



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN CRAFT VILLAGES: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS USING VOSVIEWER

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Abstract. This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of global academic research on sustainable tourism development (STD) in craft villages. Utilising data from the Scopus and Web of Science databases, 554 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2001 and 2024 were analysed through VOSviewer for bibliometric analysis. The analysis highlights key research trends, thematic clusters, influential scholars, and prominent institutions contributing to this growing field. Results indicate a significant increase in publications over the past decade, underscoring a heightened scholarly interest at the intersection of sustainability, tourism, and traditional craft heritage. Despite this upward trend, empirical investigations into the practical effectiveness of sustainability policies in craft villages remain limited. Consequently, the study calls for further research to evaluate the long-term socio-economic and cultural impacts of STD initiatives. This paper provides a foundational overview of the intellectual structure of the field and suggests future research directions to enhance sustainable development practices in traditional craft village contexts.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, craft village, bibliometric, VOSviewer

1 Introduction

In recent decades, sustainable tourism has emerged as a crucial concept in global tourism policy and development, emphasising the balance between economic benefits, environmental protection, and socio-cultural preservation [1]. Within this context, craft villages—often in rural or peri-urban areas—have emerged as essential destinations embodying local cultural identity, traditional craftsmanship, and community resilience [2]. These villages are not only key sites for cultural preservation but also offer unique, experience-based tourism opportunities aligned with the growing demand for authenticity and local engagement in travel [3].

Various studies have emphasised the critical role of the development of craft village tourism in promoting rural development and cultural sustainability. According to Barbieri,

village tourism was a strong trend globally, reflecting increasing interest in rural and cultural experiences [4]. According to Lane and Kastenholz, combining tourism and craft villages generates revenue and employment for rural workers [5]. In particular, urban residents, who often experience stress and pressure from modern life, seek peaceful and quiet environments to reconnect with traditional values and lifestyles. Moreover, strengthening the linkages between tourism and traditional handicrafts is critically essential to poverty alleviation in rural areas [6]. It is also regarded as a tool for conserving and regenerating culture in craft villages [4]. From a broader perspective, craft village tourism is explicitly linked to the economic, social, cultural, natural, and human structures of the localities in which it takes place, highlighting its integral role in sustainable rural development.

In Vietnam, craft villages emerge closely linked to the country's agricultural heritage. Historically, Vietnamese farmers took advantage of leisure time outside the farming season to produce handicrafts for daily life, which eventually developed into specialised rural crafts [7]. Over time, these crafts expanded in scale and specialisation, forming organised "craft villages". Vietnamese scholars have made significant contributions to defining and understanding this concept. According to Pham Con Son, a craft village is an ancient administrative unit that also means a place of settlement, organised activities, discipline, and customs... where people of the same occupation live together to develop their trade, rooted in collective business, economic development, and the preservation of national identity and local characteristics [8]. From an economic perspective, Duong Ba Phuong described craft villages as "rural villages with several crafts that are completely separate from handicrafts and independent businesses, whose production value accounts for a high proportion of the village's total value." [9]. Similarly, Tran Minh Yen emphasised that craft villages are "rural communities where non-agricultural occupations predominate in terms of the number of households, workers, and income share compared to agricultural activities" [10].

Integrating sustainable tourism principles into craft village development has gained increasing attention from scholars, policymakers, and practitioners. This approach is viewed as a way to protect intangible cultural heritage, diversify rural economies, and enhance local participation in tourism development [11]. However, applying sustainability frameworks such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) criteria, the circular economy model, or "Doughnut Economics" to craft village tourism remains limited and inconsistent. Many craft villages face mounting pressures from globalisation, commercialisation, and digital transformation, challenging the preservation of authenticity and the equitable distribution of tourism benefits [12].

This study addresses this gap by conducting a bibliometric analysis of international scholarly publications on sustainable tourism development in craft villages. By employing

VOSviewer, the research aims to visualise and evaluate the evolution of this field over the period from 2001 to 2024. Specifically, the study is designed to answer the following research questions:

- (1) How has scholarly output on sustainable tourism in craft villages evolved over time?
- (2) Which journals have most actively and influentially contributed to this field?
- (3) How have research co-citation authorship networks evolved in the field of sustainable tourism development in craft villages?
- (4) What are the main research themes and trends in sustainable tourism development in craft villages?
- (5) What knowledge gaps and future research opportunities remain?

By synthesising the existing literature, this study aims to assist researchers, policymakers, and tourism practitioners in comprehending the structure and dynamics of sustainable tourism research within craft village contexts. Its practical implications are profound, as it seeks to provide the audience with a deeper understanding of the field, thus guiding the development of more comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and economically viable tourism models that foster sustainability and resilience in traditional craft communities.

2 Data and Research Tools

2.1 Data Sources and Selection Process

The fast increase of scientific publications in many disciplines calls for methodical approaches for knowledge synthesis. This paper defines the conceptual framework and research trends in sustainable tourism development within artisan communities using bibliometric analysis, a quantitative method based on bibliographic data [13]. This approach helps to identify eminent authors, important publications, accepted concepts, and emerging problems, thereby offering a complete picture of the field. Title, author, publication year, abstracts, and keywords derived from bibliographic databases define bibliometric analysis [14, 15]. Its objectivity helps to reduce researcher bias and increase repeatability in literary synthesis [16, 17]. Two steps of analysis were undertaken. To ensure both comprehensiveness and accuracy in locating relevant scholarly material, a customised search strategy was created using Boolean operators and thematic keyword clusters [14].

The search query used was: ("sustainable tourism" OR "eco-tourism" OR "responsible tourism" OR "green tourism") AND ("craft village" OR "artisan village" OR "handicraft village" OR "traditional village") AND (development OR "community development" OR "economic development" OR "rural development") AND (impact OR "socio-economic impact" OR "cultural impact" OR "environmental impact") AND (management OR "tourism management" OR

"resource management" OR "sustainable practices")

Each component of the query was designed to reflect the multidimensional nature of the research topic:

- Tourism Sustainability Cluster: Terms such as "sustainable tourism", "eco-tourism", "responsible tourism", and "green tourism" capture varying discourses around environmentally and socially responsible travel.

- Village Context Cluster: Terms including "craft village", "artisan village", "handicraft village", and "traditional village" were used to reflect the diversity in terminology describing rural communities involved in traditional production and tourism.

- Development Focus Cluster: Keywords such as "community development", "economic development", and "rural development" align with the developmental aspects of tourism in these settings.

- Impact Dimension Cluster: This includes "socio-economic impact", "cultural impact", and "environmental impact", which collectively highlight the potential outcomes of tourism activities.

- Management and Practice Cluster: Terms like "tourism management", "resource management", and "sustainable practices" reflect the strategic and operational aspects relevant to implementing and sustaining tourism initiatives.

This query was applied across both the Scopus and Web of Science databases, chosen for their extensive coverage of peer-reviewed literature and established credibility in bibliometric research. The search string, or "Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses" (PRISMA Statement) [18], will be used. This leads to more transparent, complete, and accurate reporting of systematic reviews, facilitating evidence-based decision-making. This is the process of searching for and processing relevant articles on the research topic through three stages: (1) identification, (2) screening, and (3) data standardisation (Figure 1).

