

Tourism and Hospitality Research Trends in South Asia: A Comprehensive Bibliometric Analysis from 1992-2021

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ABSTRACT

This paper is the first of its kind to provide a comprehensive overview of tourism and hospitality research in the South Asia sub-region from the year 1992 to 2021. To achieve this, 1003 research articles from the Scopus database were selected and extensively studied using various bibliometric parameters. The most cited article, contributing countries, most influential institutions, most prolific journals and the most influential authors in tourism and hospitality research in the sub-region are all discussed in this work. It was observed that there is a wide gap in terms of publications between India and the remaining South Asian countries. Findings from the study show no remarkable degree of centralization in the network of institutional collaboration among institutes in the sub-region. The study established that the current areas of research in the field of tourism and hospitality, which provide a theoretical foundation, include tourism ethics, hotels, hospitality services, Kerala, India and the internet. The findings of the paper will assist scholars and researchers in identifying research topics and themes with the greatest potential to advance tourism and hospitality research. The study's implications and limitations are presented and discussed.

Keywords: Tourism and Hospitality Research, South Asia, Bibliometric, Themes, Citation Structure, Authors' Keywords.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism and hospitality are thriving globally, especially in South Asia, a key tourist hub known for its unified cultural and historical ties, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.^[1,2] The area's tourism has notably progressed since 2017, as reported by the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI).^[3] Moreover, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) highlights South Asia's significant tourism potential, with demand growing at a rapid 5% rate.^[4]

Parallel to the growth of tourism and hospitality in the sub-region is the increase in the volume of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research in tourism and hospitality-related disciplines. Subsequently, the philosophical knowledge of the intellectual and research community in the area has expanded. According to Seetanah,^[5] contemporary difficulties involving cultural, ecological and social aspects, as well as security challenges, have detailed the tourism and hospitality literature narrative in several countries in the region for over a decade. This

development in tourism and hospitality and its multidisciplinary structures require bibliometric analysis, based on quantitative information from significant previous academic articles.^[6]

A bibliometric approach aids tourism and hospitality students in staying updated with the latest research trends. LAnson and Smith highlight the challenges students face in developing research studies due to the vast amount of information.^[7] Similarly, Manchishi, Ndhlovu and Mwanza observe that students struggle with identifying pertinent literature and research topics.^[8] Through co-citation analysis, bibliometrics help in pinpointing major research themes, knowledge clusters and avenues for future studies, serving students, authors and researchers alike. Bibliometric analysis serves as a tool for analyzing the evolution of academic fields through their intellectual, social and conceptual frameworks.^[9] It encompasses six main categories: analysis of discipline relationships, journal evaluation and ranking, content analysis, citation analysis, identification of articles and studies on country-specific research.^[10-16] The primary reasons for conducting bibliometric studies include examining the progression of research, evaluating publishing platforms, analyzing author contributions, assessing research outcomes, identifying leading researchers and institutions, exploring knowledge domains and timelines, delving into specific research topics within fields and understanding the development level of these topics.^[17-22]



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Numerous bibliometric analyses within the tourism and hospitality sector have uncovered its scholarly framework and key knowledge areas.^[12,23-26] Research has also focused on the contributions of prominent authors, universities and journals.^[27-29] For instance, Svensson, Svaeri and Einarsen analyzed tourism and hospitality publications, categorizing them by methodology-quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, reviews, commentaries-and by the authors' geographic locations.^[12] In terms of institutional contributions, Jogaratnam, McCleary, Mena and Yoo highlighted Cornell University, Michigan State University, Virginia Tech and Hong Kong Polytechnic University as leading contributors in the field.^[30]

Several studies have delved into the methodologies and evolving trends within the tourism and hospitality research field.^[31-33] Koseoglu, Sehitoglu and Parnell discovered that experimental methods were predominant in 96.3% of the articles they reviewed,^[16] highlighting key focus areas such as tourism marketing, consumer behavior, development, policy and business management. Additionally, research into collaborative networks has been a focus. Ye, Li and Law explored academic collaborations through bibliometric analysis of publications in six Scopus-indexed journals from 1991 to 2010.^[34] Wong, Koseoglu and Kim undertook a similar study, assessing authorship trends in 12 Social Science Citation Index journals.^[35] Both sets of researchers noted an uptick in collaborative research efforts from 2000 to 2019.

