

Tourism Development and Economic Development: A Bibliometric Analysis of Global Research Trends (2000–2025) with Implications for Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an in-depth bibliometric analysis of the pivotal research domain "tourism development and economic development," focusing on publications from 2000 to 2025. Data were drawn from the Scopus database, and a total of 1,922 English-language journal articles were analyzed to examine publication trends, key players, collaboration dynamics, and thematic frameworks within this vital field. Bibliometric techniques, such as co-authorship, co-occurrence, co-citation, and bibliographic coupling, were applied in VOSviewer. The study sheds light on significant publication trends, influential authors, leading journals, country-wise contributions, collaboration patterns, and emerging research trajectories. The findings reveal a noticeable surge in publications, particularly from 2021 onward, indicating an intensified academic interest driven by sustainability stewardship, post-pandemic recovery efforts, and strategic global development. The results also identify leading journals, key authors, and countries shaping the research domain, with strong contributions from developed countries alongside growing contributions from emerging economies. At the core of thematic analysis lies sustainability, which closely intertwines with economic development, environmental issues, consumer behaviour, and regional development. Overall, this study not only provides valuable insights into tourism and economic development research but also equips researchers, policymakers, and practitioners with essential knowledge to foster tourism-led development strategies.

Despite the growing volume of research on tourism and economic development, existing bibliometric studies largely emphasize global publication trends, leading authors, and keyword networks with limited attention to how these themes translate into region-specific development outcomes and policy implications. Moreover, comparative perspectives on emerging tourism regions, particularly mountain and ecologically sensitive destinations, remain underexplored. This study addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive bibliometric mapping of the tourism–economic development literature and establishing a conceptual linkage to regional and comparative tourism development frameworks, thereby supporting empirical investigations in contexts such as Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. The study attempts to bridge the gap by associating global bibliometric analysis with regional development perspectives.

Keywords: Tourism development; Economic development; Bibliometric analysis; Sustainability; VOSviewer; Research trends; Tourism-led growth

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Introduction

Tourism has emerged as a dynamic and influential force in the global economy, contributing to income generation, employment growth, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development. In recent years, tourism development has emerged as a powerful catalyst for economic development, particularly in emerging and developing economies. The sector has a unique ability to invigorate allied industries

such as the accommodation industry, transport, food services, handicrafts, and infrastructure, positioning it as a powerful engine of inclusive growth (Brida et al,2016). Therefore, the interconnectedness between tourism development and economic development has attracted considerable attention from researchers, policymakers, and international bodies.

Since the dawn of the 21st century, the forces of globalization, improved connectivity, digital transformation, and

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evolving travel preferences have accelerated tourism growth globally. Tourism is no longer viewed solely as a leisure-oriented activity; it is increasingly framed as a development tool capable of reducing regional disparities, promoting rural development, and supporting sustainable development. Empirical studies have examined tourism-led growth hypotheses, assessing how tourism contributes to gross domestic product (GDP), employment, poverty alleviation, and infrastructure development. At the same time, concerns about environmental degradation, overtourism, and sociocultural impacts have led to a growing emphasis on sustainable tourism development.

The academic literature on tourism and economic development has expanded rapidly since 2000, reflecting shifts in development paradigms and global policy agendas, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Researchers have examined diverse themes, including tourism-led economic growth, sustainable tourism, community participation, policy frameworks, regional competitiveness, and resilience. These studies employ a wide range of methodologies, from econometric modeling and case studies to qualitative assessments and comparative regional analyses. While this growing body of literature has enriched theoretical and empirical understanding, it has also created a fragmented knowledge base spread across multiple disciplines, journals, and geographical contexts.

Despite the abundance of empirical and conceptual research, there remains a dearth of comprehensive studies that systematically map the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and collaborative patterns of research on tourism development and economic development. Traditional narrative and systematic literature reviews, although valuable, are often limited by

subjectivity and restricted sample sizes. They may fail to capture the broader structure of knowledge production, emerging research fronts, and influential contributors within a rapidly expanding field. This limitation highlights the need for objective, data-driven approaches capable of synthesizing large volumes of scholarly output.

