



Research Article

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURE TOURISM AND LOCAL PEOPLE: A  
BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS REVIEW**

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**Abstract**

This study analyzes 1,997 studies in the Web of Science database from 1982 to 2025 through a systematic literature review to determine the general trends in academic research examining the relationship between nature tourism and local communities. The review covers publications containing the terms “nature tourism” and “local community” in their titles, abstracts, and keywords. The data were evaluated using bibliometric analysis methods with VOSviewer, BibExcel, and Excel software. The findings show that most of the studies were written in English (1.893 documents) and were largely open access (94.8%). The year with the highest number of publications was 2024 (n=198), and the country with the most publications was the USA (n=443). Keyword analysis revealed that concepts such as “ecotourism,” “sustainability,” “conservation,” and “climate change” were prominent. When looking at the keyword list, newly emerging terms include ‘cultural ecosystem services’, ‘social-ecological systems’, ‘human-wildlife conflict’, ‘forest management’, and ‘nature-based solutions’. Geoffrey Wall was identified as the most prolific author, while the most frequently cited work was by Andereck K. L. et al. (2005) and Ap, J. (1992). When examining the results of the co-authorship/citation network, Butler, R. W. (1980) emerges as the most-cited author. The findings indicate that local community involvement is critical in the development of sustainable tourism policies; policymakers and practitioners can enhance inclusivity and long-term effectiveness by adopting community-centered approaches and prioritizing ecosystem conservation.

**Keywords:** Nature Tourism, Local Communities, Bibliometric Analysis, Sustainability

**Introduction**

Nature tourism essentially refers to activities carried out in natural environments. This type of tourism encompasses various activities based on the appreciation of natural values such as landscape integrity, landforms, water resources, vegetation, and wildlife. Nature-based tourism plays an important role in improving visitors' mental health by encompassing both relaxing activities in rural areas and adventure-oriented activities (Kiper and Arslan, 2007; Buckley, 2020). This close relationship between nature tourism and natural environments further increases the importance of mutual interaction with the local community.

The mutual interaction between nature tourism and local communities plays a critical role in both regional development and environmental sustainability. Nature tourism is gaining importance as a sustainable form of tourism that supports the economic benefit of local communities while also enabling the preservation of cultural values and the development of healthy interactions with visitors. Therefore, planning rural tourism based on local systems with the active participation of the community makes it possible to minimize negative impacts and increase social benefits. Thus, the increasing prevalence of nature-based tourism highlights the

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need for sustainable environmental protection and effective tourism policies (Kasalak and Akıncı, 2015: 194; Vural, 2019: 50; Balmford et al., 2009).

Although there are few studies in the literature examining the relationship between nature tourism and local communities, there is a lack of comprehensive bibliometric evaluation of this field's publication performance, citation analyses (country, sources, author, co-citation and co-author analysis), keyword analyses and institutional contributions. This study aims to address this gap by systematically revealing the development trends in the field. This study aims to address this gap by systematically revealing development trends in the field. In this context, the study aims to reveal development trends in the field by determining the number of articles published annually in the literature, the number of authors and institutions in the top 20, and the keywords. By examining the country, author, journal, and co-author citation networks, it aims to show how the interaction between nature tourism and local communities is addressed and to reveal the interactions in the literature. The original value of this research lies in being one of the few studies that comprehensively analyzes nature tourism and local community interactions from a bibliometric perspective. With a broad dataset covering the period 1982–2025, it systematically reveals trends, leading authors, and thematic concentrations in the field, providing an empirical and methodological map for the literature. Furthermore, by showing how the local community perspective has evolved in nature tourism research, the study is expected to provide a guiding framework for future academic work, thereby contributing to the development of sustainable tourism policies and a better understanding of socio-ecological systems.

### **Conceptual Background**

With the increasing spread of tourism activities worldwide, diversifying tourism has come to the fore in order to ensure sustainability and increase resilience against economic fluctuations. Destinations have made efforts to develop alternative types of tourism rather than focusing solely on coastal tourism, and since the 1990s, nature tourism has gained increasing attention among these alternatives (Kasalak and Akıncı, 2015: 189). Nature, as the meeting point between visitors and natural resources, is at the heart of sustainable tourism, while rural areas offer tourists unique experiences intertwined with local culture. Therefore, it is important to establish a common understanding of sustainability in destinations focused on nature-based tourism (Soykan, 2003: 8; Albrecht et al., 2021: 32).

The use of local values in tourism constitutes an important element of attractiveness for tourists seeking diverse experiences, while visitor experiences in nature tourism vary according to traveller types (Mansuroğlu, 2006: 44; Brochado, 2019). In this respect, the traditional assumption that nature-based tourists represent a homogeneous group has been critically reassessed; product-based typologies that integrate travel motivations with the characteristics of tourism offerings are considered to provide a more functional framework for sustainable management (Arnegger et al., 2010). Nature tourism is a form of travel and exploration that integrates with rural settlements, is based on natural resources (Oktay et al., 2016: 47), and is compatible with nature and intertwined with natural elements (Korkmaz, 2001: 112). Nature tourism is a process of mutual interaction in terms of preserving ecological integrity and the sustainable use of natural resources, and this link is critical for the continuity of both areas (Valentine, 1992; Fredman and Grundén, 2012).

With its expanding and diversifying structure, nature tourism is an area that encompasses supply-demand dynamics and social contexts (Coghlan and Buckley, 2012) and is an increasingly important activity that creates multifaceted economic and environmental impacts. In this context, changes in social structure lead to constant shifts in demand and trends related to recreation and nature tourism (Bell et al., 2007). Recent scholarly evidence further demonstrates a marked increase in academic attention to nature-based tourism and protected areas, with particular emphasis on themes such as sustainable management, climate change, and ecosystem services. This growing body of research indicates that nature tourism is increasingly conceptualised not merely as a recreational activity, but as a strategic domain that redefines the balance between environmental conservation and economic development (Silva et al., 2023).

The prominence of natural and cultural values in tourism encourages visitors to choose environmentally conscious activities. This contributes significantly to both environmental protection and the economic development of local communities (Mansuroğlu, 2006: 36). The tourism industry is one of the most important sectors that supports integration at the local and global levels and encourages the rapid participation of the local population, especially young people and women, in the workforce in cities and rural areas in many countries (Keskin, 2015: 148). The development of nature tourism in a rural destination creates important

opportunities for the local population in terms of both employment and income growth. To make the most of these opportunities, employment should be provided by the local population as much as possible, ensuring that economic benefits remain local and supporting regional development (Korkmaz, 2001: 130).

Nature tourism contributes to the opening of new facilities and the increase in job opportunities by boosting visitor numbers and diversifying activities in rural areas. This enables local entrepreneurs to generate income in areas such as organization, services, and equipment provision; thus, nature-based tourism comes to the fore as an important tool in the resource conservation-oriented transformation of local economies (Place, 1991; Korkmaz, 2001: 131; Özgürel et al., 2015: 114). In addition to these economic opportunities, the development of nature tourism becomes more sustainable with the active participation of the local community and the evaluation of their experiences. For example, utilizing the experiences of the local community is crucial in the process of determining campsites along hiking routes and sharing information about these areas. In this regard, training programs should be organized for the local community on research areas and effective communication; endemic or endangered species growing in the ecological conditions of the region should be identified and protected, and awareness should be raised on this issue. In addition, during nature walks, a guide from the local community as well as a trained professional should accompany the group, and participants should be given the opportunity to take part in different activities. Furthermore, information meetings should be held for the local community on the efficient use of water for agricultural and recreational purposes (Kiper and Arslan, 2007: 173).

