

Sustainable Gastronomy and Local Food Systems in Tourism: A Bibliometric Mapping of Research and Practice

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received Nov, 2025 Revised Nov, 2025 Accepted Nov, 2025</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords:</p> <p>Sustainable Gastronomy Local Food Systems Food Tourism Gastronomic Tourism Cultural Heritage;</p>	<p>This study examines the evolution of sustainable gastronomy and local food systems within tourism through a bibliometric and science-mapping analysis of Scopus-indexed publications from 2000 to 2025. Using VOSviewer, the study identifies major thematic clusters, research frontiers, and collaborative networks that shape the field. Findings reveal that gastronomy has progressed from a peripheral tourism element to a central driver of destination attractiveness, cultural identity, and sustainability practices. Keyword analyses show a strong shift from early focuses on tourism development and management toward recent emphases on sustainability, local food governance, cultural heritage, and community-based gastronomic initiatives. Co-authorship and country collaboration networks highlight dominant contributions from Spain, Portugal, Thailand, and Latin America, demonstrating an increasingly global and interdisciplinary research landscape. The study underscores the growing recognition of gastronomy as a vehicle for sustainable development and cultural preservation while identifying gaps in rural food systems, traditional cuisines, and agricultural–tourism integration. These insights provide a conceptual foundation for advancing sustainable gastronomic tourism research and practice.</p> <p><i>This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license.</i></p> <div></div>
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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has undergone a profound shift as destinations increasingly emphasize sustainability, cultural authenticity, and community resilience. Within this transition, sustainable gastronomy has emerged as a key pillar that integrates environmental stewardship, cultural heritage conservation, and local economic empowerment. Gastronomy is no longer understood merely as food consumption; rather, it is regarded as an experiential dimension that reflects place

identity and shapes tourists’ perceptions of a destination [1]. As travelers pursue experiences that are meaningful and ethically grounded, local food practices—ranging from traditional cuisines to agroecological production—have gained prominence as cultural assets capable of enhancing tourism value. This evolution signals a reorientation toward tourism models that prioritize ecological balance, cultural continuity, and inclusive development [2], [3].

The emergence of local food systems as an integral part of tourism development is linked to their potential to support sustainability at multiple levels [4]. Local food networks can reduce environmental footprints through shorter supply chains, promote biodiversity by preserving heritage crops, and strengthen local economies by circulating income among small-scale producers [5], [6]. In many destinations, local agricultural communities partner with hospitality sectors to create food experiences that celebrate local ingredients and culinary traditions. These collaborations demonstrate how gastronomy can become a tool for community empowerment, enabling farmers, fishers, and artisans to participate directly in tourism value creation [7]. Such synergies illustrate gastronomy's multidimensional contributions to sustainable tourism.

Furthermore, sustainable gastronomy is widely recognized as a means of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Culinary practices, traditional food preparation methods, and indigenous knowledge systems form essential elements of local identity and intergenerational cultural transmission [8]. Through tourism, these cultural expressions can be revitalized and shared with global audiences, ensuring their continued relevance. At the same time, tourism provides an avenue for cultural learning, where visitors engage with local stories embedded within food—from farming rituals to local spices and cooking philosophies. Such encounters deepen travelers' appreciation of cultural diversity and promote intercultural understanding [9], [10].

The global discourse on sustainable development also positions gastronomy as a strategic instrument for achieving sustainability goals. International frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize responsible consumption, sustainable agriculture, and the promotion of inclusive economies. Gastronomic tourism intersects with these goals by fostering ethical food production, reducing food waste, and encouraging equitable partnerships among stakeholders [11]. Destinations adopting

sustainable gastronomy initiatives often integrate green certifications, farm-to-table programs, and community-based food enterprises to ensure environmental and social accountability. These strategies highlight how gastronomy can be leveraged to advance sustainability at destination and global levels.

Technological advances and shifting consumer behavior additionally contribute to the rising significance of sustainable gastronomy in tourism. Digital platforms enable travelers to discover local food producers, sustainable restaurants, and community-supported agriculture initiatives before visiting a destination. At the same time, the rise of environmentally conscious travelers has accelerated demand for transparency in food sourcing, ethical supply chains, and low-carbon culinary experiences [12], [13]. As a result, destinations increasingly face expectations to demonstrate authenticity and sustainability through their gastronomic offerings. These dynamics highlight the growing alignment between tourism competitiveness and sustainable food system development.

