

# THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM LITERATURE: INSIGHTS FROM A BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW

## Abstract

 **Anish YOUSAF**, Senior Lecturer

(Corresponding Author)  
Department of Marketing  
Nottingham Business School  
Nottingham Trent University  
United Kingdom

Department of Marketing  
Chitkara Business School  
Chitkara University, India  
E-mail: anish.yousaf@ntu.ac.uk

 **Babak TAHERI**, Professor

Department of Hospitality, Hotel Management & Tourism  
Texas A&M University  
United States of America  
E-mail: babak.taheri@ag.tamu.edu

 **Rishi DWESAR**, Associate Professor

Icfai Business School (IBS)  
Hyderabad,  
IFHE University, India  
E-mail: rishidwesar@ibsendia.org

 **Martin GANNON**, Senior Lecturer

University of Edinburgh Business School, The University of Edinburgh  
29 Buccleuch Pl, Edinburgh  
United Kingdom  
E-mail: mgannon@ed.ac.uk

*Purpose* – This study identifies and maps the past, present, and future of travel and tourism literature by drawing insights from a bibliometric analysis of papers from the Scopus database. The study has two objectives: (i) to explore and identify the different theoretical characteristic of extant travel and tourism literature, (ii) to identify emerging research trends, gaps, and potential future research areas in travel and tourism literature.

*Methodology/Design/Approach* - Meta-data for 15,647 peer-reviewed articles, published across 2104 journals, was downloaded from Scopus, with the bibliometric software VOSviewer used to analyze, map, and visualize publication trends therein.

*Findings* – Analysis revealed the identification of burgeoning research areas, setting agendas for future work within the travel and tourism domain. To understand the evolution of key research themes over time in travel and tourism, we identified major and minor themes using a period-wise thematic analysis.

*Originality of the research* – By analysing publication patterns, collaboration networks, and citation impact, we provide a comprehensive overview of knowledge dissemination and collaborative dynamics within the travel and tourism community. Our study also provides a significant contextual contributions to travel and tourism literature by exploring the evolution of dominant themes and their temporal growth.

**Keywords** travel and tourism; bibliometric analysis; co-citation analysis; co-author analysis; citation structure analysis; VOS viewer

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, research in the field of travel and tourism has experienced concomitant rapid growth, with scholars therein exploring a wide range of issues in the hope of gaining better understanding of the broad scope of travel and tourism (Shin & Perdue, 2022). Addressing a multitude of research objectives, travel and tourism literature is thus now in a position where it can boast an abundance of empirical and conceptual work supported by every conceivable form of methodological design (Shin et al., 2019; Zhong et al., 2015). However, the rapid increase in scientific publications within this domain necessitates that researchers must understand sectoral trends therein to continue to advance the field at both a theoretical and operational level (Koseoglu et al., 2016). Bibliometric studies have been conducted across the gamut of academic scholarship, finding favour in both the wider social sciences and at a more precise sectoral level (Christofi et al., 2021; Donthu et al., 2021; Paul & Feliciano-Cestero, 2021; Mariani et al., 2022). The domain of travel and tourism is no exception, with many bibliometric analysis studies conducted therein underpinned by the aim of integrating the diverse literature across the field, while simultaneously identifying prolific and influential scholars/institutions therein (e.g., Merigo et al., 2020; Shin & Perdue, 2022; López-Bonilla & López-Bonilla, 2020; Leong et al., 2021). However, despite the wealth of bibliometric studies within extant travel and tourism literature, most are limited by, for example, drawing from a small sample size (Zhang et al., 2022; Henríquez et al., 2022; Atsiz et al., 2022; Lyu et al., 2020 and others), being linked to a specific journal (Leong et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2021; Vishwakarma & Mukherjee, 2019; Mulet-Forteza et al., 2018), or by being restricted to a specific geographical area (Evren & Kozak, 2014; Gupta et al., 2021; López-Bonilla & López-Bonilla, 2020; Naruetharadhol & Gebesombut, 2020).

Further, many previous studies demonstrate an unwillingness (or, indeed, inability) to look beyond citation, co-citation, and co-author analyses in identifying intradisciplinary trends. Such techniques can prove useful in interpreting extant information, but each lacks the ability to unearth emerging areas of interest capable of inspiring future researchers and practitioners. As such, given its broad multi-disciplinarity, travel and tourism research is ripe for bibliometric study aimed at mapping scholarly progress and trends over time in order to identify emerging themes for future focus. This is consistent with Shin & Perdue's (2022) recent call for a more comprehensive deployment of bibliometric analysis within the field, with this viewed as a vital precursor to robust knowledge development therein. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, there are very few large-scale bibliometric studies which specifically focus on identifying wider trends within the travel and tourism domain (Koseoglu et al., 2016). Thus, this study

differs from past bibliometric analysis conducted within the domain. First, it is the first to integrate the wide corpus of travel and tourism literature published across a variety of interrelated fields (e.g., marketing, sports, events, festivals, etc.), thereby providing an integrated view of travel and tourism trends irrespective of outlet focus. Second, it extrapolates travel and tourism literature from that of hospitality research. While the two are sometimes conflated, the focus of the bibliometric analysis herein is on evaluating and monitoring travel and tourism as a distinct scientific discipline (Koseoglu et al., 2016; Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2013). As such, this study is distinct in so much as it moves beyond traditional travel and tourism literature boundaries, encouraging dialogue between distinct yet interrelated multi-disciplinary areas (and researchers operating therein).

To do so, we began by consulting the seminal works of the field (e.g., Merigo et al., 2020; López-Bonilla & López-Bonilla, 2020; Leong et al., 2021), with bibliographic data collected and analysed thereafter via the deployment of appropriate techniques underpinned by two specific objectives: (i) to explore and identify the different theoretical perspectives characteristic of extant travel and tourism literature before establishing relationships therein, (ii) to identify emerging research trends, gaps, and potential future research areas in travel and tourism literature by exploring the most recent papers. Findings herein thus stem from the examination of different related streams of literature with a focus on travel and tourism specific phenomena. Finally, expanding upon the previous point, the discussion presented in the current paper aims to widen theoretical understanding of the multi-disciplinary travel and tourism domain, facilitating greater understanding of research trends therein. This study thus has the potential to not only increase reader awareness of past and present travel and tourism research, but its emphasis on providing a clear research issues, gaps, and future directions can also serve to guide scholars hoping to continue to contribute to this established field of research.

## **1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.1. Bibliometric Analysis**

A bibliometric approach to discipline-level research is not new, with evidence of the deployment of such methodologies dating back to the early 1890s (Kessler, 1963). However, Pritchard (1969) was the first to introduce the term 'bibliometrics', defining it as the application of quantitative techniques and mathematical methods to analyse any kind of publication (Ulker et al., 2022). Broadus (1987) thereafter defined bibliometrics as "the quantitative study of physical published units, or of bibliographic units, or of the surrogates for either." (p.376), with this simplified further by Fairthorne (2005), who considers bibliometrics the "quantitative treatment of the properties of recorded discourse and behaviour appertaining to it" (p.171). Bibliometric studies are thus established as an advanced method of analysis capable of increasing scholarly understanding of temporal trends and progress within research fields, with recent years giving rise to the emergence of several such studies across various scholarly domains (Akhavan et al., 2016; Shum et al., 2019). Bibliometric reviews are considered effective when the objective is to: understand emerging trends, organize previously published literature in a domain, and/or explore potential future research areas (Paul and Criado, 2020; Mariani, Perez-Vega, Wirtz, 2022).

Conducting bibliometric analysis requires meticulous documentation of the methodology/processes used to scan the defined literature (Pickering & Byrne, 2014; Shin & Perdue, 2022). This is primarily underpinned by the need to ensure transparent replicability; bibliometric studies must be conducted and presented in a manner that allows future researchers to replicate the results by imitating the procedure undertaken in order to explore knowledge development within the chosen domain (Spasojevic et al., 2018). The most common methods used to quantitatively evaluate available literature fall under the category of evaluative techniques, with these consisting of citation and author analysis expressed in terms of the distribution of literature by year, number of journals, number of authors, and author affiliations (Ulker, Ulker, & Karamustafa, 2022). However, more advanced relational techniques can be deployed to explore linkages between different indicators, including the aforementioned citation, affiliation, geographic, and author-based characteristics of published works (Sainaghi et al., 2020).

