

A Bibliometric Review of Socio-Economic and Sustainability Dimensions in Destination Development (2006–2025)

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Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's most influential socio-economic sectors, creating jobs, stimulating regional development, and contributing to national economies (Bhatt et al., 2024). As destinations increasingly depend on tourism-driven development, the interdependence among tourism, local society, government systems, and ecosystems has become a central point of scholarly and policy discussion. The conventional method of destination development primarily focuses on infrastructure development, market competitiveness, and tourist numbers. According to Mbaiwa (2003), such an approach has enabled an increasing body of literature to criticise the adverse influence on the local economy, social dynamics, environment, and culture. This is leading to the world of tourism being transformed into new models based on sustainability, community resilience, and responsible governance.

Sustainable development of destinations is now aligned with global trends, the first being the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to Sustainable Development Goal SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 14/15 (Life Below Water and Life on Land), it is stated that in relation to Tourism. It indirectly promotes SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships). The shift in the field-based measurement of scholarly interest in community well-being, inclusive development, livelihood resilience, environmental stewardship, and more equitable governance is high, indicating that tourism studies are moving much closer to these global sustainability agendas (Krittayaruangroj et al., 2023; Trišić et al., 2023).

Community perception on tourism, mechanisms for participation, benefit-sharing, and the quality of governance underpin social sustainability. Research indicates that higher levels of trust, empowerment, and stakeholder participation enhance community support for tourism and ensure the long-term sustainability of the destination (Gursoy et al., 2018; Nunkoo, 2017). Specific focus is given to community-based tourism (CBT) as a model for enhancing socio-

economic performance while preserving cultural and environmental resources. Pasanchay and Schott (2020) state that residents develop resilience in their livelihoods, shape their decision-making, and become more actively involved in the economy. Similarly, current global data indicate that tourism-led growth can help minimize disparities and support development in emerging economies (Bhatt et al., 2024).

Similarly, environmental concerns have gained popularity as a field of study in tourism. Nature-based tourism, protected area management, and low-carbon tourism are increasingly studied in the academic literature due to climate change, biodiversity loss, habitat degradation, and overtourism (Gössling & Higham, 2020). As valuable ecological assets, protected areas require scientific management and community-based governance that balance tourism use with conservation outcomes (Trišić et al., 2023). As these environmental and socio-economic problems become increasingly interdependent, the development of destinations is likely to be guided by climate adaptation, conservation, and circular-economy principles.

Conceptually, the sustainability-oriented tourism scholarship has grown rapidly over the last few decades, yet it has also become fragmented. The literature on sustainability research in tourism has been widely spread across a multiplicity of themes, including ecotourism, CBT, resilience, governance, protected areas, and rural development (Krittayaruangroj et al., 2023; García-García et al., 2023). It is demanded that there be a mechanism for synthesizing the intellectual framework, predominant and unfolding themes, the progress of various sustainability issues over time, and the way in which the current research corresponds to the SDGs.

This need can be addressed through the careful methodological approach of a bibliometric analysis. Bibliometrics enables the identification of research clusters, intellectual foundations, leading researchers, and knowledge gaps through co-occurrence networks, thematic mapping, and temporal evolution models. A combination of SDG alignment and bibliometric insights provides a compelling lens for examining how tourist destination development contributes to sustainability and where

further research is needed (Rabadán-Martín et al., 2025).

In light of these gaps, the current study presents a holistic bibliometric analysis of 193 Scopus- and Web of Science-indexed publications (2006–2025) on the socio-economic sustainability of destination development. This review, using Biblioshiny and VOSviewer, examines research productivity, intellectual networks, thematic clusters, and thematic evolution. A key contribution is the alignment of SDG mapping with thematic analysis, which assesses the field's contribution towards global development. The study conceptualizes destination development from a socio-economic and environmental perspective. This perspective proposes a research agenda to guide future scholarship on the SDGs.

Review of Literature

Destination Development: From Growth-Driven Approaches to Sustainability-Oriented Models

Destination development, a key activity of the tourism industry, is traditionally perceived through an economic growth paradigm. This includes the building of infrastructure, improving market competitiveness, and increasing tourist movements (Mbaiwa, 2003; UNWTO, 2018). The classic development models stressed destination image, accessibility, diversified product offerings, service quality, and related factors. More than anything, tourism was seen as a means of generating local demand and employment (Gössling & Higham, 2020).

However, initial critiques suggested that growth-led development had resulted in environmental degradation, the commodification of culture, social inequalities, and an unequal distribution of benefits within communities (Mbaiwa, 2003).

