewed as an adaptable paradigm capable of

providing flexible solutions tailored to different contexts. Briassoulis (2002) and Tosun (2001) identified the structural and managerial challenges associated with implementing sustainable tourism, particularly in developing countries. These early studies emphasised the importance of the “triple bottom line” approach, which focuses on achieving balance among environmental, social, and economic considerations.

Liu (2003) argued that sustainable tourism is not solely about conserving natural resources but also about managing consumption and transformation processes. Hall (2019) examined the role of tourism in the United Nations’ 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting the significant influence of tourism on policy development, despite its limited direct representation within the SDGs framework. Sharpley (2020) highlighted the theoretical distinctions between tourism and development, suggesting that certain aspects of these two concepts may remain fundamentally incompatible.

Recent empirical studies have concentrated on topics such as community-based tourism (Lee & Jan, 2019), climate change adaptation (Scott, 2011), and resilience planning in community tourism (Lew, 2013). These studies provided valuable insights into local community perceptions, governance structures, and the socio-economic impacts of tourism on quality of life. Tao & Wall (2009) emphasised that tourism can be an effective strategy for achieving sustainable livelihoods, particularly in rural areas.

In recent years, digitalisation has become a major focus of research on sustainable tourism. While Prados-Castillo et al. (2023) investigated the potential of blockchain technology to improve openness and confidence in tourism transactions, El Archi et al. (2023) investigated how digital platforms are changing sustainable tourism practices. Also increasingly important are environmental communication techniques and green marketing ideas. Vaid (2023) concentrated on the function of green marketing in supporting sustainable tourism practices; Cavalcante et al. (2021) performed a bibliometric analysis on the development of sustainable tourism marketing.

Institutional structures and sustainability education have been identified as critical components for advancing sustainable tourism. León-Gómez et al. (2023) emphasised the importance of integrating sustainability education into tourism programs, while Mota et al. (2018) identified governance-based gaps in tourism planning literature.

Additionally, bibliometric analyses have become increasingly valuable in mapping the intellectual landscape and identifying emerging themes within the field of sustainable tourism research. Garrigós-Simón et al. (2018) and Huang (2025) employed tools such as VOSviewer and Biblioshiny to identify knowledge networks and outline future research directions in the field.

In summary, sustainable tourism continues to evolve as a dynamic and multidisciplinary field of study. While significant theoretical frameworks have been established (Hunter, 1997; Briassoulis, 2002; Liu, 2003), gaps remain in practical applications and empirical validations, indicating opportunities for further research that integrates sustainable tourism into broader sustainable development strategies.

3. Materials and Methods

Bibliometric analysis was used in the study. Bibliometric analysis is conducted to enhance the advancement, usability, and accessibility of scientific databases, such as Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), using specialised software. It is important because large volumes of scientific data can be processed, and high research impact can be created with bibliometrics (Donthu et al., 2021). Within the scope of bibliometric analysis, three-field plot (Maggio et al., 2021), most related authors and the impact of authors, most related journals and the impact of journals, most related institutions, most cited sources, word cloud, thematic map, co-citation network papers, Co-occurrence keywords (Passas, 2024), and

collaborations between countries were examined. In the study, articles that took the subjects of “sustainable tourism” and “sustainable development” together were examined. As of February 19, 2025, 1826 publications on “sustainable tourism” and “sustainable development” were found in the WoS database. The reason why the WoS database was preferred within the scope of the study is that it is older and therefore covers past studies and has a higher impact rate (Chadegani et al., 2013). Publication types other than articles were excluded from the analysis, and a total of 1,296 articles were identified and included in the analysis. No restrictions were imposed on the publication languages of the articles. Accordingly, the publication languages were determined to be English, French, Croatian, Czech, German, Italian, Dutch, Lithuanian, Malay, Polish, Portuguese, Slovak, Russian, Spanish, Slovenian, and Turkish. The data were analysed and visualised using the R software interface RStudio and the Biblioshiny package (version 4.3.1). R Studio and the Biblioshiny package are frequently used by various researchers (Krešić & Gjurašić, 2022; Arıcı et al., 2023; Lukose et al., 2024; Huang, 2025; Göktaş, 2025) for bibliometric analysis.

4. Findings

Table 1. Main Information

Description	Results
Timespan	1992:2025
Sources (Journal)	398
Documents	1296
Annual Growth Rate %	9.06
Document Average Age	6.23
Average Citations per doc	19.08
References	59010
Keywords Plus (ID)	1515
Author's Keywords (DE)	3781
Authors	3383
Authors of single-authored docs	221
Single-authored docs	239
Co-Authors per doc	2.98
International co-autorship %	27.93

As shown in Table 1, upon examining the general information of the articles, it is evident that 1,296 studies were published on the subject between 1992

and 2025. The annual growth rate of the articles is 9.06%, and the author collaboration between countries is 27.93%.