### **1.2. Bibliometric analysis in travel and tourism Literature**

Bibliometric analyses have been applied within the domain of travel and tourism research, with this approach proving particularly popular in recent years (Hasana et al., 2022; Merigo et al., 2020). This recent increase has primarily been stimulated by improvements in the underlying technological processes core to the large-scale data collection required for robust bibliometric analysis. This has led to increased convenience in data gathering, greater database/dataset accessibility and availability, and general improvements in statistical software packages (Zupic & Cater, 2015; Ulker, Ulker, & Karamustafa, 2022). However, beyond the technological antecedents to the increase in recent bibliometric studies, there is also greater recognition that such studies provide systematic and insightful knowledge by improving scholarly understanding of the evolution of literature within a domain (Shin & Perdue, 2022; Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015; Zupic & Cater, 2015). Sheldon (1991) is credited with the early bibliometric analysis of tourism literature, finding that researchers from North America contributed most significantly to tourism related studies at the time. Similar studies were subsequently conducted by Palmer et al. (2005), Benckendorff & Zehrer (2013), and Evren & Kozak (2014), with emphasis placed on extending Sheldon's (1991) findings by introducing keyword

analysis, statistical techniques analysis, co-citation analysis, and subject analysis to the broad corpus of published travel and tourism studies. For example, Koc & Boz (2014) used triangulation techniques and found that surveys and interviews are used frequently in travel & tourism literature whereas the use of experimental design remained relatively rare.

Further, in exploring extant research specifically focused on *sustainable* tourism over a 25-year period, Ruhanen et al. (2015) explored 492 papers and Ninerola et al. (2019) explored 4647 papers published in the top-ranked journals. Again, it was found that researchers from the USA dominate the 'number of publications' and 'citations' parameters. Koseoglu et al. (2015) and Koseoglu et al. (2016) used bibliometric analysis to map the tourism literature published exclusively within leading tourism journals. Additionally, Leung et al. (2017) and Sanchez et al. (2017) used bibliometric analysis to specify distinct domains of travel and tourism literature and identified the most cited journals using citation, co-citation, and co-word analysis. Okumus et al. (2018) used a bibliometric approach to investigate trends within food and gastronomy literature over a period of 40 years. They analysed 462 articles and found that research design therein was predominantly empirical and quantitative. More recently, similar findings were reported by Koseoglu et al. (2022). To identify emerging trends within the field of tourism, Guzeller & Celiker (2018) studied papers published between 2007-16 and found that 'Tourism Management' published the most tourism-related articles. Similarly, Scott and Gossling (2022) restricted their bibliometric analysis to 1290 articles related to tourism and climate change published only in *Annals of Tourism Research* during the last 35-years. Leong et al. (2021) utilized bibliometric analysis of articles published in *Tourism Review* between 2001-2019 to map the progress of literature therein, finding that key themes included destination studies, competitiveness and innovations, experiential tourism, sports tourism, and tourist satisfaction.

Hasana, Swain, & George (2022) conducted a bibliometric analysis of 1182 articles to explore ecotourism research between 2002-20, concluding that ecotourism is an emerging field of research, and that most ecotourism articles are published by researchers from the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Canada, and China. Zhang et al. (2022) investigated 567 publications related to world heritage tourism published between 1992 and 2020, contending that researchers based in Europe, the USA, East Asia, and China have the highest citation counts and largest volume of publications. Atsız et al., , Ogretmenolu, & Akova (2022) restricted their bibliometric analysis to length of stay studies in tourism. 60 articles published in top-tier tourism journals were analyzed using VOSviewer. Both evaluative and relational analysis was conducted, and findings related keyword analysis, co-citation analysis, content analysis and the bibliographic coupling of countries and authors was discussed. Most recently, Ulker, Ulker, & Karamustafa (2022) conducted bibliometric analysis to examine 136 bibliometric studies in the travel and tourism field, concluding that the most common authorship combination exists between institutions in China and the USA.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Information Sources & Data Collection

To map the progress of travel and tourism literature to date, while also identifying emergent trends and relevant knowledge therein, we carried out a bibliometric review of previously published literature as suggested by Donthu et al. (2021). Bibliometric analysis was used as a systematic quantitative approach to classify published articles in terms of journal title, themes, publication year, author names, institutions and countries, author numbers, collaboration type, and the nature of the article (Kim & So, 2022). To extract and gather relevant data for our study, the 'Scopus-Elsevier' database was used. This database is one of the most comprehensive sources of indexed academic publications and the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature. This database covers articles published since 1966 (Archambault et al. 2009) and indexes more than 12,850 journals and 55+ million records of literature in the fields of science, social sciences, arts and humanities, and technology (Palumbo, 2016). The decision to choose 'Scopus-Elsevier' over the Web of Science database was largely motivated by two concerns: (i) Scopus boasts larger coverage (60% more) than WoS (Zhao & Strotmann, 2015) and (ii) Galati and Bigliardi (2019) advised researchers to draw from only one database while doing bibliometric studies within the social sciences. This helps in curtailing the potential data homogenization issues commonly evidenced when using multiple databases (Mariani, Perez-Vega, & Wirtz, 2022).

In the first stage, multiple search algorithms such as "travel and tourism" or "tourism and travel" or "travel-tourism" were used as the primary key for research in the fields of "Article Title", "Abstract", "Keywords". The initial search was conducted using the primary key terms. The primary algorithm was matched with a secondary key of research through the Boolean operator 'AND' consistent with Palumbo (2016). The secondary key of research terms employed were "sports" or "event-attractions" or "festivals" or "conferences" or "expos" or "expositions" or "tournaments". The same search strategy was repeated, but this time the primary key was used with the secondary key of research terms. The search was limited to all subject areas listed by 'Scopus-Elsevier'. The last query was run on January 21st, 2023, on the selected database. Multiple search stages were conducted using various combinations of the primary and secondary key search terms. Every stage resulted in relevant documents which were then retrieved using the '.csv file'. These multiple '.csv' files were merged into a single '.csv' file with 19067 records. The exported dataset was searched for duplicate records which were removed (n=1955). This resulted in a main dataset comprised of 17112 unique records.

## 2.2. Inclusion & Exclusion criteria

Several ad-hoc selection protocols were deployed to define the inclusion/exclusion criteria applied to the dataset. The focus of the bibliometric analysis herein was restricted to internationally peer-reviewed journal articles to increase the likelihood of reliable findings. Therefore, only original research articles (conceptual and empirical) and review articles were involved in the inclusion criteria. Letters to the editor, conference proceedings, book reviews, and editorial articles were excluded. Books, book chapters, and grey literature were also placed in the exclusion criteria. These two criteria resulted in narrowing the main dataset to 16789 articles from academic journals (removed=323). Articles published only in the English language were included in this study. This resulted in narrowing down the main dataset to 15805 (removed=984). To ensure topic appropriateness, all researchers manually reviewed the titles, keywords and abstracts of articles included in the dataset to ensure each focused primarily on travel and tourism. This resulted in the removal of 158 records from the dataset; each did not meet the eligibility criteria for inclusion in the bibliometric analysis. Additionally, the focus of the study was on articles published in Elsevier Scopus indexed journals. This criterion was established to increase source quality (de Larrea et al., 2021). The final meta-data of 15647 records was retained for analysis, with the dataset reduction process captured in Figure 1. Sub-parameters included information such as author names, titles, correspondence, total number of publications, citation count, source & document type, publication stage, journal sources, keywords, countries and regions, references, and other author-level metrics (Martynov et al., 2020). The description of the meta-data is shown in Table 1.

Figure 1: Flow Chart of Study Selection & Query String

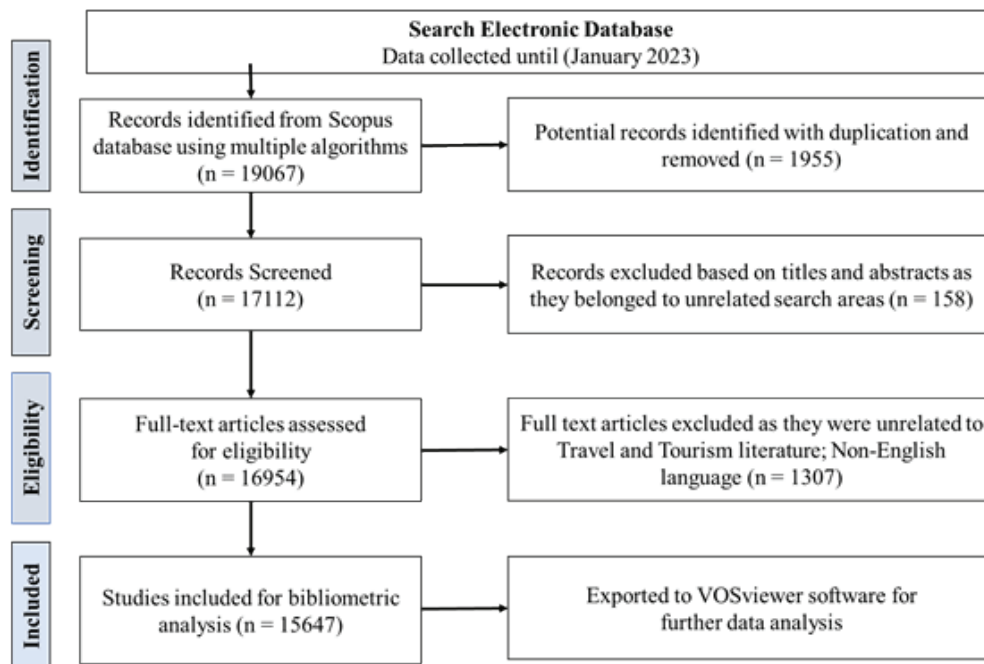


Table 1: Information about the Meta-Data

Variable	Values	Document Types	Values
Publication timespan	1975 : 2022	Article	14918
Number of sources	2139	Review	729
Number of publications	15647	Authors	
Average years from publication	5.85	Number of authors	28448
Average citations per publication	17.61	Author appearances	45494
Average citations per year per publication	2.364	Authors of single-authored publications	3225
Total number of references	780238	Authors of multi-authored publications	25223
Authors Collaboration	Values	Document Contents	Values
Single-authored publications	3904	Keywords Plus (ID)	12199
Publications per Author	0.599	Author's Keywords (DE)	34196
Authors per publication	1.67		
Co-Authors per publication	2.67		
Collaboration index	1.92		