Nature tourism not only contributes to local development but also supports environmentally sensitive and sustainable development. In this process, the quality of life of local communities improves, cultural and natural assets are preserved, high-quality services are delivered to visitors, and local needs are taken into consideration (Özgürel et al., 2015). In this respect, the sustainability discourse surrounding nature-based tourism also requires a critical examination of how natural resources are economically utilised (Duffy, 2015). However, the increasing tourist use of natural areas also generates growing environmental pressures, which has become a significant topic of debate in the literature. In mitigating the negative impacts of rising visitor density, not only physical planning and regulatory measures but also educational and interpretative programmes aimed at raising visitor awareness are regarded as effective management tools (Orams, 2010). It should not be overlooked that the relationship between nature tourism and local communities is of critical importance for sustainable management. Positive perceptions of nature conservation and tourism development among local residents are strengthened through their active participation in planning processes, whereas a lack of participation and negative attitudes may hinder local development (Törn et al., 2008).

### **Nature Tourism and Local Community Relations**

Nature tourism plays an important role in local development and the conservation of natural resources. However, the effects of this type of tourism on local communities can be both positive and negative. Therefore, it is important to examine the relationship between nature tourism and local communities in detail. Nature-based tourism generates a multidimensional transformation process for local communities, influencing not only economic outcomes but also social structures and institutional dynamics (Stronza and Gordillo, 2008). Some studies and findings from Turkish and English literature are presented below.

Place (1991) examined the relationship between nature tourism and local communities, revealing that nature tourism directs the local economy towards resource conservation, but that local communities are unaware of the economic value of the park and that tourism is not sufficiently supported as a development tool. Sekhar (2003), using the example of the Sariska Tiger Reserve in India, stated that nature tourism increased the local community's support for protected areas, but that the unequal distribution of benefits and the community's insufficient participation in the process limited this support; he emphasized local participation and the fair sharing of benefits for sustainable development. Thapa et al. (2022) revealed that nature-based tourism brings economic benefits (employment, income) and socio-cultural costs (cultural change, social conflict) for local communities, stating that the benefits are generally experienced individually, while the costs are experienced at the community level, and that these effects need to be evaluated more comprehensively. Support for sustainable tourism among local residents depends not only on economic gains but also on the strength of community attachment and the extent of participation in decision-making processes (Lee, 2013). Sandbrook (2010) argued that the economic benefits accruing to local communities in nature-based tourism are influenced more by visitors' length of stay than by the specific type or price level of tourism, suggesting that high-cost tourism does not necessarily generate greater local benefits. Findings further indicate that nature tourism has

the potential to enhance household incomes and local socio-economic welfare, particularly in rural areas where alternative livelihood opportunities are limited (Snyman, 2014).

Kiper and Arslan (2007) identified hiking trails and camping areas for nature tourism in the example of Yörükköyü in Safranbolu, Anatolia, highlighting the importance of local community participation and awareness. They demonstrated the necessity of selecting areas suitable for nature tourism and collaborating with the public through recommendations such as educational programs, ecological protection, signage, and efficient water use. Kasalak and Akıncı (2015) examined the positive and negative environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of ecotourism; noting that it created various opportunities for the local community but also caused some negative effects, they made recommendations to increase opportunities. Vural (2019) also showed in his research conducted in Bingöl Ilıcalar Township that the local community viewed tourism positively and that the vast majority supported the development of tourism. In the region, where thermal tourism is the most popular type, nature observation, cycling tourism, agricultural tourism, and mountaineering have also attracted interest within the scope of ecotourism. The study recommended that tourism planning be carried out holistically and that infrastructure needs be met while preserving the natural landscape.

Kiper and Yılmaz (2008) examined the impact of tourism on rural development in coastal settlements in Şarköy, noting that the local population viewed tourism positively and that alternative forms of tourism such as nature walks, camping, and caravan tourism could contribute to rural development. Aldırmaz et al. (2016) assessed the cultural and nature tourism potential of the Kemaliye district and determined that the region's historical, architectural, and natural values are important resources for tourism and that tourism is the main source of hope for the district's economic development. They also concluded that the contributions of cultural and nature tourism to the district have increased, but this increase has not yet been fully proven by official data.

In the aforementioned studies, researchers generally found that nature tourism creates both economic opportunities and socio-cultural impacts on the local population, but that sustainability becomes difficult if these impacts are not distributed fairly and the population is not effectively involved in the process. Furthermore, it was emphasized that local benefits vary depending on factors such as planning, participation, and infrastructure, rather than the type of tourism. In this regard, a common conclusion is that comprehensive planning and raising awareness among local communities are necessary to support sustainable development in areas with nature tourism potential. Local knowledge, trust-based relationships, and the level of social capital within communities play a decisive role in the success of nature-based conservation and tourism practices. Therefore, sustainable management approaches should integrate social dynamics alongside biological objectives in a holistic manner (Pretty and Smith, 2004).

The literature review conducted reveals the multidimensional nature of the relationship between nature tourism and local communities, highlighting the importance of using bibliometric analysis methods to systematically examine current developments in the field. Accordingly, publications addressing the relationship between nature tourism and local communities were evaluated using bibliometric analysis, and the research methodology was detailed in light of this method.

## **Methodology**

### **Design of the Study**

Bibliometrics is defined as the application of mathematical and statistical methods to books and other communication media (Pritchard, 1969: 348). Bibliometrics is a branch of analysis that examines research productivity, interaction, and scientific impact using numerical measurements related to scientific publications and citations (McBurney and Novak, 2002). Bibliometrics analyzes large amounts of data obtained in a specific field or subject to reveal the general state of current research in that field. Bibliometric analyses aim to reveal the intellectual structure of a research field or subject and show the trends within it through publications related to that field. In these analyses, relationships are examined using techniques such as citation, co-citation, co-authorship, and bibliographic matching between elements such as documents, authors, sources, institutions, and countries (Kara Çiğdem et al., 2023). Following the rules that must be applied for bibliographic research, three different programs were used to prepare, analyze, and visualize bibliographic data sets. The BibExcel program was used to process, organize, and merge recurring elements in the data set (Persson et al., 2009). BibExcel was developed to analyze bibliographic data or similarly written texts. It can create data files that can be transferred to Excel or another program for further processing. However, BibExcel does not contain

special modules for visualizing or mapping the results (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017). The dataset obtained from BibExcel was converted into tables, graphs, and figures using the Excel program. Finally, the VOSviewer software was used for bibliometric mapping (Van Eck and Waltman, 2010; Van Eck et al., 2010). *This study, being bibliometric in nature, also does not require ethical committee approval.*

### **Database Selection**

Bibliometric analyses examining nature tourism and local communities (Akyol and Çalık, 2022; Bohur Süntar and Can, 2023; Çılgin and Ongun, 2025) often employ a strategy of using and combining multiple databases, which may not be ideal in many cases. This is because the different formats of different databases can increase human error. Therefore, using a single database may be preferable. Furthermore, compared to other databases such as Scopus, Web of Science data is prepared in a more consistent and standardized manner. This allows us to extract title texts and author names (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021; Bettencourt and Kaur, 2011). For this reason, the Web of Science database was used. The Web of Science database is more established than other databases. Furthermore, it provides reliable and complete citation information, enabling the accurate calculation of the H-index or other research impact metrics. Therefore, the widely used and generally error-free Web of Science (WoS) database is an important resource for these purposes (Van Leeuwen, 2006; Jacsó, 2008; García-Pérez, 2011).