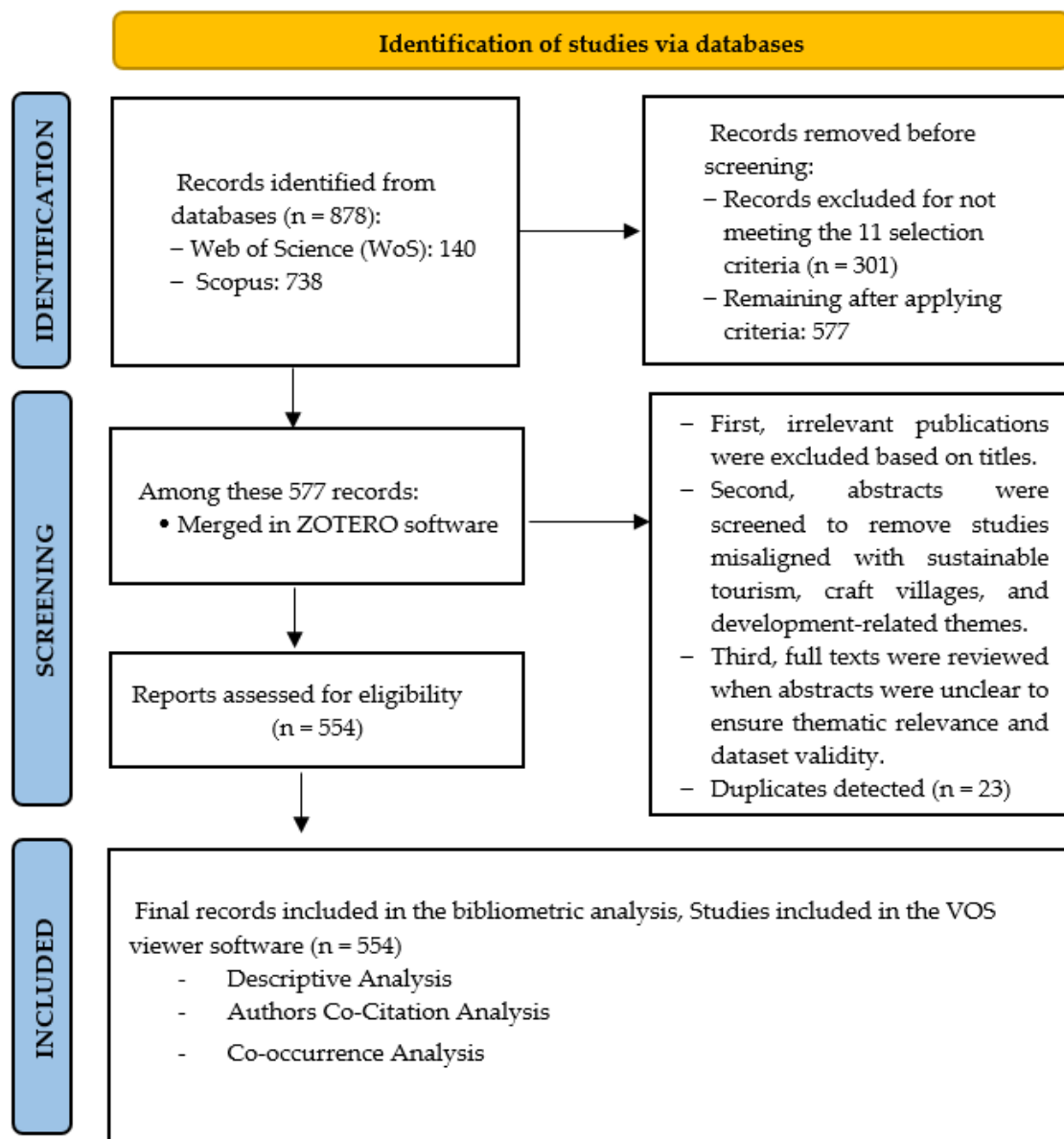


Figure 1. The Prisma chart shows the process of filtering documents

Source: Prisma, 2022

(1) **Identification:** An initial total of 878 articles was retrieved—738 from Scopus and 140 from WoS. Eleven predefined criteria (presented in Table 1) were developed to ensure thematic consistency and analytical reliability. Among these, five primary criteria were applied for sample refinement:

Table 1. Summary of data source and selection

No.	Category	Specific standard requirements
1	Time	April, 2025
2	Research Database	Web of Science, Scopus
3	Citation indexes (WoS)	SSCI, SCIE
4	Categories (WoS)	Hospitality Leisure Sport Tourism; Environmental Sciences; Environmental Studies; Green Sustainable Science and Technology; Hospitality, Leisure Sport Tourism; Management; Regional Urban Planning; Urban Studies; Biodiversity Conservation; Development Studies; Economics
5	Subject area (Scopus)	Social Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Business, Management and Accounting, Agricultural and Biological Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Economics, Econometrics and Finance
6	Searching period	2001-2024
7	Language	English
8	Searching keywords	Key 1: "sustainable tourism" OR "eco-tourism" OR "responsible tourism" OR "green tourism" Key 2: "craft village" OR "artisan village" OR "handicraft village" OR "traditional village" Key 3: development OR "community development" OR "economic development" OR "rural development" Key 4: impact OR "socio-economic impact" OR "cultural impact" OR "environmental impact" Key 5: management OR "tourism management" OR "resource management" OR "sustainable practices"
9	Document types	Article
10	Data extraction	Export with complete records and cited references in plain text format (WoS); complete records and cited references in BibTeX format (Scopus).
11	Sample size	554 articles

Source: Authors, 2025

- Category 4 (WoS Subject Areas): Articles were required to fall within fields such as hospitality, tourism, environmental sciences, sustainable development, planning, or management.
- Category 5 (Scopus Subject Areas): Eligible subject areas included social sciences, environmental sciences, management, arts and humanities, agricultural sciences, and economics.
- Category 6 (Language): Only English-language publications were retained to ensure consistency in keyword interpretation.
- Category 7 (Time Range): The time frame was set between 2001 and 2024, reflecting over

two decades of research on the topic.

– Category 9 (Document Type): Only peer-reviewed journal articles were included; book chapters, conference proceedings, and other document types were excluded to maintain academic quality and comparability.

Following the application of these filters, 301 articles were excluded, resulting in 577 records for manual screening.

(2) Screening: The screening process adhered to PRISMA guidelines [18] and proceeded through three sequential levels:

- Title screening to eliminate obviously irrelevant materials;
- Abstract screening to exclude articles falling outside the defined thematic scope;
- Full-text assessment, where necessary, to verify thematic alignment and data suitability.

This multistage review process ensured conceptual coherence and analytical robustness. The remaining 577 articles (516 from Scopus and 61 from WoS) were imported into Zotero, a reference management tool, for further processing. A total of 23 duplicate entries were identified and removed, resulting in a final dataset of 554 unique articles, which formed the basis for subsequent bibliometric analysis through co-citation and keyword co-occurrence techniques.

(3) Data standardisation: Finally, 554 articles underwent data standardisation (particularly the fields for keywords) before conducting bibliometric analyses of co-occurrence patterns. This final set of articles constitutes the primary dataset for quantitative analysis (bibliometric analysis), providing insights into research trends and potential topics and identifying key authors and journals contributing to the field.