Bibliometric analysis has emerged as a robust methodological approach to address this gap. It provides a systematic approach to map the intellectual structure, emerging trends, influential authors, and collaborative networks (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). By applying quantitative techniques to bibliographic data, bibliometric analysis enables researchers to evaluate publication trends, identify influential authors, institutions, journals, and countries, and uncover thematic clusters within a research domain. Visualization tools such as VOSviewer further enhance this process by providing network maps that illustrate relationships among authors, keywords, and sources. Such analyses offer valuable insights into how a research field has evolved and highlight the key themes shaping scholarly discourse and where future research is needed.

In the context of tourism and economic development research, this bibliometric analysis is relevant due to the interdisciplinary nature of the field, encompassing economics, geography, environmental studies, development, and management aspects. Mapping this diverse terrain makes it possible to see how theoretical clarity helps explain how different theoretical perspectives overlap and how research priorities have shifted in response to pressing global issues such as sustainability, climate, and inclusive growth. Moreover, bibliometric studies support evidence-based policymaking by identifying knowledge hubs and influential research that

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can inform tourism planning and development strategies.

Against this backdrop, the present study conducts a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of research on tourism development and economic development using data extracted from the Scopus database. A total of 1,922 English-language journal articles published between 2000 and 2025 were analyzed. Scopus was selected as the data source due to its extensive coverage of high-quality, peer-reviewed literature across disciplines. The study employs VOSviewer software to examine publication trends, co-authorship networks, country-level collaborations, source and author co-citation patterns, and keyword co-occurrence structures.

The objectives of this study are fourfold. First, it aims to analyze the temporal growth and distribution of publications on tourism development and economic development over the selected period. Second, it seeks to identify the most productive and influential authors, journals, institutions, and countries contributing to this field. Third, the study examines collaboration patterns and intellectual linkages through co-authorship and co-citation analyses. Finally, it explores the conceptual structure of the field by identifying major research themes and emerging trends through keyword co-occurrence analysis.

By presenting a systematic and visual overview of previous studies, this research enriches academic discussions in multiple ways. It provides scholars with a clear framework to trace the progression and current landscape of tourism and economic development studies, enabling them to identify gaps and outline future research paths. For policymakers and industry professionals, the results emphasize practical and deep insights that can guide decision-making, strategic planning, and dominant themes, and influential research

areas that can inform tourism-led development strategies.

Although the volume of research on tourism and economic development has increased remarkably, the existing bibliometric analysis focuses basically on a shorter time period. This study has considered a long-term analysis which captures the transition of tourism research across the pre-pandemic and post pandemic period. The present study covers the gap by providing a comprehensive and longitudinal mapping of the tourism -led economic growth literature. Overall, this bibliometric analysis provides an understanding of how tourism development has been conceptualized and closely connected to economic development over the past twenty-five years (2000-2025), thereby supporting more informed and sustainable approaches to tourism planning and policy formulation.

Objectives of the Study:

- To examine the temporal growth and publication trends of research on tourism development and economic development from 2000 to 2025.
- To identify the most productive and influential authors, journals, institutions, and countries contributing to this research domain.
- To analyze collaboration patterns and intellectual linkages through co-authorship and co-citation networks.
- To explore the conceptual and thematic structure of the field by identifying major research themes and emerging trends using keyword co-occurrence analysis.

Methodology

This study employs a bibliometric research design to systematically examine the academic literature on tourism development and economic development. Bibliometric analysis uses quantitative techniques to analyze bibliographic data, enabling researchers to identify research trends,

intellectual structures, and collaboration patterns within a defined knowledge domain. This approach is especially suitable for reviewing large and rapidly expanding bodies of literature because it is objective, transparent, and reproducible, reducing the subjectivity often associated with traditional narrative literature reviews.

