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Literature Review

# Economic impact of sustainable tourism: a bibliometric analysis.

## Impacto económico del turismo sostenible: un análisis bibliométrico.

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#### ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism is crucial for economic development and environmental conservation. This study aims to understand the economic impact of sustainable tourism in rural areas. Through a comprehensive literature review, the significance of key terms like "Sustainable tourism," "Economic impact," "Rural area," and "Economic analysis" is highlighted. The main goal is to conduct a bibliometric analysis using VosViewer software and Scopus data from 2019-2024. This analysis will identify relationships between these terms and assess the co-occurrence of concepts in the reviewed articles. The study also aims to design density maps to visualize these co-occurrences, providing a clear representation of the connections between key concepts. Additionally, it proposes identifying the density of matches in the literature and co-citations of authors, offering a solid foundation for future research in sustainable tourism. The article's structure includes an introduction, literature review, methodology, results analysis, and conclusions, providing a comprehensive framework to understand the economic impact of sustainable tourism in rural areas. This approach allows researchers and industry professionals to explore new directions and better understand the mechanisms influencing sustainable economic development through tourism.

**Keywords:** Sustainable tourism, economic impact, rural area, local employment.

#### RESUMEN

El turismo sostenible es fundamental para el desarrollo económico y la conservación del medio ambiente. Este estudio busca comprender el impacto económico del turismo sostenible en las zonas rurales. A través de una revisión exhaustiva de la literatura, se destaca la importancia de términos clave como "Turismo sostenible", "Impacto económico", "Área rural" y "Análisis económico". El objetivo principal es realizar un análisis bibliométrico utilizando el software VosViewer y datos de Scopus para el período 2019-2024. Este análisis permitirá identificar las relaciones entre estos términos y evaluar la co-ocurrencia de conceptos en los artículos revisados. También se busca diseñar figuras de densidad que visualicen estas co-ocurrencias, ofreciendo una representación clara de las conexiones entre conceptos clave. Además, el estudio propone identificar la densidad de coincidencias en la literatura y las co-citaciones de autores, proporcionando una base sólida para futuras investigaciones en el campo del turismo sostenible. La estructura del artículo incluye una introducción, revisión de la literatura, metodología, análisis de resultados y conclusiones, proporcionando un marco completo para comprender el impacto económico del turismo sostenible en las zonas rurales. Este enfoque permite a los investigadores y profesionales explorar nuevas direcciones y comprender mejor los mecanismos que influyen en el desarrollo económico sostenible a través del turismo.

Palabras clave: Turismo sostenible, impacto económico, área rural, empleo local.

#### INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism has become an increasingly important issue in the field of economic development and environmental conservation worldwide. Sustainable tourism represents a significant opportunity to boost local economic development while preserving the region's natural and cultural resources. However, despite the obvious potential, there is a need to better understand the economic impact of sustainable tourism in this rural area.

In addition to providing researchers with an outline of theoretical development and key points of seminal literature, this article provides a visual summary of the field's literature on the economic impact of sustainable tourism in rural areas. It also reveals interesting current research topics and provides a reference direction for studies on the mechanisms shaping the economic impact of sustainable tourism in rural areas and empirical research. In order to provide future researchers with a solid research foundation and suggest directions for future research.

This article arises as a response to the literature review stage and the state of the art of the subject, associated with research on: "Analysis of the economic impact of sustainable tourism". Consequently, a bibliographic search of review and research articles was carried out, which allow establishing the direct relationship between the terms of Sustainable Tourism (Sustainable tourism), Economic Impact (Economic impact), Rural area (Rural area), Economic analysis (Economic analysis).

In fact, the following formulation of the problem is used: what degree of co-occurrence exists between the terms Sustainable tourism, Economic impact, Rural area, Economic analysis according to the articles consulted in the Scopus databases, during the period between 2019-2024?

The general objective is to carry out a bibliometric analysis of article searches in the Scopus scientific databases, related to the concepts of Sustainable Tourism, Economic Impact, Rural Area, Economic Analysis, during the period 2019-2024, through the application of the VosViewer software.

The specific objectives were as follows: to identify the search equations, using as filters the keywords, the time horizon and the nature of the articles reviewed; to design the figurasdensity and visualization of the co-occurrences in the consulted databases, based on the VosViewer application, and to determine the density in the literature coincidences from Scopus 2019-2024 of the keywords and co-citations of authors associated with the consulted databases, through the interpretation of the figurasdensity visualization, word overlap and conceptual networks.