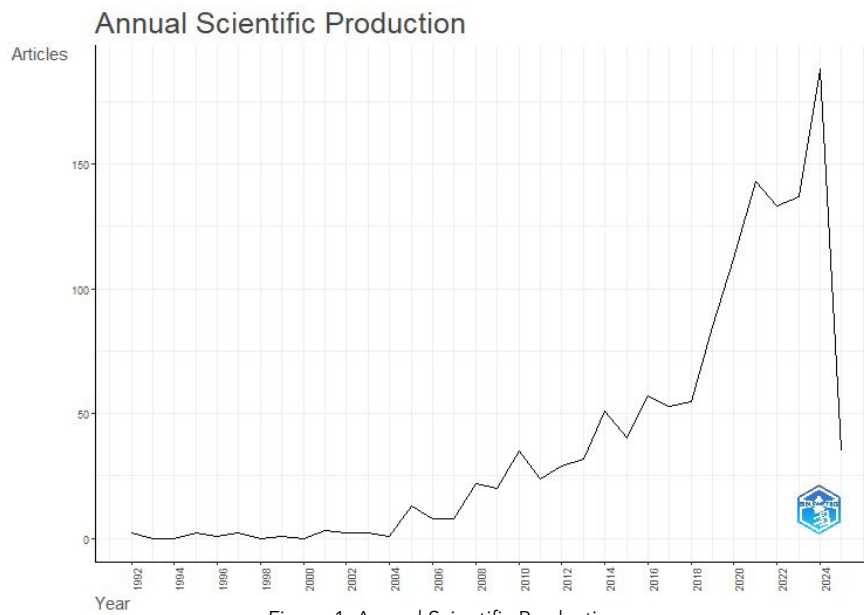


Figure 1. Annual Scientific Production

As shown in Figure 1, academic production on sustainable tourism and sustainable development was very limited in the early 1990s but entered a clear upward trend after 2005. This growth accelerated in the post-2010 period and gained remarkable momentum from 2019 onwards. Between 2020 and 2022, the number of publications increased steadily, reaching its peak in 2024. This upward trajectory can

be explained by the influence of the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals on academic agendas, as well as the growing need to restructure tourism in the post-COVID-19 era. Overall, the sharp increase in publications highlights that sustainable tourism has become a central theme in the global research agenda. In the study, a Sankey Diagram was used for a three-field plot.

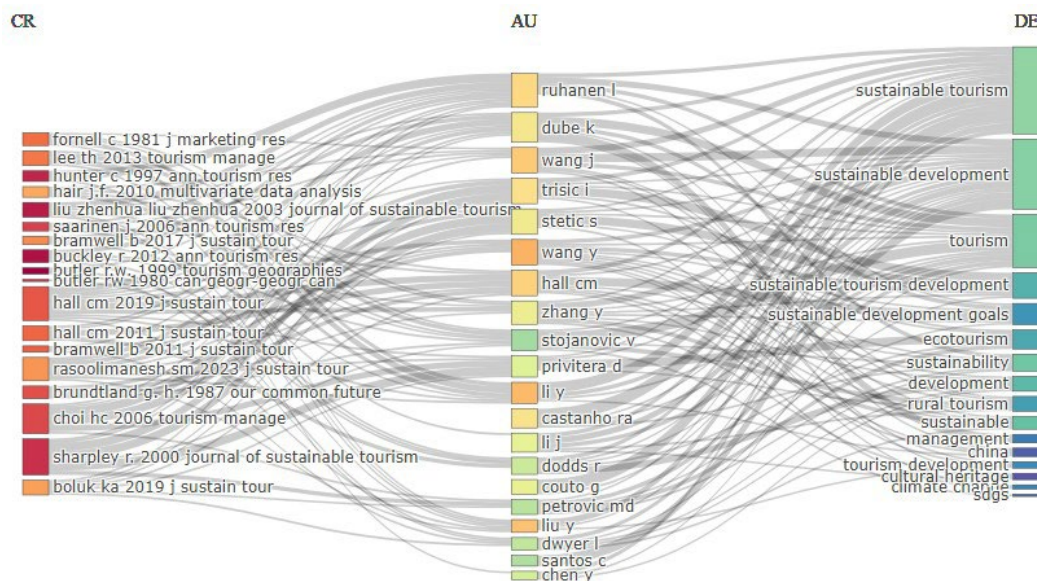


Figure 2. Three-Field Plot

A Sankey Diagram is used to visualise the energy flow in various networks and processes (Riehmman et al., 2005). A three-field plot consists of references (left), authors (middle), and keywords (right). The size of the rectangles next to references, authors, and keywords shows the magnitude of the connections between the components. According to the three-field plot analysis, it is seen that the most frequently used sources in the studies are Hall, C. M. (2019) (10 studies), Rasoolimanesh, S. M (2023) (8 studies), Sharpley, R. (2000), and Boluk, K. A. (2019) (7 studies). The most frequently used keywords in the