2.2 Research Tools

Bibliometric analysis combined with tools like VOSviewer [19] enables a comprehensive exploration of research trends, particularly in specialised fields such as sustainable tourism development in craft villages. This approach provides objective coverage and the ability to focus on specific areas, surpassing traditional literature reviews [20]. By integrating scientific mapping with bibliometric methods, researchers can visualise the theoretical structure of a research topic, facilitating the identification of clusters within academic literature [21]. This process is crucial in bibliometric measurement, allowing for systematic analysis, revealing theoretical foundations, and clarifying concepts. The methodology includes various techniques, such as co-citation analysis [21], bibliographic coupling, co-authorship analysis, co-word analysis, collaboration network analysis, and co-occurrence analysis [22]. Co-author network analysis utilises graphs and network models to depict relationships and levels of collaboration among researchers or

institutions [23]. This analysis identifies key authors or research units and assesses the strength of their connections, enhancing the understanding of author networks and suggesting new avenues for collaboration. Co-citation network analysis examines how often two documents are cited together, revealing the intellectual structure of a research field and identifying influential works [24]. Co-occurrence analysis evaluates the frequency and relationships between keywords, pinpointing specific topics for further research and deepening the understanding of the field's development [25]. Additionally, co-keyword analysis monitors trends and developments in research topics [26]. This study utilises co-occurrence analysis and authors' co-citation analysis.

3 Research Results

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

Number of Studies Over Time

Academic interest in a study subject is sometimes gauged using publication counts. Figure 2 displays the Scopus and Web of Science distribution of 554 works on sustainable tourist development in craft villages spanning 2001 to 2024. 2001–2011, 2012–2018, and 2019–2024 are three publishing periods. Producing just 7 publications (1.26%) between 2001 and 2011, the formative research domain revealed a dearth of sustainable tourism and integration of artisan village development. With 17 papers (3.07%) in the second period (2012–2018), the cultural and financial value of artisan groups attracted scholarly interest. Future studies will build on studies relating to sustainability, rural livelihoods, and heritage tourism. With 530 articles (95.67%), the worldwide focus on sustainability post-COVID-19, improved digital tourist promotion, and alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals and Global Sustainable Tourist Council criteria fostered fast expansion in the third phase (2019–2024). Recent papers by Ma, Sun, and Wang [27]; Mao, Li, and Su [28]; and Widagdo [29] underline community involvement, green innovation, and the circular economy in craft village tourism. This exponential growth reveals a change in scholarly attention, so sustainable tourism in artisan communities becomes a dynamic and strategically important issue in tourist studies.

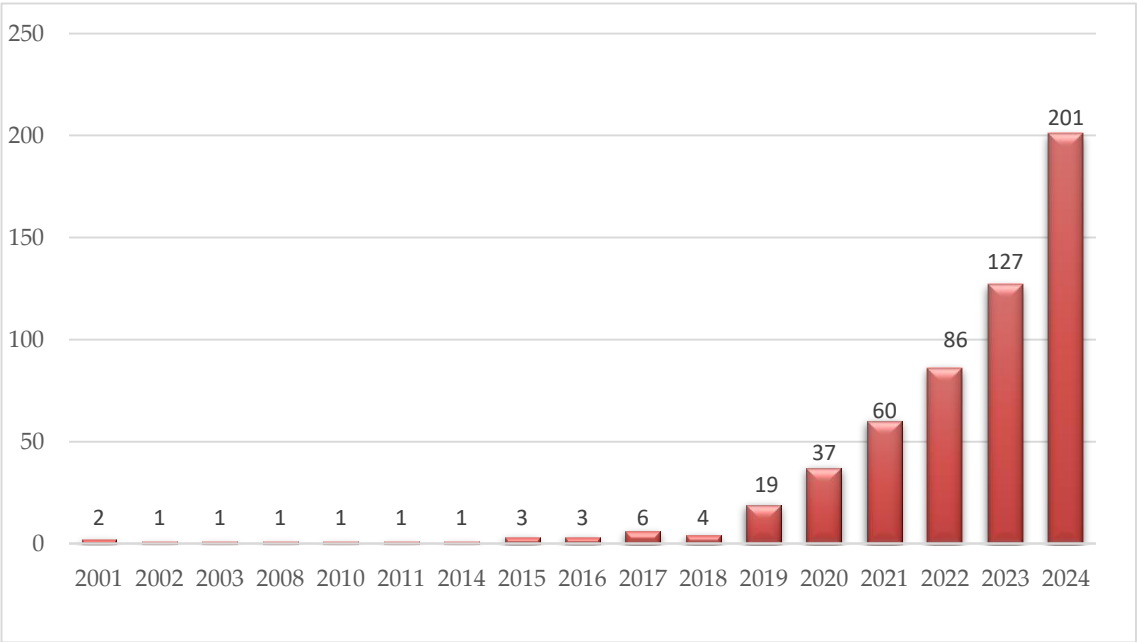


Figure 2. Number of statistical documents from 2001 to 2024

Source: Compiled by the author from Scopus, WoS, 04/2025

Journal Publication Analysis

Table 2, based on 554 papers, ranks the top ten publications with the most research on sustainable tourist growth in craft villages. This ranking comprises important bibliometric measures of academic impact and reputation as well as journal publication activity (count). With 106 articles, 19% of the total, sustainability (Switzerland leads). Land comes in with 38 (7.12%) and Tourism Management with 25 (4.68%). Important in these publications is scholarly correspondence on rural tourism, historical preservation, and community-based development. These three sites rule publishing, therefore stressing the concentration of activity in a small number of periodicals. Strong five-year Impact Factors (IFs), which gauge the average amount of citations received in the past five years, abound in many of the top ten publications. With a five-year IF of 11.5, Tourism Management has the highest, followed by Journal of Sustainable Tourism (9.5) and Tourism Management Perspectives (8.0), therefore proving their popularity and dependability in travel research. Although their publishing volumes and open-access policies enhance diffusion and accessibility, sustainability and land have five-year IFs—3.3 and 3.4. Measuring productivity and citation impact, the H-index strengthens the reputation of these works. Indicating consistent scholarly relevance, sustainability has an H-index of 169, Tourism Management 220, and the Journal of Sustainable Tourism 140. Ranked in Q1, most of the top ten journals indicate that they fall in the top 25% of their respective fields. That offers still another approach to assess journal quality.

Table 2. Publication journal statistics

Ranking	Journal	5-year IF	Count	Percentage	H-index	Q
1	Sustainability (Switzerland)	3.6	106	19.85	169	Q1
2	Land	3.4	38	7.12	54	Q1
3	Current Issues In Tourism	6.7	14	2.62	79	Q1
4	Geojournal Of Tourism And Geosites	2.1	12	2.25	25	Q3
5	Asia Pacific Journal Of Tourism Research	4.4	10	1.87	62	Q1
6	Tourism Management	11.5	25	4.68	228	Q1
7	Tourism Management Perspectives	8.0	10	1.87	82	Q1
8	Journal Of Hospitality And Tourism Management	7.6	9	1.69	45	Q1
9	Agriculture Switzerland	3.5	8	1.50	66	Q1
10	Journal Of Sustainable Tourism	9.5	8	1.50	140	Q1

Source: Compiled by the author from Scopus, Wos, and Scimago journal & Country Rank, 04/2025

3.2 Authors Co-Citation Analysis

Co-citation analysis (ACA) [30] is a bibliometric technique for identifying relationships between authors or documents frequently cited in academic publications' reference lists. It captures how often an author is cited and how frequently two or more authors are co-cited across multiple documents, thereby revealing intellectual linkages and the underlying structure of a research field [28]. Co-citation analysis can be applied to various attributes, such as author names, affiliations, countries, publication titles, or journal sources.