Despite the growing recognition of sustainable gastronomy as a vital component of tourism development, many destinations struggle to operationalize its principles within local food systems. Challenges arise from fragmented supply chains, limited collaboration between agricultural and tourism stakeholders, insufficient policy support, and inconsistent sustainability standards. Small-scale producers often face barriers to accessing tourism markets, while tourism businesses may prioritize efficiency and cost reduction over sustainability commitments. Moreover, the rapid commercialization of local cuisines can lead to cultural dilution, loss of authenticity, and marginalization of local communities. These gaps highlight the need for deeper understanding of how gastronomy and local food systems can be effectively integrated to promote sustainability in tourism contexts.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the interconnection between sustainable gastronomy and local food

systems in tourism, with a focus on understanding how destinations can strengthen ecological, cultural, and socio-economic sustainability through food-based initiatives. Specifically, the study aims to examine the roles of stakeholders, identify enabling and constraining factors within local food ecosystems, and propose an integrative framework that advances sustainable gastronomy as a core tourism development strategy.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a bibliometric and science mapping approach to analyze research on sustainable gastronomy and local food systems in tourism. The data source for this analysis is the Scopus database, selected due to its broad coverage of peer-reviewed journals in the fields of tourism, hospitality, environmental studies, and food systems. The search was conducted for the period 2000–2025, reflecting the growing prominence of sustainability discourses in tourism over the past two and a half decades. The search string combined key terms related to gastronomy, sustainability, and tourism, such as *“sustainable gastronomy”*, *“local food systems”*, *“food tourism”*, *“culinary tourism”*, and *“gastronomic tourism”*, using Boolean operators (AND/OR) to refine and expand the query as needed. Only documents categorized as articles, reviews, and conference papers in English were included to ensure consistency in analysis.

After the initial search, a screening and cleaning process was carried out to ensure the relevance and quality of the data. Duplicates were removed, and titles,

abstracts, and keywords were examined to exclude publications that used the terms *“gastronomy”* or *“local food”* in unrelated contexts (for example, purely biochemical or non-tourism food science studies). Inclusion criteria focused on works that explicitly addressed tourism, destination development, sustainability, or local food networks. The final dataset was exported from Scopus in compatible formats (e.g., RIS, CSV) for further analysis. Descriptive bibliometric indicators were then generated, including annual publication trends, leading authors, core journals, influential countries, and institutional affiliations to map the overall structure and growth of the field.

For science mapping and network analysis, the study employed VOSviewer to visualize and interpret intellectual and conceptual structures within the literature. Co-occurrence analysis of author keywords was used to identify dominant research themes and emerging topics related to sustainable gastronomy, local food systems, and tourism development. Co-authorship and country collaboration networks were analyzed to reveal patterns of scientific cooperation at individual and national levels. Additionally, citation and co-citation analyses were conducted to highlight foundational works and influential authors that shape the field. The combination of descriptive statistics and network visualizations allows for a comprehensive understanding of how knowledge on sustainable gastronomy and local food systems in tourism has evolved over time, where research gaps remain, and which thematic clusters warrant deeper investigation in future studies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Keyword Co-Occurrence Network

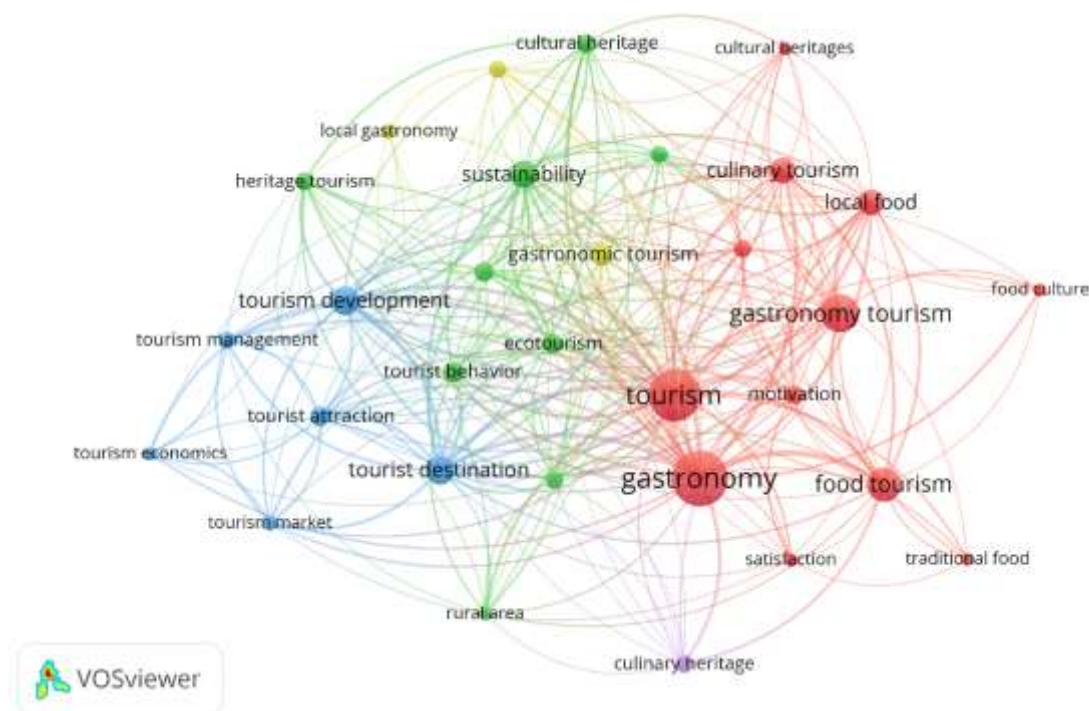


Figure 1. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

The VOSviewer visualization illustrates the conceptual structure of research on *sustainable gastronomy and local food systems in tourism* by mapping the relationships among frequently occurring author keywords. The map reveals four major thematic clusters, each represented by distinct colors, which together illustrate how the literature has evolved and how its core concepts are interconnected.