studies are sustainable development (17 studies), sustainable tourism (16 studies), tourism (14 studies), Sustainable Development Goals (6 studies), and sustainable tourism development (5 studies). The prominence of names such as Hall, Rasoolimanesh, and Sharpley suggests that theoretically based and normative studies continue to hold influence. At the same time, this structure reveals that the literature on sustainable tourism primarily revolves around a few authors, indicating that knowledge production is centralised.

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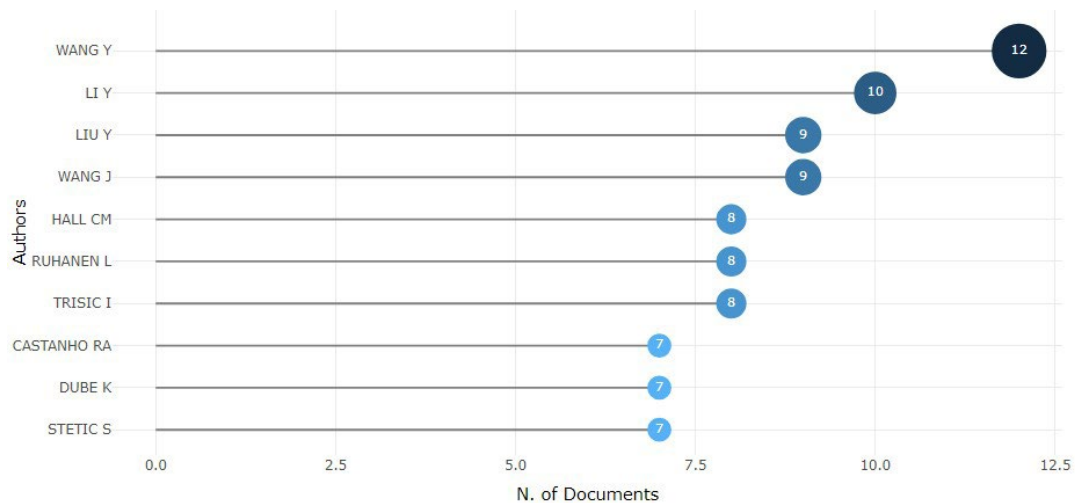


Figure 3. Most Relevant Authors

Figure 3 shows the 10 most relevant authors to the topic. This ranking is based on the number of studies by the authors on the topic and the fractional data of these studies. It is observed that Wang, Y. has published the most articles on the topic, with 12 publications. Li, Y. is in second place with 10 articles, Liu, Y. is in third place with 9 articles, and Wang, J. is in fourth place. Hall, C. M., Ruhanel, L., and Trisic, I. are in fifth, sixth, and seventh places with 8 artic-

les, respectively, while Castanho, R. A., Dube, K., and Stetic, S. are in eighth, ninth, and tenth places with 7 articles, respectively. The fact that many of the most active authors are based in China and Asia reflects a growing regional academic interest in the field. Furthermore, the high level of productivity among authors is also indicative of a high level of collaboration, suggesting that the field is well-developed in terms of collective knowledge production.

Table 2. Author's Impact

Authors	h_Index	g_Index	m_Index	TC	NP	PY_start
Hall C. M.	8	8	0,71	797	8	2009
Liu, Y.	7	9	0,5	218	9	2012
Wang, Y.	7	9	0,389	91	12	2008
Li, Y.	6	10	0,857	260	10	2019
Ruhanel, L.	6	8	0,333	571	8	2008
Stetic, S.	6	7	1	90	7	2020
Trisic, I.	6	8	1	91	8	2020
Castanho, R. A.	5	7	0,714	83	7	2019
Couto, G.	5	6	0,833	71	6	2020
Dube, K.	5	7	0,833	71	6	2020

Table 2 shows the local impact levels of authors who have conducted studies on sustainable tourism and sustainable development. The evaluation elements include H-index, G-index, M-index, TC (total citations), NP (Number of Publications), and PY_start (year of starting publications). De Visscher (2011) states that the h-index is more useful as a bibliometric tool. Therefore, the author's impact ranking

was determined based on the h-index scores. The high h-index values of authors like Hall reveal not only their productivity but also their significant impact. However, the fact that some authors receive relatively low citations despite their high number of publications suggests that the balance between quality and quantity is not always parallel.