Ever since the advent of the sustainability agenda, the academic community has made the case for balanced economic, social, and environmental outcomes. Frameworks for developing sustainable destinations focus on community engagement, governance, social equity, environmental conservation, and overall sustainability (Baloch et al., 2022; Wang & Cheablum, 2025). These changes also reflect growing alignment with the targets related to SDG 8 on promoting sustainable economic

growth, SDG 11 on making communities inclusive, and SDG 12 on promoting responsible production and consumption.

Socio-Economic Dimensions: Community Well-Being, Participation, and Inclusive Growth

Destination development undertaken to achieve socio-economic development targets receives increasing attention in tourism scholarship. According to Nunkoo (2017) and Garcoria-Garcia et al. (2023), community participation, benefit-sharing, livelihood enhancement, and social capital development are required. As noted by Singh, Seal, and Sharma (2024), community-based tourism models also aim to empower citizens through collective decision-making, capacity building, and local governance. Community cohesion and perceived benefits associated with resident empowerment positively influence local support for tourism development (Gursoy et al., 2009; Wang & Cheablam, 2025). Socio-economic studies are showing an increasing relationship between tourism and poverty alleviation, rural growth, and the elimination of regional disparities. These form significant parts of the SDG 1 (No Poverty) and the SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). However, the literature also identifies such problems as the uneven distribution of benefits, excessive reliance on the tourism industry, seasonality, and power inequality. The multifaceted nature of the issues has necessitated an integrated, participatory governance that aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Environmental and Sustainability Dimensions: Balancing Tourism Growth with Ecological Integrity

Sustainable development of the destination emphasises environmental sustainability. According to the foremost research, tourism has a dual nature. On the other hand, it raises awareness of conservation and contributes funds to protecting areas. On the contrary, tourism causes pollution, biodiversity loss, and carbon emissions (Gössling & Higham, 2020; Baloch et al., 2022). Ecotourism and nature-based tourism are widely regarded as vehicles for conservation and local empowerment. Tourism impacts require proper governance, carrying capacity management, and community stewardship (Mbaiwa, 2003; Buckley, 2012).

Recently, experts have emphasized the importance of climate-responsive planning for the tourism sector to enhance resource-use efficiency, consumption patterns, and the circular economy. This directly relates to SDG 12 and SDG 13. Further, the expansion of protected areas and biodiversity is linked with SDG 14 and SDG 15. Despite progress, empirical studies indicate a continuing gap between rhetoric and action regarding sustainability in many destinations that lack the power to enforce environmental regulations and monitor ecological impacts (Wang & Cheablam, 2025).

Theoretical and Methodological Gaps: Need for Integrated, Data-Driven Understanding

Though extensive research has been conducted in the area, it remains poorly integrated across themes, including economic development, sustainability, social construction, urban planning, environmental governance, community engagement, and environmental protection. Scholars call for an integrative framework that connects social-economic and ecological dimensions and positions destination development in the context of global SDG priorities (García-García et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2024). The existing qualitative and case-based methods are adequate for in-depth investigation but may not support large-scale generalization. Advanced quantitative and bibliometric methods may, however, facilitate conclusions about structural configurations, intellectual connections, and thematic change (Muritala et al., 2020).

In recent years, bibliometric studies have emerged as a robust technique for mapping knowledge structures, identifying conceptual clusters, and analysing the evolution of sustainability research in tourism (García-García et al., 2023). The use of co-occurrence networks indicates the growing overlap between social, economic, and environmental issues. The keywords sustainability, community development, protected areas, stakeholder engagement, etc., have been constantly used.

Thematic mapping furthermore shows how basic socio-economic themes (livelihood, community participation, etc.) further evolve into complex multidimensional themes (resilience, governance, sustainability indicators, etc.).

The bibliometric analysis and its findings help understand

the scholarly discourse on the SDGs and the corresponding research gaps. For instance, gender (SDG 5), innovation (SDG 9), and partnerships (SDG 17) have received little scholarly attention.

RQ1.

How has the volume and citation impact of research on tourism impact, destination development, sustainability, and local communities evolved between 2006 and 2025 across Scopus and Web of Science?

RQ2.

Which authors, institutions, countries, and journals have demonstrated the highest productivity and influence in advancing this field during the study period?

RQ3.

What major thematic clusters emerge from keyword co-occurrence analysis, and how are these themes conceptually interrelated?

RQ4.

In what ways have the dominant research themes evolved (2000–2010, 2011–2017, 2018–2025), and what new directions can be identified?