## 2.3. Analysis

VOSviewer software was used for data analysis. The final dataset (.csv file) was exported to VOSviewer for further data analysis. VOSviewer can be used to visually display data and helps to establish bibliometric networks (Van Eck & Waltman, 2017; Ulker, Ulker, & Karamustafa, 2022). Therefore, herein, it was used to analyse quantitative data and explain citation analysis for author(s) and journals, co-authorship network analysis based on author(s), countries and institutions, and co-word analysis. All articles were imported into VOSViewer. This approach is widely used by researchers conducting bibliometric analysis, including those in the field of travel of tourism research (Zhang et al., 2022).

### 2.3.1. Citation analysis

Citation analysis assumes that researchers read and cite studies related to their work (Uysal, 2010; Ulker, Ulker, & Karamustafa, 2022). Therefore, citation analysis can help bibliometric researchers to explore the most cited documents in the field and to infer which documents hold greater influence therein. Benckendorff & Zehrer (2013) argued that citation analysis can be conducted by counting the number of citations a publication, or a group, received over a specific period (Zupic & Cater, 2015). Herein, a citation analysis of the 20 most-cited articles was compiled using VOSviewer. The same was done for the 20 most-cited author(s), and 20 most-cited journals. The objective behind this approach was to provide readers with the properties and interrelated structures which exist within extant travel and tourism research.

### 2.3.2. Content analysis

Cheng (2016) argues that a core limitation of co-citation analysis is its inability to identify supportive arguments by a citation or evaluate its critique. Content analysis counteracts this limitation for bibliometric studies, creating a precise explanation of the discipline by combining 'citation analysis and text mining' approaches (Kunz & Hogreve, 2011). In this study, content analysis was employed with the aim of demonstrating how the downloaded texts which together comprise the dataset allow us to draw upon the concepts, themes, and relationships in the meta-data of citations to make valid and trustworthy inferences (Cheng, 2016). This provides readers with a deeper understanding of the evolution, development and emerging trends across extant travel and tourism research.

## 3. BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS RESULTS

### 3.1. Publication Productivity and Top Journals

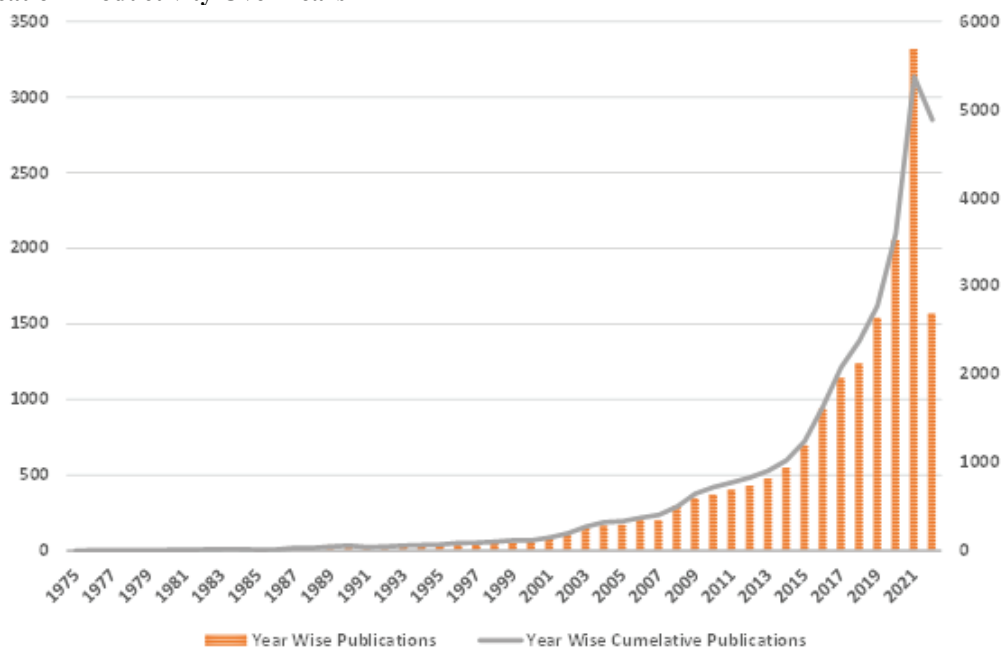
Based on inclusion criteria, the database comprised a total of 15647 articles published between 1975-2022. Our analysis reveals that the number of publications has increased by three to four times decade-to-decade, with a yearly culminative average growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 23%. The trend indicates that there is constantly increasing research interest in this field and allied areas (Figure 2). In recent years, annual publication productivity increased the most (61.5%) in 2020 (Articles Published=2054) to 2021 (Articles Published=3318). Further analysis revealed that one reason for incremental research publications was the catastrophic effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on global travel and tourism industry, which seems to have motivated researchers' recent enquiries (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Next, we analysed prominent journals in which articles were published, identifying 2104 journals, of which 67 had published more than 50 articles. The maximum number of articles were published in Sustainability (Articles=929), a cross-disciplinary journal published by MDPI Group, based out of Switzerland. Other journals which published high numbers of tourism and travel related articles included Tourism Management (Articles=661), Journal of Sustainable Tourism (Articles=363), and African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure (Articles=322) (Table 2 contains the 20 most prominent journals and related data). Interestingly, while "Sustainability" published approximately 40% more articles than Tourism Management, the total number of citations received for articles published therein were much lower than for articles published in top-tier domain specific journals (e.g., Tourism Management). We further analyzed Average Publication Year (APY) for articles published across the top 20 journals. APY is calculated by summing article publication year and dividing it by total articles published in a particular journal, thus reflecting journal's productivity of recent publications (Van Eck & Waltman, 2017). The software VOS Viewer provides this metric as part of its default reports. Analysis revealed that Sustainability (APY=2020.2), African Journal of Hospitality (APY=2019.1), Journal of Destination Marketing and Management (APY=2018.5), and Tourism Management Perspectives (APY=2018.3) were among the journals with the highest recent APY.

Table 2: **Top Journals & Number of Articles Published**

S. No	Journal Name	Publisher	Cite Score & H-Index	Number of Articles	Citations	APY
1	Sustainability	MDPI	0.66, 109	929	6468	2020.2
2	Tourism Management	Elsevier Ltd.	3.38, 216	661	47369	2010.5
3	Current Issues in Tourism	Taylor and Francis Ltd.	1.84, 82	386	9320	2017.3
4	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	Taylor and Francis Ltd.	2.48, 114	363	12368	2016
5	African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure	Africa Journals	0.21, 14	322	877	2019.1
6	Journal of Travel Research	Sage Publications Ltd.	3.29, 145	283	16677	2010.7
7	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.	2.29, 100	277	9326	2014.8
8	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	Taylor and Francis Ltd.	0.89, 44	243	3555	2016.1
9	Annals of Tourism Research	Elsevier Ltd.	3.15, 187	241	21530	2009.2
10	Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	Routledge	2.05, 82	240	8649	2012.4
11	Journal of Sport and Tourism	Routledge	0.53*, 46	234	6868	2011.1
12	Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes	Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.	0.39*, 24	216	1242	2017.2
13	Journal of Destination Marketing and Management	Elsevier Ltd.	1.75, 50	201	4874	2018.5
14	Tourism Economics	Sage Publications Ltd.	1.04, 64	198	3135	2014.2
15	Tourism Recreation Research	Taylor and Francis Ltd.	0.88, 50	197	2876	2011.9
16	International Journal of Tourism Research	John Wiley and Sons Ltd	1.14, 67	188	5087	2016.1
17	Tourism Geographies	Routledge	2..27, 73	184	4927	2016.2
18	Tourism Review	Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.	1.48, 38	183	2770	2015.1
19	Tourism Management Perspectives	Elsevier Ltd., USA	1.76, 54	179	4269	2018.3
20	Journal of Vacation Marketing	Sage Publications Ltd.	0.96, 68	178	5706	2011.6

Figure 2: **Publication Productivity Over Years**



### 3.2. Top Authors, Co-authorship & International Collaborations

Next, our analysis focused on authors in the domain. The database revealed that the 17053 articles were co-authored by a total of 28416 individuals, of which 6167 had authored only one publication (Table 3). Overall, 3904 articles were authored by a single author, while on average an article had 2.7 authors. Prof. Rob Law, with primary affiliation as UMDf Chair Professor of Smart Tourism, University of Macau, published the most articles. The author who published the most in recent years (based on APY) was Prof Xin Li (Articles = 43, APY= 2020).