### **Data Collection**

Between July 15, 2025 and August 15, 2025, a search was performed in the Web of Science database using the keywords 'nature tourism' and 'local community'; in this search, the 'all fields' tab was selected. As a result, 1,997 data sets were obtained. By year, the oldest being 1982 and the newest 2025, 1,728 documents (86.530%) are articles from 1,997 different disciplines/fields. Proceedings papers (206 documents, 10.315%) indicate that current developments in the field are shared through conferences. Review articles comprise 73 documents, corresponding to 3.655%, while book chapters and early access each account for 39 records, equivalent to 1.953%. Overall, the majority of the literature consists of articles and, in some cases, conference papers, while review articles play an important role in in-depth analysis. The findings were evaluated based on authors, citations, journals, countries, institutions, keywords, and abstract analyses. Content indexed in the Web of Science database was used for the review. All articles, conference papers, and book chapters covering nature tourism and local communities in the field of tourism were manually searched for those published by Web of Science.

### **Findings**

#### **General Characteristic of the Data Sample**

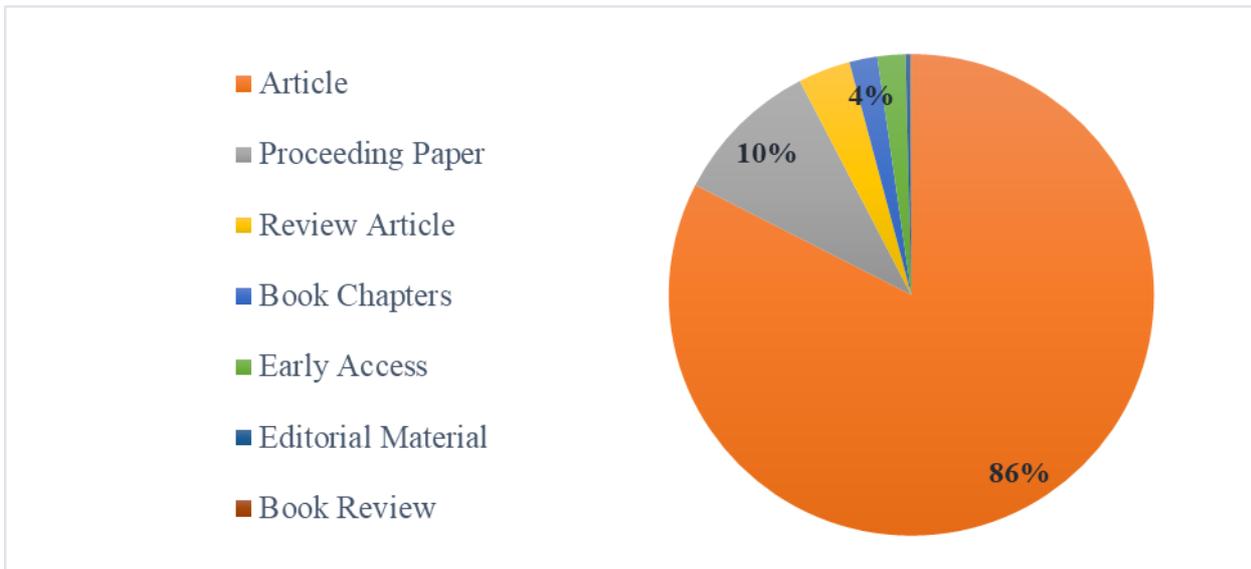
The general characteristics of the data sample reflect indicators such as the annual publication volume of a research field, document types, publication citation indices, and language level. Figure 1 shows the annual publication volume of the data. According to these data, the distribution of a total of 1997 studies by year between 1982 and 2025 is given. An upward trend in the average annual number of articles is observed during this period, which is considered an indicator of the increasing interest of scientists in the field. The forecast curve predicts that the density of literature in this field will continue to increase in the future. Figure 2 shows that among published documents, 1728 articles account for 86%, and 206 conference papers account for 10% and review articles account for 3%, corresponding to 73 documents. Publication distribution according to WOS Data set citation indexes: Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) 821 documents (41.11%), Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED) 761 documents (38.11%), Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) 528 documents (26.44%), Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Social Science and Humanities (CPCI-SSH) 127 documents (6.36%), Conference Proceedings Citation Index – Science (CPCI-S) 108 documents (5.41%), Book Citation Index – Social Sciences and Humanities (BKCI-SSH) 32 documents (1.60%), Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) 25 documents (1.25%), and Book Citation Index – Science (BKCI-S) 11 documents (0.55%). These results reflect the dominance of social science indexes such as SSCI and the role of ESCI in providing visibility to new/emerging journals. The main language of the data sample selected from the WoS database is English, which accounts for 1,893 documents, representing a dominance of 94.792%. Spanish ranks second with 65 documents (3.255%), while Portuguese (11 documents, 0.551%), French (6 documents, 0.300%), and Russian (4 documents, 0.200%) show more limited participation. The remaining languages (Ukrainian, Italian, Malay, Polish, Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, German, Japanese, Norwegian, Slovak, Slovenian, Turkish) each have between 1 and 3 documents, corresponding to approximately 0.05% of

the total. In summary, the study is almost entirely published in English, with multilingual participation remaining limited.