Figure 4. Most Relevant Journals

Figure 4 lists the sources that have published the most on the subject. This ranking is based on the number of studies published by the sources on the subject and the fractional data of these studies. It is observed that the majority of publications on the subject were produced by Sustainability, with 240 articles. Figure 4 indicates that publications on sustainable tourism and sustainable development are concentrated in a limited number of journals. Among them, Sustainability and the Journal of Sus-

tainable Tourism stand out as the leading outlets, reflecting both high productivity and strong academic influence. While Sustainability benefits from its open-access policy to host a large volume of studies, the Journal of Sustainable Tourism maintains its position as the field's most impactful and specialized journal. This concentration suggests that the topic attracts attention from both generalist and discipline-specific journals, highlighting its multidisciplinary relevance.

Table 3. Impact Journal

Journal	h_Index	g_Index	m_Index	TC	NP	PY_start
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	42	76	2,333	6143	105	2008
Sustainability	33	50	2,75	3775	240	2014
Journal of Cleaner Production	14	19	0,667	786	19	2005
Current Issues in Tourism	12	15	0,667	460	15	2008
Sustainable Tourism	12	20	0,444	480	20	1999
Tourism Management	12	13	0,387	1611	13	1995
Tourism Management Perspectives	11	13	0,917	431	13	2014
Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes	11	14	0,647	353	46	2009
Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Research	9	15	0,9	234	15	2016
Tourism Planning & Development	9	16	0,429	282	18	2005

Table 3 shows the local impact levels of journals that publish studies on sustainable tourism and sustainable development. The evaluation elements include H-index, G-index, M-index, TC (total citations), NP (Number of Publications), and PY start (year of starting publications). Similar to author impact, this

ranking is also based on the h-index. The majority of high-impact journals cover the disciplines of environmental sciences, planning, and tourism, demonstrating the multidisciplinary nature and increasing academic integration of sustainable tourism.

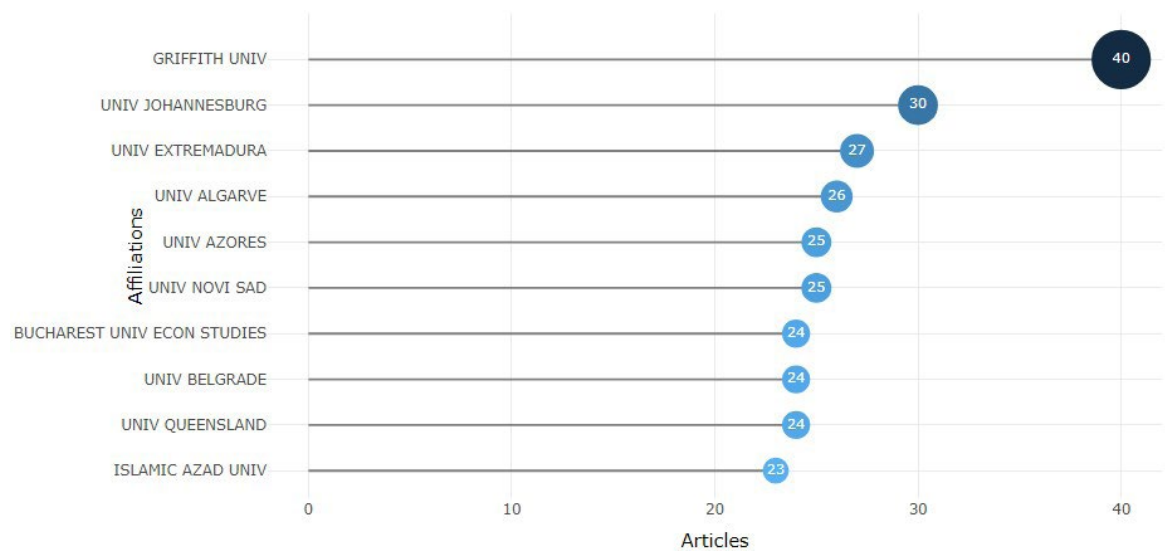


Figure 5. Most Relevant Affiliation

Figure 5 lists the institutions that have published the most on the subject based on the institutions of the authors responsible for the publications. The number of published articles was used as the evaluation criterion. When we examine the countries of the institutions that have published the most, we see that these include Australia, South Africa, Spa-

in, Portugal, Serbia, Romania, and Iran. The fact that countries such as Australia, Portugal, and Serbia are at the forefront institutionally may be a sign not only of their academic capacity but also that these countries prioritise sustainable tourism in their political agendas. Table 4 lists the countries with the highest number of publications.

