

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM: A BIBLIOMETRICS ANALYSIS USING R BIBLIOSHINY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to systematise studies on the sustainable development of rural tourism from 1990 to 2025, with materials selected from the Scopus database, including 322 articles. The results of the annual publication show that the number of publications is continuously increasing, with 2024 having the most significant number, at 45 articles. The magazine with the most publications is Sustainability (Switzerland). Author Wang Y is the most effective researcher; The most cited material is that of Garro B. In addition, this study synthesises topic trends through the appearance and disappearance of keywords over time. Through the analysis of the thematic map, it is shown that fast-growing thematic clusters include rural tourism, with a focus on environmental protection. The cluster China focuses on subjects such as sustainable rural tourism development, traditional village preservation, community empowerment, and rural economic improvement. The cluster Europe mainly focuses on rural landscapes, farms, and consumer behaviour. Thematic clusters will develop in the future, focusing on changes in land use, with essential topics including socio-economic impacts and ecological services. Niche themes include environmental effects, innovations in education, and agricultural products to support rural tourism. Additionally, biodiversity clusters and North American countries are emerging or declining clusters. This paper provides an overview of the research situation on rural tourism development, thereby helping researchers to orient their future research.

Keywords: Rural tourism, sustainable development, bibliometrics, R Biblioshiny.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism plays a significant role in developing the agricultural economy, improving the appearance of rural areas and farmers' income, and providing jobs and other functions. It is an effective means of poverty alleviation. Rural tourism income mainly comes from catering, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment services during rural tourism consumption. At the same time, the total number of tourists can be calculated by multiplying the number of trips and the number of rural tourists [1]. Therefore, rural tourism has become the leading choice for rural economic development and improving the quality of life [2]. It is impossible not to mention sustainable rural tourism development to develop rural tourism effectively. Since the late 1980s, sustainable development has become a buzzword in development studies in general and tourism studies in particular, including rural tourism [3]. Many studies have been conducted worldwide, reflecting various contents on sustainable rural tourism development. However, there are still limited studies synthesizing

and analyzing systematic documents from studies over a long period to help future researchers recognize research trends that are developing, will develop, separate, or newly appear or disappear. This will help future researchers on sustainable rural tourism shape future research directions in line with the development trends of the field. Therefore, this study aims to address the above gap.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Concept of rural tourism

Rural tourism includes many experiential elements such as nature, agriculture, and culture [4]. Alim (2019) has another concept: rural tourism showcases rural lifestyles, arts, culture, world heritage, and remarkable landscapes in agricultural or non-urban locations [5]. Lane (2009) argues that the concept of pure rural tourism is introduced; tourism located in rural areas has rural scale, characteristics, and functions, reflecting the distinct and complex rural environmental pattern, economy, history, and location [6].

Reichel et al. (2000) define rural tourism as tourism that takes place in rural areas, while Giannakis (2014) describes it as a range of activities, services, and facilities provided by farmers and rural residents to attract tourists to their areas to generate additional income for their businesses. The European Commission has adopted the term rural tourism for tourism as a means to describe and explain all tourism activities in rural areas and villages [7].

2.2 Concept of sustainable development

Since the late 1980s, sustainable development has become a buzzword in development studies in general and tourism studies in particular [3]. According to Liu (2003), sustainability, sustainable tourism, and sustainable development are well-established terms used loosely and often interchangeably in the literature [3].

According to Stoffelen & Vanneste (2017), tourism development is a series of efforts to integrate the use of different tourism resources and all forms of external aspects of tourism that are directly or indirectly related to the continuity of tourism development [8]. According to Lozano-Oyola et al (2012), sustainable tourism is not a specific form of tourism but an approach that can make all tourism more environmentally, socially, and economically beneficial [9].

According to the Vietnam Tourism Law (2017), sustainable tourism development is tourism development that simultaneously meets socio-economic and environmental requirements, ensuring harmony of interests of subjects participating in tourism activities, and does not harm the ability to meet future tourism needs [10]. In this study, the author applies the concept of sustainable development, which is defined in the Vietnam Tourism Law (2017) as tourism development that meets economic and social requirements and has environmental protection activities. This ensures the harmony of stakeholders' interests participating in tourism activities without harming the ability to meet the destination's tourism needs in the future.

