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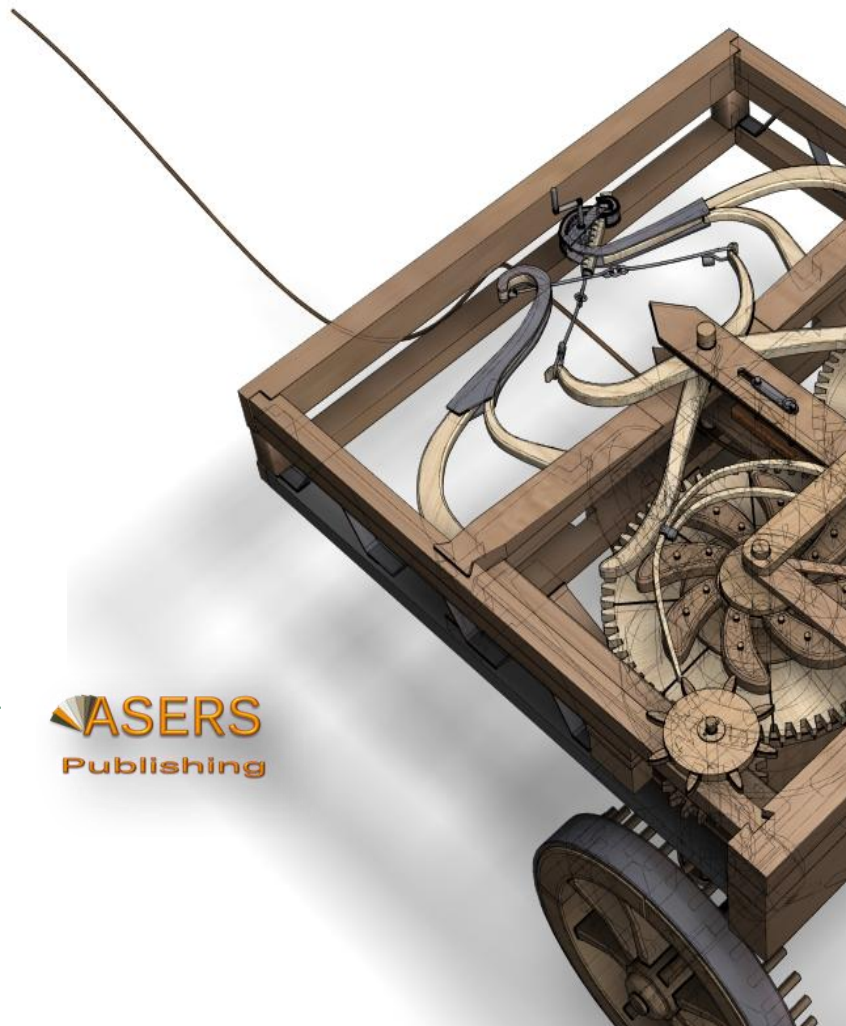
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Call for Papers Fall Issue 2025

Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism

Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism is an open access, peer-reviewed interdisciplinary research journal, aimed to publish articles and original research papers that contribute to the development of both experimental and theoretical nature in the field of Environmental Management and Tourism Sciences. The Journal publishes original research and seeks to cover a wide range of topics regarding environmental management and engineering, environmental management and health, environmental chemistry, environmental protection technologies (water, air, soil), pollution reduction at source and waste minimization, energy and environment, modelling, simulation and optimization for environmental protection; environmental biotechnology, environmental education and sustainable development, environmental strategies and policies.

Authors are encouraged to submit high quality, original works that discuss the latest developments in environmental management research and application with the certain scope to share experiences and research findings and to stimulate more ideas and useful insights regarding current best-practices and future directions in Environmental Management.

Also, this journal is committed to a broad range of topics regarding Tourism and Travel Management, leisure and recreation studies and the emerging field of event management. It contains both theoretical and applied research papers and encourages obtaining results through collaboration between researchers and those working in the tourism industry.

The journal takes an interdisciplinary approach and includes planning and policy aspects of international, national and regional tourism as well as specific management studies. Case studies are welcomed when the authors indicate the wider applications of their insights or techniques, emphasizing the global perspective of the problem they address.

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A Bibliometric Review of Sustainable Development in the Hospitality Sector

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Article info: Received 15 April 2025; Received in revised form 22 April 2025; Accepted 5 May 2025; Published 30 May 2025. Copyright© 2025 The Author(s). Published by ASERS Publishing 2025. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of CC-BY 4.0 license.

Abstract: The hospitality industry essentially provides accommodation and lodging facilities to its guests. This industry generates significant revenue for many countries. Sustainable development depicts the current generation's responsible usage of valuable items, so that future generations can have access and explore the items. Data for this research was collected from Scopus repository. The time range for the data collected is between 2015-2025. It is notable that the search for the data on Scopus identified a total of 717 documents, but 710 documents were found to be eligible for this study, as shown in the Prisma flow chart. The data collected was analysed with biblioshiny package in R studio. The result revealed that the Journal of Sustainability (Switzerland) had done significantly well by leading other journals with respect to a number of publications on sustainable development. Na Na is the most prolific scholar with twenty-four articles. The scholarly output with the most influence vis-à-vis total citations is in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, published by Han H., 2021, with a total of 440 citations and a total of citations per year of 88.0. The result was underpinned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and 12.

Keywords: sustainable development; hospitality industry; Scopus database.

JEL Classification: Q01; Z31; C89.

Introduction

The hospitality industry is important to the economic growth of different countries. It generates significant revenue and plays a key role in attracting tourists, which further boosts local economies. There is a plethora of hotels in Africa, although, many do not have high standards, however, they are notable for providing employment opportunities (Olawuyi and Adedara, 2015). Beyond financial benefits, the industry creates jobs, supports cultural exchange, and helps strengthen a nation's global connections. In many ways, hospitality is an essential part of both national and international development. The hospitality sector that is inclusive of hotels as well as eateries, are specifically important to tourism and indigenous economies, as they provide basic services capable of attracting guests as well as enhancing prosperous regions (Thommandru *et al.* 2023). Zazilah *et al.* (2025) noted that the hospitality sector's contribution to the national revenue is pretty high, similarly, it is essentially a major unit that a typical tourist needs while engaging tourism activities.

Sustainable development practices ensure valuable assets are protected and maintained so that present and future generation can explore/enjoy similar opportunities. Olawuyi (2023) opined that sustainable development is premised on the practices associated with preserving as well as passing down heritage assets, attributes, belief system and ethics from the present generation to the incoming generation. Olawuyi and Posun (2021) noted that sustainable development equates to engagements capable of maintaining the structure and components of resources by protecting them from being destroyed usually by reconstructing them.

Laranja-Ribeiro *et al.* (2021) asserted that sustainability developments depict ensuring that contemporary needs are met in the absence of the establishment of issues that can stall the capacity of incoming generation to meet their peculiar needs. This is underscored by sustainable exploration of different valuable assets. Such engagements target the utilization of resources on a sustainable basis as well as mitigation of the destruction of the environment from industrial procedures (Ahmad, 2015). It depicts actions and procedures that could ensure longevity of resources, materials and amenities (Olawuyi and Babawale, 2024). Sustainable development practices anchor the pillars of the economy, social and environment. Pooja and Bhavani (2025) noted that it is made up of three main pillars, namely, ecology, economy as well as social, hence, the ecological pillar of sustainable development concentrates on the preservation of the environment as well as its assets, while the economy targets the promotion of growth via the development of technologies as well as enhanced efficiencies of resource usage, while, the social pillar of sustainable development targets the enhancement of living situations and safety for everyone. It depicts that financial gains are prioritized without destroying the environment, while concurrently meeting social needs.