**Figure 1. Annual Publication Growth Trend in Nature Tourism and Local Community Research**



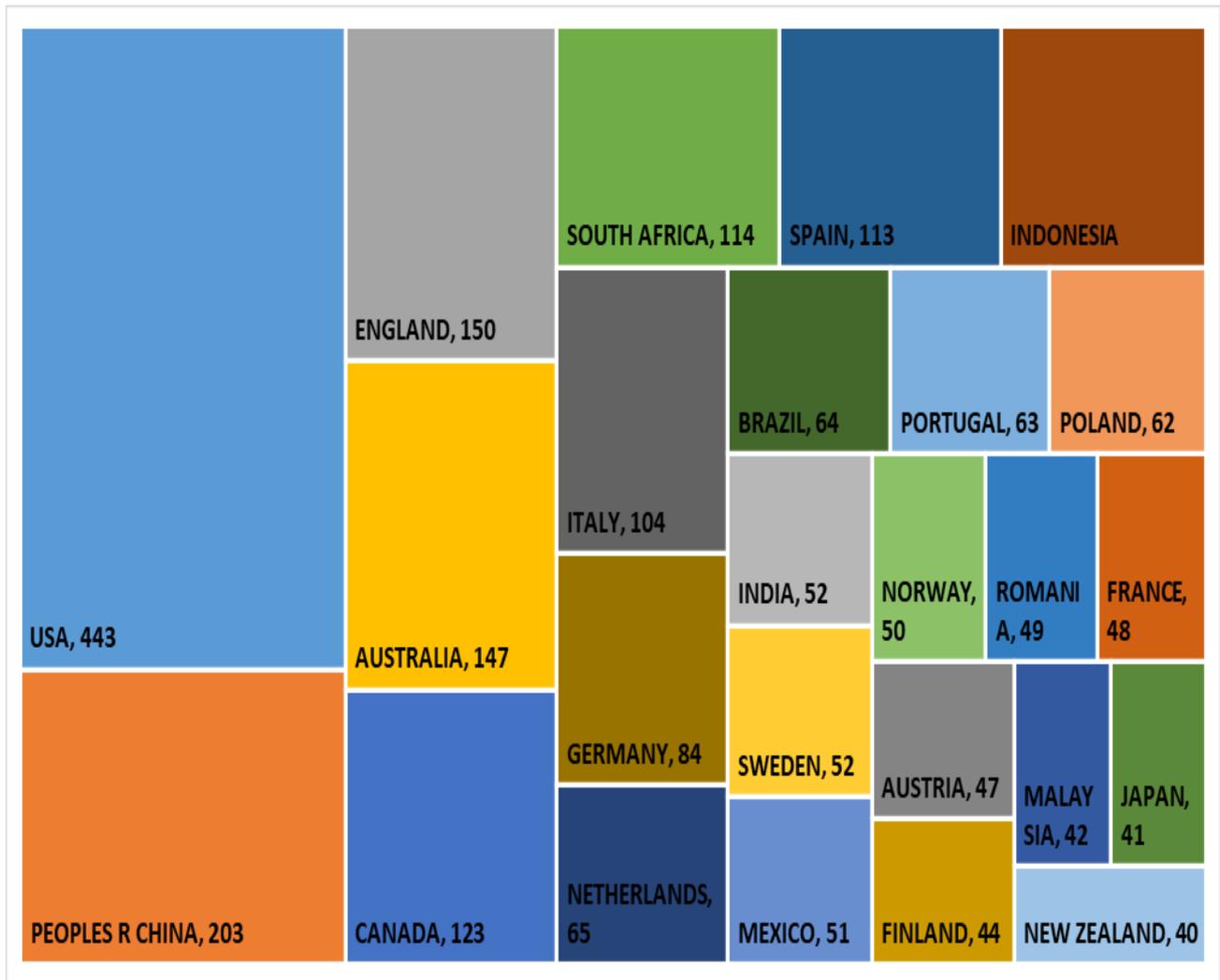
**Figure 2. Visual of Document Types in Nature Tourism and Local Community Research**



**Citation of Countries**

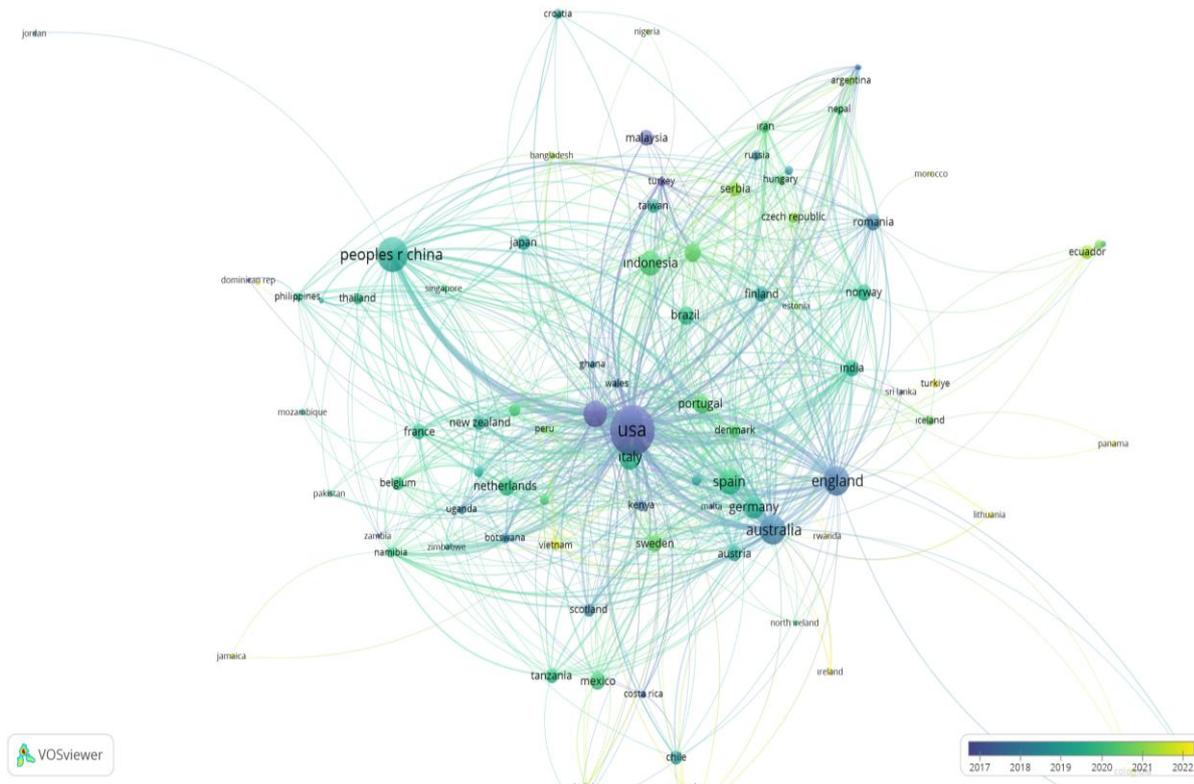
The most productive countries in terms of research on nature tourism and local community relations are shown in Figure 3. The United States stands out with the highest number of documents, ranking first on the list with 443 documents. China, with 203 documents, follows closely behind. The United Kingdom (150), Australia (147), and Canada (123) occupy the next positions, while South Africa (114), Italy (104), and Germany (84) form the upper-middle group. The Netherlands has 60 documents, Spain has 43, Brazil has 64, Portugal has 63, Poland has 62, India has 52, Sweden has 52, India has 52, and Mexico has 51 documents. The list continues with Norway with 50 documents; Romania with 49; France with 48; Austria with 47; Malaysia with 42; Japan with 41; Finland with 44 documents, and ends with New Zealand with 40 documents.

**Figure 3. Country Analysis in Nature Tourism and Local Community Research**



When we look at the distribution by year in Figure 4 using citation network analysis, we see that research on nature tourism and local community relations is more intensive in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and China compared to other countries. In contrast, research on nature tourism and local community relations in countries such as Vietnam, Turkey, Ecuador, Lithuania, Panama, Saudi Arabia, Ireland, and Colombia is beginning to gain new interest.

