



Mapping the intellectual structure and research trends in agro tourism: a bibliometric

Dr. Nitin Chandrakant Mali

I/C Director, Yashwantrao Chavan School of Rural Development, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India

Corresponding Author: Dr. Nitin Chandrakant Mali

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Abstract

Agrotourism has become a significant area of interdisciplinary study that includes consumer behavior, sustainable tourism, rural development, and entrepreneurship. The growing number of publications on this topic demands a methodical comprehension of its thematic progression and intellectual structure. The current work uses VOSviewer to map agritourism research using bibliometric analysis. Keyword co-occurrence analysis was used to analyze bibliographic data that was gathered from the Dimensions database. The results show three main thematic clusters: (i) sustainability, agro tourism, and rural development; (ii) visitor behavior and satisfaction; and (iii) bibliometric and methodological studies. Influential terms, the regional concentration of research, and new trends in the subject are also identified by the study. The findings show that behavioral and sustainability-focused methods are replacing socioeconomic viewpoints in agro tourism research. The study contributes to the literature by presenting a comprehensive overview of the agrotourism knowledge structure and suggesting future research directions related to digital transformation, climate resilience, and entrepreneurial development.

Keywords: Agro tourism, Bibliometric analysis, Rural development, Sustainability, Tourist behaviour

1. Introduction

Agritourism is becoming more widely acknowledged as a key tool for sustainable tourism, income diversification, and rural development. It gives farmers economic opportunity and gives tourists genuine experiences by fusing tourism with agricultural pursuits. Research in this area has greatly increased due to the growing interest in sustainable consumption and experiential travel.

The literature on agrotourism addresses a wide range of topics, such as destination management, sustainability, visitor behavior, farmer entrepreneurship, and rural livelihoods. Finding developing research fields and prevalent themes has become challenging due to the increasing growth of publications. As a result, bibliometric analysis has grown in significance as a quantitative technique for assessing scientific literature and illustrating the intellectual framework of a subject of study.

Analysis of co-authorship patterns, publishing trends, citation styles, and keyword correlations is made easier by bibliometric techniques. Because it can create and visualize bibliometric networks, VOSviewer is one of the most popular tools accessible. Thus, the current work uses VOSviewer for term co-occurrence analysis in order to map the intellectual structure of agrotourism research.

1.1 Literature review

Agrotourism is described as tourism activities carried out on operational farms or agricultural environments that offer

tourists cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities. Early research mostly concentrated on revenue production and rural diversification. Later, researchers broadened the focus to encompass consumer behavior, entrepreneurship, and sustainability.

A typology for agrotourism was put up by Phillip, Hunter, and Blackstock (2010) ^[4], who also emphasized the variety of activities that fall under this umbrella. According to Barbieri (2013) ^[1], agrotourism supports sustainable rural development by creating jobs and protecting cultural assets. According to Tew and Barbieri's (2012) ^[6] analysis of tourist motivations, genuine agricultural experiences and engagement with local people have a favorable impact on visitor satisfaction.

The behavioral aspects of agrotourism have been the subject of more recent research. The importance of variables including attitude, behavioral intention, loyalty, and satisfaction has increased. Additionally, researchers have used sophisticated analytical techniques, such as structural equation modeling (SEM), to study visitor behavior and inclinations to return.

There are still few systematic bibliometric studies despite the expanding corpus of literature. Current review studies frequently concentrate on particular nations or topics and fall short of giving a thorough picture of the intellectual framework of agrotourism research. Thus, to comprehend thematic advances and new trends, bibliometric analysis is necessary.

Agritourism has emerged as an important interdisciplinary field at the intersection of agriculture, tourism, entrepreneurship, and sustainable rural development. The concept generally

refers to tourism activities that occur on working farms or in agricultural settings and provide recreational, cultural and educational, experiences while providing farmers with additional revenue.