It is very important to consider the hospitality sector with respect to the dynamics of sustainable development premised on the waste produced by the hospitality sector, similarly, the construction/renovation of hospitality facilities/structures is capable of disrupting/destroying the ecosystem. Sun and Nasrullah (2024) noted that in terms of depleting the environment, hotel sector contributes significantly. Arun *et al.* (2021) noted that the hospitality industry deploys great quantity of assets for operating (for instance, energy as well as water) and generating enormous amounts of waste. The constant flow of people to the hospitality industry implies that more materials/items will be used and more waste will be generated in the hospitality industry. However, such wastes can be recycled or managed appropriately, for entrenching concepts of sustainability. Zazilah *et al.* (2025) noted that wastes that are made from different engagements in the hotel could then be broken into wastes, which could be a merchandise in waste banks, or organically produced wastes, which would be transformed to composts.

This study is novel premised on the fact that it essentially explored literature on sustainable development in the hospitality sector (2015-2025), as against, the foci of other researches, for instance, Sharma *et al.* (2024) that explored research engagement on the impact of sustainable practices in tourism and hospitality industry (2013-2023), Legendre *et al.* (2024) that explored a bibliometric analysis of the hospitality and tourism environmental, social and governance literature, Pileliené *et al.* (2024) that explored a bibliometric review of innovations in sustainable tourism research: current trends and future research agenda, amongst other studies. This study is therefore important because it shows the trends and emerging trends of research vis-à-vis the keywords underpinning the focus of the study. It also shows this study's social structure of collaboration.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Sustainable Development and Hospitality Industry

Popşa (2023) noted that in contemporary times, sustainable development is very topical in different Nations, inclusive of the hospitality sector, based on the fact that it is highly important for development in the long run as well as the performance associated with accommodation components. The consideration and engagement of sustainability procedures in the hotel sector could yield efficiency, effectiveness and productivity in the long run. This is very important because of the enormous waste generated from the hospitality industry that could predict unhealthy impacts on environmental ecology and human lives. Sun and Nasrullah (2024) noted that, as is also evident in other industries, the hospitality sector exudes many negative environmental impacts, especially through the usage and exploitation of natural resources. Popşa (2023) opined that there is a consideration of the hospitality sector is part of highly harmful sectors to the environment, as well as different industries; hence, challenges associated with the environment have far-reaching importance for the present as well as the future. Therefore, it is pertinent for owners of hotels to engage procedures which limit environmentally harmful impacts of their hotels to the barest minimum, at least from the sight of their guests. Sakshi *et al.* (2020) asserted that a typical hotel that is surrounded by sustainability issues could frequently be subjected to criticism by hotel guests, especially with respect to the depletion of the environment as well as sustainable engagements.

Although, it may be a tall order for some hotel owners to ensure that the economy is not prioritized over the environment. Blanco-Moreno (2025) opined that creating a balance between the growth of the economy and the environment as well as social responsibilities depicts a substantive problem for a typical hotel/restaurant and important stakeholders in this industry that is underscored by dynamism. This essentially is a result of the fact that a typical hotelier will only focus on generating profits at all cost and by all means. Although, it is notable that some hotel owners prioritize the social dimension of sustainable development over the economy and environment. The research revealed that hotel owners assign marginal concentration to social sustainability over

the initiatives of environment's sustainable development, maybe as a result of more hotels in the research focus being sited very close to the middle of an urban-based area, hence it becomes pretty easier to implement socially sustainable development initiatives over the environment's sustainable development initiatives (Rodríguez-Antón *et al.* 2012). Such hotels focus more on beautiful infrastructural development that could endear more people without considering that the ecosystem could be impaired negatively.

Meanwhile, some hoteliers are aware of how waste from their hotels can destroy the environment when not well managed; hence, such hoteliers have adopted and operationalized specific measures to manage their waste properly and protect the ecosystem as much as possible. Environmental depletion has resulted in hotels working towards protecting the ecology (Sun and Nasrullah, 2024). While it is good that hoteliers engage in the practices that ensure the protection, maintenance and protection of the environment, most hoteliers engage in such practices to solidify their increased customer patronage, productivity and efficiency. Iddawala (2018) opined that the motive of adopting sustainable engagements on the environment, for instance, renewable energy adoption as well as growing of specified floral species, were done with secondary motives, for instance, the achievement of cost efficiencies as well as attracting competitive advantage via making hotels beautiful. Hence, the benefits associated with the adoption and operationalization of sustainable development, precisely, about the environment of the hospitality sector, are numerous. Sustainable development is a business method premised on intelligence capable of providing hotel owners with different benefits, inclusive of cost reduction, efficiency in operations, stimulating creative organizational creative procedures, enhancement of brand image and prestige, long-run benefits, optimized supply chains, enhanced staff engagements, adherence to regulations (Sarode, 2022).

It is pertinent to note that the waste from the hotels when not well managed would not only negatively affect the immediate environment of the hotel, but it is capable of even affecting the global climate negatively. The hotel industry's substantive concentration on sustainable development basically emanates from the fact that it is susceptible to global challenges for instance climate change as well as its deep financial influence on Nations that engage tourism (Kandler-Rodríguez, 2020). Hence, hoteliers are expected to adopt transformational changes that are underscored by sustainable development practices so as to have far reaching positive effects on the environment. Jayawardena (2023) noted that in the contemporary digitalized period, the concept of sustainability has reconstructed the hotel sector, thereby calling it to adopt transformational change which has deep consequences for global business engagements. Popşa (2023) noted that the consciousness associated with the fast development of the hospitality sector poses unhealthy influence on the global environment, as well as has resulted into managers adopting various levels of ideas for the expression of their desires to align with sustainable development via the creation of ecology tags, implementation of procedures connected with sustainable behaviors as well as the adoption of a system of managing the environment. Therefore, it is pertinent for those with stakes in the hospitality sector to operationalize sustainability procedures with respect to various tasks as well as engagements. While also discussing tourism on a global scale, sustainable development can be considered as a developing issue, that results in industry's practitioners infusing sustainable development engagements in their regular operations (Jones *et al.* 2014).