3. METHODOLOGY

According to Donthu (2021), Bibliometric analysis has gained widespread popularity in business research in recent years, and its popularity can be attributed to (1) the advancement, availability, and accessibility of bibliometric software and scientific databases and (2) the

interdisciplinary synthesis of bibliometric methods from information science to business research. More importantly, the utility of bibliometric analysis in business research is a reflection of its utility in that it enables and empowers scholars to (1) gain a holistic view, (2) identify gaps in knowledge, (3) derive new ideas for inquiry and (4) position their intended contributions to the field [11]. Analysis tool: The open-source bibliometric software Biblioshiny from RStudio was used to perform the bibliometric analysis. Biblioshiny's advantage is that, compared to other bibliometric tools, it provides a comprehensive set of statistical and visualization techniques that allow performance analysis and concept mapping of the research field [12].

Implementation method: The research was carried out in 2 phases as follows:

Phase 1: Based on keywords “rural tourism” and “sustainable development” on the Scopus database with a search strategy including article title, abstract, and keywords. The search period is 1990 – 2025 (35 years), and the search results are 765 documents. Then, the author goes to the screening stage by selecting topics related to tourism: social sciences, business, management and accounting, economics, econometrics, and finance, and the results are 484 documents. To update the trend and reliable records, the author chose the document type to be an article; the publication stage was final, and the results showed 383 articles. The articles are written in English; 325 articles were found. Then the author removed duplicate articles on R Biblioshiny, and the results were 322 articles to analyze in phase 2.

Phase 2: The 322 selected articles were entered into RBiblioshiny software for analysis: performance analysis (Main Information, Sources’ Production over Time, Authors' Impact, Most Global Cited Documents, Most Frequent Words, and Trending Topics); keyword co-occurrence analysis to find clusters and thematic map analysis to show the development trend of topic clusters. From there, gaps in the research field will be identified. The implementation steps are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Overview of research methodology

Phase	Implementation steps	Result
Phase 1: Search documents on the Scopus database	Article title, abstract, keywords "rural tourism" AND "sustainable development"	765 documents
	Subject area: Social Sciences; Business, Management and Accounting; Economics, Econometrics and Finance.	484 documents
	Document type: Article. Publication stage: Final	383 articles
	Language: English	325 articles
	Remove duplicates	322 articles
Phase 2: Performance Analysis, Co-occurrence, and Thematic Map Analysis on R Biblioshiny	Performance Analysis	Main Information, Sources, Authors' Impact, Most Cited Documents, Most Frequent Words, and Trending Topics.
	Co-occurrence	Clusters
	Thematic Map	Basic Themes, Niche, Motor, and Emerging or Declining Themes.

Source: Author (2025)

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Performance Analysis

Main Information: Table 2 shows that the first research on sustainable rural tourism development was in 1990. From 1990 to 2025, studies were published in 123 sources, with 322 articles, an annual growth rate of 8.24%, and a document Average Age 5.99. The average citation per document is 24.13. Keywords Plus (ID) is 678, and Author's Keywords (DE) is 1010. There are 952 authors in total, including 34 Authors of single-authored docs. Additionally, based on the number of annual publications, the number of publications increases each year. The year with the highest number of publications is 2024, with 45 articles.

Table 2. Main Information

Description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	1990:2025
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	123
Documents	322
Annual Growth Rate %	8.24
Document Average Age	5.99
Average citations per doc	24.13
References	0
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	678
Author's Keywords (DE)	1010
AUTHORS	
Authors	952
Authors of single-authored docs	34
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	38
Co-Authors per Doc	3.41
International co-authorships %	23.91
DOCUMENT TYPES	
Article	322

(Source: Biblioshiny)

Sources' Production: Figure 1 shows that the journals with the most publications over time are the Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Land Use Policy, Sustainability (Switzerland), and Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes. Of these, the journal with the highest number of publications by 2025 is Sustainability (Switzerland), with 94 articles; the rate of publication of articles increased very rapidly from 2018 onwards. Next is the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, with 16 articles, and three journals, the Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism, Land Use Policy, and Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes, with 10 articles each.