A closer look at the data shows that while the maximum number of articles were published by authors from USA (Articles =3272) and UK (Articles =1839), none of the top 10 authors worked in organisations therein. The co-authorship network shows the important collaborations top authors had across them (Figure 3A). Based on the data (i.e., 28416 authors), Prof. Rob Law and Prof. Ying Wang had a fractional link strength of 84 and 73 respectively. Link strength reflects the number of authors with which a particular author co-authored their articles. For fractional counting, the link is fractionalized, for example, if an author co-authors a document with five author authors, each of the five co-authorships link receives one-fifth weighting (Qiu et al., 2014).

The next stage of analysis focused on countries spearheading research across travel and tourism. The objective here was to understand which countries contribute the most articles, country specific citation metrics, and which countries are contemporaneously productive. Analysis shows that the USA (Number of Articles(n)=3272), UK (n=1836), and Australia (n=1619) were the top three contributors. The network graph revealed that the USA and China boasted the highest fractional link strength (215.6); many authors from United States and China co-author publications. For comparison, the fractional link (co-authorship) strength between the US and UK was much lower (86.4) despite these two countries boasting a high number of publications individually. APY analysis shows that Indonesia and China were among the most recent significant contributors to travel and tourism research, whereas the United States and UK had the lowest APY (alongside Canada). It is, however, important to note that countries with low APY and large article numbers (e.g., USA, UK, Australia) can be considered the pioneers of travel and tourism research, contributing significantly to the early development of the field. Nevertheless, due to proportionately lesser publication volume in recent years, their APY scores appear stagnant.

Table 3: Top 10 Authors and their Research Productivity

Author	Affiliation	Articles	Citations	Link Strength	ACPA	APY
Rob Law	UMDF Chair Professor, University of Macau	88	4630	21	178.4163	2015.1
Ying Wang	Department of Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Management, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia	74	1739	27	136.8477	2019.4
Melville Saayman	Tourism Research in Economics, Environs and Society (TREES), North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa	58	931	24	37.2529	2014.4
Yaping Liu	Department of Tourism Management, Business College, Guangxi University, China	54	484	19	67.5451	2019.6
Yang Zhang	Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), Avenida Wai Long, Taipa, Macau, China	51	398	25	46.7079	2019.7
Junyi Zhang	Graduate School of Advanced Science and Engineering, Hiroshima University, Japan	48	557	22	47.9715	2018.6
Sungbum Kim	Department of IT convergence, Kumoh National Institute of Technology, Korea	44	848	8	70.6774	2018.8
Xiaoxiao Chen	Graduate School of Hotel & Tourism, Kyung Hee University, Seoul, Korea	43	536	17	57.1996	2019.8
Andrea Giampiccoli	Durban University of Technology, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa	43	387	28	27.7657	2018.8
Xin Li	School of Architecture and Urban Planning, Lanzhou Jiaotong University, China	43	637	21	66.8985	2020.0

Figure 3A:

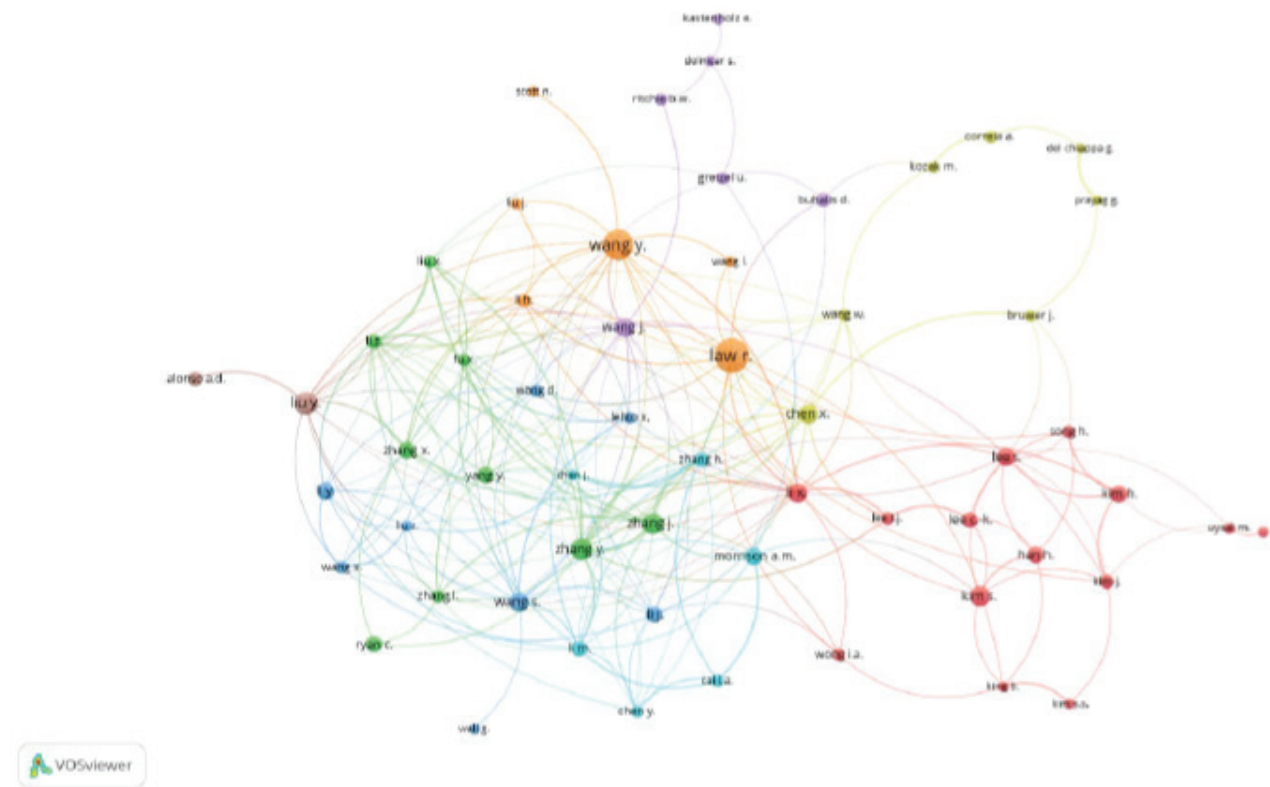


Figure 3B:

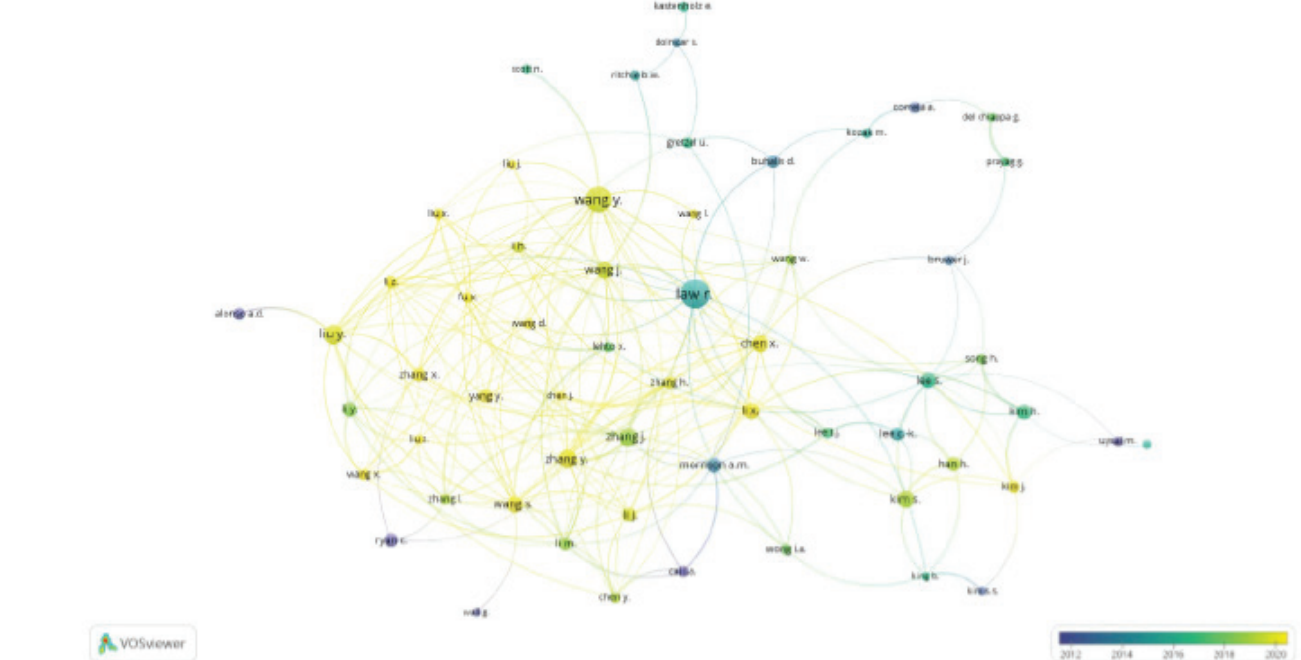


Table 4: Top 20 Publishing countries

S. No	Country	Articles Published	Total Citations	Avg. Citation Per Document	APY
1	United States	3272	85785	26.218	2014.6
2	United Kingdom	1836	48942	26.657	2014.5
3	Australia	1619	45386	28.033	2014.9
4	China	1369	16023	11.704	2019.6