Table 4. Country Scientific Production

Country	Article
China	709
Spain	310
USA	197
Italy	188
Portugal	182
Romania	170
Poland	167
UK	162
Australia	159
Serbia	128

The ranking is based on the countries of the authors. Accordingly, the 10 countries with the most publications on the subject are China, Spain, the United States, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Poland, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Serbia, respectively. Although China’s clear lead provides a quantitative advan-

tage, the content of these publications should be a separate subject of study. The fact that developing countries are also at the top of the list shows that sustainable tourism has become a common agenda not only for developed countries but also for the entire world.

Table 5. Country Scientific Production

Author(s)	Article	Sources	TC	TC per Year	Norm. TC
Hunter, C. (1997).	"Sustainable Tourism As An Adaptive Paradigm"	Annals of Tourism Research	443	15,28	1,50
Hall, C. M. (2019).	"Constructing Sustainable Tourism Development: The 2030 Agenda and the Managerial Ecology of Sustainable Tourism"	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	352	50,29	9,65
Briassoulis, H. (2002).	"Sustainable Tourism and the Question of the Commons"	Annals of Tourism Research	308	12,83	1,52
Lee, H. T., Jan, F. H. (2019).	"Can Community-Based Tourism Contribute to Sustainable Development? Evidence from Residents' Perception of the Sustainability"	Tourism Management	288	41,14	7,90
Lew, A. A. (2013).	"Scale, Change, and Resilience in Community Tourism Planning"	Tourism Geographies	254	21,17	8,65
Tao, T. C. H., Wall, G. (2009).	"Tourism as a Sustainable Livelihood Strategy"	Tourism Management	252	14,82	4,89
Tosun, C. (2001).	"Challenges of Sustainable Tourism Development in the Developing World: The Case of Turkey"	Tourism Management	236	9,4	1,52
Ramkissoon, H. (2023).	"Perceived Social Impacts of Tourism and Quality-of-Life: A New Conceptual Model"	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	233	77,67	22,67
Sharpley, R. (2020).	"Tourism, Sustainable Development and the Theoretical Divide: 20 years on"	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	224	37,33	9,58
Scott, D. (2011).	"Why Sustainable Tourism Must Address Climate Change"	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	216	13,50	7,54

Table 5 shows the 10 most cited articles among the scanned articles. The evaluation criteria include TC (Total Citation), TC per year (Annual Total Citation), and Norm. TC. (normalised total citation). The ranking was made based on TC. The abstracts of the 10 most cited articles were examined to determine the study topics. Hunter (1997) reconnected the concept of sustainable tourism with broader discussions on sustainable development, offering a more flexible paradigm that could adapt to different conditions. Hall (2019) examined the relationship between tourism and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In his study, he examined how tourism affected tourism policy despite being mentioned only three times in the UN 2030 SDG resolution. Briassoulis (2002) examined the central role of common-use resources in sustainable tourism development. Lee & Jan (2019) examined the impact of community-based tourism on sustainable development. Lew (2013) examined the concepts of scale, change, and resilience in community tourism planning, examining how resilience planning offers new perspectives as an alternative to sustainable development. Tao & Wall (2009) exami-

ned both the conceptual and practical shortcomings of sustainable development and its derivative, sustainable tourism. Tosun (2001) examined the challenges faced by sustainable tourism development in developing countries. Ramkissoon (2020) proposed a new conceptual framework for understanding how perceived social impacts of tourism and interpersonal trust can enhance the commitment of local people, thereby influencing their protection of tourism resources and quality of life. Sharpley (2020) examined the concepts of tourism and sustainable development, as well as the theoretical differences between the two concepts. Finally, Scott (2011) examined how tourism contributes to climate change, challenging the notion that the increasing interaction between sustainable tourism and climate change may not necessarily be in the interests of tourism sustainability. The fact that most of the most cited studies are theoretical and conceptually based suggests that the field is still in the process of establishing its theoretical framework. The relatively low number of citations to applied studies indicates a gap in this regard.



Figure 6. Word Cloud

Figure 6 shows the word cloud of the scanned studies. The word cloud was created using the most frequently used words in the abstract or full text of the scanned studies. The 10 most frequently used words in the studies are management (151 times), sustainable tourism (99 times), impact (76 times), tourism (75 times), indicators (64 times), model (64

times), attitudes (61 times), ecotourism (59 times), and perceptions (59 times). The prominence of concepts such as 'management', 'indicators', 'attitudes', and 'perceptions' indicates that research in the field is generally perception- and evaluation-based rather than applied. This suggests a gap between theoretical application and field practice.