An introduction is provided in Section 1. The literature is reviewed in Section 2. The study methodology and data source are presented in Section 3. An overview of the research on the economic impact of sustainable tourism in rural areas is provided in Section 4. Critical points of the research are discussed in Section 5, along with implications for future research. Research findings and insights are compiled in Section 6.

#### METHODOLOGY

The methodological perspective on which the bibliometric analysis was based corresponds to a mixed approach, since it describes the characteristics associated with the affinities and correlations of the keywords found in the bibliographic references consulted in the Scopus databases, during the period between 2019 and 2024, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Thus, the aim was to carry out a literature review of the articles reviewed in this database, which show the advancement of knowledge associated with the relationship between the concepts of the economic impact of sustainable tourism in rural areas. Likewise, the type of research applied in the article corresponds to the documentary approach, since it was based on the collection, classification and search of bibliographical references, delimited in terms of the words "economic impact", "sustainable tourism" and "rural area" which were consolidated in the database, and later, were taken into account for the bibliometric analysis through the VosViewer application.

Meanwhile, the specific research method applied in the present analysis corresponds to the categorical system, in which documentary research strategies were applied in order to categorize the words or keywords in the development of bibliographical reference searches in Scopus. Therefore, the categorical system was applied in the first instance, taking into account the Boolean operators for the definition of the ranges and search criteria in Scopus, involving the search equations.

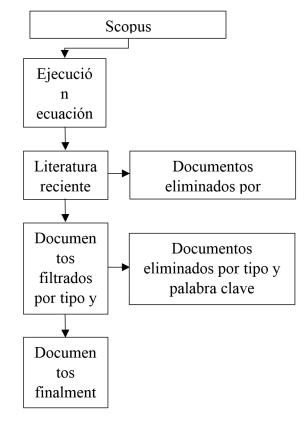


Therefore, the systematic literature review methodology was applied, which involves a review of quantitative and qualitative aspects of primary studies. Likewise, (Peña-Azpiri and Escudero-Nahón, 2020) establishes that the systematic literature review has three fundamental stages: design and planning of the searches to be carried out, application of the search equations and reporting and analysis of the results applying the bibliometric tools. Taking into account the bibliographic references collected in the Scopus databases, the procedure that allowed the bibliometric analysis using the VosViewer software is presented below.

dering studies published from 2019 to 2014, yielding 967 documents. Then, the files that were considered the most relevant and related to the study topic were filtered according to document type and keyword. This resulted in a total of 469 documents. The detailed search process is represented in the following figure.

on more recent literature, the search was refined consi-

#### Figure 1: Bibliographic search process



#### Table 1: Procedure for bibliometric analysis VosViewer.

Number	Activity
1	Design of the search equations: " Economic impact " "Rural tourism " " Economic development "
2	Entering search equations into the Scopus database.
3	Export of files in .CSV (Scopus) formats of the searches obtained.
4	Loading databases into the VosViewer application .
5	Setting the minimum number of keywords for which co -occurrences and affinities were required in the database.
6	Loading and displaying the figurasnetworks, overlay and density generated in the database loaded in VosViewer .
7	Analysis of keyword co-occurrences and density figures visualized in the VosViewer application .

Source: Own elaboration.

The following search formula was applied: " Economic impact " AND "Rural tourism " AND " Economic development ". The The equation used in this bibliographic search includes terms such as " impact", "economic", "rural", "tourism", "economic development" to refer to the economic impact of tourism in journal-type files.

The initial search without restrictions on language, document type or knowledge areas yielded 1,677 files from the Scopus database from 1976 to 2024. However, to focus

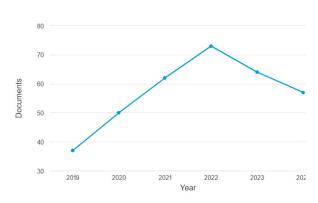
Source: Own elaboration.

#### **DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

Below is a presentation of the evolution of the number of publications over time, identifying temporal trends in the research on the economic impact of rural tourism, using the search equation " economic impact " AND " economic development " AND "rural area ", applied to the Scopus database .



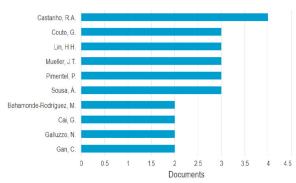
### Figure 2: Evolution of the number of publications over time



Source: Scopus database, obtained with the search equations.