The Red Cluster: Gastronomy Food Tourism Core Themes

The red cluster is the most dominant and dense, centered around key terms such as “tourism,” “gastronomy,” “gastronomy tourism,” “food tourism,” “local food,” and “culinary tourism.” The size of these nodes indicates high frequency and centrality within the literature. This cluster represents studies exploring how food serves as a motivator for travel, contributes to destination attractiveness, and enriches tourist experiences. Concepts like “motivation,” “satisfaction,” “food culture,” and “traditional food” show that researchers focus on tourists’ psychological and experiential

dimensions when engaging with gastronomy. The strong interconnections in this cluster also highlight the increasing recognition of local and traditional cuisines as strategic assets for competitive tourism development.

The Green Cluster: Sustainability, Heritage, and Local Food Systems

The green cluster revolves around terms such as “sustainability,” “cultural heritage,” “local gastronomy,” and “heritage tourism.” These connections reflect research that positions gastronomy within broader sustainable development frameworks. The presence of keywords like “ecotourism,” “tourist behavior,” and “gastronomic tourism” shows that scholars are examining how sustainable practices influence tourist choices and how local food systems contribute to cultural preservation. This cluster bridges environmental, social, and cultural dimensions by integrating heritage protection, sustainable agriculture, and community-based gastronomy initiatives.

The Blue Cluster: Tourism Development and Destination Competitiveness

The blue cluster features terms such as “tourist destination,” “tourism development,” “tourism management,” and “tourism economics.” This indicates a body of work that situates gastronomy within the strategic planning and economic aspects of tourism development. Researchers in this cluster analyze how gastronomy enhances destination branding, market positioning, and economic resilience. The presence of “tourist attraction,” “tourism market,” and “tourism economics” underscores the commercial and managerial lens through which gastronomy is studied, particularly its role in boosting local economies and diversifying tourism products.

The Yellow Cluster: Cultural Heritage and Rural Contexts

The yellow cluster, though smaller, emphasizes terms like “cultural heritage,” “rural area,” and “heritage gastronomy.” This indicates emerging interest in rural-based food tourism, where agricultural landscapes, traditional knowledge, and local food systems are integrated into tourism offerings. The cluster highlights that sustainable gastronomy is increasingly studied in the context of rural development, emphasizing its role in revitalizing remote communities, preserving cultural identity, and creating inclusive tourism opportunities.