RQ5.

How do the identified research themes correspond to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and what gaps remain for future inquiry?

Research Methodology

This research uses a bibliometric approach to analyze the literature on tourism impact, destination development, local community, and sustainability. Using bibliometric methods, trends in publications, intellectual structure, and collaborations can be systematically and quantitatively assessed.

Analysis Results:

Table 1: Main Information about Data

Timespan	2006:2025
Sources (Journals, Books, etc.)	111
Documents	193
Annual Growth Rate %	13.17
Document Average Age	4.48

Collection of Data.

Information was retrieved from Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) due to their comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals. The following search string was used in the Title, Abstract, and Keywords fields.

Search for either "tourism impact" or "destination development" or "local community" and "sustainability" in the title, abstract, or keywords.

The search was restricted to English-language journal articles, including review articles, published between 2006 and 2025. These combinations yielded 296 records.

Cleaning the Data and Finalizing the Dataset.

The information collected from both sources was combined and cleaned using Biblioshiny (a bibliometrix package for R)—removal of duplicate records and publications without DOI information, and standardization of keywords. After cleaning, 193 unique articles were used for further analysis.

Data analysis tools

The analysis employed two complementary bibliometric methods.

Bibliometrix (Biblioshiny) was used to examine yearly publication trends, key authors and journals, and keyword frequency.

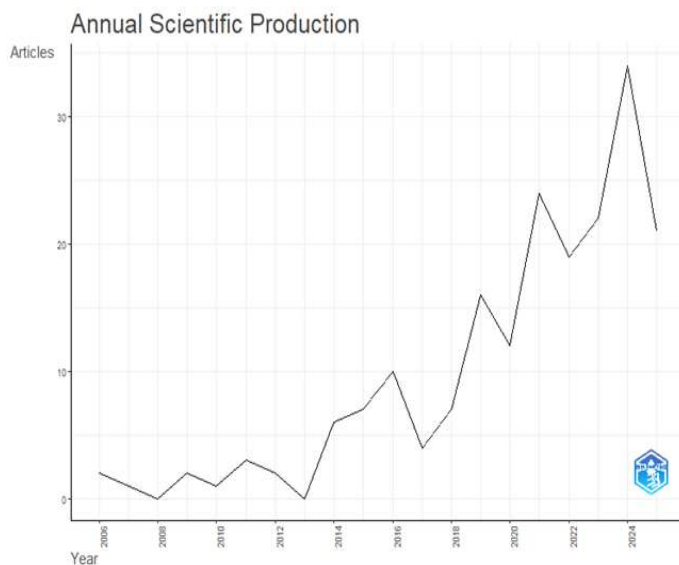
Using VOSviewer, an application for constructing visualizations based on network data, a keyword co-occurrence network and a co-authorship network were constructed throughout the study. This helped to identify the central research theme and authorship pattern in the study.

Average citations per doc	19.5
References	0
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	556
Author's Keywords (DE)	745
AUTHORS	
Authors	669
Authors of single-authored docs	23
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	23
Co-Authors per Doc	3.6
International co-authorships %	22.28
DOCUMENT TYPES	
article	178
review	15

Source: The author, using Biblioshiny by R Studio, 2025

Descriptive and Performance Analysis

Figure 1: Annual Scientific Production



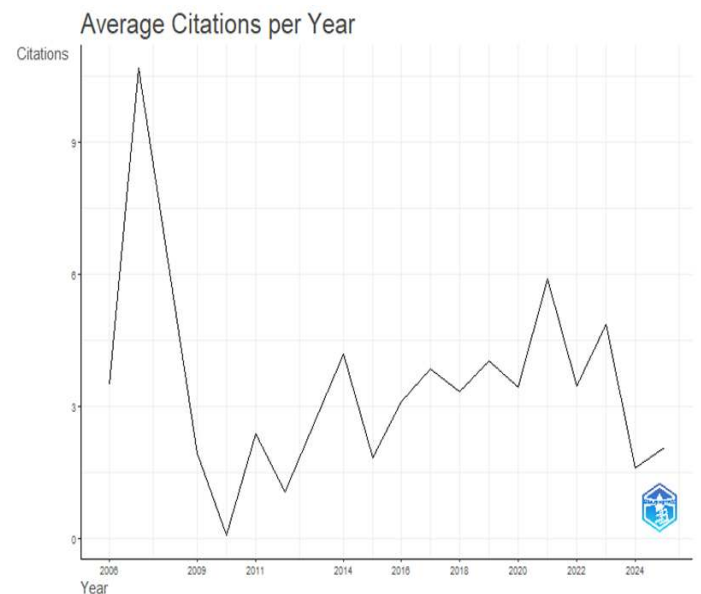
Source: The author, using Biblioshiny by R Studio, 2025