Figure 2 shows a steady increase in the number of publications on the economic impact of rural tourism from 2019 to 2022, peaking in 2022 with 73 papers, indicating a growing interest in the topic, probably due to the recognition of the importance of rural tourism in the economy and changes in travel trends. However, from 2023 onwards, a decrease in publications is observed. Despite the drop, the number of papers in 2023 and 2024 remains high compared to 2019.

Continuing with the identification of the most influential authors in the field, we can observe the following.



#### Figure 3: Most influential authors

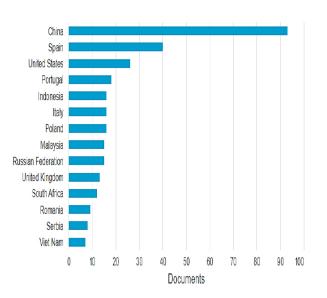
Source: Scopus database, obtained with the search equations.

On the other hand, we have the number of documents published by different authors on the subject, highlighting Castaño, RA (Castaño, et al., 2023) (Casaño, et al., 2020) (Casaño, et al., 2020) (Castaño, et al., 2019) as the most prolific author with 4 documents. The authors

Couto, G., (Couto, et al., 2023) (Couto, et al., 2020) (Couto, et al., 2020) Lin, HH, (Lin, et al., 2024) (Lin, et al., 2022) (Lin, et al., 2020) Mueller, JT, (Mueller, et al., 2022) (Mueller, et al., 2020)(Mueller & Tickamyer, 2020) Pimentel, P., (Pimentel, et al. 2023) (Pimentel, et al., 2020) (Pimentel, et al., 2020) and Sousa, Á. (Sousa, et al. 2023) (Sousa, et al., 2020) (Sousa, et al., 2020) have a similar elaboration, with 3 documents each, indicating a significant but minor contribution compared to Castaño. Other authors such as Bahamonde-Rodríguez, M., (Bahamonde-Rodríguez, et al., 2024) (Bahamonde-Rodríguez, et al., 2023) Cai, G., (Cai, et al., 2023) (Cai, et al., 2023) Galluzzo, N., (Galluzzo, 2022) (Galluzzo, 2020) and Gan, C. (Gan, et al., 2024) (Gan, et al., 2023) have published 2 papers, suggesting more limited engagement in research on this topic.

economic " are presented below. impact " AND " economic development " AND "rural area ", applied to the Scopus database.

Figure 4: Classification of articles by country of origin Scopus 2019-2024 Search equation " economic impact " AND " economic development " AND "rural area ".



Source: Scopus database, obtained with the search equations.

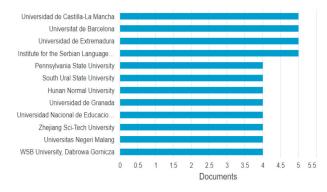
Based on Figure 3, it is important to clarify that with respect to the search equation " economic impact " AND " economic development " AND "rural area ", applied to the Scopus database, the three countries with the most related articles were shown to be China, presenting 93 docu-



ments, followed by Spain, which presents 40 documents and 26 documents whose country of origin is the United States; It should be noted that in the Scopus database, 2 articles published in Colombia were registered, developed by (Forero, 2022) and (Vianchá Sánchez, 2021).

Additionally, documents are determined by affiliation, identifying academic and research institutions in the field of the topic on the economic impact of rural tourism.

#### Figure 5: Documents by affiliation

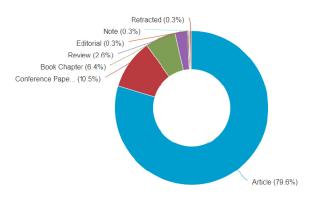


Source: Scopus database, obtained with the search equations.

The University of Castilla-La Mancha, the University of Barcelona, the University of Extremadura and the Serbian Language Institute of SASA lead with 5 papers each, demonstrating a significant contribution to research in this field. Pennsylvania State University University also stand out with 4 documents each, as does South Ural State University. University, Hunan Normal University, and the University of Granada, each with 4 documents. Other institutions such as the National University of Education, Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, Negeri Malang University, and WSB University, Dabrowa Gornicza, have contributed 4 papers each. This publication pattern reflects a broad international participation in research on the economic impact of rural tourism, with institutions from diverse regions contributing knowledge and perspectives to the topic.