5	Spain	942	15802	16.775	2017.9
6	Canada	692	18448	26.659	2014.2
7	Italy	643	9282	14.436	2018
8	South Africa	635	7319	11.526	2018
9	India	557	4149	7.4488	2018.6
10	South Korea	503	10235	20.348	2017.5
11	Malaysia	473	4956	10.478	2018.1
12	Taiwan	466	10658	22.871	2016.8
13	New Zealand	465	11797	25.37	2015.2
14	Portugal	464	5971	12.869	2017.8
15	Germany	438	7222	16.489	2017.3
16	Hong Kong	435	12893	29.639	2016.8
17	Indonesia	434	1328	3.0599	2019.7
18	Turkey	345	5905	17.116	2017.3
19	Netherlands	319	5488	17.204	2017.1
20	France	315	4927	15.641	2017.1

### 3.3. Co-Authorship (Organizations)

In the next analysis stage, institutions and organizations were evaluated based on volume of contributions to the field. The dataset covered 28,754 organizational affiliations, with 45 organizations contributing 10+ publications. Table 5 lists the top 10 organizations (by volume), alongside key authors therein. The School of Hotel and Tourism Management, Hong Kong Polytechnic University emerged as the top contributor with 102 publications and 4579 citations. Other organizations contributing significantly to the field included those from South Africa (Articles=68, Citations=1188) and New Zealand (Articles=40, Citations=607).

Table 5: 10 Most Contributing Organizations and Key Authors

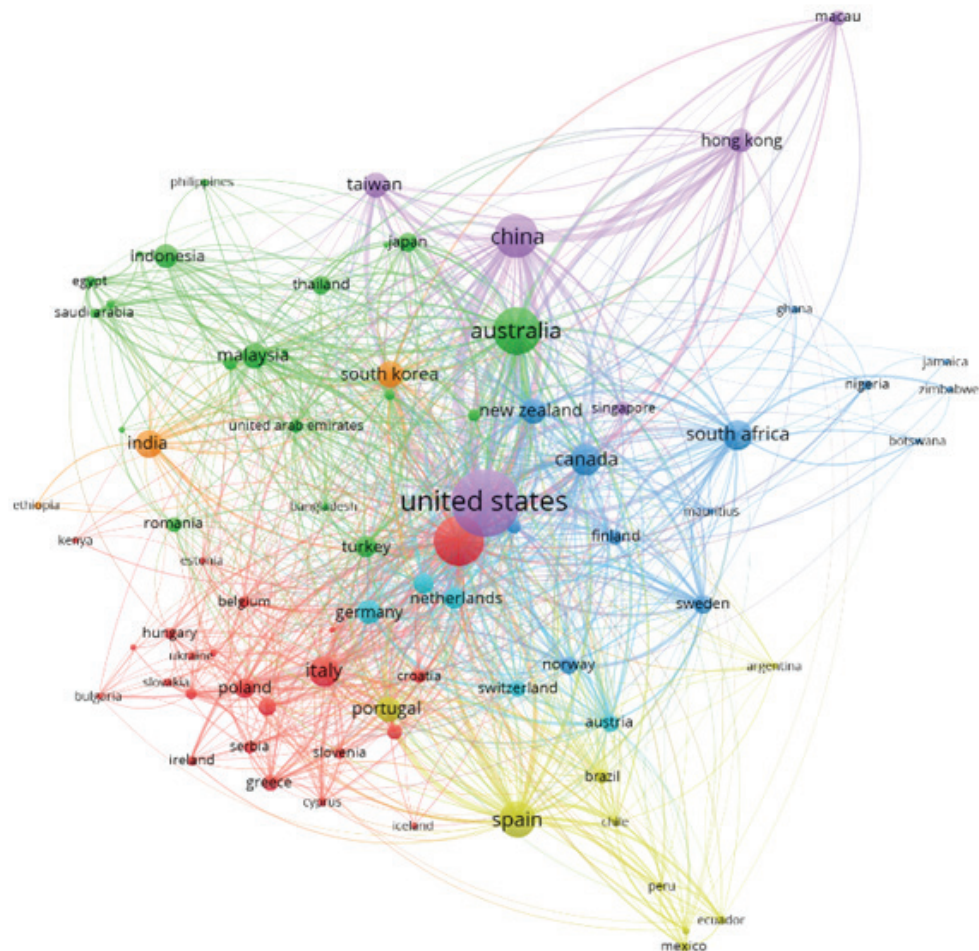
S. No	Organization	Key Authors	Publications	Citations	Avg. Citations	APY
1	School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong	Bob McKercher, Mimi Li, Rob Law	102	4579	44.9	2015.7
2	School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Johannesburg, South Africa	Anna Spenceleym, Tembi Tichaawa	68	1188	17.5	2019.7
3	Department of Tourism, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand	Brent Lovelock, James Higham	40	607	15.2	2018.7
4	School of Tourism Management, Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou, China	IpKin Anthony Wong, Honggang Xu	27	250	9.3	2019.7
5	School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Purdue University, West Lafayette, United States	Liping A Cai, Xinran Lehto	21	219	10.4	2017.9
6	School of Business and Economics, Linnaeus university, Kalmar, Sweden	Colin Michael Hall, Stefan Gössling	19	559	29.4	2019.6

7	School of Hospitality and Tourism, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand	Alison McIntosh, Thomas Pernecky	18	197	10.9	2019.4
8	College of hospitality and tourism management, Sejong University, Seoul, South Korea	Chi Xiaoting, Heesup Han	17	349	20.5	2019.4
9	Department of Geography, University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland	Colin Michael Hall	17	445	26.2	2015.9
10	School of Hospitality and Tourism management, University of Surrey, Guildford, United Kingdom	Michael B. Duignan, Xavier Font	15	320	21.3	2019.6

### 3.4. Co-Authorships (Countries)

Country specific co-authorship analysis captures the collaborative research conducted by research teams comprised of authors working from institutions within more than one country. It is widely presumed that international collaboration aids both researchers and organizations in enhancing research quality (Van et al., 2012), scholarly output (Franceschet & Costantini, 2010), and impact in terms of citations (Puuska et al., Leino, 2014). Our analysis revealed that, of 17,054 publications, 11,254 (~66%) were authored by authors affiliated to institutions situated within two or more countries. Here, the US and China again demonstrated the strongest link strength with 267 collaborations.