The main goals of early study were to define agrotourism and set it apart from rural tourism. A typology of agrotourism based on the level of authenticity and visitor participation in agricultural activities was created by Phillip, Hunter, and Blackstock (2010) ^[4]. One of the most often used frameworks in agrotourism research, their classification included a distinction between direct and indirect engagement with farming activities. In a similar vein, Streifeneder (2016) ^[5] contended that the lack of a widely recognized definition has produced conceptual uncertainties and suggested that the primary component of agrotourism should continue to be agricultural activities.

Scholarly interest in the function of agrotourism in rural development has grown significantly. According to Barbieri's (2013) ^[1] analysis, agrotourism businesses in the US provide a substantial contribution to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Agrotourism maintains local culture and builds community ties in addition to diversifying agricultural revenue. According to Tew and Barbieri (2012) ^[6], agrotourism operators also see advantages including improved quality of life, heightened community pride, and chances for family engagement.

Agrotourism has been examined from the standpoint of entrepreneurial development in a number of studies. According to Arroyo, Barbieri, and Rich's (2013) ^[1] investigation of stakeholders' opinions on agrotourism in the US, entrepreneurs see it as a successful tactic for developing rural businesses and diversifying their sources of income. Additionally, Flanigan, Blackstock, and Hunter (2014) ^[3] contended that agrotourism businesses foster social sustainability and environmental stewardship while generating economic opportunity.

The experience aspects of agrotourism and visitor behavior have drawn more and more attention from scholars in recent years. Comprehending the attitudes, motives, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of tourists has emerged as a major area of study. Research has shown that visitor satisfaction and inclinations to return are positively impacted by authenticity, farm experiences, local cuisine, and interactions with farmers (Tew & Barbieri, 2012) ^[6].

As a result, behavioral concepts including attitude, loyalty, customer happiness, and service quality have gained prominence in the literature on agrotourism. Research on agrotourism has also been influenced by the increasing focus on sustainability. According to Barbieri (2013) ^[1], agrotourism businesses frequently implement eco-friendly procedures and support sustainable rural development. Conservation of agricultural legacy, promotion of regional customs, and biodiversity conservation have all been linked to sustainable agrotourism. Scholars are beginning to acknowledge sustainability as a multifaceted idea that includes social welfare, environmental preservation, and economic viability. The growing use of behavioral models and quantitative methods is another noteworthy development in the literature.

One of the most popular analytical methods for analyzing the connections between visitor attitudes, satisfaction, and loyalty is structural equation modeling (SEM).

Theories like the Theory of Planned Behavior and Expectation-Confirmation Theory have been widely used in survey-based research to explain visitors' behavioral intentions in agritourism settings.

The literature on agritourism is still dispersed among fields like tourism, agriculture, hospitality, marketing, and sustainability studies, despite the field's explosive expansion. Although they frequently lack quantitative evaluations of the field's intellectual structure, traditional review studies offer insightful information. A useful technique for methodically assessing scientific literature and displaying connections between publications, authors, nations, and research issues is bibliometric analysis.

According to Donthu et al. (2021) ^[2], bibliometric analysis helps researchers find important studies, new trends, and knowledge gaps in a field. In a similar vein, VOS viewer, a program created especially for building and displaying bibliometric networks, was created by Van Eck and Waltman (2010) ^[7]. Because VOSviewer can analyze co-authorship networks, citation structures, bibliographic coupling, and keyword co-occurrence, it has been frequently utilized in tourism and management research.

Despite the growing prevalence of bibliometric studies in tourism research, there are still few thorough bibliometric analyses of agrotourism. The field's intellectual structure and thematic evolution are not fully mapped by existing studies, which frequently concentrate on particular nations or themes. In order to close this gap, the current study uses VOSviewer for keyword co-occurrence analysis to identify major research clusters, thematic relationships, and future directions in agrotourism research.