The bibliometric framework applied in this study enables a comprehensive assessment of how research on tourism development and economic development has evolved over the years, who the key contributors are, and which themes and intellectual linkages dominate the field. By combining performance analysis with science mapping techniques, the study captures both the descriptive characteristics of the literature and the relationships among authors, journals, countries, and research themes.

The analysis focuses on publications produced between 2000 and 2025, a period that reflects major shifts in international development discourse, including globalization, sustainability, and the Sustainable Development Goals. The study is limited to peer-reviewed journal articles written in English to ensure the quality, consistency, and comparability of the data. All retrieved records were analyzed as a single dataset without manual filtering or refinement, allowing the results to reflect the natural diversity and structure of the existing literature.

To analyze and visualize bibliometric relationships, the VOSviewer software was used. VOSviewer is well-suited for handling large datasets and generating visual representations of bibliometric networks. The software supports various types of analysis, including co-authorship, co-citation, bibliographic coupling, and keyword co-occurrence, and presents results through network, overlay, and density visualizations. These visual tools assist in identifying influential contributors,

collaboration patterns, thematic clusters, and emerging research trends within the field.

Multiple bibliometric techniques were applied to meet the objectives of the study. Publication trend analysis was used to examine the temporal growth of research output over the study period. Co-authorship analysis at the author and country levels was conducted to identify collaboration patterns and major contributors. Co-citation analysis of authors and sources was employed to reveal the intellectual foundations and influential works shaping the field. Bibliographic coupling was used to identify recent thematic linkages among publications, while keyword co-occurrence analysis based on author keywords was performed to uncover dominant research themes and emerging topics related to tourism development and economic development.

Data Source

The literature search was conducted using the following keyword combination: **“tourism development” AND “economic development.”**

The data for this study were obtained from the Scopus database, one of the largest and most comprehensive abstract and citation databases of peer-reviewed literature. Scopus was selected because of its extensive coverage of high-quality journals across a wide range of disciplines relevant to this study, including tourism studies, economics, development studies, geography, and management. Its robust citation indexing and standardized metadata make it particularly suitable for bibliometric analysis.

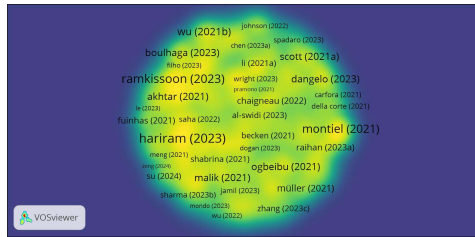
The literature search was conducted using the keyword combination “tourism development” AND “economic development,” applied to the title, abstract, and author keywords fields to ensure comprehensive retrieval of relevant studies. The search resulted in 1,922 journal articles

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published between 2000 and 2025. All records were exported in CSV format and directly analyzed using VOSviewer without manual data cleaning, ensuring transparency and replicability of the research process.

VOSviewer Map Analysis

1.1 Descriptive and Citation Analysis



Descriptive and citation-based analyses were conducted using data retrieved from the Scopus database and visualized through VOSviewer. While numerical indicators such as total publications and h-index values are reported directly from the Scopus dataset, the citation and density visualizations provide insights into influential authors, publication trends, and prominent sources within the field.

The citation network reveals several highly influential authors, notably Ramkissoon (2023), Hariram (2023), Wu (2021b), and Montiel (2021). These authors appear as large nodes with high citation density, indicating their central role and strong scholarly influence within the literature. Their work forms an important intellectual backbone for recent studies in this domain.