This study conducted an author co-citation analysis on a corpus of 554 academic documents related to sustainable tourism development in craft and traditional villages. Using VOSviewer, a citation threshold of 40 citations per author was applied to enhance the interpretability and visualisation of meaningful clusters—an approach supported in prior bibliometric methodology literature [31]. This threshold yielded a network of 154 influential authors, who were algorithmically grouped into two major clusters. Each cluster reflects a distinct scholarly community, characterised by shared research interests and theoretical orientations, while both remain loosely connected through overarching concerns with sustainable development and cultural heritage preservation.

In (Figure 3) the co-citation network map, each node represents a cited author. The node's size indicates citation frequency, the colour denotes cluster membership, the proximity between nodes reflects the degree of co-citation similarity, and the thickness of connecting lines represents

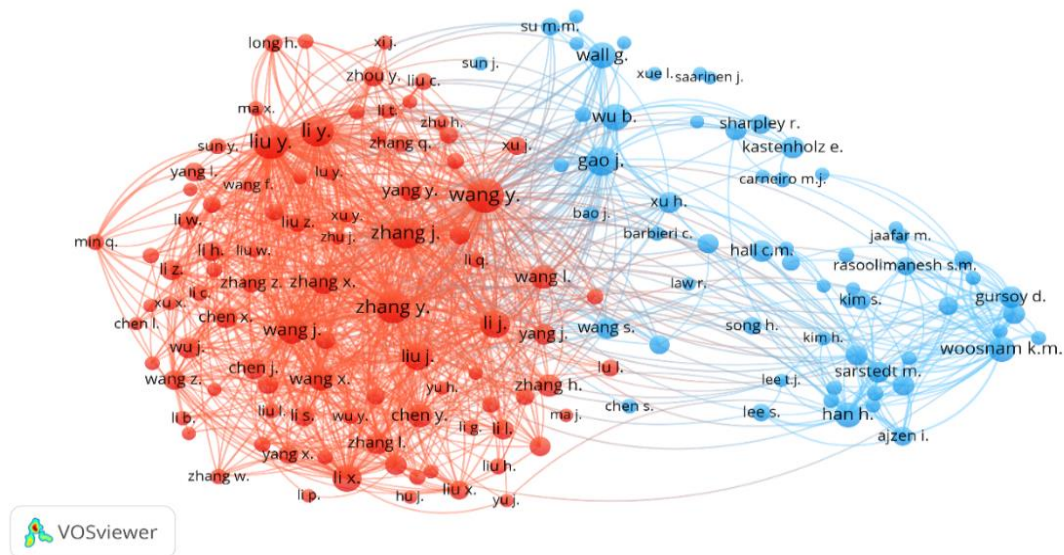


Figure 3. Author co-citation analysis map (showing 154 authors with at least 40 citations)

Source: Results of analysis from data by VOSviewer, 04/2025

the strength of co-citation links [31]. As a whole, this visualisation enables researchers to identify the dominant schools of thought, key contributors, and the intellectual foundations that shape the field of sustainable tourism in craft village contexts.

Cluster 1 (Red – 93 Authors): Sustainable Livelihoods and Community Empowerment

This cluster comprises scholarship exploring tourism as a tool for community development, poverty alleviation, and local empowerment. Classic works like Scheyvens [32] are foundational – Scheyvens proposed a framework of community empowerment (economic, psychological, social, and political) in ecotourism contexts. Her study highlighted that tourism benefits in rural areas must extend beyond economics to empower local communities truly. Similarly, He, Y., Gao, X., Wu, R., Wang, Y., and others emphasised community participation as crucial for sustainable tourism (as also suggested by Scheyvens' multi-dimensional empowerment model). Such insights set the tone for later research on livelihood sustainability [33].

Empirical studies in this cluster often examine how tourism initiatives affect rural livelihoods. For example, Gao and Wu documented the revitalisation of Yuanjia Village in China through rural tourism. Their case study showed that heritage-based tourism can increase household incomes, stimulate entrepreneurship, and revive traditional villages by creating new livelihood opportunities [34]. This aligns with the sustainable livelihood approach introduced by

development scholars: Tao and Wall explicitly advocated tourism as a sustainable livelihood strategy to diversify income in rural communities. In their work, they adapt Chambers and Conway's livelihood framework to tourism, illustrating how tourism can enhance assets (financial, social, and human capital) for villagers [35]. These perspectives reinforce the cluster's theme that tourism development should be evaluated by contributing to local livelihood resilience and well-being.

Recent studies continue this line of inquiry with sophisticated analyses. Li, Cheng, Cai, and Zhang examine how various livelihood capitals influence community perceptions and behaviors in heritage sites [36]. They observe that when tourism bolsters assets like skills or social networks, residents show more positive attitudes and engagement in conservation. This study bridges livelihood theory and on-the-ground behavior, confirming that empowering locals with resources and a voice increases support for sustainable tourism development [37]. Likewise, Wang and Dong, focusing on pro-poor tourism in China, report that tourism can improve income and reduce vulnerability in impoverished villages by leveraging local culture [38]. Their sustainable livelihood perspective demonstrates tangible poverty alleviation through tourism, echoing earlier calls for community-centric development.

Other authors in Cluster 1 address specific empowerment mechanisms. For instance, Wondirad, Bogale, and Li [39] explore handicrafts as a core tourism product in Ethiopia's Chenchu and Konso villages. They highlight that involving artisans in tourism generates income and reinforces cultural identity and pride, an aspect of psychological empowerment. However, they note challenges such as market access and capacity building, illustrating that benefits are not automatic. Similarly, Xue and Kerstetter [40] adopt an *emic* (insider) perspective on how rural tourism alters livelihood strategies. Their research in Chinese villages found that while tourism introduced new jobs and reduced farming dependence, it also changed community dynamics and resource use, requiring adaptive management to ensure equity. Integrating such findings, we see that cluster 1 scholars collectively argue for inclusive, community-based tourism where locals have agency. Empowerment is not just a moral imperative but a practical necessity for sustaining tourism's benefits [22, 39]. These sources reinforce the idea that craft and traditional village tourism succeed in the long run only if it improves residents' quality of life and builds local capacity, thereby aligning tourism development with broader rural development goals.

Cluster 2 (Blue – 61 Authors): Tourist Experience and Destination Image

Cluster 2 encompasses research on how tourists perceive, experience, and remember craft and heritage village destinations and how destinations cultivate a favorable image. Foundational studies by authors like Echtner and Ritchie [41] solidified the concept of destination image as multi-faceted, including cognitive perceptions (beliefs about a place's attributes) and affective evaluations (feelings toward the place). Their empirical assessment of destination image

measurement provided tourism planners with a way to gauge and manage the image of cultural destinations. Likewise, Baloglu and McCleary [42] developed a widely cited model of destination image formation, demonstrating that tourists' images result from both stimulus factors (e.g., marketing, previous experience) and personal factors (motivation, socio-demographics). The result implies that a craft village's image in tourists' minds can be shaped by strategically promoting its unique cultural attributes but is also filtered through tourists' backgrounds.