1.2 Research gap

The literature evaluation identifies a number of significant gaps in the field of agrotourism research. First, despite the fact that rural development and tourist behavior have been the subject of several studies, little is known about the global connections between these issues. Second, research from emerging economies like India is still rare, with the majority of empirical studies being conducted in China and industrialized nations. Third, there hasn't been much scholarly focus on cutting-edge subjects like digital marketing, smart tourism technologies, artificial intelligence, and climate-resilient agrotourism. Lastly, there aren't many thorough bibliometric studies that map the intellectual structure of agrotourism research, despite the increasing number of publications. The current work uses VOSviewer to conduct a thorough bibliometric analysis in an effort to close these gaps.

1.3 Research objectives

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To examine the intellectual structure of agrotourism research using bibliometric analysis.

- To identify major thematic clusters through keyword co-occurrence analysis.
- To analyse the relationships among keywords and emerging research themes.
- To suggest future research directions in agrotourism.

2. Research methodology

2.1 Data source and search strategy

Using agrotourism-related keywords, the bibliographic information was gathered from the Dimensions database. Included in the search string were: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("agritourism" OR "agro-tourism" OR "agro tourism") Only English-language journal articles were included in the search. Before analysis, extraneous documents and duplicate records were eliminated.

2.2 Bibliometric analysis technique

Network visualisation

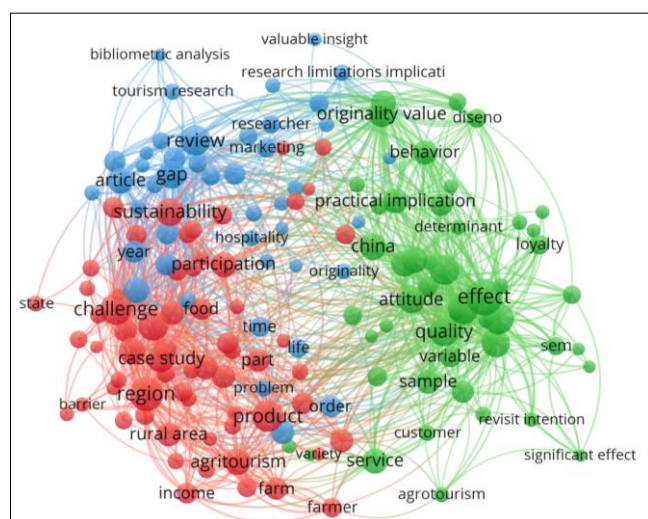


Fig 1

The study uses VOSviewer for keyword co-occurrence analysis. This method uses network maps to visualize thematic linkages and determines how frequently keywords appear together in publications.

In the visualization of the network:

- A node's size indicates how frequently a keyword appears.
- The degree of relatedness is indicated by the distance between nodes.
- The co-occurrence strength is shown by the thickness of the linkages.
- Thematic clusters are shown by different colors.

Strong linkages between the research issues were revealed by the analysis, which yielded three clusters with 7,401 links and a Total Link Strength 16,477 (TLS).

3. Findings and implications of the study

3.1 Analysis of keyword co-occurrence networks

The intellectual framework of agritourism research is revealed via the keyword co-occurrence network. The analysis revealed three main clusters that represented different but related study themes.

3.1.1 Cluster 1: Sustainability, rural development, and agritourism

Keywords like agritourism, farm, farmer, rural area, income, sustainability, participation, region, difficulty, and case study are included in the red cluster.

The socioeconomic aspect of agritourism research is represented by this cluster. Researchers mainly look into agritourism as an alternative livelihood option for rural areas, as seen by the high correlations between agritourism, farm, farmer, and income. A key idea is sustainability, indicating that agritourism is increasingly seen as a way to balance social, economic, and environmental goals.

Within the cluster, community involvement and participation also hold significant roles. This result shows that academics understand how important local communities are to the long-term viability of agritourism projects.

3.1.2 Cluster 2: Traveler conduct and contentment

Keywords like attitude, effect, intention, satisfaction, customer, loyalty, service, survey, tourist satisfaction, and SEM make up the green cluster.

The behavioral and marketing aspects of agritourism research are highlighted in this cluster. The importance of attitude, intention, and satisfaction suggests that there is a growing interest in comprehending the experiences and decision-making processes of tourists.