1.2 Theoretical Background

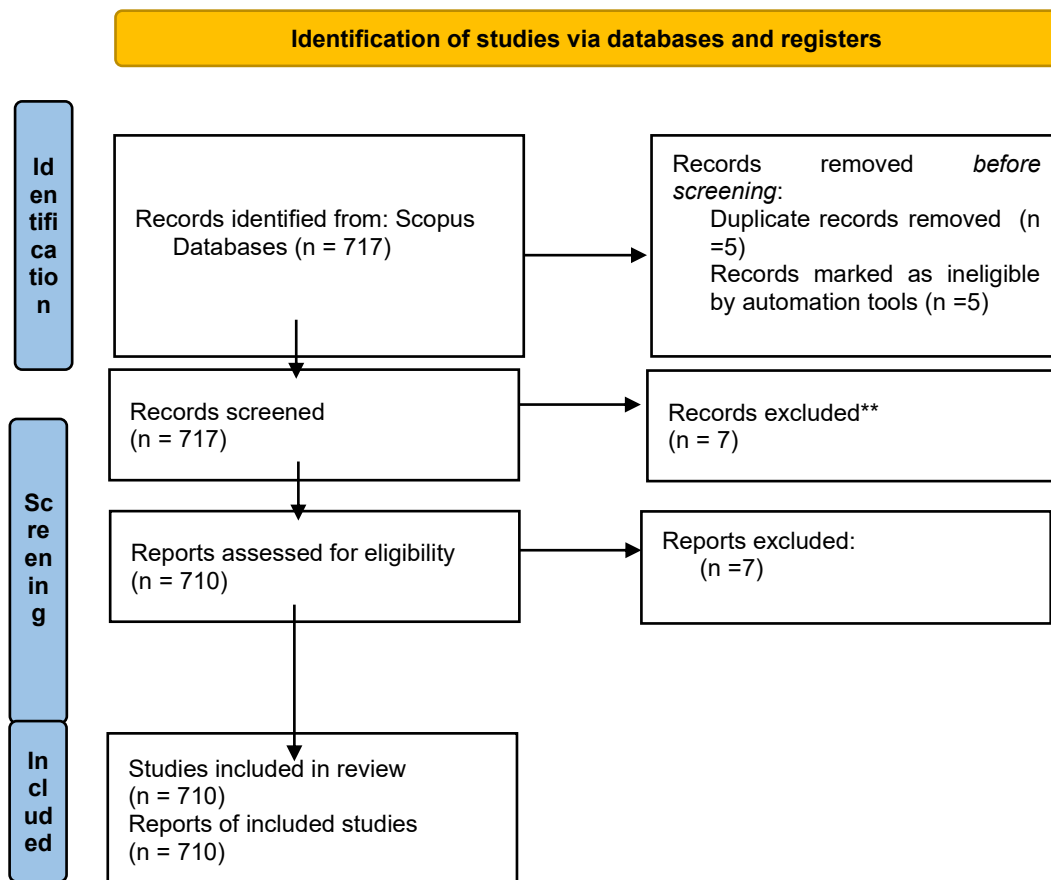
This study adopts a triple bottom-line theoretical framework, which is premised on three dimensions; economic, social and environmental that relate to the concept of sustainable development. Zaharia and Zaharia (2021) simply noted that triple bottom line is a theory used in measuring organizational performance as well as business successes through explicit integration of the economy, social and environment's bottom lines. Premised on the equal conceptualization of all three dimensions of sustainable development, the triple bottom line concept has received applause from academia as well as engaged industrial players in different settings to use formal measurement and reports for sustainable development commitment of business entities (Sánchez-Chaparro *et al.* 2022). The hospitality industry produces a lot of waste. Hence, hoteliers who are environmentally conscious have started prioritizing waste management through green initiatives. Jabbour (2012) revealed that essentially when business entities make attempts at green engagements, they could attain a TBL performance. Olawuyi and Babawale (2024) noted that the triple bottom theory depicts the exploitation and usage of the environment with the utmost level of responsibility and concurrently making enough revenue.

Context of your research paper the literature review should be a critical synthesis of previous research in the subject field. The evaluation of the literature leads logically to the research question. Who is doing what? Who has done what? Who first did it or published it? Taken from published papers, research monographs, catalogues etc. based on primary sources. Offering a, probably new, structured view of the field of study.

2. Research Methodology

This research's focus was on the scientific study of sustainable development in the hospitality industry premised on published research outputs. This is important because there is a literature gap for a robust literature review on sustainable development as well as the hospitality sector, especially, in the last one decade. Peng *et al.* (2024) asserted that the spread of studies on hospitality innovation could determine the importance of a robust literature review. There are different repositories for data on research publications in the past. Bibliometric studies could depend on data from repositories, for instance, Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, PubMed, Dimensions, SpringerLink, and so on (Cobo *et al.* 2011). Saber and Kamaruddin (2025) asserted that the method in bibliometric research essentially includes a profound search of academic repositories, specifically, Scopus or web of science, concentrating on keywords connected to training, competence, job willingness, hospitality, as well as tourism. However, this research's data was retrieved from the Scopus repository because of the impressive number of high-ranking journals in Scopus. Saber and Kamaruddin (2025) asserted that the Scopus repository, known for its profound retrieval of peer-reviewed literature, is the source of data based on its expansive spread as well as reliability. Pooja and Bhavani (2025) noted that bibliometric data from the repository of Scopus was collected in Comma Separated values (SCV) format, which provides important metadata for well-explained analysis. The data collected is on publications between the year 2015 through 2025. The Boolean operators used to search for the literature are "AND" and "OR". Firstly, while searching the Scopus repository, for the filter category of 'author name format,' the option chosen was 'surname and initials'. Secondly, for the 'search within category,' the 'article title, abstract and keywords' option were selected. Hence, under the 'search documents' category, the following were evident; sustainable AND development AND in AND the AND hospitality AND industry AND sustainable OR development AND sustainable OR hospitality AND industry. It is notable that the search identified a total of 717 documents, but 710 documents were eligible for this study, as shown in the Prisma flow chart below.

Figure 1. Prisma Flow Chart



The data collected for the 710 documents were analysed using bibliometric analysis. Bibliometric analysis is a very important tool for scholars to analyse as well as rate researchers, journal outlets, subjects, and countries (Rejeb *et al.* 2023). The bibliometric analysis was done with a biblioshiny application through R studio. This study

essentially engages quantitative bibliometric applications, for instance VOSviewer that has the capacity of being efficient for the evaluation and analysis of bibliometric data; similarly, additional applications, specifically, EndNote and Excel were used for data analysis (Donthu *et al.* 2021). Although there are other apps for bibliometric analysis, biblioshiny through R studio is indeed engaging and requires very little computer code. Pooja and Bhavani (2025) noted that Biblioshiny, found in the Bibliometrix of R package, was engaged for the analysis and visualization of data. Biblioshiny produces robust and clear analysis showing the co-authorship network, co-citation, citation sources and so on. Johnson *et al.* (2022) noted that bibliometric analysis usually is inclusive of citation analysis, co-citation, bibliographic coupling as well as co-authorship network analyses for mapping industrial intellectual structures. Blanco-Moreno (2025) opined that the major benefit of bibliometric analysis is that it essentially gives room for the development of academia to be examined from two trajectories. It is very apt to use bibliometric analysis in the literature review for tourism and hospitality because it makes it easy to focus on any or all aspects of the tourism and hospitality industry. Blanco-Moreno (2025) opined that the research engages the bibliometric method for the analysis of 837 publications from the hotel industry by concentrating on hotels as well as eateries. Oztürk *et al.* (2024) emphasized importance of bibliometric analysis in sectors that are witnessing development, for instance, tourism sustainability, for the delineation of the theory as well as practical development within its field. It is pertinent to note that the data collected was analysed to proffer solutions to the following research questions;

Q1: What are the most relevant sources, sources' production and annual scientific production for sustainable development in the hospitality industry within 2015-2025?

Q2: What is the interconnection between leading authors and annual citation indices of the research on sustainable development in the hospitality industry within 2015-2025?

Q3: what are the most cited studies on sustainable development in the hospitality industry within 2015-2025?

Q4: What are the thematic dimensions that underpin studies on sustainable development in the hospitality industry within 2015-2025