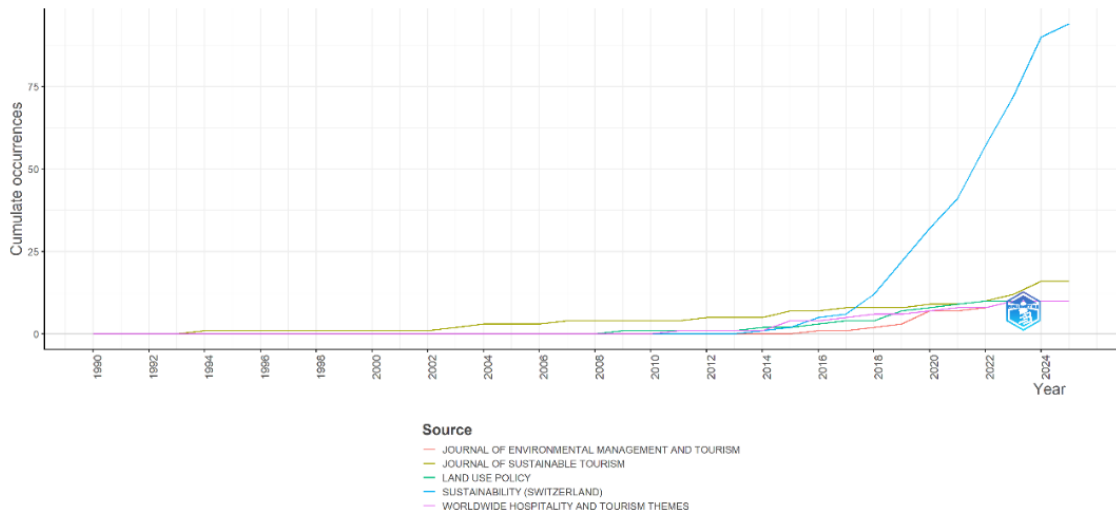


Figure 1. Sources’ Production over Time. (Source: Biblioshiny)

Authors impact: Figure 2 and Table 3 show that: Among the 10 most influential authors in the research field, Wang Y is the author with the highest H_index (5), also the author with the highest level of influence with the number of articles (NP) of 8 and the author with the highest total citations of 306. The author with the highest G_index (8) has the highest number of citations. The M_index is relatively high (0.75) - the author has a certain number of years of research in this field. The year of publication is 2019, and it has been continuous and stable until the present stage.

Next are the two authors with the second most influence, Castanho RA and Couto G, with an H_index of 4, a G_index of 5, and several publications of 5 articles. In addition, the two authors are also equal in the total number of citations (49) - the number of citations is relatively small. This can be explained by the fact that the year in which the two authors started publishing is quite late (2021).

The author with the highest M_index is Li Y (1), the author whose first research publication was quite late (2022), but is the author with the second highest number of publications (7 articles), which proves that the author has a steady and stable number of publications over the years.

Li R has a high m_index (0.75), although the year of publication is quite late (2022), so the total number of citations is not high. The author has three publications that prove his research career is stable and continuous.

The author with the lowest M_index is Kastenholz E (0.136). However, he has the longest publishing career among the 10 authors in this field. The year of first publication is 2004, so his research is cited quite a lot; the total number of citations is ranked second (231), but the number of publications is 4. This proves that the author has done early research but is not continuous or stable. In addition, the top 10 influential authors are Wang J, Liu X with four publications, Dai ML, Ma XL with three publications.