This study stream appears to be dominated by quantitative approaches, as seen by the emergence of SEM and survey as significant terms. In order to understand tourists' intents to return, levels of happiness, and loyalty, researchers are increasingly using statistical models and behavioral theories.

The results show that supply-side viewpoints are giving way to customer-centric ones in agritourism research.

3.1.3 Cluster 3: Methodological and bibliometric research

Keywords like bibliometric analysis, review, methodology, tourist research, article, marketing, and hospitality are included in the blue cluster.

This cluster's formation suggests that agritourism research is becoming more sophisticated. Academics are becoming more and more interested in studying the field's evolution and synthesizing existing information.

Bibliometric analysis, reviews, and tourism research are closely related, indicating that academics are employing methodical techniques to find important articles, new themes, and research gaps.

The interdisciplinary nature of agritourism, which combines viewpoints from tourism, marketing, hospitality, and sustainability, is also reflected in this cluster.

3.2 Network structure and key themes

The terms "agritourism," "sustainability," "participation," "attitude," "effect," "survey," and "review" have prominent places in the network and act as links between various theme groups.

According to the network structure, agritourism research has moved away from traditional studies of rural development and

toward more general topics including consumer behavior, service quality, sustainability, and research methodology.

The multidisciplinary nature of agritourism is demonstrated by the dense network and high Total Link Strength, which show significant links between themes.

3.3 Geographical focus of research

In the network, the term "China" is frequently used and is closely associated with attitude, behavior, satisfaction, survey, and practical implications.

This result shows that China is now a significant contributor to the field of agrotourism research, especially in behavioral and survey-based studies. Nonetheless, the focus on China and established economies draws attention to the potential for comparative study in developing nations like Brazil, India, and Southeast Asia.

4. Discussion

Three main streams of agritourism research are identified by the bibliometric analysis: methodological studies, tourist behavior and satisfaction, and rural development and sustainability.

The first stream focuses on agritourism as a means of generating revenue and promoting sustainable rural development. Understanding visitor experiences and behavioral intentions is the main goal of the second stream. The third stream uses review and bibliometric research to show how the field is becoming more mature.

The results also show a move away from socioeconomic viewpoints and toward behavioral and marketing-focused strategies. To better understand visitor experiences and enhance service quality, researchers are increasingly using behavioral theories and quantitative methodologies.

Additionally, sustainability continues to be a unifying topic across all study streams, demonstrating its significance in influencing agritourism research in the future.

5. Future research directions

5.1 Digital transformation in agrotourism

Future research should look into how digital platforms, smart tourism technology, social media marketing, and artificial intelligence may improve agritourism experiences.

5.2 Climate change and sustainable agrotourism

In agrotourism destinations, researchers should look at sustainable resource management, carbon-neutral travel, green practices, and climatic resilience.

5.3 Comparative cross-country studies

Studies from China predominate, indicating the necessity for cross-national comparisons, especially in developing nations like India.

5.4 Farmer entrepreneurship and social innovation

Future studies should include community-based agritourism, youth involvement, women-led agritourism businesses, and entrepreneurial ambitions.

5.5 Methodological advancements

The majority of current research is cross-sectional and survey-based. In order to obtain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of agritourism, future researchers may employ longitudinal studies, mixed methodologies, machine learning approaches, and big data analytics.

6. Conclusion

Using bibliometric analysis and VOSviewer, the current study traced the intellectual framework of agritourism research. The results showed three main thematic clusters: bibliometric and methodological research, tourist behavior and satisfaction, and rural development and sustainability.

The findings show that behavioral, sustainability-focused, and multidisciplinary approaches are becoming more prevalent in agritourism research. While digital transformation and climate resilience are developing issues for future research, sustainability continues to be a key subject connecting several research streams.

By offering a thorough grasp of agritourism research trends and pointing out possible avenues for further research, the study adds to the body of literature.

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