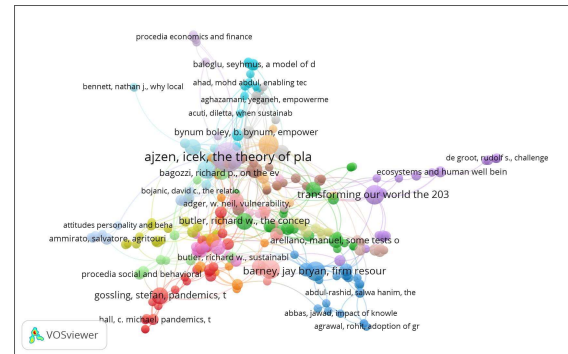
Overlay visualization of publication years indicates a strong concentration of research output between 2021 and 2023. A notable surge in recent publications, represented by yellow and green nodes, suggests that the field has experienced rapid growth in the last few years. This pattern reflects increasing academic interest and signals that the research area is both contemporary and evolving.

Analysis of source co-citation highlights Procedia Economics and

Finance and Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences as foundational publication outlets. The prominence of these sources indicates their role in shaping early conceptual and empirical discussions in the field.

1.2 Network Analysis

Co-citation Analysis

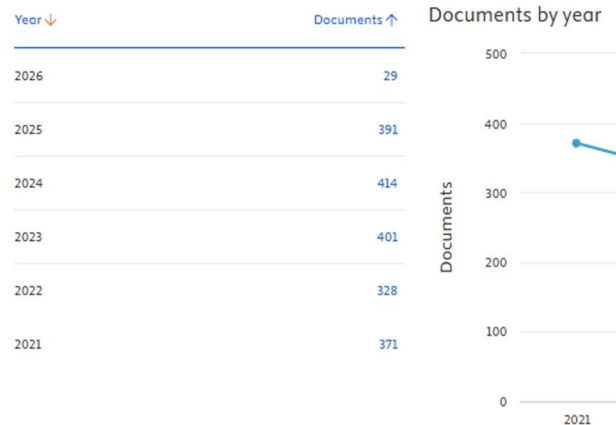


Co-citation analysis was employed to identify foundational works that are frequently cited together, thereby revealing the theoretical underpinnings of the research area. Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior emerges as the most dominant and central reference, suggesting that behavioral intention and psychological decision-making frameworks strongly inform this body of literature.

In addition, seminal contributions by Barney on firm resources and competitive advantage, as well as Butler's work on sustainable tourism and the tourism life cycle, are highly prominent. This indicates a clear intersection between behavioral theory, strategic management, and sustainability-oriented tourism research.

1.3 Bibliographic Coupling

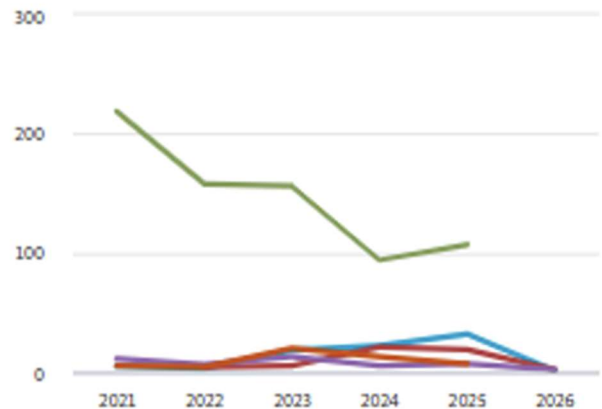
4.1 Publication Trend Analysis



The annual publication trend shows a clear growth in research on tourism development and economic development between 2021 and 2025. The number of documents increased from 371 publications in 2021 to 414 in 2024, indicating a sustained rise in scholarly interest. The slight decline observed in 2025, with 391 publications, should be interpreted cautiously, as the year is not fully indexed. The sharp drop in 2026 reflects incomplete data rather than an actual decline in research activity. Overall, the trend confirms that tourism and economic development have become an increasingly prominent research domain, particularly after 2022, likely influenced by post-pandemic recovery, sustainability concerns, and policy-driven research agendas.