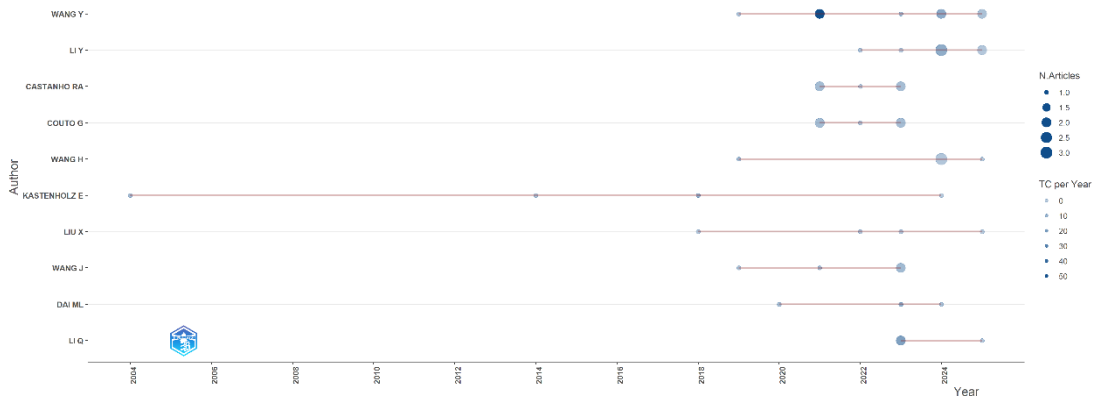


Figure 2. Authors' Production over time. (Source: Biblioshiny)

Table 3. Authors' Local Impact

Author	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
Wang Y	5	8	0.714	306	8	2019
Castanho RA	4	5	0.8	49	5	2021
Couto G,	4	5	0.8	49	5	2021
Li Y	4	5	1	31	7	2022
Wang J	4	4	0.571	71	4	2019
Dai ML	3	3	0.5	69	3	2020
Kastenholtz E	3	4	0.136	231	4	2004
Li R	3	3	0.75	28	3	2022
Liu X	3	4	0.375	20	4	2018
Ma XL	3	3	0.5	69	3	2020

(Source: Biblioshiny)

Most Global Cited Documents: Figure 3 shows the ten most-cited documents worldwide. The influential documents in the research field, which will be the foundational documents for new scholars approaching this research field, are: Re-conceptualising rural resources as countryside capital: The case of rural tourism [13]. Rural tourism: A systematic literature review on definitions and challenges [14]. Rural tourism in China [15]. Local Residents' Attitude toward Sustainable Rural Tourism Development [16]. Public preferences for landscape features: The agricultural landscape in mountainous Mediterranean areas [17]. An analysis of the stability of rural tourism as a desired condition for sustainable tourism [18]. For a 'Piece of Bread'? Interpreting Sustainable Development through Agritourism in Southern Tuscany [19]. Measuring Sustainability in a Mass Tourist Destination: Pressures, Perceptions and Policy Responses in Torre Vieja, Spain [20]. Agritourism and Sustainability: What We Can Learn from a Systematic Literature Review [21].

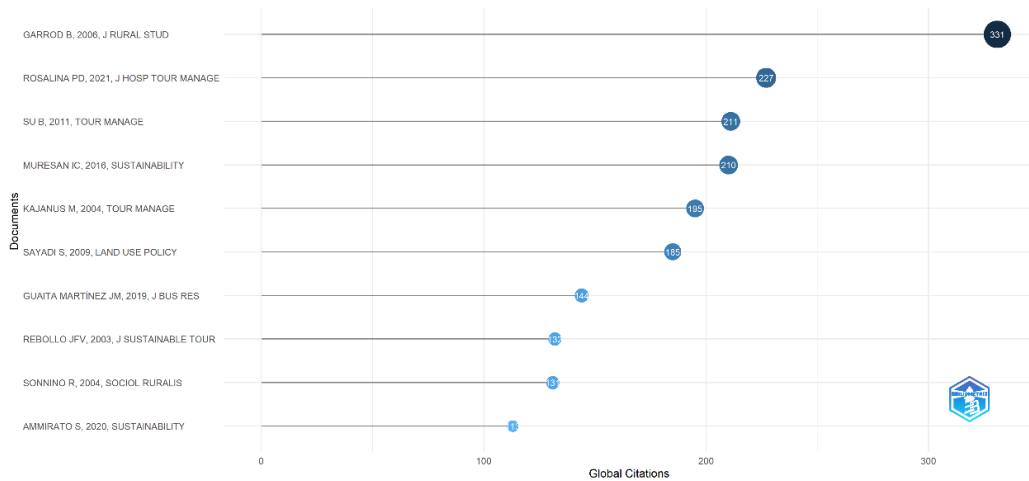


Figure 3. Most Global Cited Documents. (Source: Biblioshiny)