Figure 4: Co-authorship across Countries



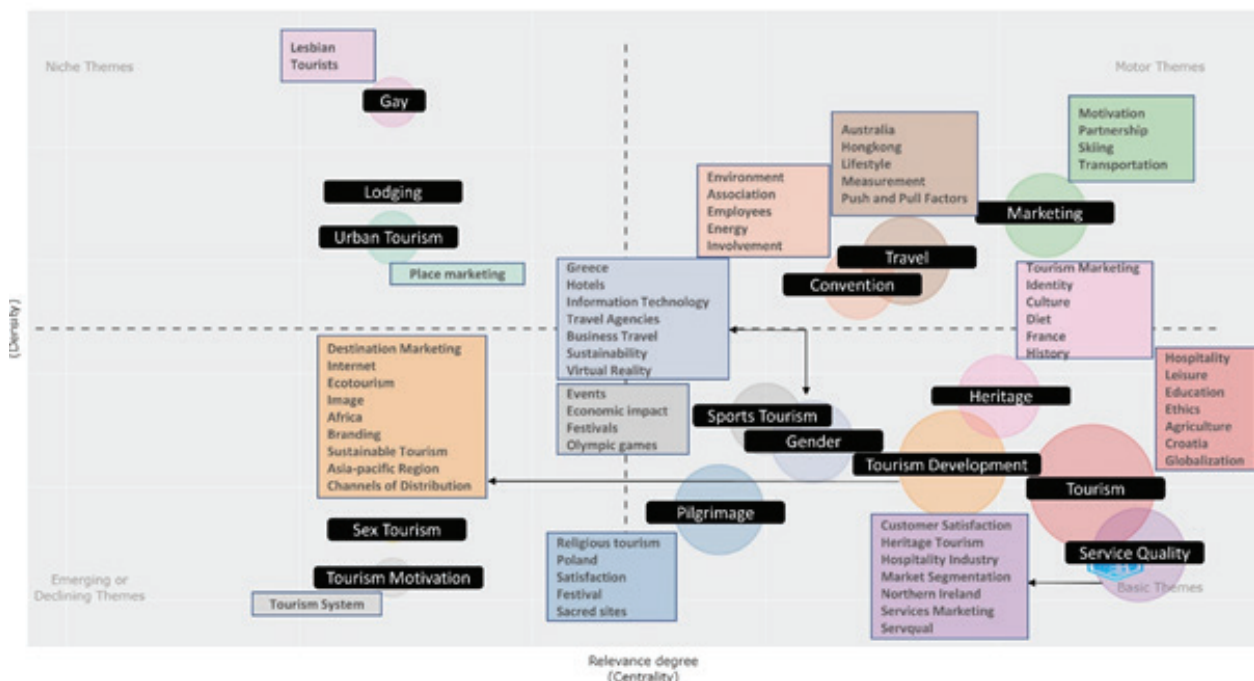
#### 4. RESEARCH THEMES AND TOPICS

The next level of analysis focused on major and minor themes in the broad domain of travel of tourism research to understand the evolution of research over the years, with period wise thematic analysis performed. 15647 papers were divided into three groups based on year of publication. The first group included papers published from 1975-2000 (N=585), second group from 2001-2010 (2,119) and third group from 2011-2022 (N=12,943). Thematic analysis used author keywords (i.e., keywords provided by the author(s) at the time of publication). Thematic analysis was software-based, underpinned by co-word analysis. In co-word analysis, words that frequently appear together are bound by a thematic relationship (Donthu et al., 2021, Van Eck & Waltman, 2009). Themes were divided into four quadrants based on degree of relevance (centrality) and degree of development (density) and mapped on a two-dimensional diagram by the bibliometric software. The plot made interpretation of themes intuitive depending on the quadrant they were assigned. The (1) upper-right quadrant held motor themes (topics that are well developed and ideal for structuring conceptual frameworks); (2) lower-right quadrant showed basic themes (topics significant within the domain and cross-cutting to its different areas); (3) lower-left quadrant demonstrated emerging or declining themes (topics not fully developed or marginally interesting); (4) upper-left quadrant has specialized or niche themes (topics strongly developed but still marginal for the domain under investigation) (Aria et al., 2022). We discuss themes which emerged across the four quadrants during the three broad periods hereafter.

##### 4.1. Research Themes

**Period 1 (1975-2000):** During the initial two decades of publications on travel and tourism research, more than 15 themes evolved over four quadrants (Figure 5A). Motor themes included travel, marketing, and conventions. These themes focused on examining travel motivation (Kim et al., 1996) and travelling for conventions (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). The highest number of themes were categorized as basic and included themes such as service quality, tourism, tourism development, heritage, pilgrimage, sports tourism, and gender. As discussed earlier, basic themes were well developed, and research frameworks were present for most themes. Some of the seminal work in sport tourism included (Lisa, 1998; Gammon & Robinson, 1997). Tourism Motivation and Sex Tourism were classified as emerging or declining themes. Whereas Gay/Lesbian based tourism, lodging and Urban Tourism were niche themes during this period. Figure 5A shows major and minor themes during this period. Appendix A lists the most cited papers across key themes published therein.

Figure 5A: Major and Minor Themes During Period 1 (1975-2000)



**Period 2 (2001 to 2010):** Tourism in general emerged as major *motor themes* during this period. Some of the minor *motor themes* were tourism and marketing, tourism in Australia, tourism in India, sustainable development and tourism, heritage, religion, and culture. Wine tourism was at the intersection of *motor* and *basic theme*. Sub-themes included sport tourism, tourism motivation, and service quality. Festivals emerged as the major *basic theme* and sub-themes included pilgrimage, cultural tourism, market segmentation in tourism, heritage tourism, sports tourism, religious and cultural tourism, economic impact of tourism, and events. Destination marketing was at the intersection of *emerging or declining* and *basic themes*. Minor themes included destination image and branding, tourism in China, Hong Kong and New Zealand, internet, Olympic games. Tourism Management was classified

as a *major emerging or declining theme*, with minor themes like marketing strategy in travel and tourism industry and tourism in Spain. Sustainable tourism and development emerged as major *niche themes*. Minor themes under sustainable tourism included sustainability, ecotourism, climate change and nature-based tourism. Similarly, minor themes under development included terrorism and politics. Figure 5B and Appendix B show themes/key publications during this period.

**Period 3 (2011 to 2022):** During this period the number of publications grew exponentially due to increased research interest compared to previous decades. Apart from tourism in general, all major themes changed from the earlier period across all the quadrants (Figure 5C). Social media and tourism emerged as two motor themes. Minor themes included destination image and marketing, China, wine tourism, destination branding and management, authenticity, content analysis. Similarly minor themes aligned with travel and tourism included hospitality, heritage, and culture. Events and hospitality emerged as motor themes, which were basic and emerging or declining themes respectively during the previous period. Instead of festivals, sustainable tourism emerged as major basic theme. Minor basic themes were sustainable development, community-based tourism, rural tourism, ecotourism, cultural and sports tourism. Emerging or declining themes included two major themes: religious tourism and satisfaction. Minor themes included pilgrimage, India, and dark tourism. Similarly, minor themes alongside satisfaction included motivation, service quality, segmentation, loyalty, medical tourism, perceived value. Covid-19 emerged as major niche theme, while minor niche themes during this period included climate change, public transport, and resilience. Appendix C lists some of the most cited papers across various themes published during this period.

Figure 5B: Major and Minor Themes During Period 2 (2001-2010)

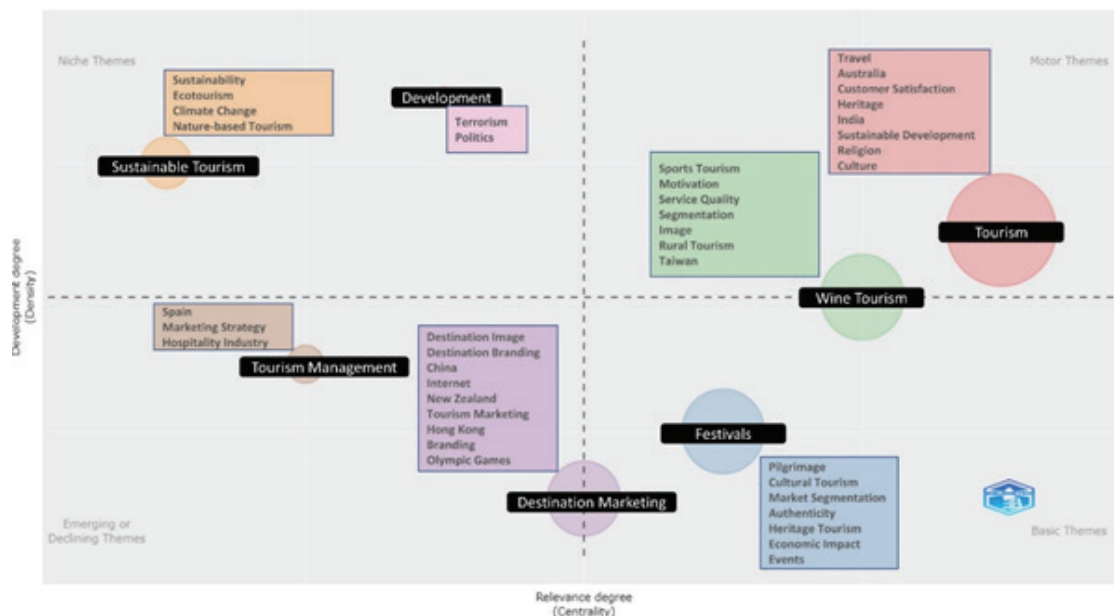
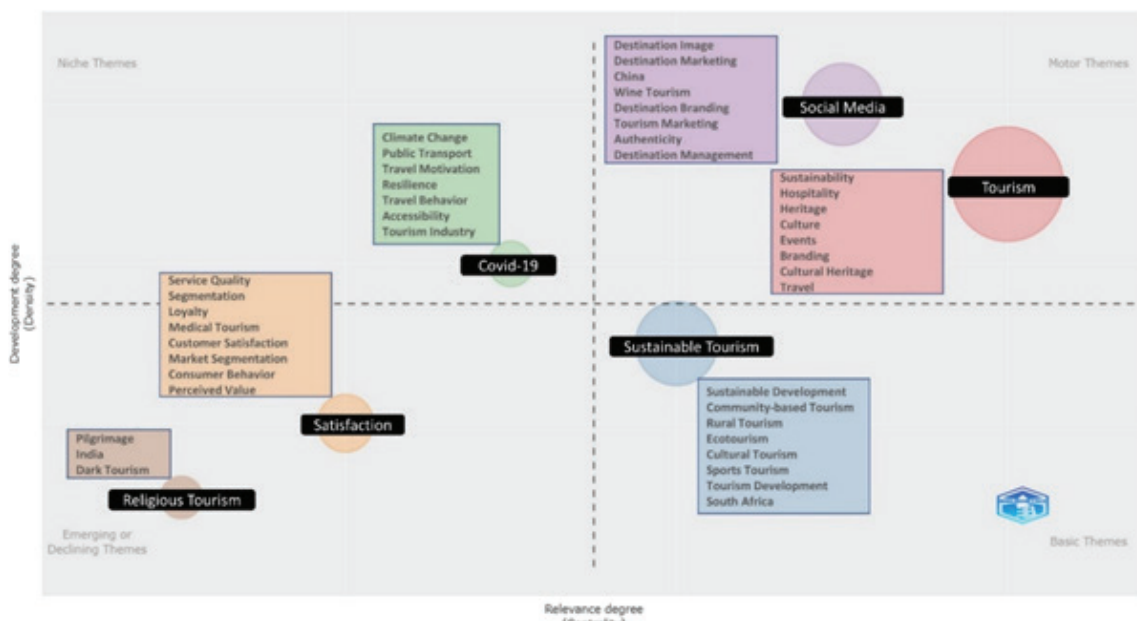


