

Tourism Governance Studies: A Bibliometric Analysis

Loso Judijanto
IPOSS Jakarta, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Research on tourism governance has been gaining increasing popularity as tourism development has been growing more complicated and needs better coordination between various parties. This paper attempts to analyze the intellectual structure, research development, and new trends of tourism governance through bibliometric analysis. The data were obtained from the Scopus database via specific keywords relating to tourism governance, destination governance, and tourism policy, after which the data were analyzed via VOSviewer in order to conduct analysis on publication trends, keyword co-occurrence, citation networks, influential authors, institutional collaboration, and country collaboration. It was found out that research in tourism governance has undergone considerable development, the most prominent research themes being sustainable tourism, tourism development, stakeholder collaboration, ecotourism, destination management, conservation, and local involvement. Keyword analysis has shown the evolution from a traditional governmental model of tourism management towards a collaborative one. Citation analysis highlights influential contributions focusing on governance frameworks, sustainable tourism policy, community-based tourism, and conservation management, with scholars such as Hall, Bramwell, Dredge, and Jamal providing important theoretical foundations. Furthermore, the collaboration analysis demonstrates that tourism governance research has become a global field involving strong academic networks across countries, particularly the United Kingdom, China, and the United States. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the development trajectory of tourism governance research and identifies future research opportunities related to smart tourism governance, climate resilience, digital transformation, and inclusive destination management.

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Corresponding Author:

Name: Loso Judijanto
Institution: IPOSS Jakarta, Indonesia
Email: losojudijantobumn@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism governance has been identified as a very important concept through which research and practitioners analyze the dynamics and systems influencing the creation and implementation

of tourism activities [1], [2]. The concept of governance within tourism is an extension of concepts from public administration and planning; however, while traditional notions of governance refer to the role of government institutions within a country, tourism

governance involves a wider range of stakeholders including actors from the private sector, civil society organizations, community groups, and even international organizations that together influence policymaking, allocation of resources, and strategy setting [3].

Interest in tourism governance by researchers over the last two decades is consistent with trends in governance theory in social sciences, which emphasize participation, multiple levels, and networking [4]. Governance in tourism is defined as a set of rules, roles, and relations that altogether seek to bring about sustainable, fair, and resilient results from the development of tourism [5]. For tourism destinations struggling with pressures such as globalization, climate change, changes in demographics, and instability of the market, tourism governance has become absolutely essential.

It has been noted that the quality of governance has been shown to affect other factors in the performance of tourism, including the competitive strength of destinations, innovation ability, visitor satisfaction, and viability in the long term [6]. The use of a governance approach emphasizes not just the creation of policies but also their effective implementation, accountability systems, and trust among stakeholders. A governance approach has very important implications for the way destination management organizations (DMOs) are set up, public policy development, and collaboration arrangements – this means that it is both normative and empirical in nature [7].

In spite of a strong theoretical foundation, the topic of tourism governance still stays fragmented within disciplines, methods of analysis, and themes under study. While some authors conduct their research on governance through the prism of case studies related to particular destinations (for example, small island states, heritage cities), there are others who use comparative or meta-analytical approaches in order to discover governance patterns in different contexts [8]. The absence of a comprehensive review of the

publication dynamics, thematic clusters, key authors, and research fronts in tourism governance does not allow for identifying the future direction of research as well as gaps that need further exploration.

Bibliometrics have become an important technique used in tourism research to measure the growth of knowledge, collaboration, and evolution of the discipline [9]. Bibliometric analysis uses citation analysis, authorship network, keyword analysis, and publication visualization to identify the hidden patterns in the field of study and anticipate future trends. The use of bibliometric analysis for tourism governance will shed light on what concepts, geographical areas, or epistemologies are prevalent in the field and where the gaps remain. Furthermore, bibliometrics will help policymakers, researchers, and destinations make sense of the evolving governance discourse.

This study addresses this challenge by undertaking a complete bibliometric analysis of research on tourism governance. The study undertakes a systematic aggregation and analysis of key literature in the field of tourism governance so as to build a comprehensive overview of the intellectual evolution, themes, authorship, and collaboration in tourism governance. This is achieved through contributions towards theory building and practice – aiding researchers to place their works in the wider context of intellectual developments while at the same time helping practitioners gain evidence-based insights into tourism governance scholarship.