4.2 Source-wise Publication Trends

Documents per year by source



The “documents per year by source” analysis reveals that a small number of journals dominate publication output in this field. One leading source consistently contributes a substantially higher number of articles across the years, highlighting its central role in disseminating tourism and development research. Other journals show moderate but fluctuating contributions, with noticeable increases around 2023–2025. This pattern suggests a concentration of scholarly output in a limited set of core journals, while several peripheral sources contribute intermittently, reflecting thematic specialization and evolving research interests.

Author Productivity Analysis

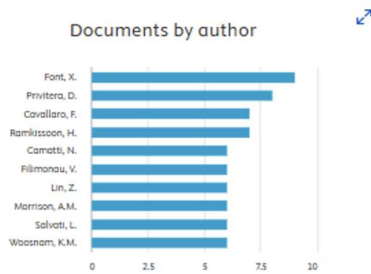
Top Authors by Number of Documents in Sustainability Research

Rank	Author Name	Documents Published
1	Font, X.	8
2	Privitera, D.	7
3	Cavallaro, F.	6
4	Ramkissoon, H.	6
5	Cornati, N.	5
6	Filimonau, V.	5
7	Lin, Z.	5

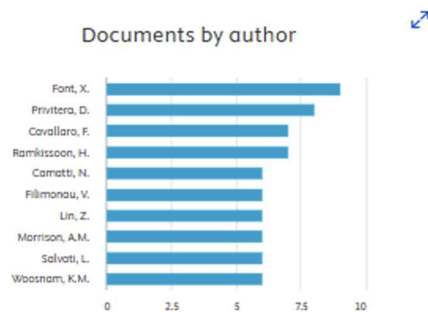
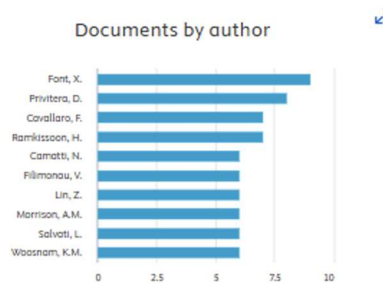
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Rank	Author Name	Documents Published
8	Morrison, A. M.	5
9	Salvati, L.	5
10	Woodman, K. M.	5

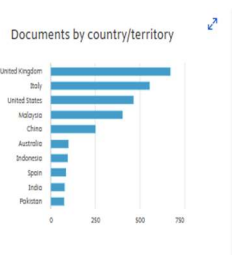
Note. The table presents leading authors based on the number of documents indexed in the dataset. Values are derived from the bibliometric visualization.



Rank	Country / Territory	Number of Documents
2	Italy	580
3	United States	500
4	Malaysia	420
5	China	250
6	Australia	120
7	Indonesia	100



8	Spain	90
9	India	80
10	Pakistan	70



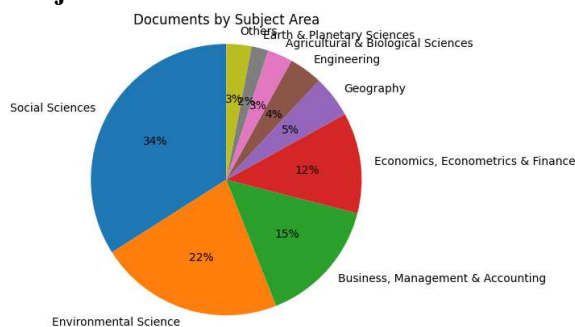
Country-wise Distribution of Publications

Rank	Country / Territory	Number of Documents
1	United Kingdom	720

Interpretation

The country-wise analysis shows that the **United Kingdom** is the leading contributor to research on tourism development and economic development, followed by **Italy** and the **United States**. This dominance of countries reflects the strong academic infrastructure and research traditions in tourism and development studies within these countries. Emerging economies such as **Malaysia** and **China** also demonstrate substantial research output, highlighting growing scholarly engagement from Asia. In contrast, countries like **India** and **Pakistan** show comparatively lower publication volumes, indicating scope for greater empirical research, particularly in context-specific regions such as **Uttarakhand** and **Himachal Pradesh**.