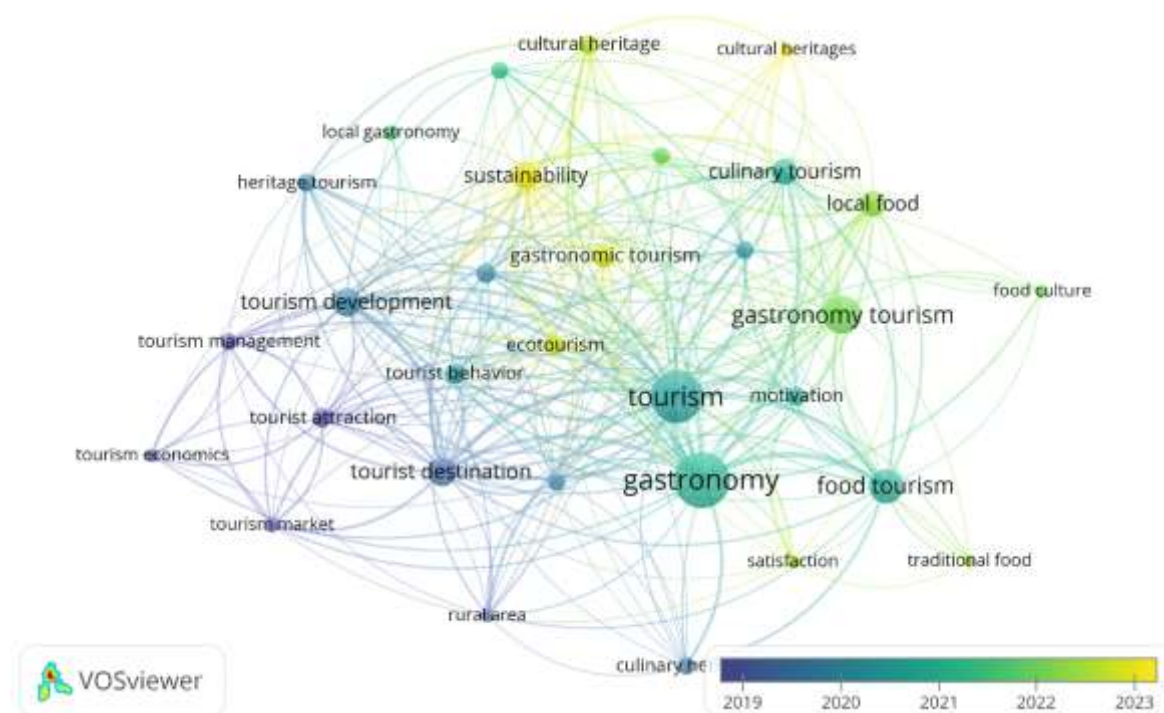


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

The overlay visualization shows the temporal evolution of research themes within sustainable gastronomy and local food systems in tourism. Colors range from dark blue (older studies, around 2019) to yellow (newer studies, around 2023), allowing us to identify how interest in specific topics has

shifted over time and which themes have recently emerged.

Older Themes (Blue to Dark Blue): Foundational Tourism and Destination Studies

Keywords in darker shades tourist destination, tourism development, tourism

management, tourism economics, tourism market, tourist attraction represent earlier research priorities, mostly before 2020. These terms indicate that the initial body of literature focused on *traditional tourism development*, destination competitiveness, and managerial aspects of tourism systems. Studies from this earlier period were concerned with understanding how tourism contributes to local economies and how destinations can attract more visitors through strategic planning. These foundational themes provided the base upon which gastronomy-related studies later expanded.

Mid-Period Themes (Green to Teal): Integration of Gastronomy into Tourism Research

As the colors shift to greenish tones, terms such as gastronomy, food tourism, gastronomy tourism, tourist behavior, ecotourism, satisfaction, traditional food appear. This indicates a period (around 2020–2022) in which gastronomy became more central in tourism scholarship. Researchers increasingly explored how food experiences influence tourist motivation, behavior, and satisfaction. The integration of ecotourism

and traditional food in this cluster suggests a growing interest in linking gastronomic experiences with nature-based tourism and cultural identity. This transitional phase marks the emergence of gastronomy as a strategic tool for enhancing tourism value and enriching visitor experiences.

Newest Themes (Light Green to Yellow): Sustainability, Local Food, and Cultural Heritage

Nodes highlighted in yellow and light green, such as sustainability, local food, cultural heritage, culinary tourism, local gastronomy, indicate very recent research directions (2022–2023). These themes reflect a shift toward sustainability-driven approaches in gastronomy tourism. Scholars have begun to prioritize studies on ethical sourcing, sustainable food production, cultural heritage preservation, and community-based gastronomy initiatives. The prominence of local food and cultural heritage in the most recent cluster suggests that current research is increasingly concerned with how gastronomy supports sustainable destination development, heritage conservation, and local identity formation.