Though there have been numerous empirical studies on various aspects of tourism governance, the area of study lacks a consistent concept, a theory-based approach, and defined developmental stages. Literature reviews conducted earlier tend to be either thematic (i.e., on some sub-areas such as destination governance or partnerships), or merely descriptive instead of systematic, which results in insufficient development of the body of knowledge about the field's structure, impact, and development. Thus, the area lacks a systematic review that could give

a clear picture of all the research done on the topic, its key authors, citation patterns, and emerging research directions. The objective of this study is to perform a bibliometric analysis of tourism governance literature to systematically map its intellectual landscape.

2. METHODS

This study employed a bibliometric research design to systematically map and analyze the scholarly literature on tourism governance. Bibliometric analysis provides a quantitative and visual approach to understand the intellectual structure, evolution, and trends within a research field. By applying bibliometric techniques, this study aimed to identify key authors, journals, countries, institutions, and thematic clusters in tourism governance research. The scope of the analysis was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2000 and 2026 to ensure the inclusion of contemporary developments in governance theory and practice. Only documents indexed in the Scopus database were considered due to its comprehensive coverage of international journals and high-quality bibliographic metadata, including author affiliations, citations, abstracts, keywords, and references.

The data was collected via a well-designed search process in Scopus. The keywords were chosen through previous literature review, based on commonly used phrases when it comes to the topic of tourism

governance, namely, “tourism governance,” “destination governance,” “stakeholder management in tourism,” and “policy networks tourism.” In order to filter out all non-English language journal articles, Boolean operators and filters were used. The obtained database was exported in BibTeX and CSV formats, which included all relevant information related to authors’ names, publication date, journals’ titles, citation number, keywords, and affiliations.

Bibliometric analysis and visualization have been performed with the help of VOSviewer (version 1.6.x), which is a software dedicated to the development and visualization of bibliometric networks. VOSviewer software has been utilized for co-authorship, co-citation, bibliographic coupling, and keyword co-occurrence analysis. Co-authorship analysis helped in recognizing the collaboration networks between authors, institutions, and countries. Co-citation and bibliographic coupling analysis helped in recognizing the influential publications and the intellectual structure of the field. Keyword co-occurrence analysis offered valuable information regarding the key research themes, trending issues, and emerging clusters in the area of tourism governance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Keyword Co-Occurrence Network

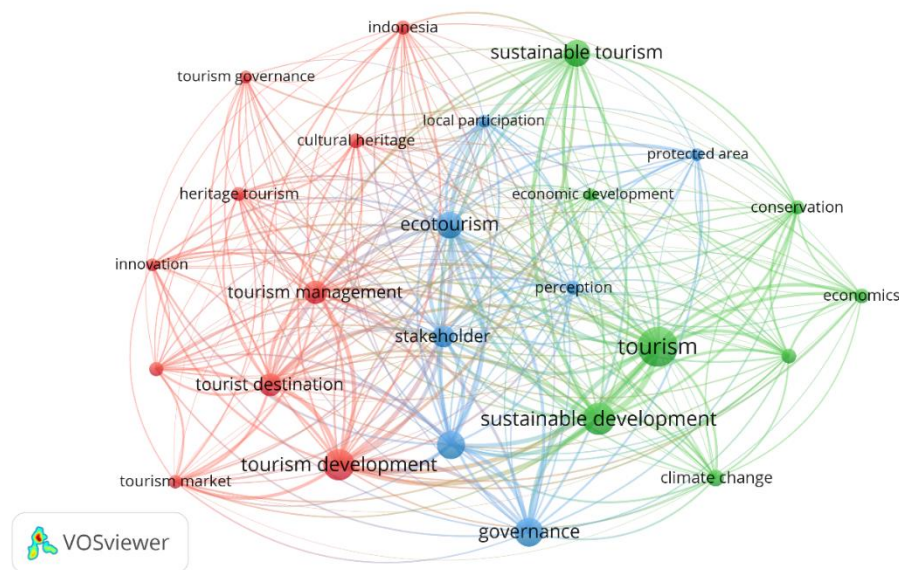


Figure 1. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the field of tourism governance studies. It features a number of connected clusters of varying colors, with the node size showing the keyword usage frequency and the linking lines indicating the strength of relations between keywords. It can be seen that tourism governance is closely connected to the topics of sustainable tourism, tourism development, stakeholders, destination management, conservation, and governance itself.