Scientific production on tourism impact, destination development, sustainability, and local communities has been on an upward trend from 2006 to 2025. Engagement in the early years was relatively limited, with a considerable increase in research activity after 2014, peaking in 2024 onwards with over 30 publications. This increase is

consistent with international sustainability programs such as the UN SDGs, indicating a move towards responsible tourism development that builds communities. This trend shows that the subject has only been researched in the past 10 years.

Citation Impact and Performance

Figure 2: Average Citation per Year



Source: The author, using Biblioshiny by R Studio, 2025

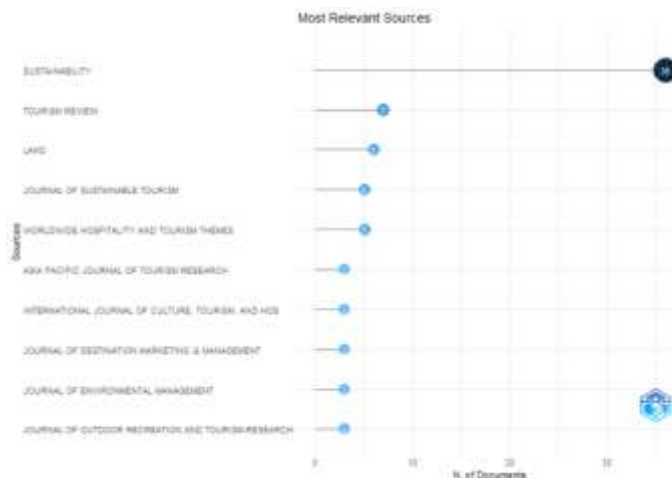
Table 2: Year-wise Citation Analysis

Year	MeanTCperArt	N	MeanTCperYear	Citable Years
2006	70	2	3.5	20
2007	203	1	10.68	19
2009	33	2	1.94	17
2010	1	1	0.06	16
2011	35.67	3	2.38	15
2012	14.5	2	1.04	14
2014	50.33	6	4.19	12
2015	20.14	7	1.83	11
2016	31	10	3.1	10
2017	34.75	4	3.86	9
2018	26.57	7	3.32	8
2019	28.19	16	4.03	7
2020	20.58	12	3.43	6
2021	29.5	24	5.9	5
2022	13.84	19	3.46	4
2023	14.55	22	4.85	3
2024	3.18	34	1.59	2
2025	2.05	21	2.05	1

Source: The author, using Biblioshiny by R Studio, 2025

Citation analysis shows a trade-off between the number of published papers and the per-paper citation. The average citation rate across the dataset is 19.5 citations per artwork. In the earliest papers, the cumulative impact appears to be the largest, as MeanTCp peaked at 203 in 2007, when the citation window was longer, but the number of articles was smaller. The citation impact remained stable during the high-output period (2014-2021), during which articles consistently received 20-50 citations. Thus, a baseline impact. Recent years have seen a marked decrease (MeanTCp = 2.05 in 2025) due to the citation window effect, since articles published more recently have not yet had sufficient time to receive citations.

Figure 3: Most Relevant Sources



Source: The author, using Biblioshiny by R Studio, 2025

In examining keyword co-occurrence, the analysis reveals a distinct, cohesively conceptualized thematic framework in the study of socio-economic and sustainability in destination development. The idea of sustainable tourism research has been placed in four broad thematic areas, indicating a multidimensional approach and its interdependence with community, governance, and development processes. The fact that these clusters are closely related indicates that the field is no longer a collection of thematic silo research but one that is systemic and integrative (Ruhanen et al., 2015; Wang & Cheablam, 2025).

The primary and central cluster is dedicated to the outcomes of sustainability and tourism development, and the terms of sustainability and sustainable development have become the most widespread. By including the areas of tourism development, ecotourism, local participation, and COVID-19, the cluster reflects a strong focus on the socio-economic effects and resilience performance of tourism development in the sphere (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Hall et al., 2020). Crisis-related themes are gaining popularity and reflect growing academic interest in the destination's vulnerability and its ability to adapt to shocks (Gössling et al., 2020).