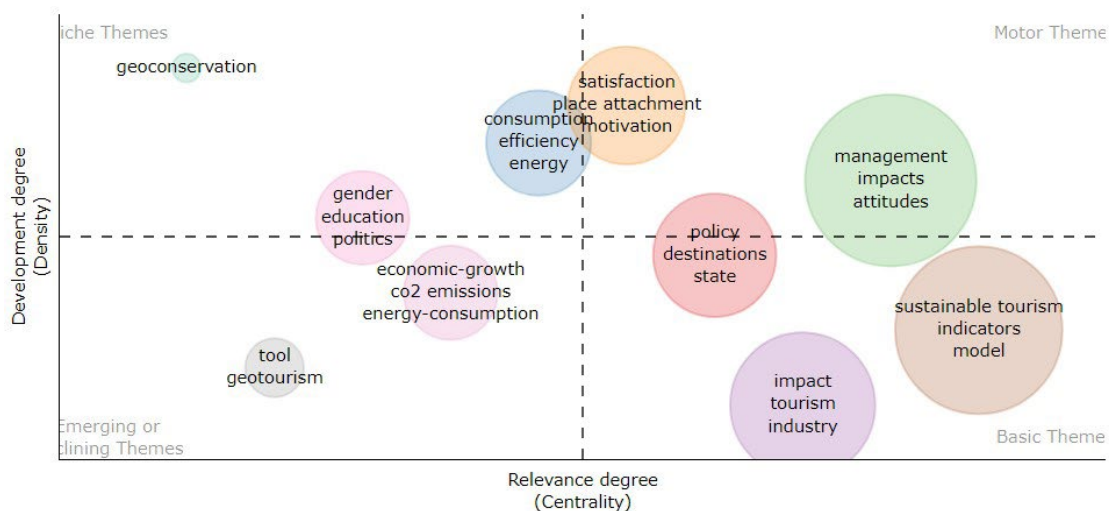


Figure 7. Thematic Map

A thematic map is essential for analysing the words used in studies, identifying emerging topics, and determining which topics authors will focus on (Agbo et al., 2021). While the thematic map consists of four quadrants, the words are placed in the appropriate area. While niche themes are located in the upper left, there are niche words related to the topic. While motor themes are located in the upper right, there are both central and widespread niche words. While emerging or declining themes are located in the lower left, some words emerge or disappear related

to the topic. Finally, while basic themes are located in the lower right, words related to the topic are less frequently used compared to the motor theme. The sizes of the circles increase and decrease according to the number of articles in which the word is used. The rise of themes in the 'emerging or declining' areas (e.g., CO₂ emissions, consumption) in the thematic map indicates that sustainability in the literature is no longer just about nature protection, but also encompasses more systemic issues, such as carbon footprint and consumption policies.

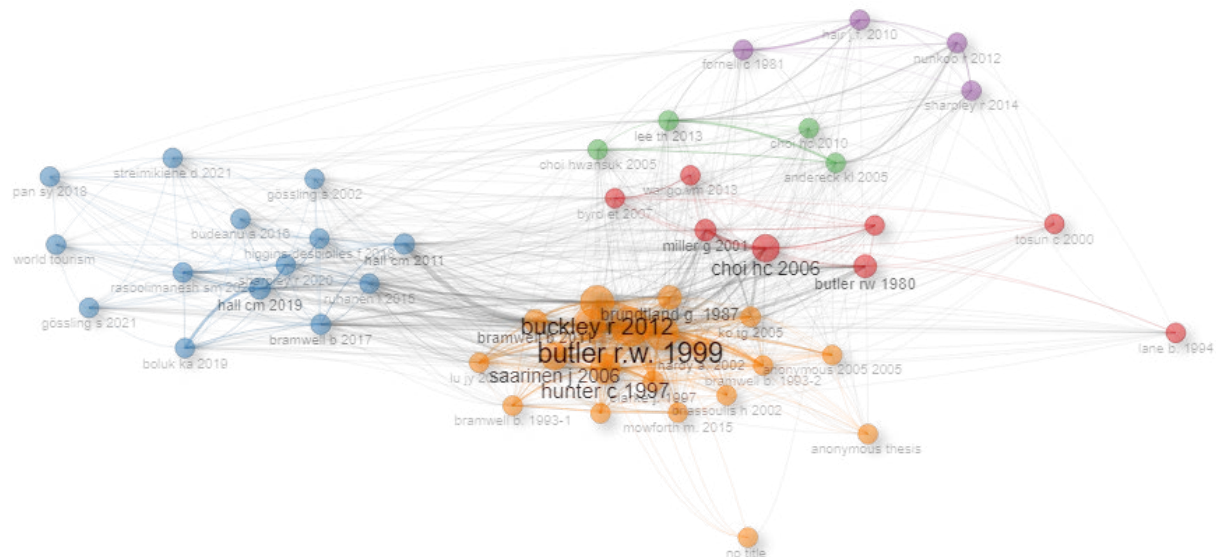


Figure 8. Co-Citation Network Papers

The co-citation network illustrates the shared citation patterns among authors. According to the analysis results, the most cited authors on the subject are Butler (1980), Choi (2006), Miller (2001), Byrd et al. (2007), UNWTO (2004), Lane (1994), Tosun (2000),