Green is a cluster which depicts the major topic concerning sustainable tourism and environmental governance. The term "tourism" is used as one of the biggest keywords, reflecting the significant place of the term within the research area. Tourism is linked to keywords including sustainable tourism, sustainable development, conservation, protected area, climate change, and economic development. It is evident that the current research in tourism governance increasingly focuses on the balance between economic aspects and environmental concerns. Sustainable tourism is closely associated with conservation concepts, which means that governance mechanisms are often studied within the natural resource management area.

The cluster in red color brings out the link between tourism management, destination development, and cultural-based tourism governance. Tourism development, tourist destination, tourism management, tourism governance, heritage tourism, cultural heritage, and tourism market are some of the keywords that are very much associated with this cluster. This is an indication that researches on tourism governance tend to be concerned with the planning and management of tourism destinations through institutions. The emergence of Indonesia as one of the leading keywords in this cluster implies that Indonesia has been a key empirical site in tourism governance research.

The blue cluster refers to the growing dimension of collaborative governance and stakeholder participation. Examples of keywords in this context include governance, stakeholder, local participation, and ecotourism. This shows that the management of tourism increasingly sees tourism management as a multiple actor approach whereby government, communities, private sectors, and other stakeholders are engaged. The relationship between governance and stakeholder participation illustrates how tourism management has evolved from being government-based to collaborative

governance. Here, effective tourism management is not only about policy implementation but also involves collaboration and decision making.

From the network map, it can be seen that tourism governance research has developed into an interdisciplinary field, incorporating elements of sustainability, economic growth, environmental protection, culture, and participatory governance. As the clusters have a high level of

interconnectedness, there is an implication that future research into tourism governance may focus on the integration of smart tourism, climate change adaptation, community empowerment, and sustainable destination development. Hence, the results show that the current trend of tourism governance research is shifting from administration to a more holistic perspective on resilience and sustainable value creation.

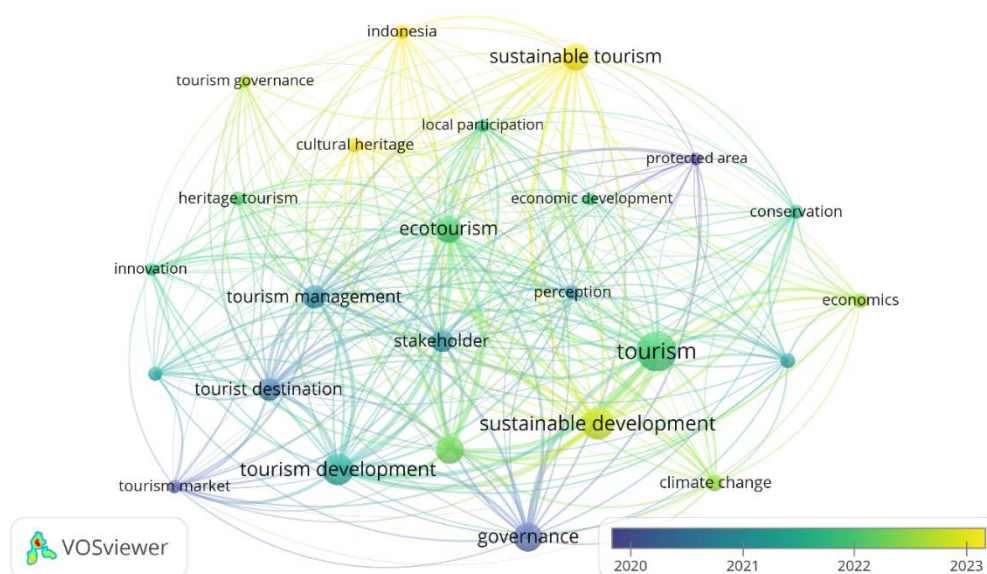


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 2 depicts the timeline of keyword evolution in the domain of tourism governance studies with respect to the year of their mean publication. The colorscale of the figure reflects the progression of the research focus, with darker blue corresponding to earlier studies (circa 2020), green depicting intermediate progressions (2021-2022), and yellow illustrating more recent trends (circa 2023). As can be seen from the figure, tourism governance has increasingly evolved from conventional tourism management and destination development to sustainability and participation.