Despite the numerous bibliometric studies in tourism and hospitality and their impact on the intellectual domain of the subject area, the literature clearly reveals that little or no study has been conducted within the South Asian Sub-Region.

Objectives of the study

This study aims to explore various aspects of tourism and hospitality research in the South Asian region from 1992 to 2021 with the following research questions:

- a) Identifying the publication and citation structure of tourism and hospitality research in the South Asian Region.
- b) Determining top contributing countries, most influential articles, prolific journals and overall contributions within the region.
- c) Scrutinizing country-wise prolific institutes, authors and their collaboration networks.
- d) Analyzing the evolution of themes, trends, or research topics in the field and suggesting potential future directions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The significance of bibliometric analyses in academic research, particularly using the Scopus database, cannot be overstated. Recent studies such as Al-Raei *et al.* (2023)^[36] in Oral

Oncology Reports have demonstrated the utility of Scopus for comprehensive bibliometric studies in various scientific domains. Similarly, Singh *et al.* (2023)^[37] and Bashar *et al.* (2023)^[37] have also leveraged Scopus to elucidate trends in oral cancer research and the impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior, respectively.

In line with the above precedents, this study utilizes bibliometric techniques to analyze publication trends and citation structures in the tourism and hospitality fields within the South Asian sub-region. Data was extracted from the Scopus database on January 28, 2022, using "Tourism" or "Hospitality" as the search keywords. It is pertinent to mention that our research focused exclusively on the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries. This group includes India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Maldives and Bangladesh. However, due to the absence of research papers from Afghanistan in the Scopus database for the period 1992-2021 under the keywords "Tourism" and "Hospitality," this country was excluded from our study. The decision to concentrate on the remaining seven SAARC countries was driven by their significant and diverse contributions to the South Asian region. These countries offer a substantial and varied range of data, enabling a comprehensive and detailed analysis of tourism and hospitality sectors. Their inclusion in the study is crucial, as they collectively represent a culturally rich and economically significant part of South Asia, thereby providing a broad and representative perspective on regional trends and practices in these sectors.

Further, it is crucial to emphasize the pivotal role played by universities in academic research within the domain of tourism and hospitality. Our decision to focus on certain cities within the South Asian region was strategically influenced by the presence of prominent universities in these locations. These universities are recognized for their substantial contributions to research in the fields of tourism and hospitality. The rationale behind selecting these particular cities stems from the fact that they are home to these leading academic institutions, which are central to driving research and scholarly discourse in these sectors. These cities, therefore, not only represent significant urban centers in the South Asian region but are also the hubs of academic activity, where pioneering and influential research in tourism and hospitality is concentrated.

Data Refinement Process

The bibliometric analysis conducted for this study utilized the Scopus database, with data extracted on the 28th of January, 2022. The focus was on documents containing the keywords "Tourism" or "Hospitality." This analysis spanned publications from the years 1992 to 2021, initially identifying 130,144 documents. This period was chosen in light of Dahiya's (2013)^[38] findings on the evolution of tourism and hospitality education in Asia, particularly in India, where significant advancements in the field began around the early 1990s. A refinement process, limiting the

Table 1: Yearly publication and citation structure.

Period	Total Publications (TP)	Total Cited Publications (TCP)	Total Citations (TC)
2019-2021	491	312	1732
2016-2018	209	156	1894
2013-2015	107	90	1705
2010-2012	89	77	917
2007-2009	37	36	1267
2004-2006	19	16	260
2001-2003	15	13	301
1998-2000	16	15	388
1995-1997	9	6	89
1992-1994	12	7	18
Total	1003	725	8570

(TP: Total Publication, TCP: Total Cited Publication, TC: Total Citations).

Table 2: Most influential countries between 1992 and 2021.