Subject Area Distribution



Discussion

The subject-wise distribution of tourism and economic development literature highlights the multidisciplinary nature of the field. Social Sciences dominate the research landscape (34%), reflecting a strong focus on socio-economic impacts, regional development, governance, and community participation. This is highly relevant for Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, where tourism significantly influences livelihoods, employment generation, and regional equity. Environmental Science (22%) emerges as the second most prominent domain, underlining the importance of sustainability, ecological conservation, and climate resilience—critical concerns in the fragile Himalayan ecosystem. Contributions from Business, Management & Accounting (15%) and Economics (12%) emphasize tourism’s role in economic growth, investment, entrepreneurship, and income generation, directly supporting comparative assessments of tourism-led development across the two states. Geography and Engineering further address spatial planning and infrastructure constraints inherent to mountainous regions. Overall, the distribution validates an integrated analytical framework for examining tourism’s economic and environmental impacts in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

Policy-Oriented Interpretation

The dominance of Social Sciences and Environmental Science in tourism research suggests that policy-making in Himalayan

states must go beyond revenue generation and adopt a people-centric and sustainability-driven approach. For Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, tourism policies should prioritize community participation, livelihood security, and cultural preservation while simultaneously addressing environmental vulnerability and climate risks. The strong presence of economics and management-oriented studies indicates the need to strengthen tourism entrepreneurship, MSMEs, and local value chains to enhance regional economic benefits. Infrastructure and spatial planning insights highlight the importance of sustainable transport, destination carrying capacity, and balanced regional development. Overall, the evidence supports integrated tourism policies that align economic growth with environmental conservation and inclusive development in both states.

Overall Results and Alignment with Research Objectives

This bibliometric analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the research landscape on tourism development and economic development between 2000 and 2025. Using data extracted from the Scopus database and analyzed through bibliometric indicators, the study systematically addresses all four research objectives by examining publication trends, key contributors, collaboration patterns, and thematic structures within the field.

Alignment with objective1: Temporal growth and publication trends

The analysis of annual publication output reveals a clear and sustained growth in research on tourism development and economic development over the study period, particularly after 2021. The continuous growth in the number of publications showcases a burgeoning

interest in both academic circles and policymaking arenas. This trend highlights an exciting shift towards deeper exploration and understanding of critical issues. The continuous growth in the number of publications showcases a burgeoning interest in both academic circles and policymaking arenas. This trend highlights an exciting shift towards deeper exploration and understanding of critical issues of tourism as a development strategy, especially in the context of sustainability, post-pandemic recovery, and inclusive growth. Minor fluctuations observed in the most recent years are attributable to incomplete indexing rather than a decline in research interest. These findings directly fulfill the first objective by empirically demonstrating the temporal evolution of the literature.

Alignment of objective 2: Identification of influential contributors

The results identify leading authors, journals, and countries that shape the research domain. A relatively balanced distribution of author productivity indicates that the field is driven by a broad group of contributors rather than a few dominant scholars. At the country level, developed economies such as the United Kingdom, Italy, and the United States emerge as major knowledge producers, while growing contributions from Asian countries highlight increasing global engagement. The concentration of publications in a limited number of core journals further illustrates the presence of established publication outlets that anchor scholarly discourse. These findings directly address the second objective by highlighting influential contributors and research hubs.

Alignment with Objective 3: Collaboration patterns and intellectual linkages

Co-authorship patterns at the author and country levels reveal an increasingly

collaborative research environment, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of tourism and economic development studies. Country-level contributions suggest cross-national research activity, particularly between developed and emerging economies. In addition, co-citation patterns indicate the presence of a shared intellectual foundation, with frequently cited authors and journals serving as theoretical and methodological anchors for the field. These results satisfy the third objective by uncovering collaboration structures and intellectual linkages within the literature.