The research themes of the previous work, which are marked by blue keywords, are mostly related to tourism destination, tourism development, tourism market, and governance. This implies that the first tourism

governance studies were mostly concentrated on destination planning and development, and institutions to govern tourism operations. However, over time, the attention was shifted towards more broad notions like stakeholder participation, community participation, ecotourism, and sustainable development, which are indicated by green keywords. The shift signifies the increased interest among scholars in collaborative governance models where tourism development is considered as a cooperative process.

New trends in research, symbolized by yellow keywords, are sustainable tourism, Indonesia, cultural heritage, and local participation. It appears that the above-mentioned emerging topics show that contemporary tourism governance studies put more and more focus on sustainability,

preservation of culture, and empowerment of communities as key components of tourism management. The correlation between sustainable tourism and such terms as

conservation, protected areas, and development proves that the current research is evolving in the direction of integrated tourism governance models.

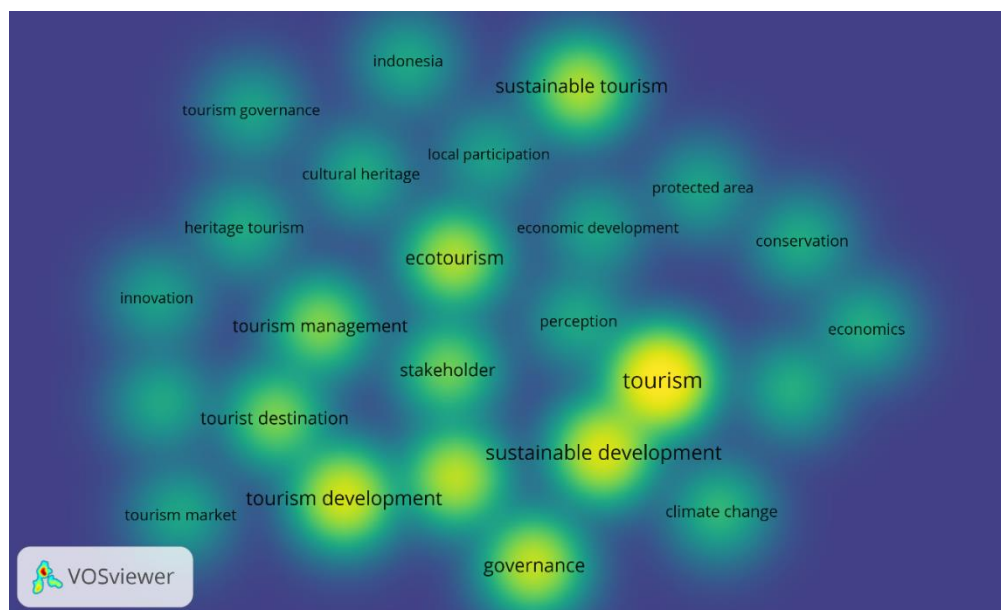


Figure 3. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 3 shows the density and intensity of research subjects in tourism governance studies. The color intensity is used to show the frequency and significance of keywords, where bright yellow denotes keywords that have been used frequently and are subject to more research attention, while green and blue denote less dense topics. Tourism, sustainable tourism, sustainable development, tourism development, and ecotourism can be seen as the major subjects of research, thus denoting that these topics constitute the heart of tourism governance studies.

The distribution of keyword densities shows that there is increasing interest in the

issue of the link between sustainability and destination management in tourism governance. The high concentration on sustainable tourism and sustainable development indicates an increasing scholarly interest in the issues of environment protection, economics, and resilience of tourism. At the same time, the usage of such keywords as stakeholder, local participation, governance, and conservation indicates that current studies focus on collaborative tourism management practices. Hence, further tourism governance research will be probably oriented towards the development of inclusive governance practices.