Country	TP	TCP	TC	TC/TP	TC/TCP
Bangladesh	25	15	42	1.7	2.8
Bhutan	1	1	1	1.0	1.0
India	884	626	7522	8.5	12.0
Maldives	1	1	2	2.0	2.0
Nepal	11	11	138	12.5	12.5
Pakistan	59	52	759	12.7	14.5
Sri Lanka	23	19	76	3.3	4.0

(TP: Total Publication; TCP: Total Cited Publication; TC: Total Citation; TC/TP: Citation Per Publication; TC/TCP: Citations Per Cited Publications).

Table 3: Most cited articles in the South Asian sub-region.

R	TC	Title	Authors	Country	Year	C/Y
1	536	Exploring consumer attitude and behaviour towards green practices in the lodging industry in India.	Manaktola K., Jauhari V.	India	2007	38.29
2	159	Service quality and the training of employees: The mediating role of organizational commitment.	Dhar R. L.	India	2015	26.50
3	157	An empirical investigation of relationship between total quality management practices and quality performance in Indian service companies.	Talib F., Rahman Z., Qureshi M.N.	India	2013	19.63
4	138	India's image as a tourist destination - a perspective of foreign tourists.	Chaudhary M.	India	2000	6.57
5	126	Microplastics along the beaches of southeast coast of India.	Karthik R., <i>et al</i>	India	2018	42.00

R: Rank, TC: Total citation, C/Y: Citation per year.

search to the specified publication period, reduced this number to 123,813 documents. Further narrowing of the scope to specific subject areas-Accounting, Arts and Humanities, Business Management and Social Science, Economics, Environmental Science-was conducted. By selecting only articles, the dataset was significantly refined to 55,977 articles. Geographic limitations

were then applied, focusing on countries within the South Asian Sub-Region, which reduced the dataset to 1,010 articles. Language selection criteria were set to include only articles written in English, further narrowing the dataset to 1,009 articles. The final stage of refinement involved the exclusion of articles without complete details, resulting in a final count of 1,003 articles.

Table 4: Most Prolific Journal and Contribution of Countries.

Rank	Name of Journal	India	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka	Nepal	Bhutan	Maldives	Total
1	Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes.	50	0	0	2	0	0	0	52
2	Tourism Recreation Research.	41	0	1	0	0	0	0	42
3	International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Systems.	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	33
4	African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure.	19	0	1	0	0	0	0	20
5	International Journal of Applied Business and Economics.	13	0	1	0	1	0	0	15

Analysis Techniques

The study employed 'biblioshiny' in R and 'VOS viewer' software for quantitative bibliometric analysis and scientific mapping. These tools facilitated the examination of publication volume and citation structures, providing insights into the productivity and influence of the articles.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Articles from the Scopus database between the period 1992-2021, using 'Tourism' or 'Hospitality' as the search keywords were extracted for this study. However, out of the eight South Asian countries, no paper was found from Afghanistan. Therefore, sampled articles focus on the remaining seven South Asian Countries that is, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Publication and citation structure

Table 1 given below presents a comprehensive analysis of publication and citation patterns in tourism and hospitality research within the South Asian sub-region from 1992 to 2021, demonstrating a notable shift in research dynamics over time.

The data reveals a pronounced skewness in publication and citation numbers towards the latter part of the studied period, with the years 2019 to 2021 marking an unprecedented spike-491 total publications and 1,732 total citations. This surge contrasts sharply with earlier periods, indicating a significant evolution in research focus and output. Such a trend can be largely attributed to several key factors. Foremost, the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the industry, driving a substantial increase in research aimed at understanding and mitigating its effects. Additionally, the advent of the digital revolution has broadened research themes, incorporating e-tourism and online consumer behavior, which have significantly contributed to the scholarly output. Moreover, the evolution of tourism and hospitality

education, particularly in regions like India, has been a catalyst for increased research activity. This shift is underscored by Dahiya's (2013)^[38] exploration of the sector's educational advancements, further propelling the field's development.

Most influential countries

Table 2 highlights the research output and citation impact of South Asian countries in tourism and hospitality from 1992 to 2021.

India emerges as the leading contributor with 884 publications and 7522 citations, accounting for 88% of both metrics. Pakistan and Nepal, with 759 and 138 citations respectively, also show significant research activity. Notably, Nepal's research, though limited in number, has a high citation rate per publication, indicating quality contributions. The data reveals a stark disparity in research output across the region, with India's dominance pointing to robust academic frameworks that other regional countries could potentially model. This analysis underscores the need for strategic support to foster research development throughout South Asia.