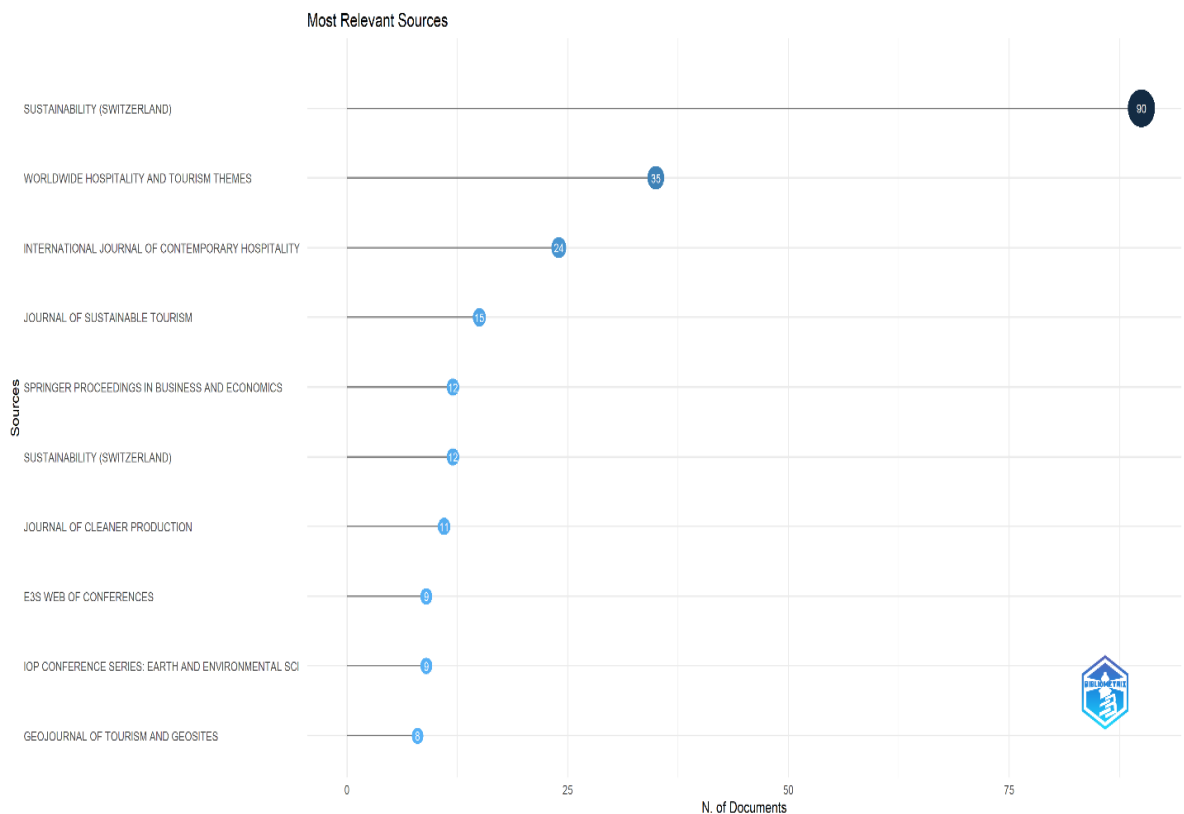
Q5: What is the dimension of the collaborative network of the studies that underpin sustainable development in the hospitality industry within 2015-2025

3. Research Results

The document types in the 710 documents analysed are essentially articles, book chapters, conference papers, reviews and books. It is notable that there are four hundred and fifty-one (451) articles, ninety (90) book chapters, seventy-seven (77), forty-one (41) reviews and twenty-nine (29) books. The keywords distributions are; two hundred and twenty-four (224) 'sustainable development', two hundred and twenty-three (223) 'hospitality industry', one hundred and sixty-nine (169) 'sustainability', one hundred and forty-six (146) 'tourism' and ninety-six (96) 'hospitality'.

The figure below shows a sequence of the most relevant sources. It is pertinent to note that the most relevant sources for the publications and their corresponding numbers are; sustainability (Switzerland) with ninety (90) documents, worldwide hospitality and tourism studies with thirty-five (35) documents, international Journal of Contemporary Hospitality with twenty four (24) documents, journal of sustainable tourism with fifteen (15) documents, springer proceedings in business and economics with twelve (12) documents, sustainability (Switzerland) with twelve (12) documents, Journal of Cleaner Production with eleven (11) documents, E3S web of conferences with nine (9) documents, IOP conference series earth and environmental sciences with nine (9) documents and Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites with eight (8) documents.

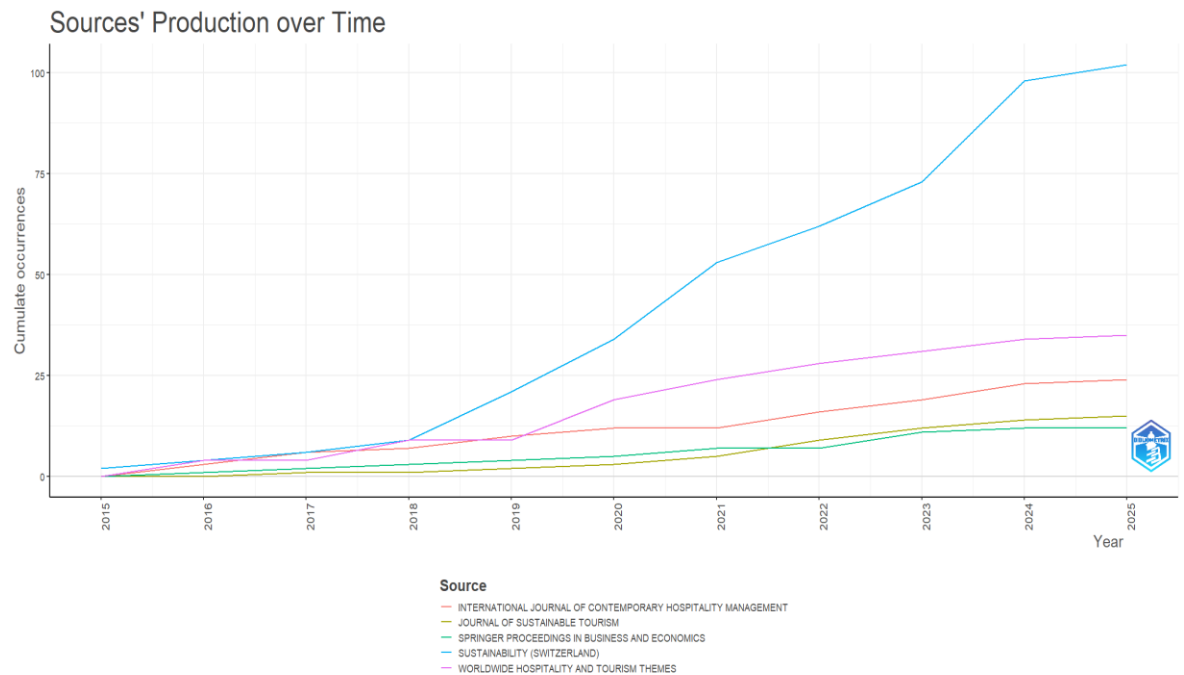
Figure 2. Most Relevant Sources



Source: Authors' creation (2025)

Figure 3 reveals sources' production over time. It is noteworthy that there was an upward spike in sources' production overtime in 2018. The upward spike is evident in the Journal of Sustainability (Switzerland), followed by Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Studies and the International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality, amongst others. These are highly rated journals with impressive citation indices in the Scopus database.

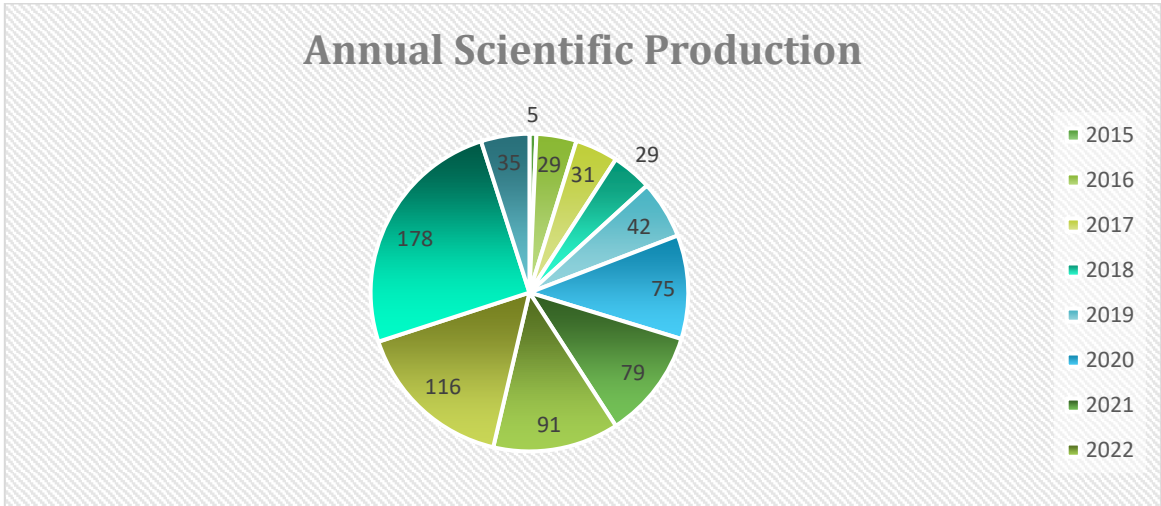
Figure 3. Source's Production over Time



Source: Authors' creation (2025)