Most Frequent Words and Trending Topics: Figures 4 and 5 show that the most frequently occurring word is “sustainable development” (160 times), which started around 2017 and appeared most in 2021. Next is the word that appeared around 2015 and most in 2021: “tourism development” (101 times). The third most frequently occurring word, which appeared around 2015 and appeared most in 2021, is “rural area” (78 times). Appearing later, around 2018, with the highest number of appearances in 2022, is “ecotourism” (58 times). Around 2016, with the most research appearances in 2020, is “rural development” (56 times). The word “China” was first used around 2018 and will appear most in 2023, with 50 times. “Sustainability” (38 times), “Tourism” (38 times), “Tourist destination” (33 times), “Tourism management” (21 times).

In addition, the topic that developed around 2014 is sustainable rural tourism development in Europe and Eurasia. Next is rural tourism development in mountainous areas, research on the socio-cultural impacts of rural tourism development, the scope of study being expanded to other European countries, economic development, rural development, sustainable development, heritage tourism, tourism management, and participatory approaches. The most recent topics are regional development and empowering local communities when participating in rural tourism development.

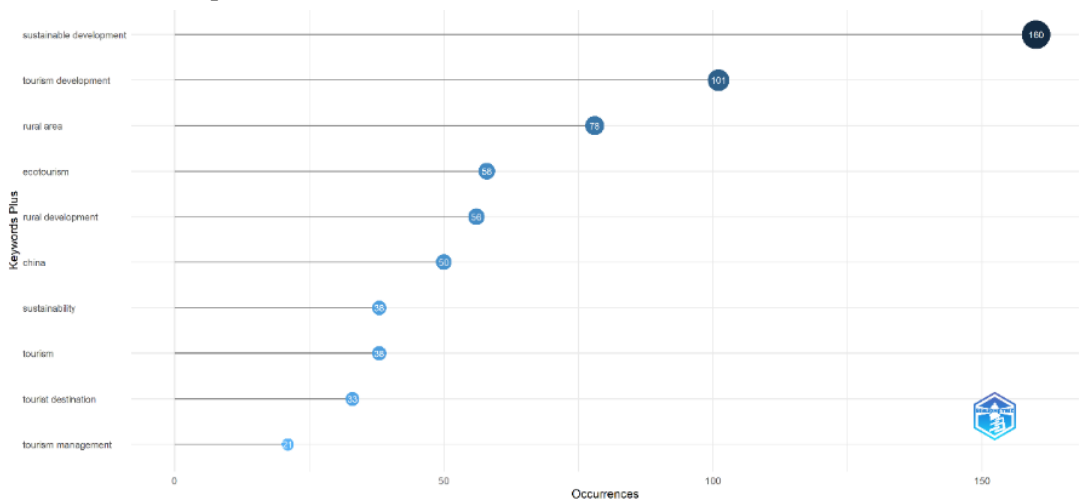


Figure 4. Most Frequent Words (Source: Biblioshiny)