Figure 5C: Major and Minor Themes During Period 3 (2011-2022)

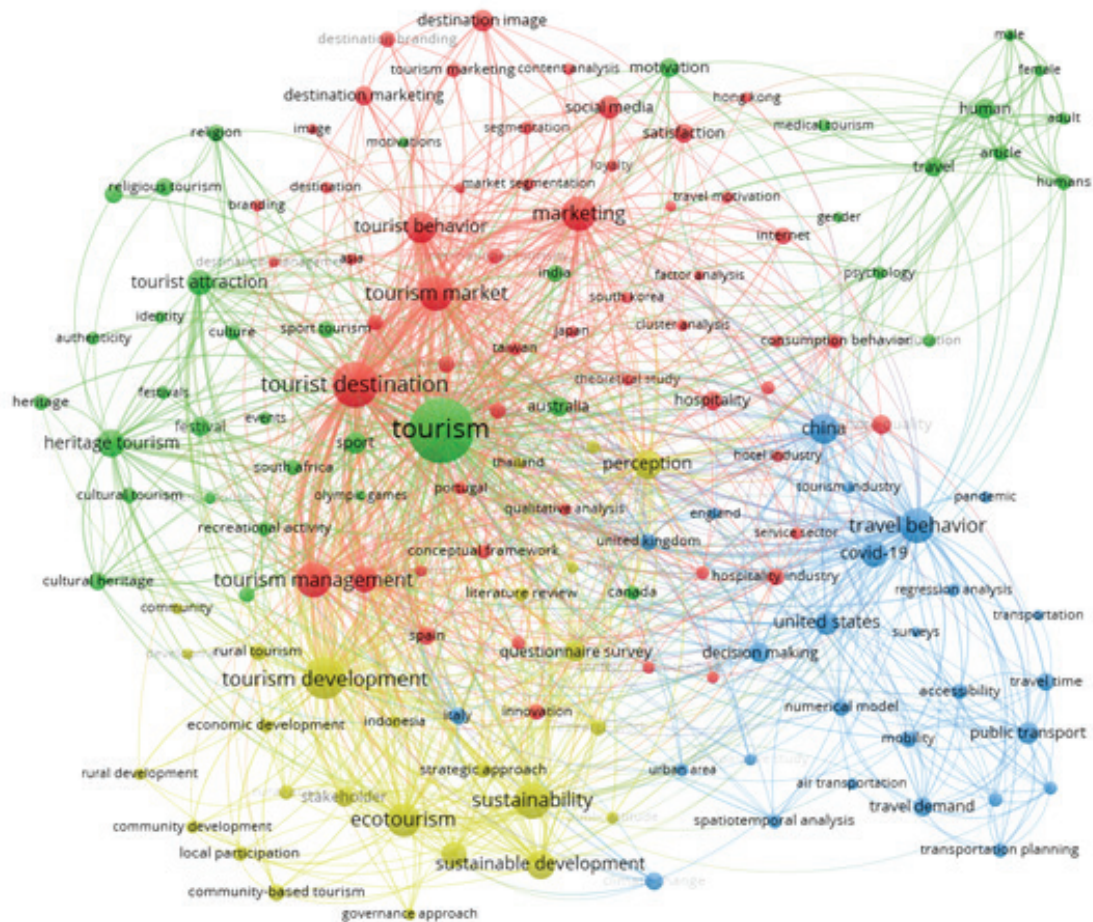




## 4.2. Research Topics, their Relationships, and Publication Years

Following the identification of major and minor themes across three different periods, supporting analysis of interrelationships between key topics was conducted. The period in which these topics became predominant was also identified. This analysis was conducted across all the publications without bifurcating them based on publication period. To identify key topics, author keywords and index keywords were considered. In total, there were 42301 keywords, with 1721 (~4%) occurring more than 10 times, 898 appearing more than 20 times, 337 appearing more than 50 times, and 145 appearing more than 100 times. Given that it was impractical and less meaningful to analyse co-word network with large numbers of words, a cluster network with words appearing more than 100 times was selected. To analyse major themes and related terms, a network with four clusters was most meaningful (**Figure 6**).

**Figure 6: Co-Word Cluster Network Visualization**



## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Given its interdisciplinary nature, travel and tourism research presents an opportunity for bibliometric analysis to map scholarly progress and trends over time, thereby identifying emerging themes for future exploration (Shin & Perdue, 2022). This study began by acknowledging foundational works in the field, followed by the collection and analysis of bibliographic data using appropriate techniques. A database of 15,647 articles published between 1975-2022 was compiled to (i) investigate and recognize the distinct theoretical perspectives in existing travel and tourism literature, and to establish relationships among them, and to (ii) identify new research trends, gaps, and potential future research areas therein by analysing the most recently published papers. This database drew from 2,104 journals, of which 67 had published over 50 articles. Notably, the journal “Sustainability”, a cross-disciplinary publication, was found to have the highest number of articles (929 articles) followed by “Tourism Management” (661 articles), “Current Issues in Tourism (386),” “Journal of Sustainable Tourism” (363 articles), and “African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism, and Leisure” (322 articles). Interestingly, although “Sustainability” published around 40 percent more articles than “Tourism Management,” the latter received a significantly higher number of citations compared to the former.

We also examined the Average Publication Year (APY) of articles across the top 20 journals and found that “Sustainability” (APY=2020.2), “African Journal of Hospitality” (APY=2019.1), “Tourism and Leisure”, “Journal of Destination Marketing and Management” (APY=2018.5), and “Tourism Management Perspectives” (APY=2018.3) were among the journals with the most recent APY, indicating a higher proportion of recently published articles. Also, of the 17,053 articles collected, 28,416



authors contributed to publication, with 6,167 authors publishing only one article in the database. We found significant growth in the number of publications, with a 3-4x increase per decade and an average yearly cumulative growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 23%. Notably, the most substantial increase in publication productivity occurred between 2020 (2054 articles) and 2021 (3318 articles), a growth rate of 61.5%. Further investigation revealed that 3,904 articles were authored by a single author, while on average, an article had 2.7 authors.

A deeper investigation of the database revealed that the most prolific author was Prof. Rob Law, UMDF Chair Professor of Smart Tourism at the University of Macau. Among the top 10 publishing authors, Prof. Xin Li had the highest Average Publication Year (APY) score, publishing 43 articles. Both also boasted the highest fractional link strength, 84 and 73 respectively. In terms of national performance, the highest number of articles were published by authors from the United States (Articles =3272), United Kingdom (Articles =1839), and Australia (n=1619). Co-authorship networks demonstrate that the USA and China had the highest fractional link strength (215.6), indicating strong collaborations between authors from these countries. APY analysis revealed that Indonesia and China were among the most recent significant contributors to travel and tourism research, while the US and UK had the lowest APY scores (alongside Canada). It is noteworthy that countries with low APY and large article numbers (e.g., USA, UK, and Australia) are regarded as pioneers in travel and tourism research, making significant contributions to the field's early development.