Most cited research articles in the South Asian sub-region

Table 3 outlines the most cited research in South Asian tourism and hospitality. The top-cited article by Manaktola K. and Jauhari V. on green practices in India's lodging industry, with 536 citations and a rate of 38.29 citations per year, highlights the growing interest in sustainability. Following this, Dhar R. L.'s work on the impact of employee training on service quality and organizational commitment has garnered 159 citations, indicating the critical role of human resources in service excellence. The third article, by Talib F., Rahman Z. and Qureshi M.N., with 157 citations, underscores the significance of quality management in enhancing service performance. Notably, the study on microplastics by Karthik R. *et al.* reflects urgent environmental concerns, with

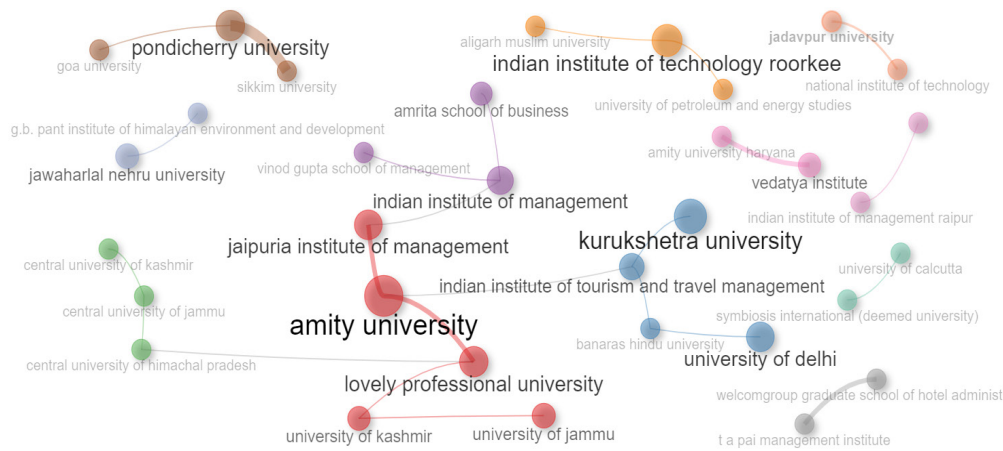


Figure 1: Collaboration network of institutes in India.

Table 5: Most prolific institutes in India.

Affiliation	No. of Documents
Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee.	31
Kurukshetra University.	25
Amity University.	25
Lovely Professional University.	25
Tourism Recreation Research, Lucknow.	20

Table 6: Most prolific institutes in Pakistan.

Affiliation	No. of Documents
Hazara University, Pakistan.	5
University of Agriculture, Faisalabad.	5
COSMATS University Islamabad.	5
University of the Punjab.	4
Quaid-i-Azam University.	4

the highest annual citation rate of 42.00. These findings reveal a keen academic focus on sustainability, quality management and service excellence within the region.

Prolific journal and contribution of countries

Recognizing influential journals in hospitality and tourism (Table 4) is essential for guiding research and industry practices. These journals, by publishing a significant share of scholarly work, highlight key trends and directions in the field. 'Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes' leads this group with 52 articles, representing 5.2% of the total, followed by 'Tourism Recreation Research' and 'International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Systems'. This concentration of research outputs in a few journals highlights their pivotal role in the field.

The findings further reveal India's substantial contribution, with 218 out of 233 articles in these top journals originating from

the country, emphasizing its dominant academic influence in hospitality and tourism research. Conversely, the absence of contributions from Bhutan and the Maldives suggests a disparity in regional research output. This information is essential for understanding the geographic distribution of research contributions and the central forums for academic discourse in hospitality and tourism.

Copious institutions and their collaboration network in the South Asian region

This section analyzes institutional contributions and collaboration networks in South Asia using Biblioshiny software's Social Structure tool. This analysis employs bibliometric tools to quantify and visualize research collaborations, with node size and link density indicating the extent and strength of these efforts. It provides a transparent, data-based perspective on research interactions. However, it also shows a heavy concentration of contributions from countries like India, overshadowing smaller nations such as Bhutan and Maldives. This discrepancy underscores regional research and collaboration imbalances, indicating a need for broader and more varied academic partnerships.