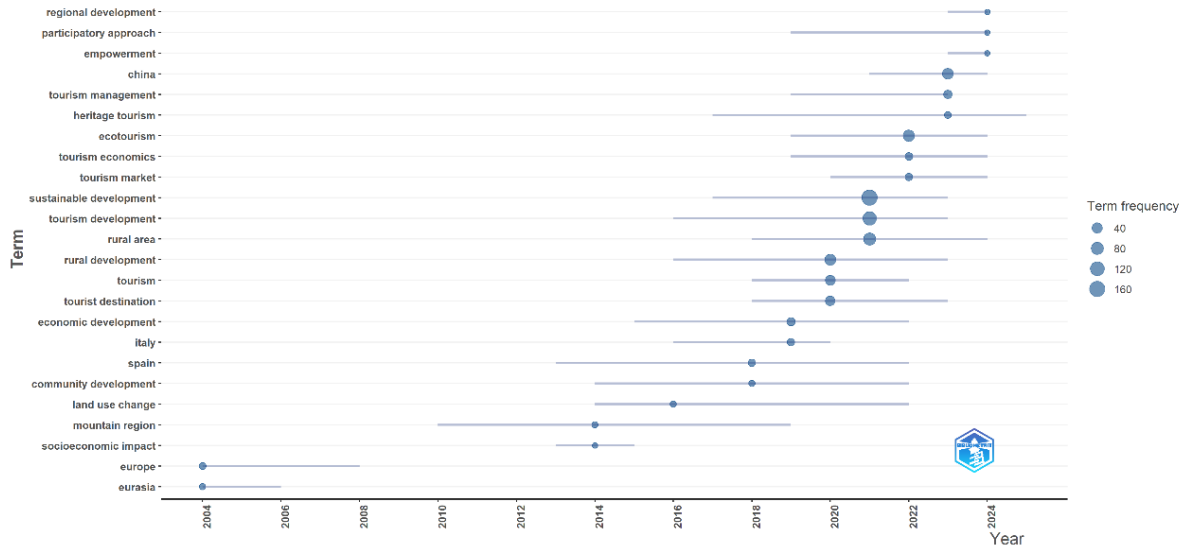


Figure 5. Trend Topics (Source: Biblioshiny)

4.2. Thematic Map

Based on where the clusters are located, centrality and density characteristics can be used to describe the development of each theme [12]. The position of a cluster in the Thematic Map can be interpreted as follows: *Motor Themes* represent the maximum density and centrality of themes to the evaluation domain. These clusters represent the majority of research conducted during the period being evaluated. *Niche Themes* show high topic density but low external links (low centrality), meaning they are of limited but essential importance to the research domain. Clusters in this quadrant can be inferred to be specialized and separate from the general focus. *Emerging or Declining Themes* represent emerging or declining themes. *Basic Themes* contain clusters that represent centrality, but are still immature and have the potential to grow [22].

Motor Themes: “Rural tourism”, “China” and “Europe” form three clusters characterised by high concentration and density. As central and well-developed clusters, the core of the field.

The cluster “Rural tourism” has the highest Density, indicating it has been extensively studied. This suggests that the keywords within this cluster are closely interconnected and that the topic has experienced substantial development. The most central keywords associated with this cluster (with the highest betweenness centrality) include “rural tourism”, “environmental protection”, “land use planning”, “rural areas”, “natural resources”, “economic growth”, “literature review”, and “surveys”.

The cluster “China” has Centrality and Density. This suggests that the topic has been extensively studied and exhibits substantial interconnectedness and significant influence within the research field. The most prominent keywords, characterised by the highest betweenness centrality, include “China”, “village”, “competitiveness”, “policy making” and “empowerment”. Spatial analysis serves as the primary technique.

The cluster “Europe” has a fairly high density, indicating that this cluster has been quite thoroughly researched. The keywords in the cluster are closely linked to each other, indicating that the topic has developed quite strongly. The key keywords in this cluster are "rural landscape", "farm", and "willingness to pay".

In summary, the central and fast-growing theme (core theme) of the research field. The first, rural tourism focuses on environmental protection, rural planning and rural tourism development associated with rural economic development. The second is to develop rural tourism in China, focusing on the competitiveness of destinations, making policies, and focusing on villages in China. The third is rural development in Europe and the United States; the research focuses on the landscape of rural areas, including farms, and examines the affordability of tourists in relation to the type of rural tourism.

Basic themes include “Sustainable development” and “Land use change”, two clusters specific to the research topic that have potential for future development.

The cluster “Sustainable development” has the highest Centrality and a reasonably high density. This cluster develops nicely, and the content is strong. With essential keywords related to the themes of “sustainable development”, “tourism development”, “rural area”, “ecotourism”, “rural development”, “sustainability”, “tourist destination”, “tourism management”, “rural economy”, and “economic development”. “Questionnaire survey” plays the most crucial role in the research methods applied in this cluster.