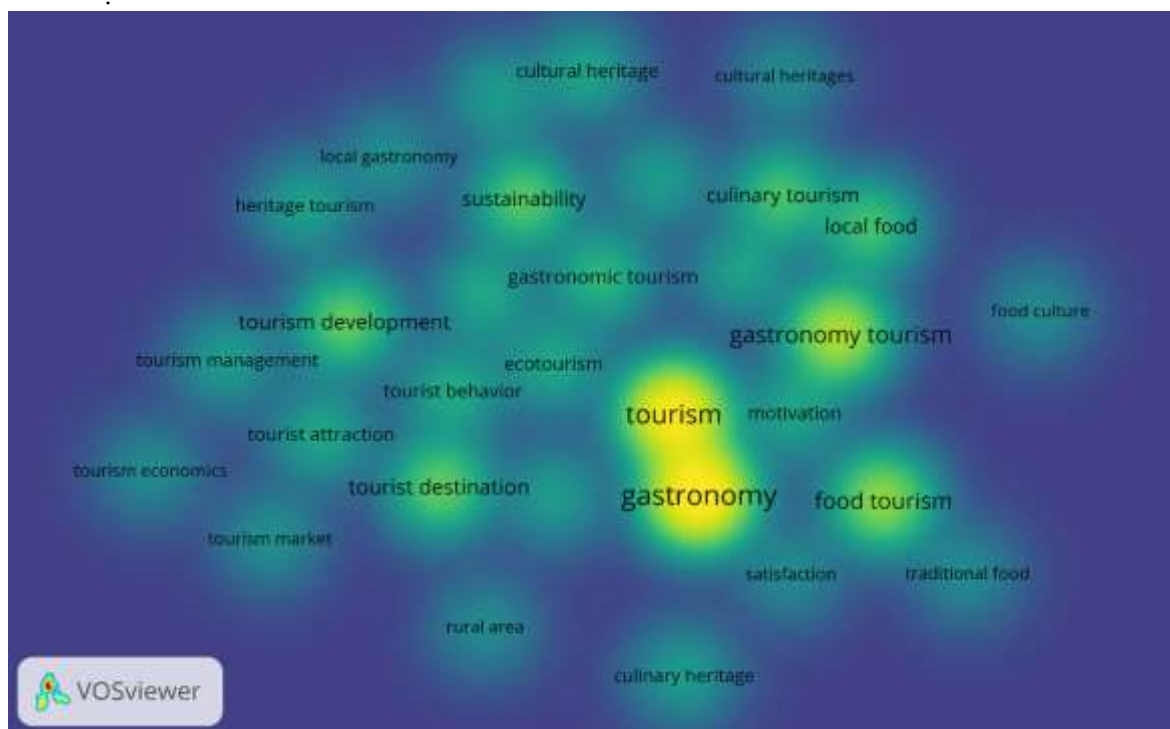


Figure 3. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

The density visualization reveals the concentration and intensity of research themes within the literature on sustainable gastronomy and local food systems in tourism. The brightest yellow areas, particularly around the keywords “tourism” and “gastronomy,” indicate that these concepts form the central and most frequently studied core of the field. Their prominence reflects the strong scholarly consensus that gastronomy is a fundamental driver of tourism experiences, destination appeal, and cultural engagement. Surrounding this core are green-shaded regions representing moderate research density, including terms such as “sustainability,” “local food,” “cultural heritage,” and “local gastronomy.” These keywords suggest increasing academic

attention toward sustainability-oriented frameworks and community-based food systems, marking them as rapidly growing but not yet saturated areas of inquiry.

Meanwhile, the blue and darker zones covering terms such as “tourism management,” “tourism economics,” “rural area,” “culinary heritage,” and “traditional food” indicate lower research frequency and highlight themes that remain more specialized or underexplored. This gradient from high to low density shows that while the core of gastronomic tourism research is well established, significant opportunities remain for deeper investigation into rural food systems, traditional cuisines, cultural preservation, and managerial or economic perspectives within sustainable gastronomy.

3.2 Co-Authorship Network



Figure 4. Author Collaboration Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

The co-authorship network reveals the collaborative structure among scholars working in the field of sustainable gastronomy, local food systems, and gastronomic tourism. The map shows several clusters of authors, each representing a distinct collaboration circle, with node size

reflecting publication volume and link strength indicating frequency of joint authorship. At the center of the network, López-Guzmán, Tomás J. appears as the most prominent and influential contributor. The large node size and numerous connections demonstrate that López-Guzmán serves as a

central pillar in the literature, collaborating with multiple researchers across different clusters. His collaborative links with González Santa Cruz, Francisco, Sánchez-Cañizares, Sandra M^a, and Pérez-Gálvez, Jesús Claudio reflect a strong Spanish research network that has produced a substantial body of work in gastronomy tourism, cultural heritage, and local food studies.

A second significant cluster centers around Pérez-Gálvez, Jesús Claudio, whose collaborations with Jara Alba, Carol Angélica and Pérez-Priego, Manuel Adolfo indicate an active research group exploring gastronomic motivations, tourist experiences, and sustainable tourism practices. This cluster is closely connected to López-Guzmán's group, showing overlapping intellectual contributions and shared research agendas.

On the right side of the map, a separate green cluster consists of Carvache-

Franco, Mauricio, Carvache-Franco, Wilmer, and Villagomez-Buele, Cesar Gardel. This group represents a strong Latin American research collaboration with a focus on tourist behavior, culinary motivations, and food-based destination segmentation. Their cluster's distinct position on the map indicates that while connected to the broader field, they contribute with a slightly different regional perspective and thematic orientation. On the left side, the red cluster features Hernández-Mogollón, José Manuel, Di-Clemente, Elide, Hernandez Rojas, Ricardo David, and Folgado-Fernandez, Jose A. This cluster is thematically aligned with tourism development, cultural heritage, and destination competitiveness. Though connected to López-Guzmán's work, they maintain a more independent research trajectory focusing on rural tourism, heritage resources, and experiential consumption.



Figure 5. Affiliation Collaboration Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

The institutional co-authorship visualization illustrates how universities and academic departments collaborate in producing research on sustainable

gastronomy, gastronomic tourism, and local food systems. The network structure reveals a clustering of institutions around several central academic units, indicating shared

research agendas and recurring scholarly partnerships. At the center of the network, the “department of business, university” appears as the most influential institutional node, shown by its large size and extensive connections to other units. This suggests that business-related departments—often associated with tourism management, hospitality, and service industries—play a dominant role in leading and coordinating research in gastronomic tourism. The strong linkages between this department and other nodes emphasize its function as an intellectual hub through which interdisciplinary work is coordinated, particularly involving tourism development, culinary studies, and sustainable food practices.