A parallel thread in this cluster examines the nature of the tourist experience, particularly authenticity and satisfaction in heritage contexts. Wang is seminal here – he redefined authenticity from the tourist's perspective, introducing the notion of “existential authenticity”, where tourists feel authentic to themselves through immersive experiences [43]. In a craft village setting, the term might mean a visitor finds personal meaning by engaging in traditional crafts or rituals, regardless of whether those practices are staged for tourism. This idea expanded the discourse beyond viewing authenticity as an objective trait of artefacts, emphasising the experiential, subjective side of heritage tourism [44]. Subsequent research built on this, exploring how authenticity (or perceptions thereof) impacts tourist satisfaction and memories.

Modern contributions in Cluster 2 often bridge experience and image, recognising that memorable experiences lead to positive destination images and revisit intention. For instance, Wang, C., Liu, J., & Zhang, T identified four dimensions of memorable tourism experiences (affect, expectations, consequentiality, and recollection) by interviewing travellers [45]. Their work suggests that destinations like traditional villages should aim to create significant moments – perhaps a personal interaction with a craftsperson or an emotional connection during a homestay – to embed the visit in tourists' memories. Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick even developed a scale for memorable tourism experiences, underscoring the growing scholarly focus on experience design [45]. In practical terms, these studies imply that craft village tourism planners must curate authentic, engaging activities to enhance visitor satisfaction and post-trip word-of-mouth. A positive experiencescape (the overall sensory and emotional environment of the experience) not only delights tourists but also becomes part of the destination's brand image [46].

Recent research tailors these concepts to the context of cultural villages. Li and Wang provide empirical evidence from Chinese traditional villages that ties together authenticity, experience, and image [47]. They found that when tourists perceive a village's cultural landscape as authentic, it boosts their memorable tourism experiences, strengthening their place attachment and intention to recommend the destination. In other words, authenticity (e.g., genuine traditional architecture and lifestyle) enriches the tourist experience, enhancing the destination's image through visitor loyalty and advocacy [47]. This confirms the intuitive link that authentic experiences yield positive images. Additionally, Jv, Liu, and Wang have developed a specialized

scale to measure “authentic perception experience” in agricultural heritage villages, reflecting academic and managerial interest in quantifying how real and meaningful a tourist’s experience is in such settings [48]. Their scale validation indicates that factors like interaction quality, cultural immersion, and personal relevance are key to tourists’ authenticity perceptions.

Another notable example is the work of Zhao, Ryan, Deng, and Gong, who studied Lu Village in China to see how modifying the environment can improve tourist experiences [49]. They introduced the concept of creating a “softening cultural landscape” – making subtle design and interpretation changes to blend cultural heritage with visitor comfort – to enhance tourist experiencescapes. The case of Lu Village showed that thoughtful interpretation (e.g., storytelling signage and guided craft-making sessions) and scenic improvements (e.g., aesthetic landscaping that complements historical buildings) led to richer tourist engagement without compromising authenticity. This work sits at the nexus of experience and image: a pleasing experiencescape leads visitors to perceive the destination more favorably, elevating the village’s image as both authentic and tourist-friendly [46]. In sum, Cluster 2’s scholarship, from the conceptual [43, 41] to the applied [47, 49], collectively emphasizes that understanding and managing the tourist experience – particularly authenticity, satisfaction, and memorable moments – is crucial for the sustainable success of heritage tourism in craft villages—a strong, positive destination image results from consistently meaningful experiences delivered to visitors.

Although the two co-citation clusters address distinct dimensions of sustainable tourism—Cluster 1 from the community development side and Cluster 2 from the tourist experience perspective—they are fundamentally interconnected. Authenticity is a key point of convergence: it enhances tourist satisfaction (Cluster 2) but depends on local communities maintaining and benefiting from cultural practices (Cluster 1) [42, 34, 39]. Empowered residents are more likely to preserve traditions, provide authentic experiences, and reinforce destination appeal. Stakeholder collaboration also links the clusters. Involving locals in heritage interpretation strengthens both community pride and destination image [37], while positive tourist feedback can encourage community participation [38]. Community-based tourism (CBT) exemplifies this intersection by integrating empowerment theory with experience economy principles [43, 41], aiming to benefit both hosts and guests. Thus, sustainable tourism requires a balance: empowering communities enhances authenticity, while rich tourist experiences generate the support needed to sustain local initiatives. The two clusters, though distinct, form complementary pathways toward shared sustainability goals.

Table 3. Most cited authors in each cluster

Cluster	Author	Number of citations	Total link strength
1	Chen H.	63	2522
	Chen J.	108	4597
	Chen I.	44	2352
	Chen M.	42	2009
	Chen W.	47	2245
	Chen X.	109	4750
	Chen Y.	143	6240
	Chen Z.	152	3198
	He Y.	41	1832
	Hu J.	40	1547
2	Ajzen I.	87	3261
	Bao J.	50	1964
	Barbieri C.	50	1197
	Boley B.B.	47	1792
	Buhalis D.	44	741
	Carneiro M.J.	59	1854
	Chen S.	50	1949
	Dupre K.	44	1263
	Fornell C.	58	2027
	Gossling S.	47	1082

Source: Analysis results from Scopus data using VOSviewer, 04/2025

In conclusion, the author's co-citation analysis reveals two primary intellectual streams in the field of sustainable tourism in craft villages. Cluster 1 emphasises community well-being through empowerment, livelihoods, and bottom-up planning [35, 37], while Cluster 2 highlights the importance of authenticity, experience, and destination image for tourist satisfaction [47, 50].

They offer a comprehensive perspective: sustainable tourism must create shared value for communities and visitors. As recent studies show increasing cross-cluster integration, the field is moving toward a more holistic approach that recognises that vibrant cultural heritage and meaningful visitor experiences are mutually reinforcing and essential to the long-term viability of craft village tourism.

3.3 Co-occurrence Development

Co-occurrence analysis focuses on the frequent appearance of keywords within the same documents to reveal conceptual relationships and thematic structures in the literature. This method allows researchers to identify dominant research themes, track historical developments,

and highlight emerging topics in a field [51]. The analysis is based on information related to keywords, including both author keywords and indexed keywords provided by the database. The co-occurrence of these keywords—defined by their joint appearance within the same document—indicates their conceptual proximity, helping to map the intellectual structure of the research domain [52].

Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

From a dataset of 554 academic publications on “sustainable tourism development in craft villages” retrieved from the Scopus database (April 2025), a total of 1,533 keywords were extracted. These included a combination of author keywords and database-indexed keywords, ensuring a comprehensive representation of both self-reported and system-generated thematic descriptors. After setting a threshold of at least five occurrences per keyword, 127 keywords met the inclusion criteria for the co-occurrence analysis. Using VOSviewer software, a co-word network was visualised, resulting in 7 thematic clusters, 2,574 links, and a total link strength of 5,837 (Figure 6).