The inclusion of protected areas, management, governance frameworks, impact assessment, etc., together outlines a second theme cluster. This cluster covers the institutional and policy framework upon which the development of sustainable destinations relies. It focuses on regulatory mechanisms and planning instruments as key enablers for sustainability objectives (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Dredge & Jenkins, 2007). The close association of protected areas with nature-based tourism is one of the many examples of an emergent connection of conservation priorities and tourism-based development strategies (Buckley, 2012; Eagles et al., 2002).

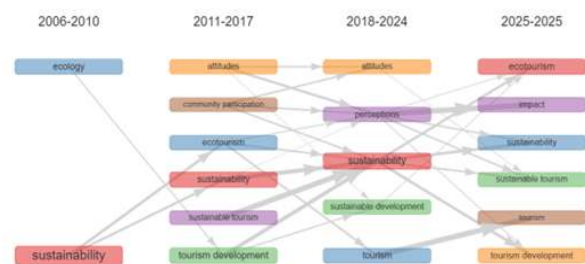
The third cluster, which encompasses perceptions and attitudes of residents, social acceptance, and so on, with high-frequency keywords perceptions, attitudes, support, and destination competitiveness. This cluster shows how rising awareness of community support and perceived benefits can act as important conduits of sustainable

tourism success (Gursoy et al., 2009; Nunkoo et al., 2012; Shekhar et al., 2025). Through its focus on the relationships among social perceptions, competitiveness, and development outcomes, the theme also embodies a trend toward more socially embedded and participatory forms of destination planning (Stylidis et al., 2014; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016).

The fourth and smallest cluster relates to the local community and quality of life, with keywords such as local community, rural tourism, and quality of life. This cluster has a lower density but serves as a bridge between the developmental process and social impact. Moreover, performance indicator measures of community wellbeing improvement also reflect the higher-order criterion of sustainable destination development (Aandereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Uysal et al., 2015). Its placement in the network reveals that quality of life is being integrated into sustainability assessments rather than conceived as an outcome.

The conceptual relationships between these clusters suggest a causal and feedback structure. Governance and management frameworks shape tourism development processes, which influence residents' perceptions and participation. Finally, community well-being and quality of life are influenced. Sustainability is the coordinating concept that enables the integration of environmental, socio-economic, and community issues into a cohesive research agenda. Contemporary tourism research increasingly views destination development through a systemic lens, as confirmed by this interlinked thematic structure (Sharpley, 2020; Saarinen, 2020).

Figure 8: Thematic evolution 2006-2025



Source: The author, using Biblioshiny by R Studio, 2025

The thematic evolution analysis demonstrates a progressive maturation of tourism and sustainability research, marked by a shift from environmentally grounded concerns to socially embedded, outcome-oriented sustainability frameworks.

2006–2010: Environmental and Ecological Foundations

The early phase of studies (2006-2010) focused on sustainability and environmental issues, primarily assessing tourism's environmental impact and its alignment with more ecologically oriented goals. During this period, sustainability was primarily conceived as an ecological constraint on tourism development, with little regard for social or governance dimensions. The identification of environmental impacts and the development of sustainability as a principle of tourism research (Hunter, 2002; Weaver, 2007).

2011–2017: Social Turn and Community Engagement

From 2011 to 2017, the research agenda shifted notably to include community participation, resident attitudes and perceptions, and ecotourism, indicating a decisive social turn in the literature.

Scholars are increasingly recognizing that sustainability outcomes depend more on local acceptance, stakeholder engagement, and governance processes than on environmental management alone (Choi & Murray, 2010; Moscardo, 2011). Ecotourism began to gain favour as a legitimate way to link conservation and community, while sustainable tourism came to be used to link environmental and social discourses (Shekhar et al., 2025; Lee, 2013; Bramwell et al., 2016).

2018–2024: Consolidation around Sustainability, Attitudes, and Perceptions

The period from 2018 to 2024 is one of consolidation and integration of concepts, highlighting the prominence of attitudes, perceptions, sustainable development, and tourism. At this stage, rather than offering insights into new thematic directions, the research is conducted to deepen social and sustainability-related debates already underway. It emphasizes investigations into how tourism development

and sustainability initiatives are perceived and evaluated by tourism stakeholders, particularly host communities. This is increasingly referred to as social legitimacy, experiential evaluation, and human values, which are gaining prominence in sustainability evaluation (Boley et al., 2014; Nunkoo & So, 2015). Sustainability becomes part of the broader scope of sustainable development, a concept that implies a multidisciplinary approach encompassing the social, environmental, and economic aspects of tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Koens et al., 2018).