In terms of article production, the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee is the most productive and prolific institution in India, with 31 published articles. Table 5 shows the top five most bountiful institutions in India. Figure 1 illustrates a network of academic collaboration among various institutions in India. Notably, institutions such as 'Amity University' and 'Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee' appear as significant hubs, indicative of their extensive collaborative ties and pivotal role in this intellectual ecosystem. This visualization underscores the intricate web of relationships that underpin scholarly cooperation, emphasizing how such synergies are instrumental in advancing educational frontiers.

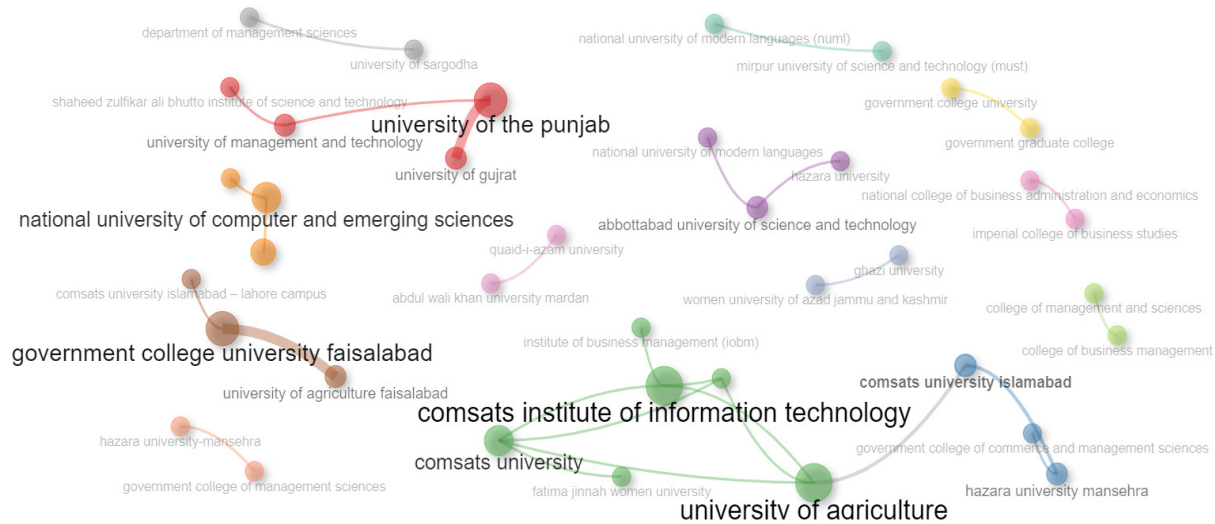


Figure 2: Collaboration network of institutes in Pakistan.

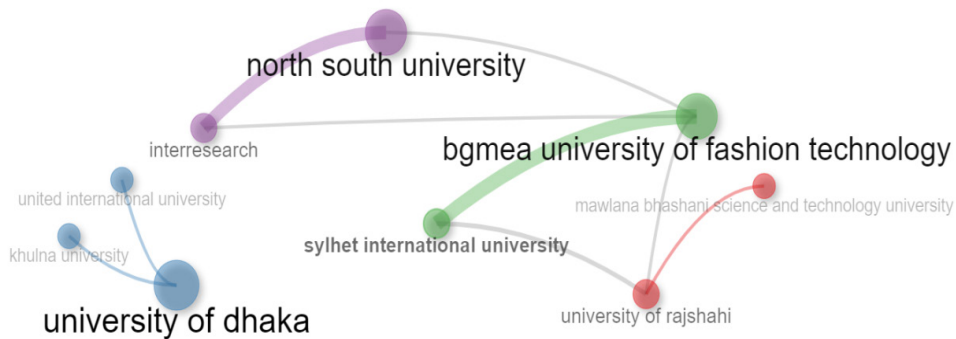


Figure 3: Collaboration network of institutes in Bangladesh.

Table 7: Most prolific institutes in Bangladesh.