Surrounding the core are several significant collaborating units, such as the “department of gastronomy and c...”, “school of hotel and tourism management”, and “department of food service and” The close clustering of these institutions demonstrates the alignment between hospitality, gastronomy, and tourism education programs in producing integrated research outputs. Their proximity suggests

that collaborations occur frequently among departments with shared expertise in culinary arts, food culture, hospitality management, and tourism experience design. On the right side of the visualization, the “bachelor of tourism, university...” node forms its own connected cluster. This likely represents undergraduate tourism programs that contribute to research through student-led projects, thesis collaborations, or multi-department academic teams. Its strong linkages to the central business and hospitality departments indicate that foundational tourism programs are actively integrated into broader institutional research structures.

Meanwhile, the left side of the map shows a smaller, more isolated node “international university of bu...”, which appears to have fewer connections. This indicates that while the institution contributes to the literature, it collaborates less frequently with the main academic clusters. Such peripheral positioning often reflects emerging research institutions, independent research groups, or universities operating within different regional or linguistic contexts.

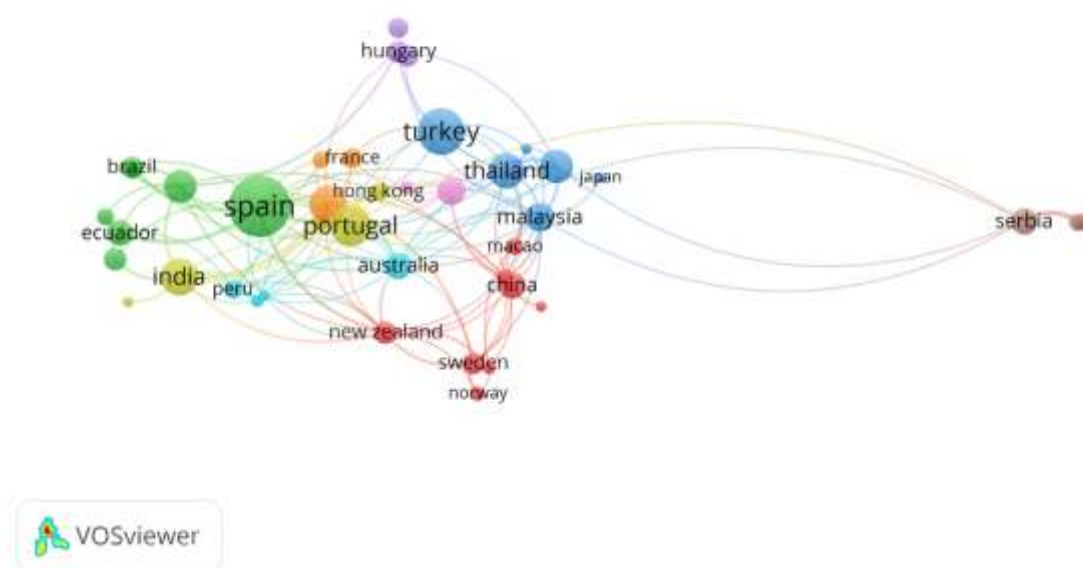


Figure 6. Country Collaboration Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

The country collaboration network visualizes how nations contribute to and interconnect within the field of sustainable gastronomy, culinary tourism, and local food systems research. The size of each country node reflects its publication output, while the connecting lines indicate the strength and frequency of collaborative relationships between countries. At the center of the network, Spain emerges as the most dominant and influential contributor in this research domain. Its large node size and numerous interlinkages with countries such as Portugal, Brazil, Ecuador, India, Peru, France, and Turkey indicate that Spain serves as a global hub for gastronomic tourism scholarship. This centrality suggests a strong academic tradition focusing on Mediterranean gastronomy, cultural heritage, and sustainable food systems—topics frequently aligned with Spain's tourism and culinary identity.

Portugal also appears as another highly connected country, forming a strong dyad with Spain and bridging collaborations across Europe, Latin America, and parts of Asia. The close clustering of Portugal with countries like Brazil and India indicates a shared interest in community-based food systems, heritage tourism, and cultural gastronomy. These countries represent a richly interconnected Ibero-Latin cluster, likely strengthened by linguistic, cultural, and historical relationships.

On the right side of the network, the blue cluster highlights Thailand, Turkey, Malaysia, China, Australia, and New Zealand as key Asian-Pacific contributors. Their co-

authorship patterns suggest a regional research focus on culinary tourism experiences, food markets, cultural gastronomy, and tourism development in emerging economies. Thailand and Turkey, in particular, are shown as significant nodes with strong outbound collaborations, reflecting their global visibility in gastronomy tourism research and their role as major tourist destinations known for distinctive culinary traditions. The presence of China, Japan, Macao, and nearby countries in this cluster highlights Asia's growing role in gastronomic tourism studies, especially regarding food consumption behavior, culinary identity, and sustainable food practices within urban tourism contexts.