**Figure 4. Country Citation Networks in Nature Tourism and Local Community Research**



**Citations Sources**

The bibliometric performance of journals with the highest H-index values, based on a citation analysis of publications addressing the relationship between nature tourism and local communities, is presented comparatively in Table 1. When examining the data in Table 1, it is seen that the ‘Journal of Sustainable Tourism’ journal has the highest number of citations (2168) and is in a leading position in terms of H-index (27). This journal stands out as an important journal for research on local communities and nature tourism. Looking at the difference between the H-Core citation total (1934) and the total citations (2168), there is a significant difference. This indicates that while some articles in the journal receive a high number of citations, other articles have a broader impact. In contrast, the journal ‘Sustainability’ (117 documents), which has the highest productivity in terms of number of publications, has a lower average citation per article (13.0), presenting a broad but relatively limited impact profile. On the other hand, the journals ‘Ocean and Coastal Management’ (21.7) and ‘Environmental Management’ (26.5) show balanced performance with medium average citation values.

The journal Tourism Management has by far the highest impact intensity, with an average of 103.6 citations per article, indicating that it pursues a policy of publishing fewer but higher-quality articles. Similarly, the journals Biological Conservation (61.2) and Tourism Management Perspectives (55.0) also stand out with their high average citation values. The journals ‘Conservation Biology’ (52.1) and ‘Environmental Conservation’ (48.6) stand out with high average citation values despite their relatively low number of documents. Journals at the bottom of the list, such as ‘Land’ (7.4) and ‘Journal of Park and Recreation Administration’ (12.5), do not appear to perform poorly in terms of total citations and average citation values. Overall, the table reveals significant differences in impact intensity, productivity, and citation distribution among journals in the field of nature tourism and local communities, and shows that high-impact journals generally follow a selective and focused publication policy.

Journals publishing articles on nature tourism and local community relations reveal significant differences in terms of impact intensity, productivity, and citation distribution. Journals that publish a small number of highly cited articles (e.g., Tourism Management, Biological Conservation) lead in terms of average citations, while highly productive journals (e.g., Sustainability) have a broad scope but lag behind in average citation values.

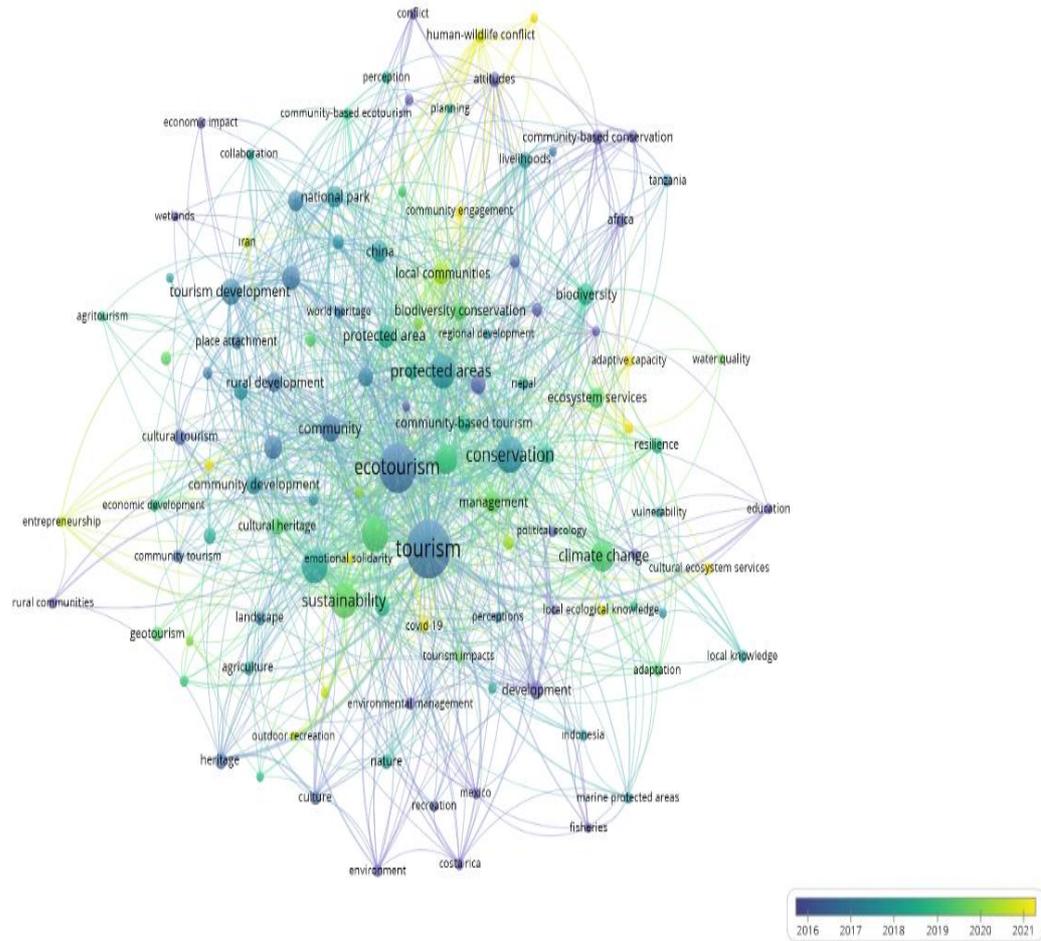
**Table 1. Publication Citation Analysis in Nature Tourism and Local Community Research**

#	Journal Names	Total Citations in h-Core	Total Citations	Document	h-index	Avr.
1	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	1934	2168	44	27	49,3
2	Sustainability	760	1519	117	21	13,0
3	Tourism Management	1952	1969	19	17	103,6
4	Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism – Research, Planning and Management	528	588	29	14	20,3
6	Ocean and Coastal Management	445	477	22	13	21,7
5	Tourism Management Perspectives	764	770	14	13	55,0
7	Environmental Management	484	529	20	12	26,5
8	Journal for Nature Conservation	396	434	19	11	22,8
9	Journal of Environmental Management	551	583	19	11	30,7
10	Tourism Geographies	335	373	19	11	19,6
11	Biological Conservation	786	795	13	10	61,2
12	Journal of Rural Studies	312	345	19	10	18,2
13	Marine Policy	294	323	16	10	20,2
14	Society and Natural Resources	443	470	15	10	31,3
15	Current Issues in Tourism	216	262	17	9	15,4
16	Journal of Park and Recreation Administration	182	225	18	9	12,5
17	Land	155	207	28	9	7,4
18	Land Use Policy	289	314	14	9	22,4
19	Conservation Biology	417	417	8	8	52,1
20	Environmental Conservation	434	437	9	8	48,6

**Keyword Analysis**

A list of 20 keywords commonly used in nature tourism and local community research is provided in Table 2. The keyword network analysis created with the VOSviewer program is shown in Figure 5. According to the research results, the most frequently encountered words in the relationship between nature tourism and local communities are ‘tourism’, ‘ecotourism’ and ‘conservation’, which reveals that the main axis of the research area is based on the relationship between tourism activities, ecotourism and conservation efforts. Other important nodes include ‘sustainability’, ‘climate change’, ‘local communities’, and ‘protected areas’, indicating that the studies focus on themes such as environmental sustainability, the effects of climate change, and the role of local communities. The size of the nodes represents the total frequency of use of the relevant keyword, while the colors represent the period in which the keyword stood out in the literature. Blue tones indicate that more studies were conducted between 2016 and 2018, while green and yellow tones indicate topics that stood out in the 2019-2021 period. For example, while ‘climate change’ and ‘ecosystem services’ have gained prominence more recently, concepts such as ‘sustainability’ and ‘protected areas’ have been present in the literature for a longer period. When we look at newly emerging terms, concepts such as ‘cultural ecosystem services’, ‘social ecological systems’, ‘human-wildlife conflict’, ‘forest management’, and ‘nature-based solutions’ are present and indicate new research trends.