Affiliation	No. of Documents
University of Dhaka	5
North-South University	4
Khulna University	3
Inter-Research	2
Rajshahi University	2

Table 8: Most prolific institutes in Sri Lanka.

Affiliation	No. of Documents
University of Colombo	5
University of Sri Jayewardenepura	5

In Pakistan, findings presented in Table 6 show three institutions to be the topmost prolific institutes. These are Hazara University, the University of Agriculture Faisalabad and COMSATS University Islamabad, each recording 5 documents. Figure 2 illustrates a collaboration network among Pakistani educational institutions, unveiling key aspects of their collaborative relationships. Notably, 'COMSATS Institute of Information Technology' and 'University of the Punjab' emerge as central nodes, signaling their prominent roles in knowledge exchange and joint research initiatives. The dense clustering around these nodes suggests a high degree of interconnectivity, indicative of active collaboration likely driven by shared academic pursuits and complementary resources.

It was observed in Bangladesh that the University of Dhaka is the most prolific institution, recording five documents. The most prolific institutions in Bangladesh are shown in Table 7. Additionally, two collaboration network clusters were identified. Figure 3 presents a network diagram illustrating the collaborative relationships between higher education institutions

in Bangladesh. Central to this network is the 'University of Dhaka', which acts as a key node with connections to several other universities, suggesting its influential role in fostering academic partnerships. 'North South University' is depicted with prominent connections as well, particularly with the 'BGMEA University of Fashion Technology', indicating a possible strategic partnership, likely in fields such as research, academic exchange, or curriculum development. The graph also exhibits smaller nodes like 'Khulna University' and 'United International University', which might represent emerging institutions or those with specialized collaborative ties.

Though there are some prolific institutions in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives, no collaboration network between institutes in these countries was discovered. The findings of Sri Lanka's most prolific institutions are presented in Table 8. With five documents each, the University of Colombo and the University of Sri Jayewardenepura emerged as the top two institutions.

Table 9: Most prolific institutes in Nepal.

Affiliation	No. of Documents
Tribhuvan University	5
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Nepal	2
Pokhara University	2

Table 10: Prolific institutes in Bhutan and Maldives.

Affiliation	No. of Documents	Country
Ministry of Agriculture Bhutan	1	Bhutan
Maldives National Chamber of Commerce and Industry	1	Maldives

Table 11: Top Contributing Authors in South Asian Region.

Author	Documents	Citations	Affiliation	Top Key words
Jauhari, V.	13	799	Microsoft Corporation, New Delhi, India.	India, Strategy, Hospitality, Services, Hospitality Management.
Manaktola, K.	3	549	ALZEA, Mumbai, India.	India, Employee Satisfaction, Organizational Trust, Service Climate, Tourism.
Rahman, Z.	8	381	Indian Institution of Technology, Roorkee, India.	Corporate Social Responsibility, India, Scale Development, Self Service Technology, Age.
Adnan Hye, Q.M.	1	105	Department of Economics, Institute of Business Management (IOBM), Karachi, Pakistan.	ARDL; economic growth; Pakistan; rolling windows technique; tourism.
Ali Khan, R.E.	1	105	Department of Management Sciences, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Sahiwal, Pakistan.	ARDL; economic growth; Pakistan; rolling windows technique; tourism.

Table 9 shows the most prolific institutions in Nepal. Five institutions are found to be influential in terms of their contributions. However, Tribhuvan University is found to be the most prolific in terms of the number of documents, recording five documents.

Interestingly, Bhutan and the Maldives each recorded one influential institution, with both countries having one document each. However, since both countries recorded a single institution with only one document each, there was no basis to address the level of collaboration network among institutions in these countries. Table 10 presents the findings on the prolific institutions in Bhutan and the Maldives.

This present study further analyzes the collaborative structure among the countries sampled for the study. Figure 4 provides a graphical representation of the international collaboration network between higher education institutions across several South Asian countries. India appears as a central node with a larger size and multiple connections, indicating its role as a major collaborator in the region. This suggests that India may serve as an educational hub, engaging in significant partnerships with



Figure 4: Collaboration network amongst countries in the South Asian region.