Next, there are documents by type, where they are classified according to the type, whether it is a journal article, conferences, book chapters, among others. Evaluating the distribution of types of publications in the field.

#### Figure 6: Documents by type

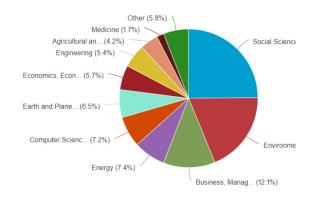


Source: Scopus database, obtained with the search equations.

Considering Figure 6, it can be observed that the predominant type of document under this model is the article, representing 79% of the total. This high percentage indicates a preference for publishing articles in academic journals, which suggests greater visibility and recognition in the community. In second place, session documents constitute 10%. Finally, book chapters comprise 6%, which indicates a smaller but significant contribution to collective works. These data highlight the diversity of formats in the dissemination of knowledge about the economic impact of rural tourism.

Additionally, there are documents by area, identifying the predominant thematic areas in the research and analyzing how these relate to the economic impact of rural tourism.

#### Figure 7: Documents by area

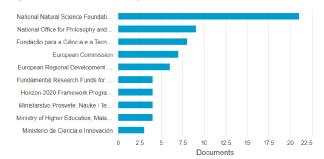


Source: Scopus database, obtained with the search equations.



Continuing with the most relevant area, social sciences, with 24% of the total. This is followed by environmental science with 19%, highlighting the importance of this field in research on the economic impact of rural tourism. In third place are business, management and accounting, representing 12%, which underlines the interest in administration and the economic implications within this context. Finally, there are documents by Sponsor, determining the main sources of funding for the research.

#### Figure 8: Documents by sponsor



Source: Scopus database, obtained with the search equations.

Data on the main funding sources for research into the economic impact of rural tourism highlight the significant influence of diverse funders. The National Natural Science Foundation of China leads with 21 papers, underlining its crucial role in fostering scientific output. The National Office of Philosophy and Social Sciences and the Foundation for Science and Technology follow with 9 and 8 papers respectively, reflecting their strong support in these areas. The European Commission and the European Regional Development Fund, with 7 and 6 papers, show the importance of European funding in research. Other funders, such as the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities, the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme, and the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia, each contribute 4 papers, highlighting a diverse international contribution. Finally, the Ministry of Science and Innovation, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, and the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, with 3 papers each, illustrate a more specific but significant support in their respective countries. These data reflect a global panorama of funding, evidencing the positive impact of multiple sponsors in the promotion and development of scientific research in the field of rural tourism.

Continuing with the journals with the most citations throughout the selected years.

#### Figure 9: Cited journals

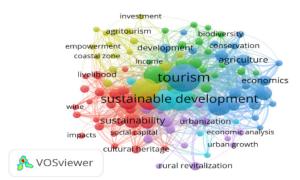


Source: Scopus database, obtained with the search equations.

Figure 9 shows the citations of different journals between 2019 and 2024, highlighting the importance and impact of these publications in areas such as sustainability, tourism and environmental sciences. "Sustainability (Switzerland)" stands out with the highest citations, especially in 2020 with 131 citations and 2019 with 122 citations, reflecting its influence on research. Newer journals such as the "Journal of Cleaner Production" and the "Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management", although with fewer citations, are starting to gain relevance. Overall, the distribution of citations shows both the durability of some publications and the growing impact of others in these fields of study.

However, taking into account the processing of searches in the bibliometric software VosViewer, the visualization of the network figure of the Scopus database is presented below.

### Figure 10: Network figure co-occurrences keywords articles Scopus - VosViewer.



Note: This figure was created in VosViewer from the search equations entered in the Scopus database, filtering the time criterion from the year 2019 to the year 2024.

Considering the network visualization map of the keywords associated with the searches in the Scopus database, it is perceived that 3 clusters of terms are formed . The articles selected for this bibliographic research demonstrate that sustainable rural tourism has a significant economic impact on local communities. These studies highlight benefits such as job creation, increased income for local businesses and improved infrastructure. In addition, they underline the importance of proper management to maximize these benefits and ensure balanced development. Overall, the reviewed literature reaffirms that sustainable tourism is a viable tool for rural economic development.

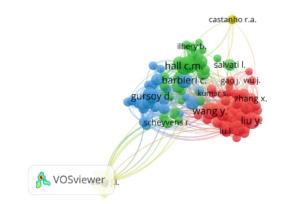
The keyword co-occurrence figure generated by VOSviewer reveals the relationships between the most frequently used terms in research on rural tourism and sustainable development, organized into six clusters.