Based on Table 4, the keyword “China” ranks as the most frequently co-occurring term, appearing 172 times with the highest total link strength of 1007, underscoring its central role as

Table 4. Top 15 co-occurring keywords

No.	Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link Strength
1	China	172	1007
2	Tourism development	112	630
3	Sustainable development	76	472
4	Tourism	68	404
5	Village	53	354
6	Ecotourism	56	329
7	Sustainability	51	291
8	Tourist destination	52	289
9	Rural development	47	284
10	Rural area	44	246
11	Tourism management	42	227
12	Perception	36	203
13	Cultural heritage	33	192
14	Tourism market	29	183
15	Traditional Village	23	105

Source: Analysis results from Scopus data using VOSviewer, 04/2025

Source: Analysis results from Scopus data using VOSviewer, 04/2025

Table 5. Thematic Clusters in Sustainable Tourism Development in Craft Villages

Cluster	Main Theme	Representative Keywords	Key Research Focus & Examples
1	Environmental Management & Rural Development	craft village, biogas, rural area, pollution control, Red River Delta, investments	Managing environmental impacts (e.g., pollution) while enhancing rural livelihoods, e.g., biogas adoption in the Red River Delta.
2	Tourism Development & Destination Marketing	village tourism, tourist loyalty, rural tourism, destination image, COVID-19	Tourism strategies, destination image, and resilience to crises, e.g., post-COVID strategies and rural tourism branding.
3	Environmental Pollution & Public Health	waste management, lead (Pb), recycling, health, environmental policy	Studies on pollution from craft production and health risks, e.g., lead exposure mitigation in pottery villages.
4	Socio-Economic Development in Developing Regions	rural economy, craft production, poverty reduction, developing world, MICMAC	Tourism's role in poverty alleviation and rural development, e.g., community-based enterprises in Africa and Indonesia.
5	Core Sustainable Development Discourse	sustainable development, sustainability, management, triple bottom line	Conceptual frameworks and models, e.g., GSTC criteria, holistic planning, and sustainability strategies.
6	Cultural Heritage & Community Empowerment	cultural heritage, local community, participation, authenticity, tradition	Focus on preserving culture and promoting community-based tourism, e.g., Xitang, Bali, and African craft villages.
7	Tourism Planning & Policy Innovations	tourism planning, destination management, policy, smart tourism, resilience	Governance and innovation in craft village tourism, e.g., the MICMAC-Mactor method, ICT-based planning, and policy reforms.

Cluster #1 – Environmental Management and Rural Development: This cluster focuses on the environmental and economic aspects of craft village tourism. Key concepts include pollution control, environmental management, and sustainable rural livelihoods. Common keywords like “craft village”, “rural area”, “Red River Delta”, “biogas”, and “investments” highlight efforts to manage environmental impacts (e.g., waste, water pollution) while fostering local economic growth. Many studies analyse how traditional craft villages address ecological challenges through technological or policy solutions. For instance, research in Vietnam’s Red River Delta craft villages assesses biogas adoption and waste treatment to alleviate severe pollution from crafting while enhancing rural energy supply [53]. Such works emphasise that protecting the environment is vital for craft village tourism. They highlight integrating resource management and rural development, showing that investments in cleaner production and pollution control yield ecological and economic benefits for communities [54]. These findings align with sustainable development models, showing that environmental stewardship is essential for rural financial growth in tourism.

Cluster #2 – Tourism Development and Destination Marketing: The second cluster addresses tourism strategies in craft villages, focusing on tourist experience, marketing, and rural destination growth. Keywords include “village tourism,” “rural tourism,” and “tourist loyalty.” It highlights how craft villages evolve into tourist spots and retain visitors. Key themes are creating a positive destination image, visitor satisfaction, and promoting ecotourism. Studies analyse tourism’s impact on diversifying rural economies and improving visitor infrastructure. For example, Jia explores rural tourism competitiveness and development models in China, showing how strategic planning can enhance traditional villages as tourist destinations [55]. Research has explored how destination marketing and product development, such as unique craft heritage, can stimulate local economies. Crisis management is also significant; the keyword ‘COVID-19’ indicates that scholars have examined the pandemic’s effect on village tourism and recovery strategies. Some studies detail how rural craft tourism adapted to COVID-19 through domestic tourism promotion and health safety measures, emphasising the need for resilience in tourism development plans [57]. Cluster 2 highlights practical tourism management in craft villages, focusing on marketing, image-building, and resilience to external shocks for sustainable community benefits.

Cluster #3 – Environmental Pollution and Public Health: The third cluster addresses research on environmental protection, pollution, and health in craft villages. Key terms are “recycling”, “waste management”, “lead (Pb)”, and “environmental policy”, highlighting the adverse effects of craft production like toxic waste, water pollution, and heavy metal contamination on community health [58]. Craft villages involved in pottery, metalworking, or dyeing often face severe pollution challenges. Research focuses on monitoring and reducing these impacts. Environmental engineering studies have examined lead poisoning risks and assessed waste recycling programs to mitigate pollution [59]. Additionally, policy research has explored ecological regulations and cleaner production techniques, evaluating how government policies and community initiatives like water treatment and waste management can improve public health outcomes [60]. Cluster 3 highlights a vital aspect of sustainability in craft village tourism: failing to address pollution and health hazards can compromise tourism's cultural and economic benefits. Scholars advocate for integrating environmental management solutions, such as waste recycling, emission controls, and health monitoring, into sustainable tourism development. This cluster intersects with Cluster 1 regarding environmental management. However, it distinctly focuses on ecological and human health, emphasising that sustainable tourism must ensure a safe environment for residents and visitors.

Cluster #4 – Socio-Economic Development in Developing Regions: Cluster 4 focuses on socio-economic growth, craft production, and development policy in developing countries. Key themes include “developing world,” “rural economy,” “craft production,” “environmental economics,” and “sustainable development.” Researchers examine how sustainable tourism in

craft villages promotes economic development and reduces poverty while considering environmental and cultural factors [61]. Many studies highlight improving livelihoods through tourism and preserving traditional crafts. Some research examines community-based craft enterprises as a tool for rural development, exploring how tourism generates market opportunities for local artisans and boosts the rural economy [62]. Some adopt an environmental economics view, analysing trade-offs between tourism's economic benefits and the costs of resource use or environmental damage. A study by Jansen van Veuren explored the transformation of cultural craft villages in South Africa, showing how policy frameworks integrate tourism with socioeconomic planning [63]. Recent research in Indonesia uses strategic planning tools, like MICMAC analysis, to enhance craft tourism, aiming to optimise socio-economic benefits and sustainability [64]. Sustainable development guides these works: scholars assert tourism in craft villages should promote economic growth with social equity and resource conservation. This cluster mirrors global discourse, showing sustainable tourism as a pathway to rural development. It is particularly relevant for Asia, Africa, and traditional craft communities that aim to develop without losing their heritage or environment.

Cluster #5 – Core Sustainable Development Discourse: The fifth cluster focuses on “sustainable development”, the central framework for sustainability in tourism and craft villages. The term “sustainable development” is prominent, often linked to concepts like “sustainability” and “management”. Although it has fewer keywords, this cluster connects strongly with others, serving as a conceptual bridge. It encompasses work on sustainable tourism principles and frameworks in craft villages. For example, Huang et al. created a strategic model for rural tourism sustainable development, typical of this cluster's focus on sustainability models and strategies [65]. Cluster 5 studies engage with global sustainable tourism standards, like the Global Sustainable Tourism Council criteria and the triple bottom line, to explore their applicability to craft villages [66]. They highlight sustainability as a unifying goal across various research areas: studying environmental impacts, community well-being, or craft tourism marketing, all aim to align tourism development with long-term sustainability objectives [67]. This cluster highlights sustainable development as a foundational theme in the literature, with most studies connecting to this concept. Its role often involves synthesising or conceptualising, ensuring that various enquiries (environmental, social, and economic) contribute to a cohesive vision of sustainability for craft village tourism [68]. Works in this cluster advocate holistic approaches and sustainability in policy and practice, reminding us to balance the triple bottom line of craft tourism development (economic, environmental, social).