**Figure 5. Keyword Network in Nature Tourism and Local Community Research**



**Table 2. Keyword Analysis in Nature Tourism and Local Community Research**

#	Keywords	Count	#	Keywords	Count
1	Tourism	225	11	National park	60
2	Ecotourism	170	12	Community	45
3	Conservation	92	13	Tourism development	45
4	Sustainability	89	14	Rural tourism	41
5	Sustainable Tourism	83	15	Community Participation	38
6	Protected Areas (PAs)	79	16	Protected area (PA)	36
7	Sustainable Development	79	17	Biodiversity	33
8	Climate Change	62	18	Ecosystem services	33
9	Nature-based Tourism (NbT)	62	19	China	32
10	Local Community	61	20	Management	31

**Citation of Authors**

Author citation analysis shows how many citations an author receives from other authors. Looking at the research results, the most productive author is Wall, Geoffrey. With 14 publications and 755 citations, he leads in both publication and citation counts. His H-index is 13, indicating that 13 of his publications have received 13 or more citations. Su Ming Ming, with 11 publications and 740 citations, is close to Wall in terms of average citations and has a strong academic impact. Woosnam, Kyle, with 9 publications and 368 citations, has relatively fewer citations but is quite balanced in terms of his H-index value. Similarly, Larson, Lincoln R, with 8 publications and 372 citations, has achieved a higher H-index value with fewer citations, like Woosnam, Kyle. Lemelin, R. Harvey, has created a higher H-index value with 73 citations. Min Oingwen has made a significant impact, obtaining 174 citations in 8 publications. Seekamp, Erin similarly made a notable impact with 7 publications and 183 citations.

**Table 3. Author Citation Analysis in Nature Tourism and Local Community Research**

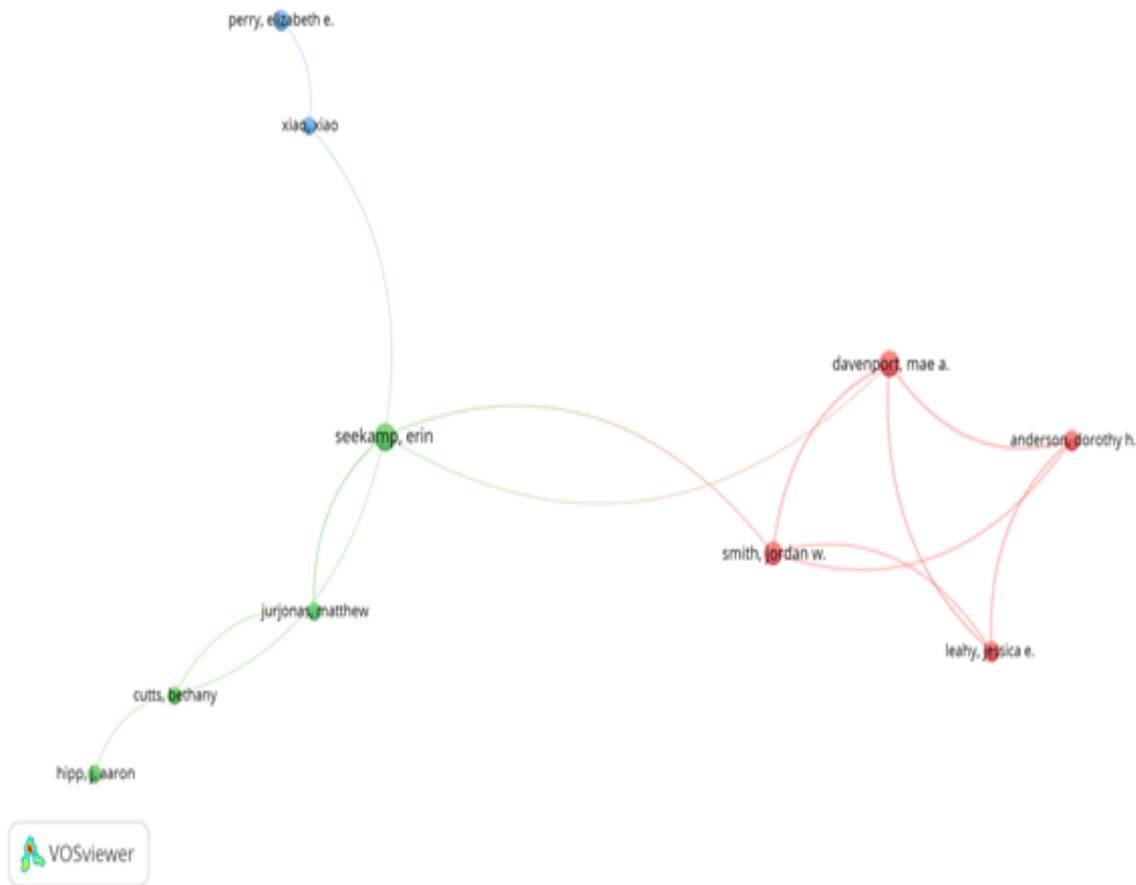
#	Authors	Document	Total Citations	h-index
1	Wall, Geoffrey	14	755	13
2	Su Ming Ming	11	740	11
3	Woosnam, Kyle M	9	368	8
4	Larson Lincoln R	8	372	8
5	Lemelin, R. Harvey	7	73	7
6	Min, Qingwen	8	174	7
7	Seekamp, Erin	7	183	7
8	Stewart, WP	9	154	7
9	Davenport, Mae A	7	187	6
10	Kaltenborn Bjorn P	6	187	6
11	Deng Jinyang	7	89	6
12	Nepal, Sanjay K	6	233	6
13	Stokowski Patricia A	6	58	6
14	Saarinen Jarkko	6	637	5
15	Sasaki, Nophea	5	133	5
16	Stojanovic Vladimir	7	44	5
17	Suryawan, I. Wayan Koko	7	44	5
18	Tuulentie, Seija	6	42	5
19	Anderson, Dorothy H	4	154	4
20	Berkes, Fikret	5	143	4

**Co-authorship of Authors**

A network map of author citation analysis has been created using at least 3 publications and at least 15 citations to identify co-author networks. This analysis examines the works written jointly by specific authors. It also evaluates collaborations between authors and the connections between the individuals involved in these collaborations. Co-author analysis is useful for understanding how researchers in a field interact (Liu et al., 2005; Glänzel and Schubert, 2005). According to the research results, by selecting the ‘full counting’ tab, a total of 3 clusters, 11 observation units, 14 connections, and 33 total connection strengths are seen. Each node represents an author. Davenport, Mae a. stands out as the author who collaborates the most in nature tourism and local community research. Davenport has 4 connections and 13 connection strengths. This indicates that she collaborates with multiple authors. Seekamp Erin is seen as the other author who collaborates most in nature tourism and local community research. Having 5 connections and 8 total connection strengths shows that Erin has an effective network in this field.