and Waligo (2013). The fact that authorities such as Butler, Tosun, and Choi are still among the most cited authors indicates that classical approaches continue to dominate the literature, and the space available for new paradigms is more limited.

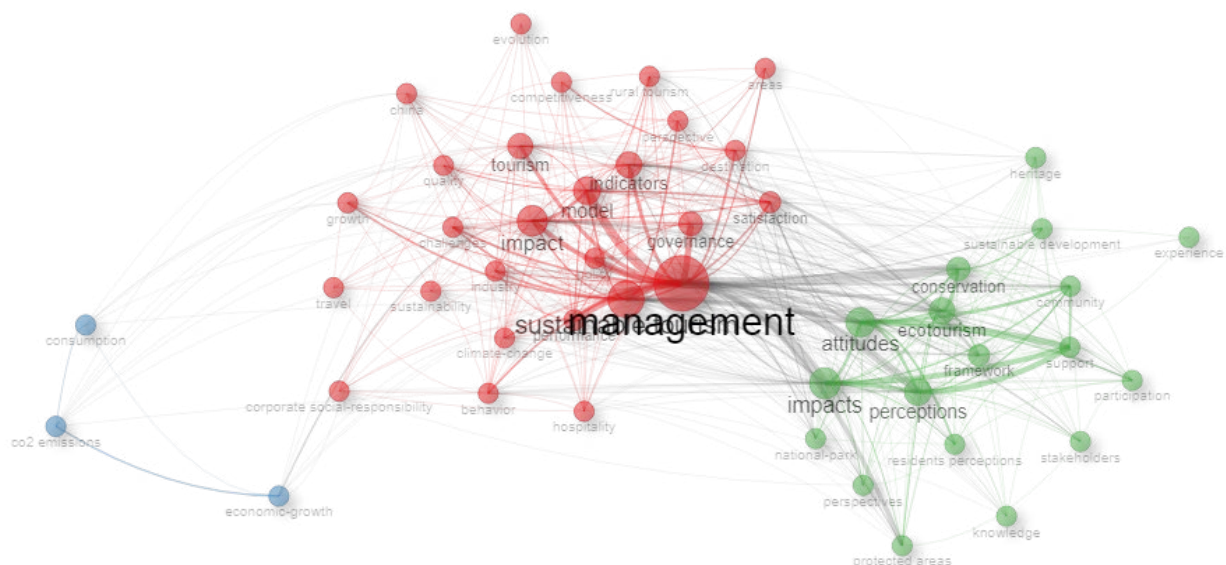


Figure 9. Co-Occurrence Keywords

Co-occurrence analysis was conducted for the keywords used in the articles. This analysis displays the network of keywords used in conjunction, helping us to identify the relationships between different keywords. The thickness of the connections between the words indicates the strength of the co-occurrence between the keywords. According to the analysis results, there are three distinct clusters of keywords in the studies. The first cluster consists of the words "management, sustainable tourism, impact, tourism, indicators, model, governance, challenges, policy, performance, satisfaction, destination, industry, climate-change, growth, behavior, perspective, quality, sustainability, areas, rural tourism, hospitality, china, competitiveness, travel, corporate

social-responsibility, evolution". The second cluster consists of the words "economic-growth, consumption, co2 emissions". The third cluster consists of the words "impacts, attitudes, ecotourism, perceptions, conservation, framework, support, community, sustainable development, participation, protected areas, stakeholders, perspectives, residents perceptions, national-park, experience, heritage, knowledge". The existence of three main clusters (governance and performance, environmental impacts, and community perception) reflects an interdisciplinary but thematically fragmented nature of the literature, suggesting that the field still focuses on micro-level issues rather than holistic policies.