Cluster #6 – Cultural Heritage and Community Empowerment: The sixth cluster explores the sociocultural aspects of craft village tourism, focusing on heritage preservation and community involvement. Topics include cultural heritage conservation, authenticity, community participation, and the role of local stakeholders. This cluster views craft villages as custodians of

unique cultural heritage, which tourism can showcase or jeopardise without careful management. Key concepts involve “cultural heritage,” “local community,” “participation,” and “tradition.” Scholars examine how tourism preserves traditional crafts and cultural identity and how local communities benefit tourism [69]. Su et al. studied Xitang, an ancient craft town in China, to understand community support for tourism, issues like residents avoiding entrance fees, and the dynamics between residents and tourists regarding heritage tourism [70]. Suhartana et al. studied the social capital of a Balinese indigenous community and its impact on heritage tourism. These cases highlight the importance of community-based tourism (CBT), where local participation and empowerment drive sustainability [71]. The findings highlight the need to involve local artisans and residents in decision-making, share tourism benefits equitably, and protect cultural authenticity (craft techniques, festivals, architecture) from commercialization. A significant part of this research focuses on Asia (e.g., China, Southeast Asia), which is known for its rich craft heritage. However, similar themes appear in other regions, including studies on African cultural villages examining tourism's impact on cultural preservation [72]. Cluster 6 highlights that people and culture are central to sustainable craft village tourism. It promotes models where local communities actively manage their cultural resources, enhancing cultural pride, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and community well-being through tourism [73].

Cluster #7 – Tourism Planning and Policy Innovations: The seventh cluster focuses on destination management and policy in craft village tourism, encompassing tourism governance and strategic development keywords like “tourism planning,” “destination management,” “policy,” “stakeholders,” and “strategy,” alongside concepts like “smart tourism” and “low-carbon tourism.” Research here examines managing craft village destinations sustainably, highlighting the role of institutions such as Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and public-private partnerships. A key theme is strategic planning tools for rural craft tourism. Ilhami et al. illustrate this by using the MICMAC-Mactor method for sustainable tourism planning in an Indonesian city with craft villages, demonstrating systems analysis in policymaking [74]. This cluster also explores innovative tourism management through ICT and data analytics for smart craft destinations. Jabeen et al. examine the relationships between technological innovation, foreign direct investment (FDI), and tourism growth, showing how innovation and funding drive new tourism models [75]. Furthermore, this cluster covers resilience and adaptation strategies; keywords like “resilience” and “crisis management” appear as researchers consider how to make craft village tourism plans robust against shocks (e.g., pandemics or climate events). Policy-orientated studies often discuss formulating guidelines or action plans that align tourism growth with sustainability criteria, recommending governance reforms or community-based planning processes [76]. Cluster 7's themes are globally relevant, with many case studies from Asia, where governments create rural tourism plans, and Europe, where innovative policies are tested. This cluster reflects a forward-looking perspective on craft village tourism, focusing on planning,

modern management, and proactive policies addressing future challenges like climate change and market shifts while leveraging innovations for sustainable tourism development.

Analysis of Research Hotspots

Figure 6 shows the evolution of co-occurring keywords in sustainable tourism literature for craft villages from 2021 to 2023. Each node is a keyword, and the colour gradient from purple to yellow indicates the average publication year—yellow for recent research. This overlay visualisation highlights trends and shifts in focus over the past few years.

Since 2021, the field has focused on key concepts like “tourism development”, “sustainable development”, “ecotourism”, and “cultural heritage”. These themes guide research, especially in China's extensive case studies (172 occurrences, link strength = 1007), highlighting its role in rural revitalisation and heritage tourism strategies [77, 78].

By mid-2022, a shift toward technical and spatial planning was evident, with an increasing focus on terms like “spatial analysis”, “GIS”, and “spatiotemporal analysis”. These highlight a new research stream centred on land use change, distribution modelling, and data-driven planning for village tourism. Simultaneously, ecological and environmental dimensions gained renewed visibility through terms such as “environmental protection,” “conservation,” and “ecosystem service,” suggesting that sustainability is being conceptualised not only culturally and

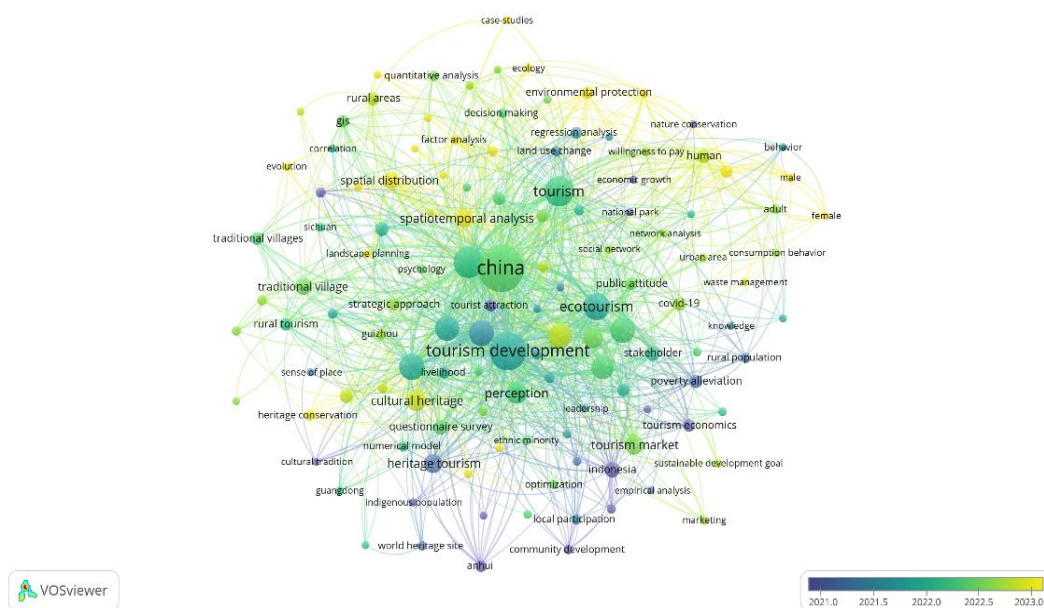


Figure 6: Development trends of keywords

Source: Analysis results from Scopus data using VOSviewer, 04/2025

socially but also ecologically [79, 80].

From late 2022 to 2023, several novel and more topical keywords emerged. Notably, “COVID-19,” “resilience,” “risk assessment,” and “consumption behaviour” began appearing with increasing frequency and more recent timestamps, reflecting a growing interest in how global shocks, such as pandemics, impact the sustainability and adaptability of rural tourism systems [56]. Studies have focused on community vulnerability, adaptive capacity, and crisis management, placing resilience at the forefront of contemporary research agendas.

Another critical development involves the rise of governance- and policy-related terms, such as “public attitude,” “stakeholder,” “local participation,” and “governance approach.” These keywords, clustered around community engagement and inclusive planning, highlight the importance of participatory development frameworks in ensuring the long-term viability of tourism in traditional villages. Researchers increasingly examine how multi-stakeholder collaboration and bottom-up planning affect the sustainability of tourism initiatives in both Global South and Global North contexts [71, 54].