The lines between nodes represent the collaboration between authors. The ‘fractional counting’ method was selected to interpret co-authorship link values. This option was selected because it is considered a fairer and more realistic method for analyses such as references and collaborative links (Perianes-Rodriguez et al., 2016). The authors with the highest co-authorship links are Smith, Jordan W., Davenport, Mae A., and Anderson, Dorothy H. There is also a high co-authorship link between Davenport, Mae A. and Leahy, Jessica E. In addition, there is a high authorship link between Davenport, Mae A. and Anderson, Dorothy H. It can be said that the strong collaboration between these two authors has made a significant contribution to the field. The link strength value between these two authors is seen as 4.

**Figure 6. Co-author Network in Nature Tourism and Local Community Research**



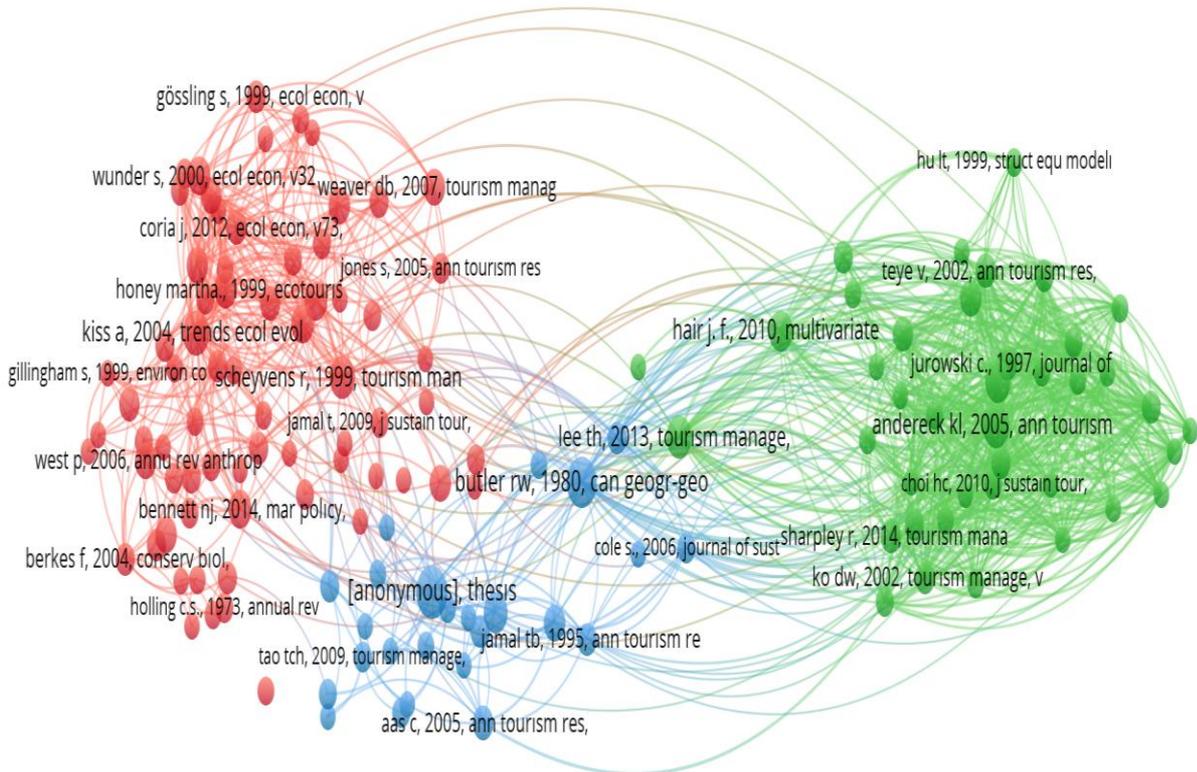
**Co-citation of Cited References**

Co-citation analysis establishes a connection between two publications when they are cited together, thereby providing the opportunity to examine a broader literature (Hallinger and Kovacevic, 2019). When two publications are cited together in the references of a third publication, either by the author or the journal, this helps measure the theoretical and methodological similarities between them. For example, if publications A and B are cited in publications X, Y, and Z, the common citation count for A and B is considered to be 3, indicating that they share similarities (Özçınar, 2017).

According to the research results examined with the VOSviewer program, a network map was created for common network analysis with a minimum citation criterion of 15. This map contains 3 clusters, 136 observation units, 3808 connections, and 8771 connection strengths. Looking at our common citation network, which shows the citations made in the articles in our dataset, we see from this Figure 7 indicates that certain publications on nature tourism and local community relations are more highly cited than others. This Figure 7 also indicates articles should be used if work is conducted in this field. When we look at it, Butler, R. W. (1980) is one of the leading names in the academic literature with the most co-citations on nature tourism and local community relations. The number of co-citations is 56, the total link strength is 250, and the number of links is 102.

Another frequently cited article is “Residents' Perceptions of Community Tourism Impacts” by Andereck et al. (2005). It has 44 citations, a total link strength of 383, and 84 links. Looking at the highest link strength among co-citations, it is the article titled ‘Residents’ perceptions on tourism impacts’ written by Ap, J. (1992). The number of common citations is 39, the total link strength is 417, and the number of links is 85. Andereck et al. (2005) and Ap (1992) were examined with a common citation analysis strength, or link strength value, of 19. These two publications together formed the basis for the common citation analysis.

**Figure 7. Common Citation Network in Nature Tourism and Local Community Research**



**Discussion and Recommendations**

The findings of this study indicate that Richard W. Butler (1980) and John Ap (1992) have strong co-citation power. This suggests that the literature continues to be shaped primarily by the Tourism Area Life Cycle model and Social Exchange Theory. According to Butler's (1980, 2006) Tourism Area Life Cycle, local communities initially display a positive attitude toward tourism. However, this support may decline over time due to social, cultural, and environmental challenges (Dilek et al., 2017). The community's perception of tourism impacts directly shapes the trajectory of tourism development. In areas where local voices are not adequately considered and participation is limited, initial enthusiasm often proves unsustainable in the long term (Pekerşen and Kaplan, 2023).

Social Change Theory explains these attitudes as a balance between perceived costs and benefits. Individuals evaluate the economic and social gains from tourism against potential environmental, cultural, and social downsides (Ap, 1992; Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004; Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2011; Lee, 2013; Ahmad et al., 2023). The long-term success of tourism depends heavily on active community involvement. Lack of participation can generate social, cultural, and economic tensions between residents and visitors (Pekerşen and Kaplan, 2023).

In the context of nature tourism, these issues highlight the need to consider policy, planning, and governance from a sustainability perspective. Sustainable development requires both the protection of natural resources

and social acceptance, which can be achieved through careful management of carrying capacity and the facilitation of community participation. Carrying capacity defines the maximum number of people an area can accommodate, varying according to ecological, physical, socio-cultural, psychological, and economic dimensions (Avcı, 2007; Gökdeniz, 2019; Kahraman and Türkay, 2017; Tabak and Canik, 2020; Türkay, 2014). Strategic management of these capacities ensures the long-term preservation of natural, cultural, and historical resources while maintaining the economic benefits of tourism (Mtapuri, 2021).