On the far right, Serbia appears as an isolated cluster with limited connections. This indicates that while Serbia contributes to the literature, its collaboration with the global scholarly community remains relatively modest. Such positioning often signals either a developing research landscape or a domestically focused publication pattern that has not yet expanded into broader international networks. Countries like Hungary, Sweden, Norway, and France appear in smaller clusters but maintain important bridging roles within their respective regional networks, contributing to the diversity and geographic spread of gastronomic tourism research.

3.3 Citation Analysis

The bibliometric data above identifies the ten most significant articles in the domain of Fear of.

Table 1. Top Cited Research

Citations	Authors and year	Title
383	[14]	Incorporating local and international cuisines in the marketing of tourism destinations: The cases of Hong Kong and Turkey
290	[15]	Government websites for promoting East Asian culinary tourism: A cross-national analysis
250	[16]	Gastronomy: an essential ingredient in tourism production and consumption?
191	[17]	Food tourism research: a perspective article
175	[18]	Gastronomy as a tourism resource: Profile of the culinary tourist
139	[19]	Food and gastronomy for sustainable place development: A multidisciplinary analysis of different theoretical approaches

Citations	Authors and year	Title
132	[20]	Scary food: Commodifying culinary heritage as meal adventures in tourism
121	[21]	What makes a gastronomic destination attractive? Evidence from the Israeli Negev
117	[22]	Local gastronomy, culture and tourism sustainable cities: The behavior of the American tourist
103	[1]	The role of a high-quality restaurant in stimulating the creation and development of gastronomy tourism

Source: Scopus, 2025

The table highlights the ten most influential and highly cited publications in the domain of gastronomy tourism, sustainable gastronomy, and food-related destination development. These works collectively form the intellectual foundation of the field, shaping theoretical directions, methodological approaches, and practical applications in tourism studies. The most-cited article [14] with 383 citations emphasizes the strategic integration of local and international cuisines in destination marketing. This work is widely regarded as a seminal contribution because it demonstrates how culinary offerings function as both cultural symbols and competitive assets that can differentiate destinations. Its high citation count reflects the enduring relevance of understanding food as a powerful branding tool in tourism economies.

The second most impactful study [15] focuses on the role of government websites in promoting culinary tourism across East Asia. With 290 citations, this research underscores the importance of digital communication, national branding, and state-led initiatives in shaping tourists' perceptions of culinary identity. It highlights how public institutions contribute to gastronomic tourism development through online promotion, a topic that continues to gain importance in the digital era. Another foundational contribution comes from [16] with 250 citations, who presents gastronomy as a central component in tourism production and consumption. This early theoretical work positions food not only as a basic need but also as an experiential and cultural resource that enhances the tourist journey. The paper's influence lies in its

ability to redefine gastronomy as an essential part of the tourism value chain.

More contemporary frameworks are represented by [17] with 191 citations, offering a reflective perspective on the evolution of food tourism research. This piece synthesizes trends, challenges, and future directions, highlighting the field's maturation and the need for more sustainability-oriented scholarship. Its high citation count in a short time indicates strong academic interest in updated conceptualisations of food tourism. The study by [18] (175 citations) is crucial for profiling culinary tourists and identifying motivations, preferences, and behaviors. As gastronomic tourism became more consumer-focused, this type of empirical profiling enabled destinations to tailor products and enhance visitor experiences. [19] (139 citations) expands the field by linking food to sustainable place development. This multidisciplinary analysis integrates gastronomy with cultural geography, urban planning, and sustainability science, reflecting a shift toward more holistic and community-centered perspectives in tourism.

The exploration of cultural heritage through unconventional gastronomic experiences is exemplified by [20] (132 citations), who analyze how "scary food" is commodified in tourism. Their work demonstrates how unique or extreme culinary offerings can create memorable experiences and niche markets. The attractiveness of gastronomic destinations is further explored by [21] (121 citations), who provide empirical evidence from Israel's Negev region. Their study identifies the factors that contribute to the appeal of food destinations, advancing

understanding of destination choice behavior in culinary tourism.

Studies connecting local food, sustainability, and tourist behavior—such as [22] with 117 citations highlight the rising importance of sustainable cities and cultural gastronomy. This work reflects growing global interest in responsible consumption, authenticity, and local cultural practices. Finally, [1] (103 citations) explore the role of high-quality restaurants in stimulating gastronomy tourism. Their findings illustrate how fine dining and culinary excellence can elevate a destination's gastronomic reputation, stimulate local food economies, and attract high-value tourists.

Discussion

The findings of this bibliometric and science-mapping study reveal a rapidly evolving knowledge structure surrounding sustainable gastronomy and local food systems in tourism. Through the integration of keyword co-occurrence analysis, overlay visualization, density mapping, and co-authorship networks, the results indicate that gastronomy has become a central pillar in contemporary tourism scholarship—both as an experiential component and as an engine for sustainability, cultural preservation, and destination competitiveness. This section discusses the empirical insights generated from the visual analyses and articulates their broader implications for theory, practice, and future research.