We also examined the contributions of various institutions and organizations to the field of travel and tourism, focusing on volume of publications. The dataset encompassed a total of 28,754 organizational affiliations, with 45 organizations making 10+ contributions. The School of Hotel and Tourism Management at Hong Kong Polytechnic University emerged as leading contributor, with 102 publications and 4,579 citations. Other organizations making significant contributions to the field included institutions from South Africa (Articles=68, Citations=1,188) and New Zealand (Articles=40, Citations=607). An analysis of co-authorship at country level examines the collaborative research conducted by teams of authors from institutions spanning multiple countries. Our findings indicate that approximately 66% papers were authored by those affiliated with institutions located in 2+ countries. Again, the USA and China exhibited the strongest link strength, with 267 collaborations.

To understand the evolution of key research themes over time in travel and tourism, we identified major and minor themes using a period-wise thematic analysis. Results highlight interesting differences in terms of motor, emerging, basic and declining (sub) themes over these three time periods. For example, where travel, marketing, and convention themes were motor themes in the first period, tourism motivation and sex tourism were classified as emerging or declining themes, and gay/lesbian-based tourism, lodging, and urban tourism were considered niche themes in the first period. Interestingly, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> period, general tourism emerged as a major motor theme. The 3<sup>rd</sup> period, saw a change as major themes shifted across all quadrants. In this era, the major basic theme shifted from festivals to sustainable tourism, accompanied by minor themes such as sustainable development, community-based tourism, rural tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, and sports tourism. Two major emerging or declining themes were religious tourism and satisfaction, with minor themes including pilgrimage, tourism in India, dark tourism, motivation, service quality, segmentation, loyalty, medical tourism, and perceived value. The COVID-19 pandemic emerged as a major niche theme during this period, with additional minor niche themes including climate change, public transport, and resilience. This period-wise thematic analysis helps us to understand the evolution and growth of research in the field and sets the agenda for the coming decade.

## Theoretical Contributions

This study not only offers factual insight, but also contributes theoretically to our understanding of the field by moving beyond conventional travel and tourism literature boundaries and demonstrating collaboration between various interdisciplinary areas and respective leading scholars therein. Findings are based on the examination of diverse related literature streams, with a consistent focus on travel and tourism. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on specific themes or research areas within this domain (Yousaf et al., 2018), our study takes a pioneering approach by encompassing the entirety of the field. This unique perspective allows us to examine interconnections and interdisciplinarity therein, shedding light on the diverse range of topics and sub-domains that contribute to overall understanding of travel and tourism. By counteracting the limitations of prior bibliometric studies and concentrating exclusively on travel and tourism, our research not only addresses calls by Shin and Perdue (2022) and Koseoglu et al. (2016) for deeper investigation of the field, but also extends this by providing a comprehensive analysis that reveals emerging trends, identifies knowledge gaps, and highlights the most influential research papers and authors therein.

Accordingly, this bibliometric analysis also reveals the dynamic landscape in which different themes have gained varying levels of importance across the years. Notably, the recent period has witnessed the emergence of social media and sustainability as dominant themes, reflecting the growing influence of technology and environmental concerns in travel and tourism decision-making. Additionally, the prominence of heritage/culture, and themes such as climate change, resilience, accessibility, and travel behaviour signify the evolving interests and focus within the field. By shedding light on these evolving themes and their respective shifts in importance, this study offers valuable insights for researchers and practitioners alike in understanding the changing nature of the industry, contributing to the advancement of knowledge therein. The themes emergent across different periods can help researchers understand which topics are adequately addressed, which are facing ongoing investigation, and which are currently overlooked, to be investigated in future. This overarching understanding of the 'state of play' within the field should allow for more strategic development of theory across travel and tourism research. By analysing publication patterns, collaboration networks,

and citation impact, we provide a comprehensive overview of knowledge dissemination and collaborative dynamics within the travel and tourism community. Findings herein thus offer valuable insights for the international academic community. By utilizing these findings and considering the identified trends and gaps therein, researchers can tailor their expertise to contribute to the advancement of knowledge. Moreover, our study offers valuable insights into the evolution of research within travel and tourism, enabling researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to gain a holistic perspective of the field's development over time.

An important characteristic of the travel and tourism domain is that it is highly-collaborative and multi-authored; we observed that highly-cited authors have extensive networks, indicating the presence of strong collaborative efforts. Further, our analysis demonstrated the widespread participation and contribution of researchers from around the world to knowledge advancement within the field. This demonstrates the international scope and relevance of travel and tourism research, contributing to the theoretical understanding of the field's global reach and impact. As such, our findings point to a vibrant and dynamic research landscape, capable of facilitating future growth, innovation, and advancement within the domain. By uncovering the highly collaborative nature of this domain and highlighting the extensive networks and collaborations therein, we contribute to the theoretical understanding of knowledge creation and dissemination in the field. The observation of strong collaboration networks among highly cited authors provides strong evidence of knowledge exchange, idea sharing, and cross-pollination of research and ideas.

This bibliometric analysis also provides a significant contextual contribution to travel and tourism literature by exploring the evolution of dominant themes and their temporal growth, with particular emphasis on the increased recent significance of themes focused on India and China, with this captured in our thematic analysis map. This is further supported by the discussion on the publication productivity of Indian and Chinese colleagues, indicating their substantial contribution to scholarly discourse in travel and tourism. Our analysis also highlights India's pioneering role in religious/pilgrimage tourism, emphasizing the country's significance as a destination for spiritual travel. Understanding the publication trends and productivity of these countries is crucial for grasping the evolving landscape of the field, as well as identifying the unique perspectives and challenges that emerge from these regions. This contextual contribution not only enriches the existing body of knowledge but also serves as a foundation for future research collaborations, and cross-cultural comparisons across sector.

## 6. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH & STUDY LIMITATIONS

The current study has mapped key thematic areas within tourism research using bibliometric analysis, bringing forward both well-established and emerging domains. Based on these findings, there are several avenues for future research that can further deepen understanding in the field. The important themes identified in this study, *such as destination image, destination marketing, destination branding, destination management, sustainability, heritage and cultural tourism, travel and hospitality, and social media marketing*, offer rich potential for continued exploration. As tourism dynamics evolve in a post-pandemic world, these areas demand updated perspectives and more context-sensitive approaches. In terms of content areas, future research could investigate how destination branding and marketing strategies are adapting to newer platforms such as short-form video apps and AI-driven personalization. Studies might also explore how cultural and heritage tourism can remain authentic and community-driven in the face of commercialization. The role of local communities in shaping their own narratives and managing tourism development remains a crucial area deserving more attention, especially through participatory research methods that prioritize local voices.

The recent niche themes identified as climate change, travel behaviour, and accessibility in tourism highlight important gaps in current literature. More focused research is needed on how climate-related risks are influencing destination planning, tourist preferences, and long-term sustainability. Exploring tourist behaviour in light of recent global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing awareness of environmental impacts, is another key direction. In addition, accessibility remains an underexplored area, and future studies could examine how the tourism industry can be more inclusive of people with disabilities, older adults, and others with special needs. Research here may involve collaboration with accessibility advocates, disability studies experts, and designers focused on inclusive infrastructure.

The role of interdisciplinary collaboration is becoming increasingly important in tourism research. To fully understand complex issues such as sustainability, climate change, or digital transformation in tourism, future studies should draw on insights from other fields such as environmental science, psychology, urban planning, digital media, and public policy. For instance, understanding traveller behaviour in response to environmental concerns may require a psychological lens, while evaluating sustainable tourism practices could benefit from collaboration with environmental experts and urban planners. Similarly, examining the influence of social media platforms and algorithms on destination image and travel choices invites input from digital communication and data science disciplines. Another significant direction for future research lies in expanding the methodological approaches used to investigate these themes. While bibliometric and quantitative analyses provide a strong foundation, future studies may benefit from mixed-method designs that incorporate both quantitative and qualitative data. For example, combining sentiment analysis of user-generated content with in-depth interviews or surveys could offer a more comprehensive view of tourist experiences and destination perceptions. Longitudinal studies that track changes in travel behavior or branding effectiveness over time would also add valuable insights. Furthermore, advanced methods such as machine learning and geospatial analysis can be integrated to examine patterns in tourist flows, environmental impacts, and digital engagement with destinations.

Future research studies should also highlight the weaknesses of our study. One such weakness stems from the reliance of the study on a single database (Scopus) in providing meta-data for analysis. We therefore encourage future studies to draw from, for example, WOS, Google Scholar, and/or EBSCO to expand the volume of literature analyzed therein. Further, in terms of data analysis, limitations can be offset in future via the adoption of alternate methods (e.g., meta-analysis) or by using more advanced software (e.g., CiteSpaceII; Bibexcel). Next, travel and tourism are inherently global, with researchers across the world publishing scientific work relevant to the field in many different languages. This study exclusively focused on articles published in English. Thus, there is scope for future research to broaden the scope of data retrieval by including papers published in different languages. Lastly, only journal articles were taken into consideration while retrieving data. Books, conference papers, and chapters in edited books were excluded from the selection criteria. Thus, future research may incorporate other publications into their investigation of existing literature.

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