The increasing prominence of “digital transformation” themes is also subtly visible through the co-occurrence of terms like “perception,” “place attachment,” “tourist behaviour,” and “VR” in some studies [72, 73]. These concepts reflect a shift toward understanding the digital augmentation of tourist experiences, particularly in post-pandemic contexts where physical travel has been constrained but interest in virtual heritage experiences is growing.

In summary, the evolution of keywords from 2021 to 2023 illustrates both the consolidation of core themes—such as rural development, sustainability, and cultural heritage—and the emergence of new research frontiers. These include integrating spatial technologies, climate and health resilience, participatory governance, and digital innovation. Together, these research hotspots demonstrate how the field adapts to global challenges while remaining grounded in the cultural and community-centred values defining sustainable tourism in craft villages.

4 Research Gaps

Several research gaps emerge across key thematic clusters based on the extensive co-occurrence analysis of 554 academic publications concerning sustainable tourism development in craft villages. These gaps highlight underexplored areas and suggest directions for future scholarly inquiry and policy innovation.

Digital and Smart Technologies in Craft Tourism

Clusters #6 (smart tourism, big data, VR, AR) and #7 (GIS, spatial planning) underscore the increasing relevance of digital transformation in rural tourism management. However, existing

literature rarely explores how emerging technologies such as AI-driven interpretation, blockchain-based heritage protection, or immersive VR experiences can enhance tourist engagement and sustainability in craft villages. For instance, although Altassan emphasised eco-tourism investment in heritage villages, integrating innovative technologies for storytelling and visitor flow management remains under-researched [69, 66]. Future research should evaluate the role of digital infrastructure in optimising sustainability without eroding cultural authenticity.

Stakeholder Dynamics and Participatory Governance

Cluster #1 (community participation, stakeholder engagement) strongly emphasises local empowerment and tourism co-management. However, more nuanced studies are needed to explore power asymmetries and conflicts between stakeholders, such as artisans, tour operators, and local authorities. Although Ginting et al. examined governance post-revitalisation in Indonesia, few studies dissect stakeholder perceptions in decision-making [81, 72]. Future research should focus on participatory models integrating community voice into tourism planning for equitable and inclusive development.

Economic Resilience and Craft Revitalisation

Cluster #3 strongly links craft promotion, sustainable livelihoods, and tourism. While studies such as Azharunnisa et al. (2024) address the fusion of tourism and craft revival, there is a research void regarding the scalability of such models and the socioeconomic resilience of artisans against market fluctuations [56, 82]. Investigations are needed into sustainable supply chains, cooperative business models, and digital marketing strategies to sustain craft economies in volatile tourism environments.

Ecological Sustainability and Environmental Pressures

Despite Cluster #4's emphasis on ecotourism, studies on carrying capacity, carbon footprint analysis, and nature-tourism balance in traditional village settings remain sparse. For example, Chen et al. addressed water pollution linked to tourism in Huizhou villages but did not elaborate on systematic ecological impact assessments [76]. Future enquiries should incorporate environmental monitoring frameworks and GIS-based simulations to evaluate and mitigate the ecological footprint of tourism development.

Visitor Experience and Behavioural Intentions in Craft Settings

While Cluster #2 encompasses studies on visitor satisfaction and tourist behaviour, few have delved into the unique dimensions of experiential tourism in craft villages. Emotional responses to authenticity, interaction with artisans, and heritage consumption behaviours remain underexplored. Bai et al. examined cognitive appraisal mechanisms in rural destinations, but

further segmentation by demographics (e.g., Gen Z, international vs. domestic) and motivations is needed to tailor offerings and sustain revisitation intentions [66, 52].

Temporal Evolution and Policy Gaps

The temporal analysis reveals a surge of interest post-2020, likely influenced by COVID-19 and global shifts toward localisation and slow tourism. However, policy frameworks supporting tourism-craft integration often lag behind academic insights. For instance, Ferdian highlights stakeholder attitudes in Indonesia but fails to connect these to national tourism policies [72]. Comparative policy analysis across countries could uncover best practices and inform future governance reforms.

These identified research gaps highlight the necessity for interdisciplinary, technology-enabled, and community-centred approaches to developing craft villages as sustainable tourist destinations. Bridging these gaps will enhance academic understanding and guide practical interventions for heritage preservation and local prosperity. Despite considerable progress, future research on sustainable tourism in craft villages should incorporate digital innovation, climate resilience, gender equity, and governance reform while expanding geographically and methodologically. Addressing these gaps will enrich our understanding of how tourism can serve as a transformative tool for rural heritage conservation and community development in various contexts.

5 Conclusion

This study offers a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of 554 academic publications on sustainable tourism development (STD) in craft villages, retrieved from Scopus and Web of Science and processed through VOSviewer. The results offer a disciplined perspective of the intellectual basis, thematic orientations, and developing trends of this multidisciplinary field. Particularly in settings where tourism interacts with cultural preservation and community livelihoods, the sharp increase in publications—especially those related to post-2020—underscores growing scholarly attention to the sustainability of rural heritage sites.

The analysis highlights five major thematic orientations: rural livelihoods and community development, cultural heritage and traditional crafts, tourist experience and authenticity, environmental sustainability, and spatial planning and governance. Central keywords such as “tourism development,” “sustainability,” “cultural heritage,” and “ecotourism” serve as conceptual bridges linking these clusters. Two dominant intellectual directions emerge: one centred on local participation and socio-economic empowerment [43, 45] and the other on tourist behaviour and place-based experiential values [54, 58]. Despite thematic differences, both streams converge around promoting inclusive and culturally sensitive tourism models.

Moreover, the author's co-citation analysis reinforces this dual structure of knowledge by identifying two primary clusters of scholarly influence. Cluster 1 focuses on sustainable livelihoods and community empowerment, featuring foundational works by Scheyvens, Tao, Wall, and others who emphasise tourism's role in poverty alleviation, capacity building, and bottom-up development planning. Cluster 2 highlights tourist experience and destination image, including seminal contributions by Echtner, Ritchie, and Wang, which explore authenticity, memory, and experiential value in heritage tourism contexts. Although distinct, the clusters are intellectually interlinked through concepts like authenticity, community participation, and shared value creation—indicating that sustainable tourism in craft villages requires a balance between empowering local communities and delivering meaningful experiences for visitors. This ACA insight complements the keyword-based analyses by illuminating the deeper theoretical and disciplinary alignments driving research in this domain.

In addition, the co-occurrence and overlay analyses reveal the temporal evolution of research interests. While core topics like “rural development” and “heritage tourism” remain persistent, new terms such as “resilience,” “digital transformation,” and “governance” have emerged in recent years, indicating a shift toward adaptive and technology-enabled strategies [69, 66]. These changes suggest that the field is expanding and aligning with broader global challenges, such as climate change, digital innovation, and post-pandemic recovery.

Nonetheless, several limitations must be acknowledged. The reliance on English-language publications from two databases may have excluded valuable regional studies published in local languages or non-indexed sources, especially from Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Moreover, the study does not incorporate co-authorship or institutional network analysis, which could have enriched the understanding of collaborative structures and academic influence. Future research should broaden data sources, apply more diverse bibliometric techniques, and integrate qualitative and mixed-methods approaches to capture the nuances of sustainability practice and policy in traditional village tourism across varied socio-cultural contexts.

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