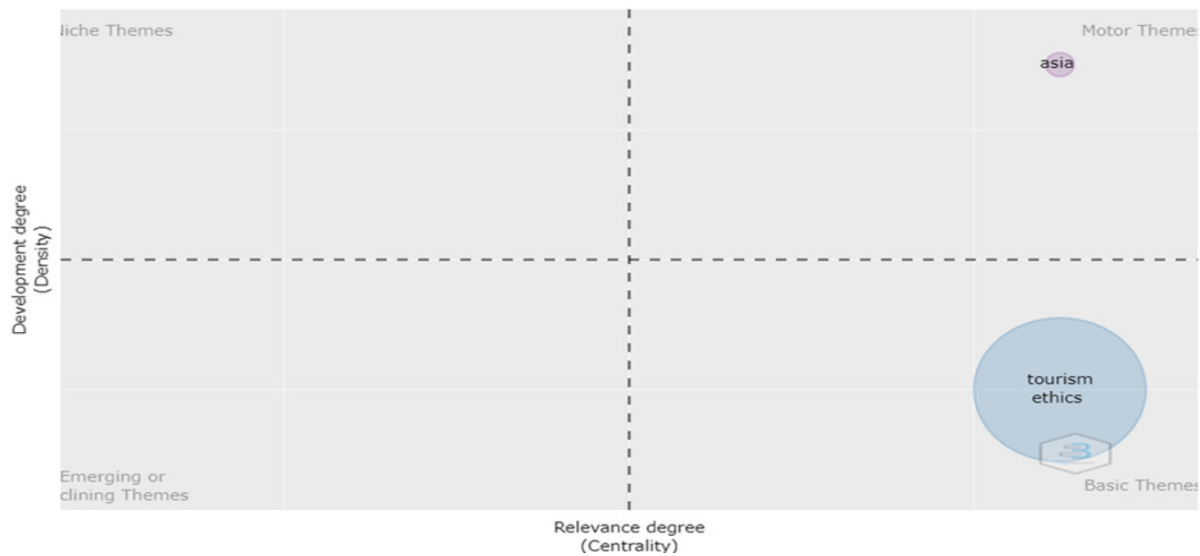


Figure 5: Thematic map of themes from 1992 to 2001.

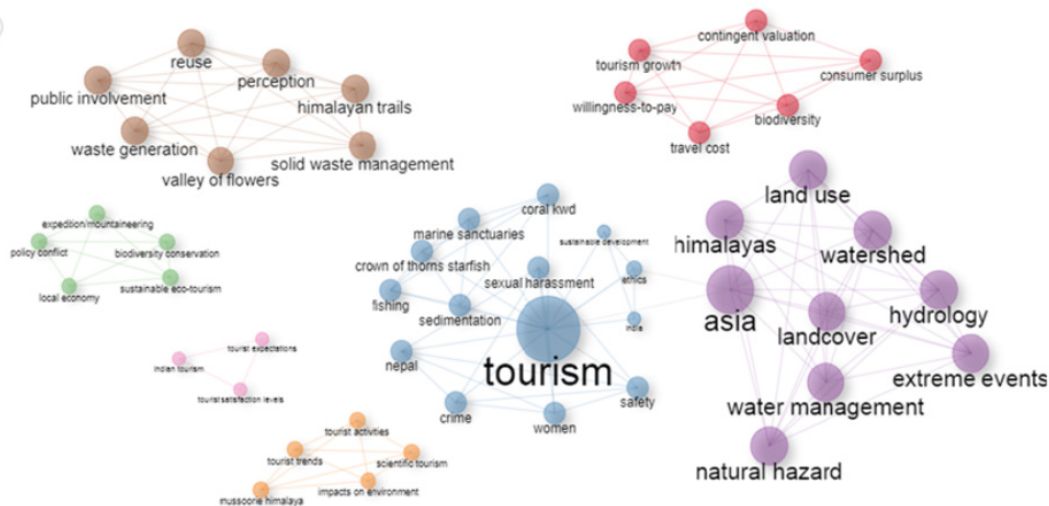


Figure 6: Conceptual structure map of keywords between 1992 and 2001.

institutions in neighboring countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The bilateral links between India and these countries could represent shared research projects, student and faculty exchange programs, or other forms of academic cooperation. The connections between Pakistan and Bangladesh, as well as those between Nepal and India, may denote specialized collaborative ventures, possibly reflecting historical ties or strategic alignments in certain fields of study.