The first cluster , with 25 items, seems to focus on concepts related to "tourism", "sustainable development", "economic impact", "sustainable tourism" and "cultural tourism", showing the interconnection between tourism activity and sustainable practices. The second cluster , with 20 items, groups terms associated with " economic aspect ", "environmental economics" and "economic development", indicating a focus on cultural preservation and its relationship with tourism. The third cluster also contains 20 items, but is oriented towards words such as " rural tourism" and "development", suggesting an interest in the economic implications of rural tourism.

The fourth cluster , with 17 items, is linked to terms such as "agrotourism" and "biodiversity," highlighting the relationship between tourism and sustainable agricultural practices. The fifth cluster , with 15 items, focuses on terms such as " economic growth " and "socioeconomic condition," reflecting a focus on the social and economic impact of tourism on rural communities. Finally, the sixth cluster , although smaller with 6 items, includes terms such as "innovation" and "sustainable development," signaling an interest in economic investments and their role in promoting rural tourism.

This figure reflects the breadth and complexity of the field of study, showing how different aspects of rural tourism are interrelated through economic, social, cultural and environmental concepts. The grouping of key terms suggests areas of research that are deeply connected, underlining the interdisciplinary nature of rural tourism and sustainable development.





Note: This figure was created in VosViewer from the search equations entered in the Scopus database, filtering the time criterion from the year 2019 to the year 2024.

Figure 11 of the co-citations generated by VOSviewer illustrates the citation relationships between authors who have contributed to research on the economic impact of tourism. Different colors represent groupings of authors who are frequently cited together, indicating that their work is closely related in thematic terms.

Several groups of authors are also highlighted. The blue group, with authors such as Barbieri C., Gursoy D., and Scheyvens R., indicates a strong citation network in areas that probably focus on sustainable tourism and local development. The green group, where authors such as Hall CM, Ilbery B., and Salvati I. are observed, could be associated with topics related to rural development and tourism practices. On the other hand, the red group, with authors such as Wang Y., Liu Y., and Zhang X., suggests a focus on more recent or emerging research, possibly linked to specific case studies or new methodologies in tourism analysis.

Castanho RA, represented in yellow, appears to be more isolated, suggesting that although his work is relevant, he might be addressing slightly different or more specialized topics compared to the main groups. The connections

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between the different groups indicate a cross-pollination of ideas and references that enriches the field of study, showing how research from different geographical areas and methodological approaches interrelate and contribute to the body of knowledge on the economic impact of tourism. This figure highlights the collaboration and dialogue between researchers, reflecting the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of this area of study.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the bibliometric analysis of the economic impact of sustainable tourism in rural areas reveal a growing trend in research on the topic between 2019 and 2022, highlighting the significant increase in publications in 2022, suggesting a growing interest in rural tourism as an economic driver. However, a decrease in publications is observed from 2023 onwards, which could indicate a change in research priorities or an exhaustion in the exploration of the topic within current frameworks. Furthermore, the analysis of the most influential authors and the identification of leading countries and universities in this area of research show a strong presence of China, Spain and the United States, reflecting the global relevance of sustainable tourism and its economic impact.

The study also highlights the diversity in document types, with a predominance of journal articles, indicating a rigorous academic approach in knowledge dissemination. Analysis tools such as VosViewer allowed for the visualization of keyword co-occurrences and affinities, offering a deeper understanding of conceptual connections in the reviewed literature. These findings not only consolidate the importance of sustainable tourism in rural development, but also open new avenues for future research, especially in less explored or emerging areas in the context of sustainable tourism and its economic impact.

#### Limitations and future research

Limitations of this study include the possible exclusion of relevant studies due to keyword and database selection, the temporal restriction of the analysis, and the focus on quantitative data that limits in-depth exploration of the qualitative content of the reviewed studies.

For future research, it is essential to explore the impact of tax reforms in Colombia from a longitudinal perspective, analyzing how recent modifications affect different economic sectors and how they compare with international practices. It would also be valuable to investigate the perceptions of taxpayers and tax professionals regarding the fairness and efficiency of these laws, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures implemented to combat tax evasion. Furthermore, a deeper analysis of the social and economic implications of these policies in various regions of the country could offer a more complete view of their impact.

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