The keyword co-occurrence network demonstrates that “tourism,” “gastronomy,” “food tourism,” and “gastronomy tourism” remain the intellectual anchors of the field, forming the core around which other themes orbit. These central terms suggest that research continues to view gastronomy primarily through the lens of visitor experiences, destination branding, and the cultural identity of places. The strong clustering around motivational factors such as *satisfaction*, *authenticity*, and *traditional food* reflects the well-established understanding that culinary practices enrich tourist experiences by creating emotional, cultural, and sensory engagement with destinations.

The dense interconnections between culinary tourism concepts indicate that the field has matured to acknowledge gastronomy not as a peripheral attraction but as a principal component shaping traveler behavior and destination distinctiveness.

The overlay visualization further highlights a temporal evolution in research priorities. Earlier studies (2019 and earlier) predominantly addressed macro-level tourism development themes—such as destination management, tourism economics, and attraction marketing. These topics formed the foundational stage of gastronomic tourism scholarship, exploring its contribution to regional tourism strategies. Over time, however, the field shifted towards more nuanced explorations of gastronomy as an experiential and cultural phenomenon. Between 2020 and 2022, research increasingly examined tourists' psychological responses, culinary motivations, and the experiential value of food consumption. The most recent themes (2022–2023), marked in yellow, show a significant shift toward sustainability, local food systems, cultural heritage, and community involvement, indicating a conceptual broadening from consumer-centric perspectives to system-wide sustainability frameworks.

The density visualization supports this transition by showing high research concentration in areas related to gastronomy and tourism, while sustainability and heritage topics appear as moderately dense yet growing areas. This pattern suggests that the future trajectory of gastronomic tourism research will continue integrating environmental ethics, local food governance, and cultural conservation within tourism studies. The peripheral placement of themes such as rural areas, culinary heritage, and tourism economics reflects potential gaps in the literature, emphasizing the need for more research linking rural sustainability, agricultural livelihoods, and gastronomic tourism development.

The co-authorship network analysis reveals that the field is sustained by a set of influential scholarly communities, particularly within Spain, Portugal, Turkey,

Thailand, and Latin America. Authors such as López-Guzmán, Sánchez-Cañizares, Pérez-Gálvez, and Carvache-Franco play central roles in shaping the literature. Their collaborative patterns highlight strong knowledge production hubs focused on Mediterranean gastronomy, cultural heritage, and culinary behavior. Similarly, institutional networks indicate that tourism, business, hospitality, and gastronomy departments constitute the core academic engines driving interdisciplinary research. These collaborations underscore the multi-sectoral nature of gastronomic tourism research, bridging culinary arts, food systems, cultural studies, and tourism management.

The country collaboration network demonstrates that Europe—especially Spain and Portugal—continues to dominate global scholarly contributions. However, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Oceania are forming increasingly interconnected clusters. This geographical expansion signals a global recognition of sustainable gastronomy as a strategic resource for tourism destinations. The presence of emerging contributors such as India, Peru, Ecuador, and Malaysia shows the growing scholarly and practical interest among developing nations seeking to capitalize on culinary identity and local food systems to enhance tourism competitiveness. Nonetheless, the map also reveals isolated clusters such as Serbia, which indicates limited international collaboration and highlights opportunities for integrating underrepresented regions into global food-tourism research networks.

The citation analysis of the top ten most influential articles reflects a clear intellectual progression. Foundational works by [16] and [14] framed gastronomy as a strategic component of tourism production and marketing. Subsequent studies expanded this foundation by profiling culinary tourists, examining food-related destination attractiveness, and exploring culinary heritage as a marketable tourism asset. More recent contributions emphasize sustainability, urban development, and community-based

food systems, indicating that the field has embraced broader socio-ecological narratives. Collectively, these influential works have shaped the theoretical and methodological direction of gastronomic tourism research, forming a cohesive yet evolving body of knowledge.

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric and science-mapping analysis of sustainable gastronomy and local food systems within tourism research, revealing a field that has significantly evolved in scope, depth, and interdisciplinary engagement. The findings indicate that gastronomy has shifted from being treated merely as an accompanying tourism attraction toward becoming a central strategic resource for destination competitiveness, cultural preservation, and sustainable development. The keyword clusters, temporal evolution, and density patterns demonstrate that while early research emphasized tourism development and destination management, recent scholarship increasingly incorporates themes of sustainability, local food governance, cultural heritage, and community empowerment. This transition reflects a growing recognition that gastronomy is deeply embedded within broader social, cultural, and ecological systems.

The co-authorship and country collaboration networks highlight the global and interconnected nature of the field, with strong contributions from Spain, Portugal, Thailand, Turkey, and several Latin American countries. These collaborations have fostered diverse methodological and theoretical perspectives, enriching the academic discourse on food-based tourism. Influential publications further show that the intellectual foundations of the field rest on studies that integrate destination marketing, culinary identity, gastronomic motivation, and sustainable place-making.

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