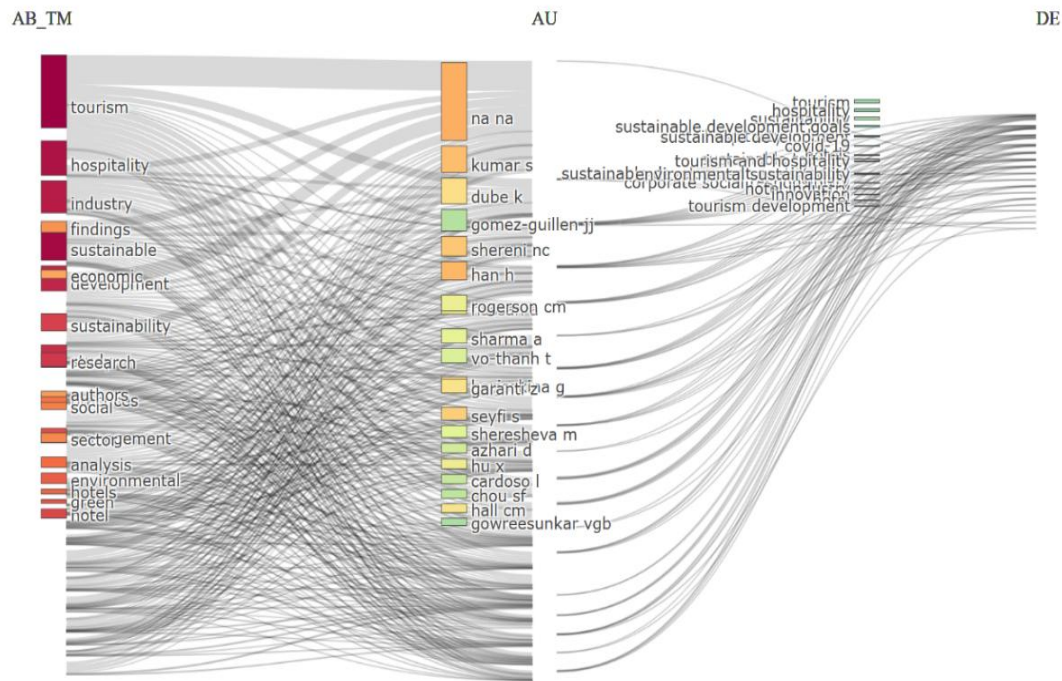
The chart below shows the annual scientific production of the articles published. It is apparent that most of the articles were published in 2024, with one hundred and seventy-eight (178) published articles and the least number of the articles five (5) were published in 2015. This shows that there has been an increasing yearly increase in published articles published by different authors. As of 12 March 2025, when the data for bibliometric analysis were fetched from Scopus, a total of 35 published articles on sustainability in the hospitality industry. The fact that there is a yearly increase in numbers published in 2019 points to the fact that the total number of articles on sustainability in hospitality by the end of 2025 will be more than the numbers published in 2024.

Figure 4. Annual Scientific Production



Source: Authors' creation (2025)

Figure 5. Three-fields Plot



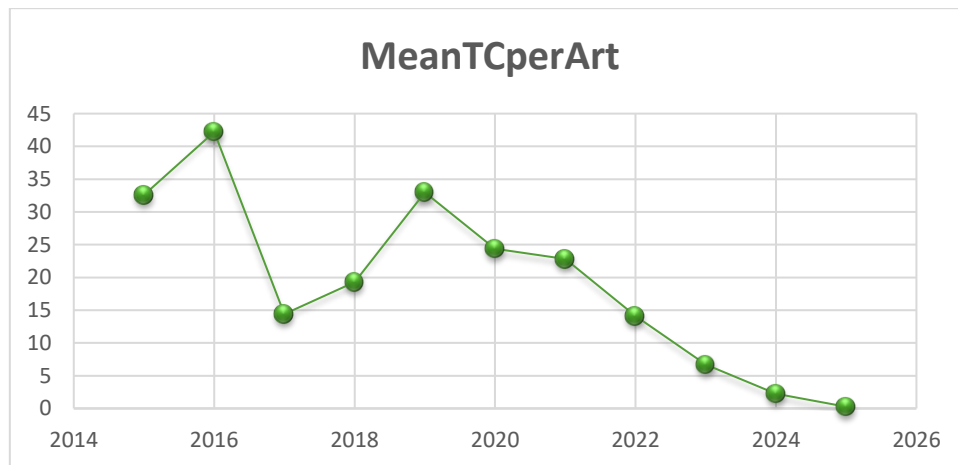
Source: Authors' creation (2025)

The three-fields plot premised on the Sankey diagram below shows the interconnection between leading authors (AU), author keywords (DE) and title (AB_TM). It is notable that the keyword that had the highest frequency is tourism. Similarly, the word in the title with the highest frequency is tourism. In the same vein, the first three words that are apparent in the titles of the leading scholars are tourism, hospitality and industry. However, the least three keywords that are apparent in the research output of the leading scholars are hotel industry, innovation and tourism development. Similarly, the least three words that are apparent in the titles of the leading scholars are hotels, green, hotel.

Average Citations per Year

The chart below reveals the three years with the highest mean total citations per article (MeanTCPerArt) as well as their corresponding mean figures in descending order are 2016 with MeanTCPerArt of 42.21, 2019 with MeanTCPerArt of 32.98 and 2015 with MeanTCPerArt of 32.6.

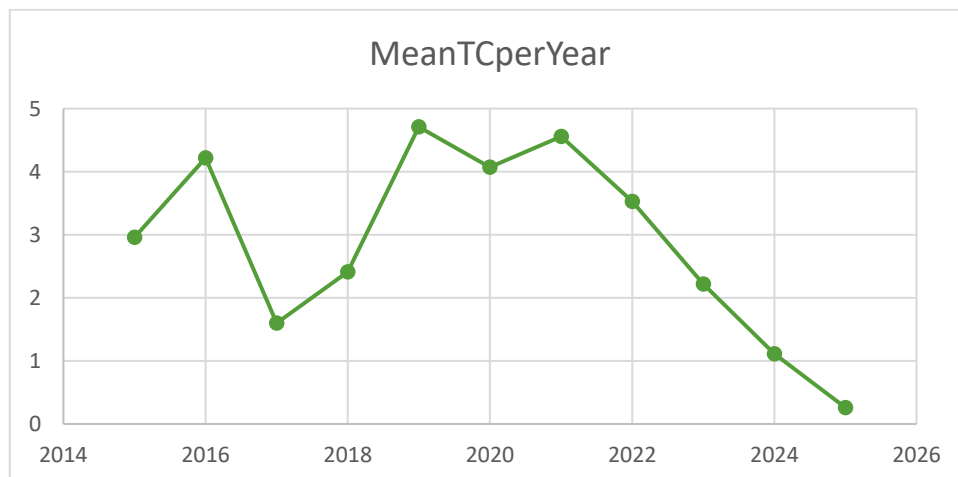
Figure 6. Mean Total Citation per Article



Source: Authors' creation (2025)

Figure 7 shows that the three years with the highest mean total citations per year (MeanTCperYear) as well as their corresponding mean values in descending order are 2019 with MeanTCperYear of 4.71, 2021 with MeanTCperYear of 4.56 and 2016 with MeanTCperYear of 4.22.