2025: Impact-Oriented and Applied Sustainability

The 2025 thematic structure ends with the keywords 'impact', 'ecotourism', and 'sustainable tourism', showing a clear move towards more practical, outcome-based research. Measurement and evaluation of sustainability are the emphasis at this stage, in which the conceptualization aspect is established, while the socio-economic and environmental effects of tourism are evaluated. The ecotourism industry reappears as an applied field that has risen as an operational system of policy and destination management evaluation. It is an emerging research trend associated with responsible tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals (Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014; Scheyvens et al., 2016; Spenceley et al., 2019).

Emerging Directions

The themes evolved from the identification of environmental impacts (2006–2010) to community engagement (2011–2017), then to sustainability assessment based on perceptions (2018–2024), and, lastly, to impact-focused, policy-relevant research (2025). Emerging directions show stakeholder perceptions, governance effectiveness, and sustainability outcomes. Future research will be more focused on how sustainable tourism is implemented, experienced, and evaluated in practice, rather than on its conceptualization.

Table 3: Alignment of Bibliometrically Identified Research Themes with United Nations SDGs

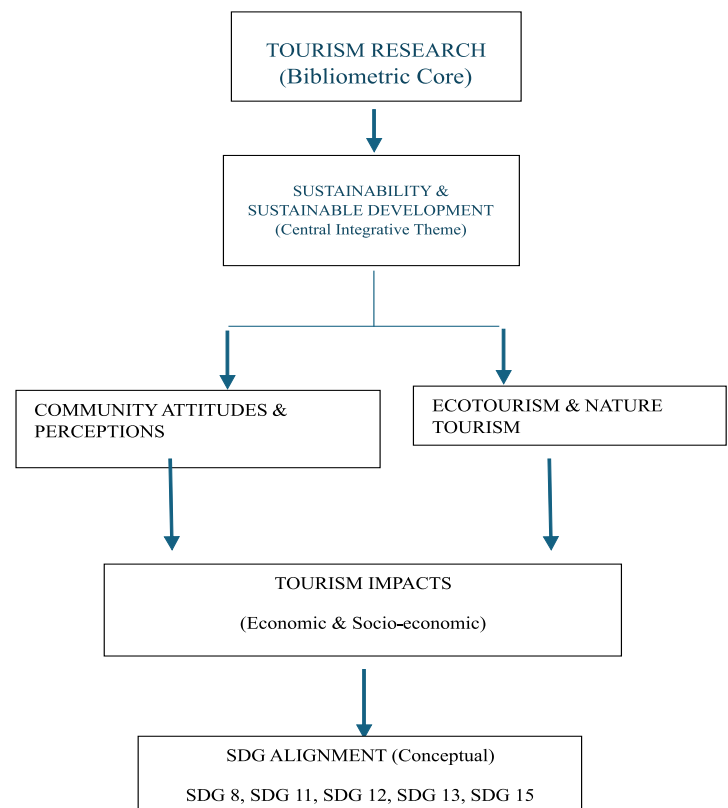
Bibliometric Theme	Observed Keywords	Aligned SDGs	Rationale Based on Bibliometric Evidence
Sustainability & Sustainable Development	sustainability, sustainable development, tourism	SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production SDG 13 – Climate Action	These keywords show the highest frequency and centrality across co-occurrence and thematic evolution maps, indicating sustained scholarly focus on responsible resource use and long-term environmental sustainability.
Community Attitudes & Perceptions	community, attitudes, perceptions	SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities	The repeated co-occurrence of social perception-related keywords reflects research emphasis on community acceptance, social evaluation, and inclusive destination development.
Ecotourism & Nature-Based Tourism	ecotourism, nature tourism	SDG 15 – Life on Land	The explicit presence of ecotourism-related keywords supports alignment with biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems through tourism.
Tourism Impacts	impact, tourism	SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth	The emergence of impact-focused keywords in later periods indicates growing attention to tourism's economic contributions and development outcomes.

Table 3, showing the SDGs alignment, is the result of the post-bibliometric interpretive step, drawn exclusively from keywords identified through keyword co-occurrence and thematic evolution mapping. In short, only the themes supported by consistent, high-frequency keywords were used in the study. This way, their correspondence with SDGs will reflect the empirical structure of the literature rather than normative assumptions.

The prevalence of keywords associated with sustainability indicates an alignment with SDGs that address responsible production and climate concerns. Furthermore, the prominence of community attitudes and perceptions suggests that tourism research supports sustainable community development. Like, the presence of the ecotourism and impact keywords reveals growing research interests in biodiversity conservation and the economic outcomes of tourism development. Tourism research aligns selectively but significantly with some SDGs. This mapping also shows areas such as gender equality or inequality that have limited bibliometric evidence but require attention.