3.2 Co-Authorship Analysis

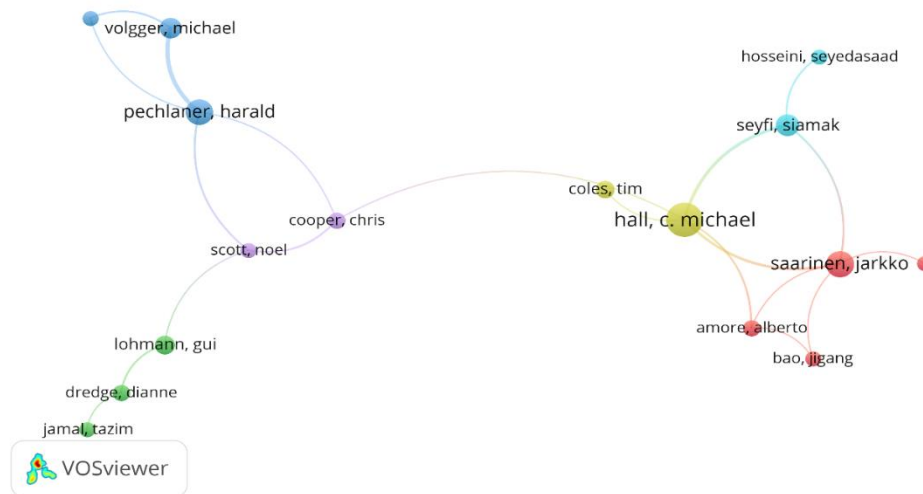


Figure 4. Author Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

The Figure 4 shows the intellectual base and influential authors in the tourism governance literature. This network contains several clusters, representing different theoretical and research strands contributing to the development of this field. The larger nodes include authors like Hall, C. Michael; Saarinen, Jarkko; and Pechlaner, Harald. These nodes show influential authors having strong citation links, and thus indicating their important contribution in the field of tourism governance, destination management, and

sustainable tourism. The linkages between different authors show intellectual connections between these researchers. For instance, authors like Hall and Saarinen are highly involved with themes like tourism policy, sustainability, regional development, and governance approaches while authors like Pechlaner, Volgger and others have made an important contribution in the destination governance and collaborative governance approach.



Figure 5. Institution Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

As it can be seen in Figure 5, the research connections and inter-organization relationships of the institutions contributing to tourism governance research are shown in the network below. In fact, a number of clusters of institutions can be seen on the network and the University of Oulu, Finland can be seen as one of the most dominant institutions within this network since it suggests a strong presence of this institution in tourism governance research. Such institutions as the Geography Research Unit,

University of Oulu, Qasim Ibrahim School of Business, Villa College, and tourism-related departments from Chinese universities are examples of institutions that actively participate in the development of knowledge in this field. Based on the links between the institutions, it is possible to say that tourism governance research involves international cooperation of universities from Europe and Asia.