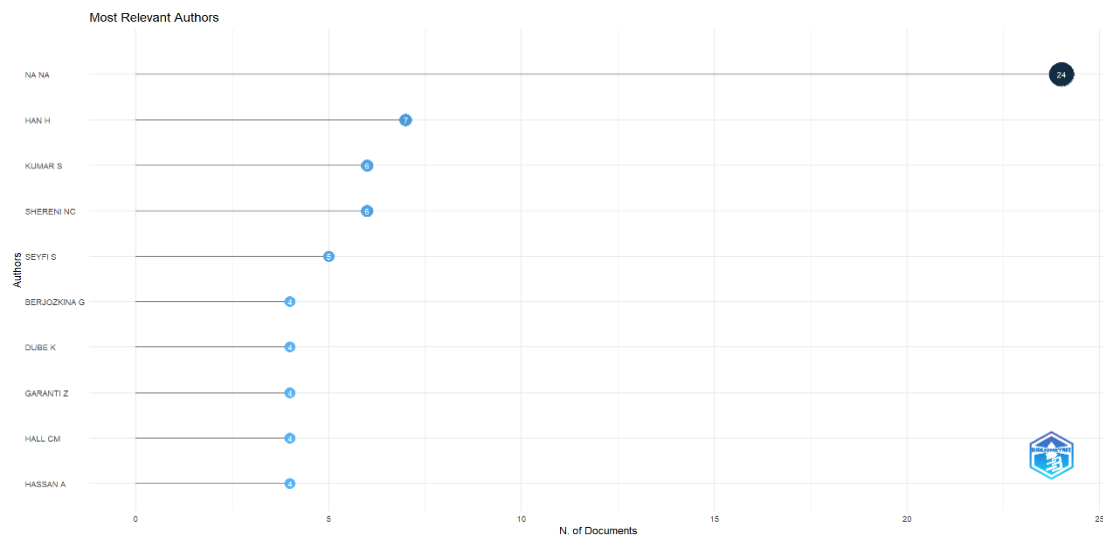
Figure 7. Mean Total Citation per Year



Source: Authors' creation (2025)

The chart below shows that the Na Na is the most relevant author under the review year with twenty-four (24) articles, followed by Han H with seven (7) articles, Kumar S. and Shereni NC with six (6) articles each, Seyfi S., with five (5) articles, Berjozkina G., Dube K, Garanti Z., Hall C., Hu X., Rogerson C., Sharma A., Sheresheva M., and Vo-Thanh T. with four (4) articles each, amongst other authors.

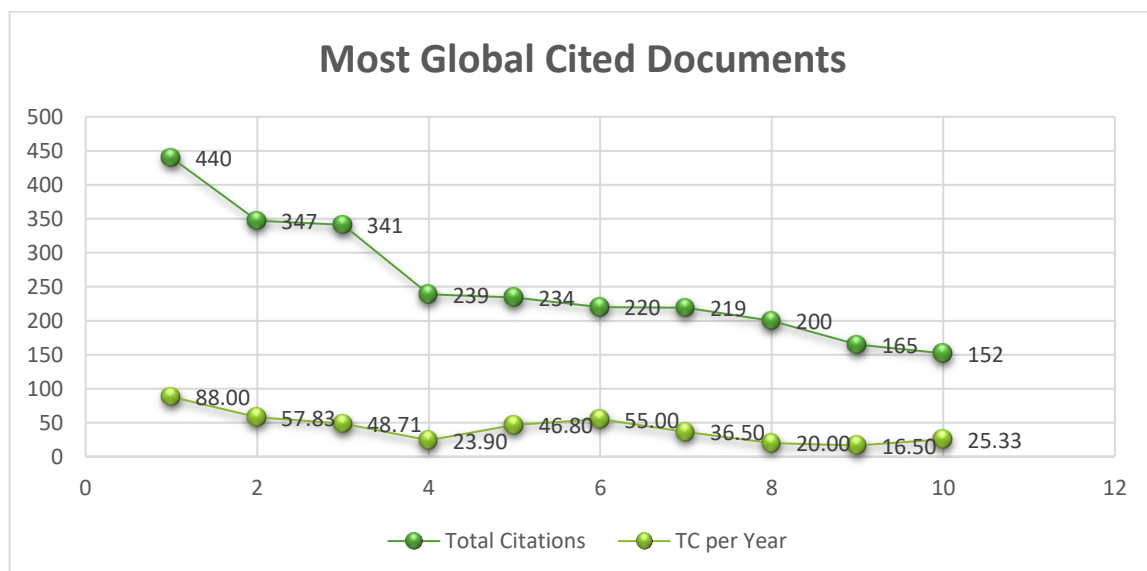
Figure 8. Most Relevant Authors



Source: Authors' creation (2025)

Figure 9 shows the most global cited world documents with respect to the author's name(s), year of publication, name of journal, overall total citations and total citations per year. The information about the most global cited documents is presented in descending order as follows; Han H, 2021 in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism with overall citation index of 440 and total citations per year's index of 88.0; Asadi S, 2020 in the Journal of Cleaner Production, with overall citation index of 347 and total citations per year of 57.83; Nosratabadi S, 2019 in the Journal of Sustainability with overall citation index of 341 and total citations per year of 48.71; Pirani Si, 2016 in the Journal of Cleaner Production with overall citation index of 239 and total citations per year of 23.90, amongst others.

Figure 9. Most Global Cited Documents



Source: Authors' creation (2025)

The various colors in figure 10 depicts co-occurred thematic keywords underpinned by different research trajectories. The cluster in green color has the following co-occurred words; sustainable development, environmental sustainability, tourism, energy efficiency, leisure industry, carbon footprint, decision making amongst others. The most prominent keyword in the green color is 'sustainable development'. However, the cluster in red has the following co-occurred words; hospitality industry, sustainability, tourism development, innovation, ecotourism, climate change, tourism market, amongst others. The most prominent keyword in red color hospitality industry. The cluster in blue color has the following co-occurred words; human, industry, article, female, male and adult.

Figure 12 shows the research's collaboration network, while figure 13 shows the Country collaboration map. It is notable that there were significant collaborative efforts between different authors in the same regions and authors in different regions before a lot of the articles were published. It is noteworthy that in terms of spatial location, there were intercontinental and intercountry collaborations, for instance, there were collaborations between authors in Australia and Egypt, collaboration between Argentina and Kenya, collaborations between authors in China and Japan and so on. Specific collaborations authors that collaborated were also pointed out in the figure below.