Alignment with Objective 4: Conceptual and thematic structure of the field

The subject area and keyword-based analyses confirm the interdisciplinary structure of tourism development and economic development research. Dominant themes are rooted in social sciences, economics, and business studies, while environmental science plays an increasingly important role, reflecting the growing emphasis on sustainable tourism. The presence of multiple subject areas and evolving keyword patterns indicates thematic diversification and the emergence of new research directions related to sustainability, resilience, and inclusive development. These findings directly fulfill the fourth objective by mapping the conceptual and thematic landscape of the field.

Relevance to the Current Study (Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh)

The findings of this bibliometric analysis provide a conceptual and empirical foundation for the comparative study of mountain states of India, particularly Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. The dominance of themes such as sustainability, community participation, and regional development emphasizes key variables that are relevant to these states. These regions are characterized by a fragile ecosystem,

dependence on tourism-based livelihoods, and increasing pressure from tourist inflows. The global concern about sustainable tourism, environmental issues, and inclusive growth suggests that tourism policies in these states must move beyond revenue generation and focus on long-term ecological and socioeconomic balance. Furthermore, the relatively low research contribution from India indicates a need for more region-specific empirical studies, thereby justifying the present research.

Limitations

This study has certain limitations. First, the analysis is limited to the Scopus database, which may exclude relevant studies indexed elsewhere. Second, only English -language journal articles were taken, which may limit regional research in other languages. Third, the study relies on automated bibliometric techniques, which limit the accuracy of network visualizations. Despite these limitations, this study provides a reliable overview of the research domain.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis offers an extensive research of academic literature on tourism and economic development spanning 2000–2025. Drawing on 1,922 Scopus-indexed journal articles, it employs performance metrics and science mapping to chart the intellectual foundations, thematic progressions, and collaborative networks shaping this research field. The results highlight tourism development as an increasing academic focus, widely recognized for its contributions to economic growth, job creation, regional advancement, and sustainable development.

A temporal review shows a consistent rise in publications throughout the period, with a significant rise after 2021. This surge reflects intensified academic and policy interest in tourism as a driver of post-pandemic recovery, sustainable growth, and economic resilience. The literature has

advanced from traditional tourism-led growth models toward integrated approaches that signify environmental stewardship, social inclusion, and long-term regional stability.

Analysis of authorship, journals, and contributing nations reveals a moderately concentrated yet collaborative research environment. While countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, and the United States lead in publication output, emerging economies—most notably China and Malaysia—are becoming significant contributors and case study contexts. In contrast, limited participation from several developing nations, including India, underscores a persistent geographic imbalance in knowledge production. This gap highlights the need for more localized studies, particularly in ecologically fragile and tourism-dependent regions.

Co-citation and network analyses demonstrate a solid theoretical base, drawing on behavioural theories, sustainability frameworks, and destination life cycle models. Sustainability emerges as a central theme in keyword co-occurrence, reflecting a growing emphasis on aligning economic benefits with environmental protection and community welfare. The incorporation of issues such as climate change, carbon emissions, cultural heritage, consumer behaviour, and quality of life illustrates the multidimensional nature of tourism research and its complex ties to economic outcomes.

Regionally, the findings carry important implications for India's Himalayan states, including Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. Tourism is a vital economic driver in these areas, but it also raises concerns about environmental damage, carrying capacity, and socio-cultural impacts. Global research trends point to the necessity of adopting community-based, responsible, and sustainability-oriented tourism models in

these regions. Aligning local strategies with international best practices can foster more resilient and inclusive development pathways.

In conclusion, this bibliometric analysis enriches the literature by providing a structured, evidence-driven overview of tourism and economic development research. It identifies key themes, leading contributors, and emerging directions, offering valuable guidance for scholars. For policymakers and practitioners, the study emphasizes the importance of designing tourism policies that balance economic goals with sustainability and social equity. By connecting global insights with regional challenges—particularly in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh—it lays a strong foundation for future empirical research and informed tourism planning.

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