The cluster “Land use change” features essential keywords such as “land use change”, “socioeconomic impact”, “ecosystem service”, and “conservation management”.

In short, the cluster represents the field of research. It is likely to evolve in the future as “Sustainable development”, focusing on rural tourism, ecotourism, effective destination management, and economic development in rural areas. The “Land use change” cluster focuses on the socio-economic impacts of rural tourism on destination stakeholders, the development of ecological services, and the conservation of natural resources.

Niche Themes: Comprises two clusters, namely “Innovation” and “Land Management,” which are in-depth but have fewer connections to other clusters.

The “Innovation” cluster is characterised by central themes such as “education”, “innovation”, “agricultural production”, and “young population”.

Conversely, the “Land management” cluster focuses on key topics including “mountain environment”, “trend analysis” and “Western Europe”.

Thus, the topics that can be developed if properly focused are "Innovation", focusing on educational innovation, innovation of agricultural products, and young personnel to develop rural tourism. Additionally, "Land management" is primarily concentrated in "Western Europe."

Emerging or Declining Themes: The “Biodiversity” clusters within national parks and the “North America” clusters are either emerging or nearing phase-out, which merits careful consideration (Figure 6 and Table 4).

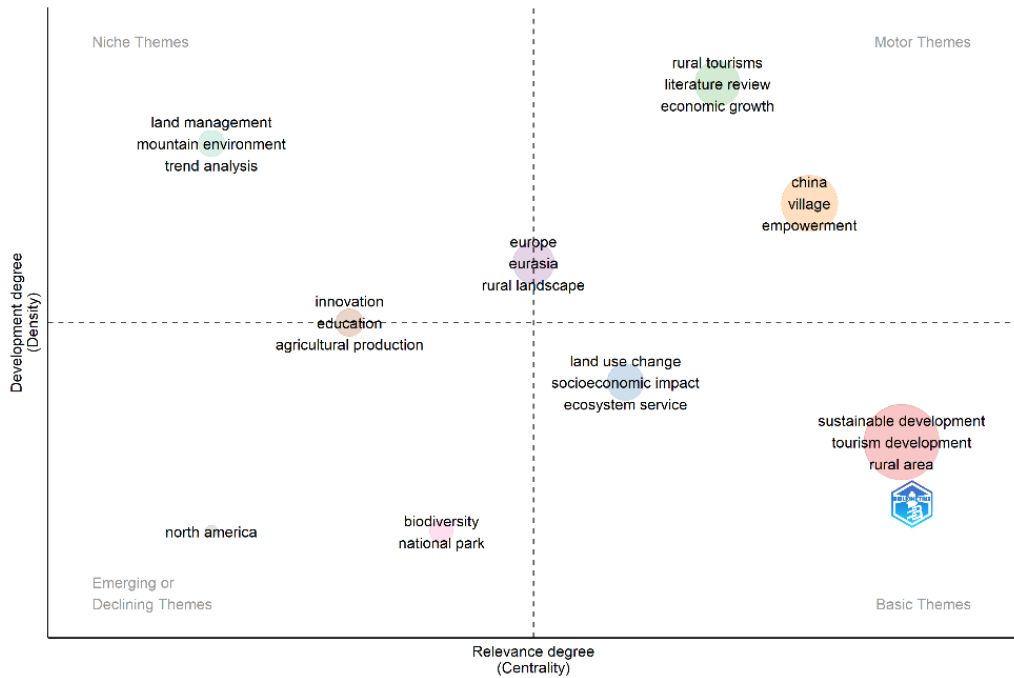


Figure 6. Thematic Map. (Source: Biblioshiny)

Table 4. Summary thematic map clusters and evolution trend

Cluster	Centrality	Density	Frequency	Evolution Trend
Sustainable development	21.798	62.865	1108	Stable & expanding
Land use change	2.604	62.87	22	Stable & expanding
Rural tourisms	3.325	109.614	53	Continues to expand
Europe	2.32	65.183	37	Continues to expand
China	6.254	73.328	167	Continues to expand
Innovation	0.944	64.583	9	Potential for development if properly focused
Biodiversity	1.042	50	6	Emerge or Disappear
North america	0	50	2	Emerge or Disappear
Land management	0	87.5	8	Potential for development if properly focused