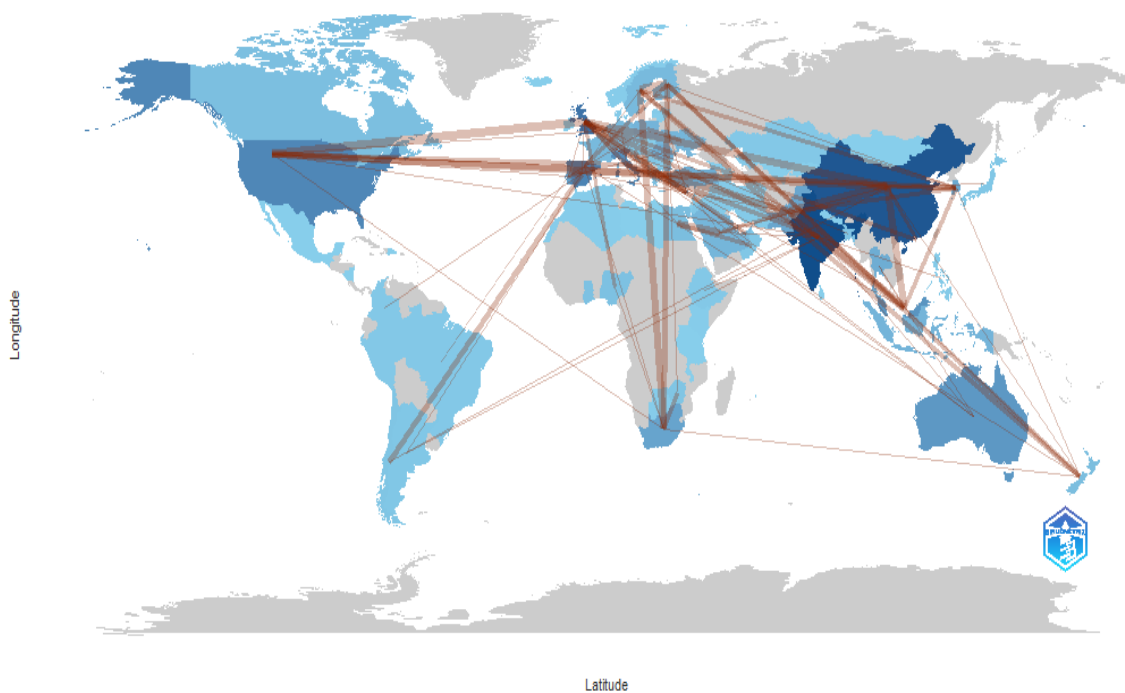
Figure 12. Collaboration network



Source: Authors' creation (2025)

Figure 13. Country Collaboration Map

Country Collaboration Map



Source: Authors' creation (2025)

4. Discussions

The Journal of Sustainability (Switzerland) is notable for publishing an impressively high number of articles on the sustainable development and hospitality industry. Pileliene *et al.* (2024) asserted that with respect to the most prolific journal outlets, the journal that leads others in the sector of innovation in sustainable tourism is the Journal of Sustainability (Switzerland) by the Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI) that has fifty-eight publications as well as one thousand, one hundred and fifteen citations, and it is a journal that does not essentially represents tourism. This impressive high number of publications might be premised on the name of 'sustainability' that is evident in the name of the journal. Despite the fact that this journal has published a lot of articles on sustainable development and the hospitality industry, they are high-quality publications, especially with their research aims, objectives, methodologies, analyses, discussions and conclusions. This is one of the major reasons the journal has high impact factor index. Meanwhile, other journals (Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Studies, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality, and journal of Sustainable Tourism, amongst others) depict a multidisciplinary approach that underpins research into sustainable development and the hospitality industry.

The obvious increase in articles published in the hospitality and tourism industry in 2018, depicts increased concentration of the academia as well as industry stakeholders in sustainable development. This increase across the globe implies the narrative of protecting the environment while generating income has percolated through the hospitality industry in recent times. Blanco-Moreno (2025) opined that the conceptualization of such ever-changing dynamism is very crucial because the hotel industry is operating as an intersection of the environment, society as well as economic importance. Iddawala *et al.* (2024) asserted that the studies similarly found out that the majority of hotel owners connect sustainable development by basically focusing on the environmental dimension. Kostić *et al.* (2019) noted that it is therefore very important to establish highly efficient methods for the environment, ecology tags, green certificate programs, as well as predictors of performance capable of ensuring reduced carbon footprints and cost of operating accommodation components, as well as offering visitors better experiences.

This could also be premised on the gamut of policy frameworks and regulations set by different organizations to promote sustainable development amongst various stakeholders. Such policy frameworks and regulations are sometimes driven by the feedback of guests at the hotels. Sun and Nasrullah (2024) noted that in the hotel industry, the standpoints of hotel guests could guide the hotel to concentrate on better procedures and service quality, hence, it is apparent that the hospitality industry has contended with serious competition that is premised on the enhanced pressure of digitalized engagements, which has in turn compelled hotels to establish sustainable targets. This has compelled some hotels to embrace green initiatives. In the hospitality business, hotel guests being conscious of their options as well as their influence on the environment can lead to pressure on business enterprises with respect to production designs, sales as well as production items (Huang and Chen, 2022). Barakagira and Paapa (2023) asserted that the various green practices engaged by the hospitality industry usually result in a competitive edge to the organizations premised on costs as well as materials saved and customers retained. This simply accounts for a yearly growth in numbers of published articles on the hospitality industry as well as sustainable development by different authors. The annual scientific report that is deeply rooted in academic publications shows a significant elevation in 2024's publications.

The highest frequency associated with 'tourism' reinforces that it is the fulcrum of academic narrative in the field of hospitality and tourism, based on the three-field plot in the Sankey diagram. Pooja and Bhavani (2025) noted that three field-plot in the Sankey diagram implies the connectivity between any of the three major dimensions, such as sources, authors, nations, affiliations, keyword and so on. This might be because tourism is the basis upon which the concept of hospitality sits. The fact that the first three words apparent in the research outputs of leading scholars are tourism, hospitality and industry. This simply means that tourism and hospitality are of the same industry, hence, their dominance in academic discourse. This dominance reinforces the fact they constitute a research fulcrum that has received immense attention and search in academia. Meanwhile, the words with the least frequency are 'innovation' and 'green hotel', which depict areas that beg for research attention of scholars. It is evident that the three years with the highest mean total citations per article (MeanTCPerArt) and their corresponding mean figures in descending order are 2016 with MeanTCPerArt of 42.21, 2019 with MeanTCPerArt of 32.98 and 2015 with MeanTCPerArt of 32.6, which simply depicts that there was a major policy focus as well as enhanced consciousness of sustainability practices during the years cited.

The year 2019 with the highest mean total citations per year means that many researchers read and cited articles published on sustainable development and hospitality. There is a strong connection between the mean

total citations per year for the years 2019 and 2021. This is based on the fact that COVID-19 started in 2019 and it has subsided a great deal in 2021, perhaps, this surge in total citations per year might be as a result of the lock-down. Various scholars might have published the articles they wrote during the ravaging lock-down of 2020 in the year 2021. This spike might have been a result of the impact of the pandemic on research and scholarly outputs. Pileliene *et al.* (2024) asserted that the major gap in number of publications was registered in 2021 consequent upon the global pandemic of COVID-19. Similarly, collaboration trajectory amongst the most-cited Nations was revealed.

Na Na is a very prolific contributor to the discourse on sustainable development and the hospitality industry with twenty-four articles. It is notable that other prolific authors also have good numbers of publications, for instance, Han H has seven (7) articles, Kumar S. and Shereni NC with six (6) articles each, Seyfi S., with five (5) articles, Berjozkina G., Dube K, Garanti Z., Hall C., Hu X., Rogerson C., Sharma A., Sheresheva M., and Vo-Thanh T. with four (4) articles each, amongst other authors. This depicts robust research narratives on sustainable tourism strategies, the hospitality environment, eco-friendly ideas, sustainability in consumer behavior, climate change and so on. The scholarly outputs of the most prolific scholars indicate interdisciplinarity of research, especially with regard to blending studies on the environment, business models, customer's buying behaviors in sustainable development of the hospitality sector. Iddawala *et al.* (2024) asserted that, very prolific people in the tourism academic space have submitted different frameworks as well as methods to use systematical engagement and measurement in sustainable development commitment of tourism and hospitality industries in the past decades.

The scholarly output with the most influence with regards to total citations is in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism published by Han H., 2021 with a total of 440 citations and total citations per year of 88.0, followed by the scholarly output of Asadi S., 2020 in the journal of cleaner production, with overall citation index of 347 and total citations per year of 57.83, and Nosratabadi S., 2019 in the journal of sustainability with overall citations index of 341 and total citations per year of 48.71, among others. The impressive total number of 440 citations of the article of Han H., implies that the article is indeed of high quality and it has delved into different topical issues bordering on sustainable development and hospitality. Similarly, the fact that the article was published in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism will make it easy for the internet to push it up to authors searching for such articles, especially with respect to the algorithm that easily connects with the name of the journal with the search words (sustainable development).