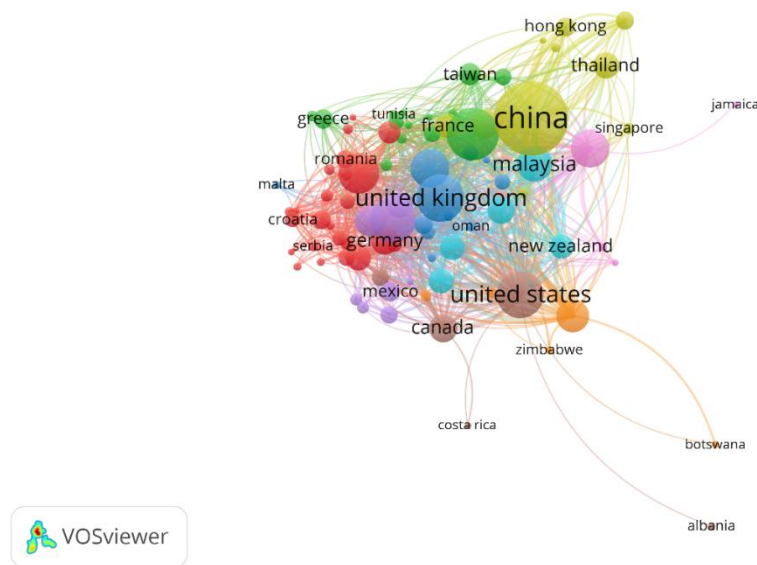


Figure 6. Country Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 6 presents the distribution of research activities related to tourism governance and the cooperation patterns around the world. The network shows that the research on tourism governance is conducted on an internationally collaborative scale where some highly connected and important countries serve as central nodes. Among those countries the UK, China, and the USA appear to be the largest nodes due to the high involvement in tourism governance publications and international cooperation.

Some other major contributors to research in tourism governance, which include Germany, France, Malaysia, Spain, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia, have strong connections with the above mentioned countries and reflect the multidisciplinary character of the research area. High density of connections between countries indicates that the process of knowledge development in tourism governance is facilitated with the help of international cooperation, especially between Europe, Asia, and North America.

3.3 Citation Analysis

Table 1. Top Cited Research

Citations	Authors and year	Title
718	[10]	Why local people do not support conservation: Community perceptions of marine protected area livelihood impacts, governance and management in Thailand
525	[11]	A systematic scoping review of sustainable tourism indicators in relation to the sustainable development goals
475	[12]	Governance, the state and sustainable tourism: A political economy approach
741	[13]	A typology of governance and its implications for tourism policy analysis
354	[14]	Local tourism governance: A comparison of three network approaches
310	[15]	An integrated approach to "sustainable community-based tourism"
304	[16]	Corporate social responsibility: The disclosure-performance gap
294	[17]	Ecotourism for Conservation?
280	[18]	Motivations for ISO 14001 in the hotel industry
279	[19]	Tourism and corporate social responsibility: A critical review and research agenda

Source: Scopus, 2026

The Table 1 below shows the topmost publications in the tourism governance literature based on citation impact. As it appears from the findings, the highly cited publications tend to be those that emphasize the role of governance, sustainable tourism development, stakeholder involvement, conservation, and community participation. For instance, one of the most highly cited works is that of [13], titled "A Typology of Governance and Its Implications for Tourism Policy Analysis" which has 741 citations. The paper stresses the fundamental significance of governance models for the understanding of the processes of tourism policy and decision-making. Another publication that attracted academic interest and has been cited 718 times is that of [10], who explored community attitudes, conservation and governance problems in marine protected areas. There are other highly cited articles such as those by [12] and [14].

Moreover, there are multiple issues through which the area of tourism governance has evolved, including sustainable tourism metrics, community tourism, corporate social responsibility, ecotourism, and environmental management. The works by [11] and [15] can be viewed as examples of the current interest of researchers

to the topic of sustainable development and community tourism. Publications focused on the issues of corporate social responsibility and environmental criteria like [16] and [18] are the example of increased focus on organizational responsibility and environmental management within tourism governance research.

4. CONCLUSION

The bibliometric analysis gives an elaborate review of intellectual evolution, research trend, and knowledge structure of tourism governance research. The results of the study indicate that tourism governance has become a multidisciplinary field of research that incorporates elements of sustainable tourism, destination management, stakeholder cooperation, environmental conservation, and public policy. The analysis of keywords shows that the early research in tourism governance focused on tourism development, destination management, and governance, while the recent studies emphasize topics such as sustainable tourism, climate change adaptation, ecotourism, cultural heritage protection, and stakeholder participation. Thematic evolution shows the shift in research from government-based tourism

management to stakeholder involvement in governance.

The bibliometric mapping also emphasizes the vital role played by the influential authors, institutions, and countries in the development of the field. Scholars like Hall, Bramwell, Dredge, Jamal, and Saarinen have made important theoretical contributions on topics like governance structures, stakeholders' networks, sustainable tourism planning, and policy analysis of destinations. The study of

collaboration between countries reveals that research on tourism governance has been achieved with great international collaboration with UK, China, and the United States being the major countries contributing to the field. Highly cited papers reveal that community participation, conservation governance, sustainability goals, and responsible tourism practices are important in the literature.

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