Although tourism offers significant economic, social, and cultural benefits, overuse of natural resources can damage fragile ecosystems and heritage sites. To safeguard these values, local communities must be actively involved at all stages of planning and implementation. This includes not only participation in decision-making but also education and awareness-raising about sustainable practices, such as renewable energy use, waste management, and water conservation. Community-based management, coordination, and cooperation among stakeholders are essential to ensure balanced, sustainable development.

Local municipalities, development agencies, and conservation boards play a critical role in protecting natural and cultural resources and promoting sustainable nature tourism. For example, municipalities can set visitor quotas in line with ecosystem conservation plans to prevent overuse. Including community representatives in decision-making through advisory panels and tourism committees enhances participation and governance transparency, reducing local resistance and supporting both biodiversity and the local economy. Policies should support community-led tourism initiatives, provide education for residents, and strengthen partnerships among communities, businesses, and government agencies, thereby enhancing social capital and long-term sustainability. Effective destination management requires collaboration among all stakeholders, including communities, businesses, public institutions, and tourists ensuring the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of nature tourism (Davie et al., 2024; Wijayanti et al., 2025; Pramono and Juliana, 2025).

In conclusion, the long-term success of nature tourism may depend on sustainability-oriented policy, planning, and governance approaches that place local communities more centrally within decision-making processes. Institutionalized participation, careful management of carrying capacity, and coordinated collaboration among public institutions, businesses, and residents could help reduce social resistance while supporting the protection of ecological and cultural resources. By more effectively integrating biodiversity conservation, local economic considerations, and inclusive governance mechanisms, nature tourism may be better positioned to contribute to environmental, social, and economic sustainability for both communities and visitors.

## **Conclusions**

Nature tourism is only possible if the people living in the region protect and preserve the area where nature tourism takes place (Kurt Konakoğlu and Kurdoğlu, 2020; Koç and Soykan, 2020). Therefore, it is accepted that the potential negative impacts of tourism must be minimized in order to gain the support of the local community for tourism in destinations (Akpulat and Polat Üzümcü, 2019). This is because the sustainability of nature tourism depends on the balanced management of environmental sensitivity, social order, and cultural interaction. The economic participation of the local community and the encouragement of cultural sharing support the long-term success of tourism by increasing social acceptance in the region. However, while nature-based tourism provides economic benefits, it can also generate socio-cultural costs such as cultural change, transformation of lifestyles, price increases, and social conflict. For this reason, it is crucial to systematically and comprehensively assess the benefits and costs of tourism in terms of its demographic and geographic dimensions (Cengiz and Kırkbir, 2007; Thapa et al., 2022).

At the same time, as stated in the study by Oktay et al. (2016: 47), training programs aimed at raising tourism awareness among the local population are also crucial for the implementation of nature-based tourism based on the concept of sustainability. Indeed, training provided to the local community enables them to play a more active role in destination marketing; thus, tourists visiting the region tend to revisit the area they left satisfied or recommend it positively to their peers after encountering a locally aware community (Zengin et al., 2019: 270). In conclusion, it is possible to infer that the sustainability of nature tourism is directly linked to raising the local community's awareness of tourism and ensuring their active participation. Educating the local community to raise awareness is a key element in the balanced management of the environmental, economic, and cultural dimensions of tourism in destinations, as well as in regional development and the preservation of cultural values. In this context, minimizing the potential negative impacts of tourism and effectively involving the local community as key stakeholders in tourism planning processes is critical for long-term success and

sustainability. In this way, through local participation and equitable sharing, both nature conservation and long-term benefits for the local community can be ensured.

This study aims to examine studies addressing the relationship between nature tourism and local communities using bibliometric analysis methods. The Web of Science database was searched to obtain data from 1997, demonstrating the breadth of literature on the subject. One significant finding is that the number of studies addressing the relationship between nature tourism and local communities has increased year by year. This increase is thought to stem from the importance of the relationship between nature tourism and local communities. Looking at the studies conducted over the years (Chiu et al., 2016; Obradović et al., 2022; Reimann et al., 2011), we see that the relationship between tourism and local communities has become even more important. The first of these studies was published in 1982. This indicates that the literature on this subject has been developing since 1982.

The limitations of the study are the use of the WoS database and the fact that only titles were scanned. The analysis was conducted using bibliometric analysis methods and document review techniques. First, a country citation analysis was performed. This analysis examined the distribution and impact of citations made by academic publications from different countries. The US stood out as the most productive country with the highest number of documents. This can be attributed to the fact that universities and research institutions in the US are interested in research on nature tourism and local communities. Another analysis was keyword analysis. Keyword analysis examined the frequency and uniqueness of keywords. The most frequently encountered words in the relationship between nature tourism and local communities are ‘tourism’, ‘ecotourism’, ‘conservation’, ‘sustainability’, ‘climate change’, ‘local communities’, and ‘protected areas’, which shows that the studies focus on themes such as environmental sustainability, the effects of climate change, and the role of local communities. Emerging concepts such as “nature-based solutions” and “social-ecological systems” suggest that the field is shifting beyond a sole focus on tourism impacts toward a more holistic ecosystem management perspective.

When we look at the newly emerging terms, concepts such as ‘cultural ecosystem services’, ‘social ecological systems’, ‘human-wildlife conflict’, ‘forest management’, and ‘nature-based solutions’ are present and indicate new research trends. It can be said that these new keywords are mentioned to better understand the interaction between nature, society, and ecosystems. The author citation analysis examined the visibility and impact levels of specific authors within the scientific community. Looking at the research results, the most productive author is Wall, Geoffrey. He was found to have the highest value in terms of both citation count and h-index. In addition, co-author analysis evaluated the collaboration and partnerships between many authors. We see that Butler, R. W. (1980) is one of the pioneering names in the academic literature on nature tourism and local community relations, receiving the most co-citations. Butler R. W. (1980)'s “Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution” model argues that tourist areas evolve over time in a specific S-curve.

In this evolution, visitor numbers increase, infrastructure and marketing, develop, and when environmental, social, and physical capacity limits are reached, growth slows down or harmful effects emerge. It suggests the need for protection against overuse and capacity management for long-term sustainability. Another frequently cited reference is the article titled ‘Residents Perceptions of Community Tourism Impacts’ by Andereck K. L. et al. (2005). This article examined the views of residents (local people) on the impacts of tourism in communities. When looking at the highest citation strength among common citations, it is John, A.'s 1992 article titled 'Residents perceptions on tourism impacts'. The article proposes a foundation based on social change theory to explain residents' (local people's) positive or negative perceptions of tourism impacts. It identifies that the theoretical orientation of studies on tourism impacts is limited. The model is based on the concept of change relationships and derives propositions to test these relationships. These propositions are formed from inferences drawn from the social change literature. Andereck K. L. et al., 2005 and Ap, J., 1992, were examined as having high co-citation analysis power. These two publications together ensured the highest connection power in the co-citation analysis by being cited together.

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