Blanco-Moreno (2025) opined that scientific mapping creates a visual component as well as the development of thematic areas. Density, which represents the vertical axis, and centrality, which represents the horizontal axis, are defining characteristics defining chosen titles (Pooja and Bhavani, 2025). The various colors in the chart for the co-occurrence network have different meanings. Green color has the following co-occurred words; sustainable development, environmental sustainability, tourism, energy efficiency, leisure industry, amongst others; with 'sustainable development' being the most prominent. The red color cluster has the hospitality industry, sustainability, tourism development, and innovation, amongst others, with the 'the hospitality industry' being the most prominent. The blue color cluster has human, industry, article, female, male and adult. The two prominent keywords in this co-occurred network are sustainable development and the hospitality industry, which are the main thrust of this study. Pooja and Bhavani (2025) noted that the thematic analysis creates themes via the usage of author keyword clusters as well as their connectivity amongst them.

The motor themes and emerging or declining themes are essentially blank. Niche themes contain humans, articles and hospitality, while the basic themes contain the hospitality industry, sustainable development and sustainability. This implies that the hospitality industry has essentially started engaging in the practices of sustainability and sustainable development. Authors in different parts of the world collaborated to produce articles on sustainable development and the hospitality industry, for instance, there were collaborations between authors in Australia and Egypt, collaboration between Argentina and Kenya, collaborations between authors in China and Japan and so on. The collaborating clusters are basically underpinned by the network of collaborations of different Nations (Abdi-Khalife, 2020). The result of the study showed that "inter-nation collaboration gives room for the publication of studies with impressive quality that is received by a larger audience of researchers in the globe (Pileliene and Jucevicius, 2023).

Conclusions and Further Research

It is notable that there has been a systematic growth of studies and knowledge outputs of sustainable development in the hospitality industry from 2015-2025. The Journal of Sustainability (Switzerland) has done significantly well by leading other journals with respect to the number of publications on sustainable development.

The high standards maintained by the journal and the 'sustainability' in the name of the journal have attracted many prolific scholars to the journal. Journal of Sustainability also attracted the most prolific scholar Na Na that has published twenty-four articles, among other prolific scholars. 2019 has the highest mean total citations per year index, which implies that scholars in diverse fields cited studies on sustainable development in 2019. However, the scholarly output with the most influence vis-à-vis total citations is in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, published by Han H., 2021 with a total of 440 citations and a total of citations per year of 88.0. The two prominent keywords in the co-occurring network are sustainable development and the hospitality industry, which are the main thrust of this study. This simply means that the data retrieved from Scopus is reliable. It is indeed worth noting that many investors of hospitality businesses have started deploying sustainable initiatives, because the niche themes contain human, article and hospitality, while the basic themes contain hospitality industry, sustainable development and sustainability. The content of the basic theme underscores the connectivity between sustainable development, sustainability and the hospitality industry. The fact that sustainable development is indeed a topical issue has resulted in authors in different parts of the collaborating, especially deciphering its affinity with the hospitality industry in different parts of the world.

Theoretical implications

The triple bottom theory that encompasses environmental, economic and social dynamics of sustainable development was deployed. It is evident that environmental dynamics are prominent in this study, especially premised on the hospitality sector being known to produce enormous quantities of waste. Therefore, there is a call for the hospitality industry to embrace green initiatives with respect to the management of their waste. There is no gainsaying that hospitality businesses are established to generate profits, however, a balance must be established between profit making and management of the environment.

Implication for SDG

The result of this study is underpinned by sustainable development goal (SDG) 12 (responsible consumption and production) and SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation). This depicts that it is expected of the hospitality industry to be responsible with respect to the consumption of materials and production of goods (especially food and drinks) for guests. The responsible production of goods and services is connected to responsible management of the wastes from such goods and services. Apparently, responsible management of waste will yield clean water and sanitation.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Dr Olakunle S. OLAWUYI: Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Software, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft

Professor Carina Kleynhans: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Validation, review and editing

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Declaration of Use of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

The authors declare that they have not used generative AI and AI-assisted technologies during the preparation of this work.

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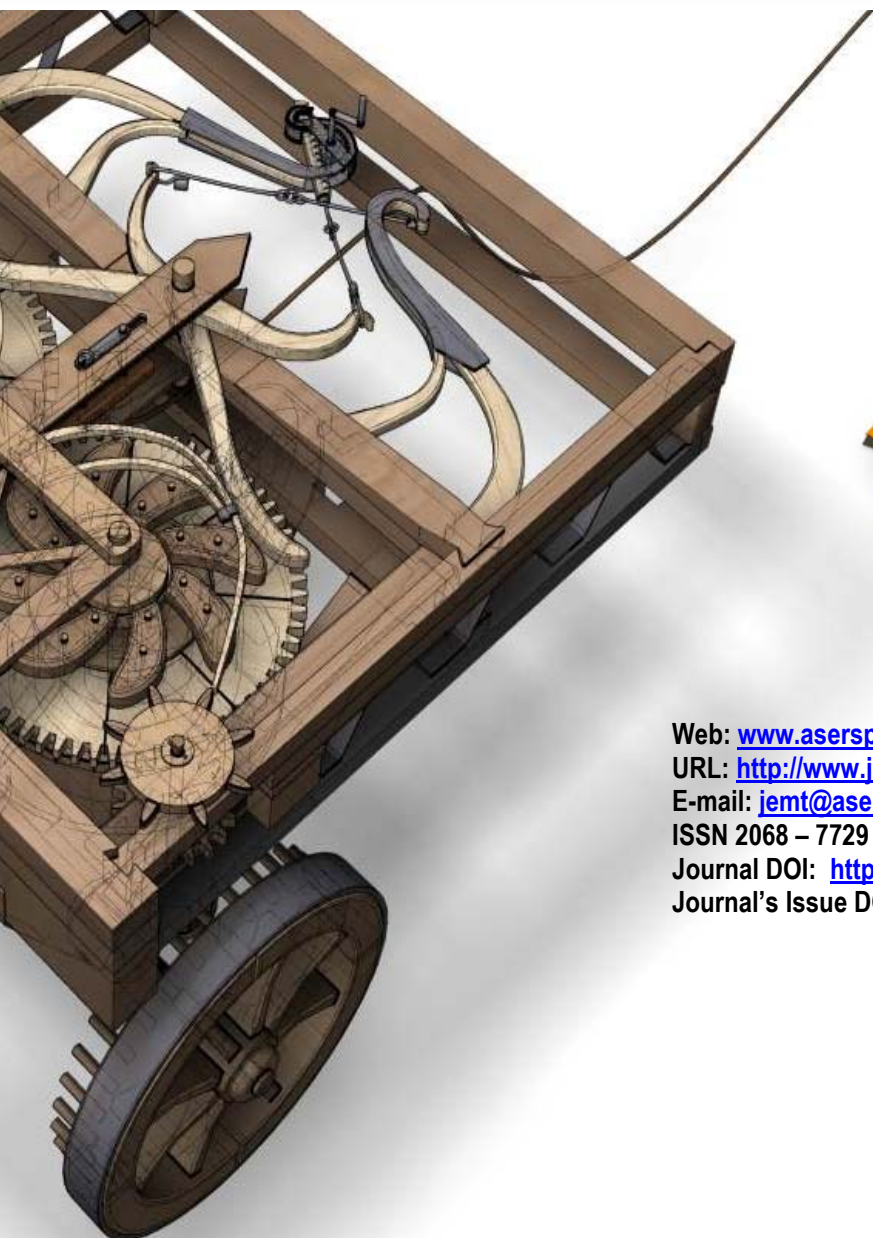
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