Conceptual Framework Linking Tourism Research Themes with Sustainable Development Goals

Figure 9: Framework Linking Tourism Research Themes with Sustainable Development Goals



In accordance with the paper's title and dataset, which seek to conduct a study on destination development limited to sustainability, local community, and socio-economic character, Tourism Research has been adopted as the higher-level bibliometric domain. Consequently, the selection of data, bibliometric procedures, and interpretation is organized around tourism as the primary analytical domain rather than as a thematic construct, thereby ensuring methodological and conceptual coherence (Zupic & Čater, 2015; Ruhanen et al., 2015).

Within this domain-specific analytical framework, a conceptual framework is established based on keyword co-occurrence and thematic evolution analyses. The framework is incorporated to consolidate disjointed bibliometric results into a unified interpretive structure and to ensure a coherent transition from mapping to analysis. In line with the protocols of bibliometric synthesis, including the work of Cobo et al. (2011) and Aria and Cuccurullo (2017), this study illustrates conceptual convergence among themes identified empirically. It suggests no causation or time-ordering among the constructs.

The most recurring and structurally most central term throughout the analytical stages is sustainability and sustainable development. Sustainability is seen as one of the integrated paradigms linking tourism development to the environment, society, and the long-run viability of places (Buckley, 2012; Bramwell et al., 2016; Sharpley, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018).

Around this core, community attitudes and perceptions emerge as an evaluative dimension of growing importance, reflecting social acceptance of sustainable tourism

development. According to Boley et al. (2014), Nunkoo & So (2015), Styliadis et al. (2014), and Moscardo (2011), their prominence indicates an increasing focus on sustainability, one that appreciates the impact of resident support on destination success and policy legitimacy.

At the same time, ecotourism and nature-based tourism are environmentally related manifestations of sustainability principles, as shown by consistent scholarship on conservation-based tourism models, particularly in rural and protected areas (Weaver, 2007; Eagles et al., 2002; Buckley, 2012). The growing relevance of tourism impacts in recent times points towards an increasing importance of outcome-oriented research that focuses on the measurement of economic and socio-economic impacts like the generation of employment, the enhancement of livelihood, and the well-being of the community (Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014; Uysal et al., 2015; Koens et al., 2018).

To conclude, the framework links thematic linkages to selected UN SDGs (8, 11, 12, 13, and 15) solely based on direct thematic correspondence. The positioning demonstrates that tourism research conceptually engages with global sustainability agendas without claiming direct policy impact or causal contribution, in a manner consistent with SDG-oriented tourism research (Kong et al., 2024; Scheyvens et al., 2016; Saarinen, 2020).

In conclusion, the framework strengthens analytical coherence by integrating established themes in tourism research, sustainability discourse, and the SDGs into a single interpretive framework for the study, thereby enhancing theoretical clarity and interpretative depth.

Table 4. Policy-Implication Matrix Derived from Bibliometric Evidence

Framework Theme	Key Bibliometric Evidence	Policy Implications	Relevant SDGs
Sustainability & Sustainable Development	Sustainability and sustainable development emerged as the most frequent and structurally central keywords across all periods, indicating their role as the core integrative concepts in the field.	Integrate sustainability criteria into destination planning and monitoring frameworks; encourage systematic sustainability reporting for tourism projects to support evidence-based decision-making.	SDG 12, SDG 13

Framework Theme	Key Bibliometric Evidence	Policy Implications	Relevant SDGs
Community Attitudes & Perceptions	Keywords related to community, attitudes, and perceptions became prominent in later periods, reflecting a growing emphasis on social acceptance and stakeholder evaluation.	Institutionalize resident participation through consultations, perception surveys, and benefit-sharing mechanisms to enhance the social legitimacy of tourism development.	SDG 11
Ecotourism & Nature-Based Tourism	Ecotourism consistently clustered with sustainability and conservation -related keywords, particularly in rural and protected -area contexts.	Promote community-based ecotourism models and conservation -oriented tourism practices that balance destination development with biodiversity protection.	SDG 15
Tourism Impacts (Economic & Socio-economic)	The emergence of "impact" as a keyword in recent stages indicates a shift toward outcome-oriented evaluation of tourism development.	Implement systematic impact assessment frameworks focusing on employment, livelihoods, and community well -being to guide sustainable tourism policies.	SDG 8
Knowledge Development & Research Integration	Bibliometric patterns reveal thematic diversification alongside fragmented authorship and source distribution.	Support integrative research approaches and knowledge-sharing platforms that connect sustainability, community, and impact -focused research to strengthen policy relevance.	SDG 17

This analysis uses bibliometric data to provide evidence for sustainable destination governance. Dominant research themes are synthesized by keyword co-occurrence and thematic evolution analysis. The findings aid in the design of evidence-based policy interventions related to tourism sustainability research.