5. CONCLUSION

The study reviews sustainable rural tourism development research from 1990 to 2025. Firstly, we identified 322 published documents from Scopus on the topic. *Secondly*, using RStudio of Biblioshiny to visualise the performance of authors, documents, most cited, and keywords in the research field. *Thirdly*, we observed that the clusters of “Sustainable development” and “Land use change” continue to expand. The clusters of “Rural tourisms”, “Europe”, and “China” remain stable and are expanding. The clusters of “Innovation” and “Land management” indicate potential for development if appropriately focused. The clusters

of “Biodiversity” and “North America” are emerging or disappearing. However, this study also acknowledges the following limitations: The research is limited to the Scopus database and is only performed in R BiblioShiny, ignoring other platforms such as Vosviewer, Scispace, or other reliable databases. The keywords are instrumental in bibliographic research outcomes; however, the keywords mentioned above may not have comprehensively captured all aspects of sustainable rural tourism development. Research is an ongoing process and is subject to change over time, which can lead to fluctuations in the significance of the research cluster. Therefore, in the future, it is necessary to conduct research on various data sources, diversify keywords to facilitate discoveries, and conduct empirical studies that provide detailed insights into clusters.

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TÓM TẮT

PHÁT TRIỂN DU LỊCH NÔNG THÔN BỀN VỮNG: PHÂN TÍCH TRẮC LƯỢNG THƯ MỤC SỬ DỤNG R BIBLIOSHINY

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Mục đích của nghiên cứu này là hệ thống các nghiên cứu về phát triển du lịch nông thôn bền vững từ năm 1990 đến năm 2025, với các tài liệu được lựa chọn từ cơ sở dữ liệu Scopus, bao gồm 322 bài báo. Kết quả công bố hàng năm cho thấy số lượng xuất bản liên tục tăng, trong đó năm 2024 có số lượng xuất bản đáng kể nhất, với 45 bài báo. Tạp chí có nhiều ấn

phẩm nhất là Sustainability (Thụỵ Sĩ). Tác giả Wang Y là nhà nghiên cứu hiệu quả nhất; tài liệu được trích dẫn nhiều nhất là của Garro B. Ngoài ra, nghiên cứu này tổng hợp các xu hướng chủ đề thông qua sự xuất hiện và biến mất của các từ khóa theo thời gian. Thông qua phân tích bản đồ chủ đề (Thematic Map) cho thấy các cụm chủ đề phát triển nhanh bao gồm du lịch nông thôn tập trung vào bảo vệ môi trường. Cụm chủ đề Trung Quốc với các chủ đề quan trọng là phát triển du lịch nông thôn bền vững, tập trung vào các làng truyền thống, trao quyền cho cộng đồng và cải thiện kinh tế nông thôn. Cụm chủ đề nước phương Tây chủ yếu tập trung vào cảnh quan nông thôn, trang trại và hành vi tiêu dùng. Các cụm chủ đề sẽ phát triển trong tương lai, bao gồm cụm chủ đề thay đổi trong sử dụng đất với các chủ đề quan trọng là tác động kinh tế xã hội và các dịch vụ sinh thái. Các chủ đề của ngành bao gồm tác động môi trường, đổi mới trong giáo dục và các sản phẩm nông nghiệp để hỗ trợ du lịch nông thôn. Ngoài ra, các cụm chủ đề đa dạng sinh học và các nước Bắc Mỹ là các cụm chủ đề mới nổi hoặc sẽ biến mất. Bài báo sẽ cung cấp một cái nhìn tổng quan về tình hình nghiên cứu về phát triển du lịch nông thôn, từ đó giúp các nhà nghiên cứu có định hướng cho nghiên cứu trong tương lai.

Từ khóa: Du lịch nông thôn, phát triển bền vững, trữ lượng thư mục, R Biblioshiny.