Figure 10. County Collaboration

Country collaboration represents the collaboration between countries on a world map, while emphasizing the interconnection between countries. When collaborations between countries on the subject are examined, it is evident that the majority of collaborations are led by China (134 studies), followed by Spain (58 studies), Australia (43 studies), Italy (40 studies), and Poland (37 studies). The high level of international cooperation among countries such as China, Spain, and Australia demonstrates that these countries have become key players in sustainable tourism research, directing the circulation of knowledge.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to conduct a bibliometric analysis of articles on the subjects of “sustainable tourism” and “sustainable development”. Within the scope of the study, the most relevant authors and most influential authors, the most relevant journals and most influential journals, the most relevant institutions, the most cited sources, thematic map, co-citation network, co-occurrence keywords and country collaborations will be determined, revealing the situation on the subject and shedding light on the deficiencies in the literature, so it is thought that the study will pioneer future studies.

When the analyses conducted within the scope of the study are examined, it is evident that although studies on sustainable tourism and sustainable development began in 1992, they experienced a significant increase starting in 2008 and continuing thereafter, particularly in 2019 and the subsequent years. This situation reflects both the global impact of the Sustainable Development Goals and the need to restructure tourism after COVID-19. Given the increasing importance attached to the concept of sustainability, it is anticipated that more studies will be conducted on the subject in the years to come.

When the three-field plot is examined, it is evident that the most commonly cited sources in the studies are Hall, C. M. (2019), Rasoolimanesh, S. M. (2023), Sharpley, R. (2000), and Boluk, K. A. (2019). Again, in this analysis, we determined that the most frequently used common words are sustainable development, sustainable tourism, tourism, Sustainable Development Goals, and sustainable tourism development. Since the Sustainable Development Goals are expected to be fulfilled by 2030 (United Nations, 2025), we anticipate that the importance attached to this issue will increase in the years to come.

The authors with the most publications on the subject were determined to be Wang, Y., Li, Y., Liu, Y., Wang, J., Hall, C. M., Ruhanel, L., Trisic, I., Castanho, R. A., Dube, K., and Stetic, S., respectively. Upon examining the impact ratios of the authors, it was observed that the 9 authors with the most publications were also included in this list. When the journals that published the most studies on the subject were examined, it was seen that these were Sustainability, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes, Land, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Planning & Development, Tourism Review, Current Issues in Tourism, and Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Research, respectively. When the journals with the most impact were examined, it was determined that the 7 journals in this list were also among the journals with the most publications. When examined from this perspective, although it can be said that the number of publications and their impact are directly proportional, it is thought that studies published by different authors or journals can be pretty remarkable in terms of their subject matter, and the impact rate can be high. Furthermore, the analysis results reveal that knowledge production is concentrated around a limited number of authors, journals, and institutions, while thematic developments are increasingly focused on issues such as climate change, CO² emissions, and

digital transformation. These findings demonstrate that sustainable tourism is no longer a purely theoretical discussion but has become central to the academic and policy agenda within the context of sustainable development.

The institutions with the highest number of publications were determined to be Griffith University (Australia), University Johannesburg (South Africa), University of Extremadura (Spain), University of the Algarve (Portugal), University of the Azores (Portugal), University of Novi Sad (Serbia), Bucharest University of Economic Studies (Romania), University of Belgrade (Serbia), University of Queensland (Australia) and Islamic Azad University (Iranian). The countries with the highest number of publications were identified as China, Spain, the United States, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Poland, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Serbia, respectively. This result indicates that publications on the subject have garnered global attention.

When we examine the subjects of the most cited studies, it was determined that the studies were generally related to the conceptual and theoretical framework (Hunter, 1997; Tao & Wall, 2009; Sharpley, 2020), the impact of sustainable tourism on practice and policies (Tosun, 2001; Hall, 2019), and community-based tourism (Lee & Jan, 2019; Ramkissoon, 2020). When the thematic map is examined in comparison with these results, it can be observed that the tendency towards topics such as economic growth, CO2 emissions, and energy consumption is increasing, as indicated by the emerging or declining sections.

Ultimately, the findings of this study offer important implications for policymakers, industry representatives, and academics. Policymakers can leverage the data to develop more effective tourism strategies aligned with the SDGs; industry representatives can follow emerging best practices and trends; and academics can develop new theoretical frameworks based on identified gaps and strengthen interdisciplinary collaborations. For future studies, it can be suggested that researchers conduct research based on application to determine the level of application of sustainable tourism approaches and policies in the field, conduct theoretical and practical research on issues related to SDGs, and conduct more detailed research on issues such as climate change, adaptation to climate change, carbon footprint, sustainable tourism in developing countries and sustainable development. Finally, the study has some limitations as it only includes articles in the WoS database. It is thought that future studies, examining databases such as WoS and Scopus together and/or including other sources (such as books, book chapters, and papers) in the analysis process, will help obtain more comprehensive results.

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