While the importance of sustainability and sustainable development has been made very clear, there is a need to institutionalize sustainability within destination planning and monitoring, supported by the standardization of indicators and reports (Buckley, 2012; Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014). Community attitudes and perceptions are becoming increasingly important and appear to endorse participatory governance. Such policies formalise the resident engagement and benefit-sharing process, enhancing the social legitimacy of initiatives (Boley et al., 2014; Nunkoo & So, 2015).

Long-term involvement of tourists in ecotourism and nature-based tourism calls for a variety of conservation-oriented development strategies. These strategies, particularly in rural and protected-area settings, receive policy support to achieve convergence among community-based tourism models. Along with benefits from tourism, biodiversity can be protected (Eagles et al., 2002; Weaver,

2007). More recently, tourism impact as a theme appears to highlight growing development-focused and outcome-oriented research. It has been acknowledged that the value of systematic measurement of economic and socio-economic tourism impact for inclusive growth (Uysal et al., 2015; Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014).

All in all, these policy recommendations show how bibliometric information can benefit tourism policy-making by bridging dominant research themes and practical interventions.

Limitations and Future Research

The study provides a comprehensive bibliometric synthesis of tourism research on destination development, sustainability, and socio-economic dimensions, but has some limitations. To begin with, the analysis relies on Scopus- and Web of Science-indexed publications, which may ensure the quality and comparability of the data; however, it will miss relevant studies published in regional journals, non-indexed publications, or grey literature. The dataset is limited to English publications, which may not include opinions from other countries. Furthermore, as with all bibliometric studies, this study's findings are subject to citation-window effects, especially for recent publications whose research impact is not yet established.

The study's reliance on author keywords and database indexing may not capture evolving concepts or nuanced thematic overlaps within tourism sustainability literature. The conceptual framework pulls together several dominant themes but does not assess causal connections or the effectiveness of sustainability or policy interventions.

The shortcomings in future research can be addressed by using multilingual datasets, which could enhance coverage by accessing other databases or by including qualitative systematic reviews alongside the bibliometric findings. Additional studies might investigate how patterns of collaboration vary by country and the funding behind these collaborations, in the context of citation dynamics over time. Ultimately, research that connects the aforementioned themes to outcomes at the destination level and indicators of the SDGs will bridge the bibliometric and tourism policy gaps.

Conclusion

This bibliometric review provides a synthesis of tourism research on destination development, sustainable tourism, local community, and socio-economic dimensions published between 2006 and 2025, obtained from Scopus and Web of Science. The review provides an integrated picture of how this set of literature has grown, consolidated, and diversified over time, demonstrating the dominant concepts, thematic structures, and intellectual directions in tourism sustainability (Font & McCabe, 2017)

The results show that the literature on sustainability and sustainable development is clearly consolidating as the central organizing concept with strong connections to destination development, community-related issues, and tourism impacts. The initial focus of tourism research on the environment has, over time, evolved into a more integrated socio-economic one while still keeping sustainability as the central analytical anchor (Bramwell et al., 2016; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018).

The rise of community attitudes and perceptions within sustainability-oriented tourism research is the growing acceptance of social approval by the residents. Simultaneously, the ongoing existence of ecotourism and nature-based tourism also raises issues and underscores the

relevance of conservation approaches in rural and protected areas. A recent surge in interest in the impacts of tourism is a testament to a maturing research agenda that increasingly assesses outcomes such as employment and community well-being (Rivera et al., 2016; Koens et al., 2018).

By linking the empirically identified themes in some selected United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 8, 11, 12, 13, and 15), the tourism research conceptually aligns with sustainability initiatives. This connection is more indicative than causal, as tourism scholarship helps frame the challenges of sustainability and development pathways, but it does not claim direct effectiveness in enhancing tourism policy (UNWTO, 2018; Scheyvens et al., 2016).

In general, the study offers a coherent, evidence-based synthesis of the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of tourism sustainability research, with a sound bibliometric basis for future empirical research on destination sustainability and socio-economic impacts.

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