Top contributing authors in South Asia region

In the dynamic and multifaceted world of hospitality and tourism, research serves as the backbone for innovation, policy formulation and service enhancement. The importance of these fields cannot be overstated, as they are integral to the cultural exchange, economic development and global connectivity that

characterize our modern era. Understanding the contributions of top authors in this domain is critical; their work not only reflects prevailing academic and industry trends but also sets the trajectory for future investigations and practical applications. The most influential authors and their collaborations are important in bibliometric research, according to Sharma *et al.*,^[39] as it aims to highlight the leading contributors within a specific subject area. Table 11 given below provides an overview of key scholars from South Asia whose research stands out in the hospitality and tourism fields. Jauhari, V., who is at the top with 799 citations, primarily researches strategies and management in India's hospitality sector. His findings help businesses improve their services and stay competitive. Manaktola, K., cited 549 times, investigates how satisfied and trusting employees are at work, which is crucial for good service and customer satisfaction.

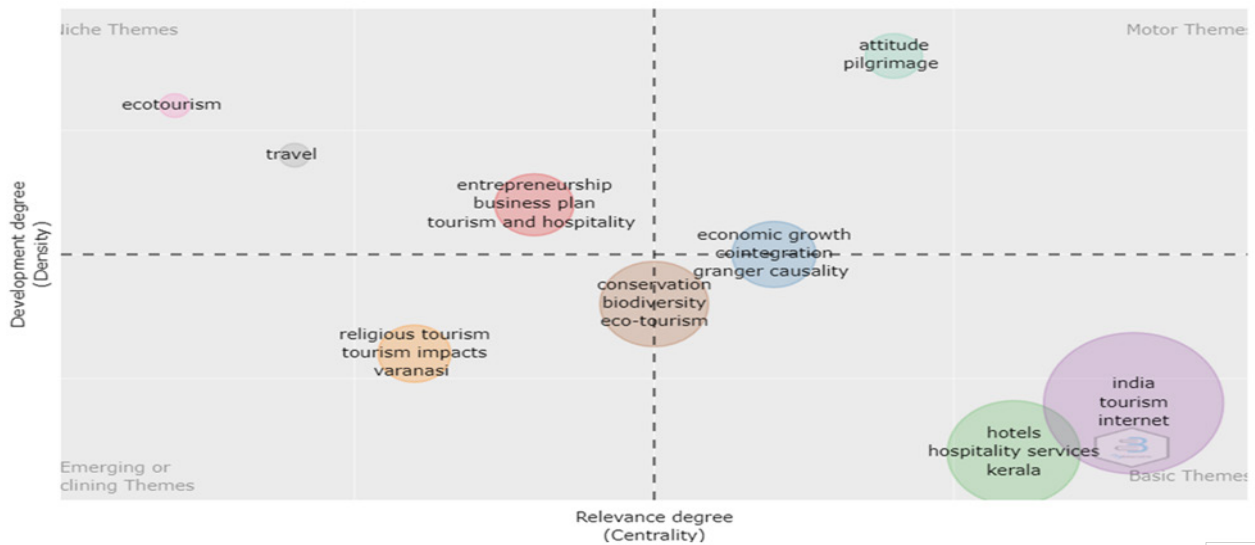


Figure 7: Thematic map of themes from 2002 to 2011



Figure 8: Conceptual structure map of keywords between 2002 and 2011.

Rahman, Z., with 381 citations, looks at how businesses can be responsible to society and make use of new technology to serve customers better. Then there are Adnan Hye, Q.M. and Ali Khan, R.E., who each have 105 citations for their work. They focus on Pakistan's economic growth and how it's connected to tourism, using the 'rolling windows technique' to analyze data. Together, these authors have greatly contributed to our understanding of how hospitality and tourism can help the economy and improve people's lives.

Thematic analysis of authors' keywords

Thematic evaluation is a technique for identifying the transformational link between evolutionary paths and trends that have progressed over time.^[40] Thematic maps create clusters based on the co-occurrence of keywords in a set of documents that are comparable. As a result, cluster networks are built from co-occurring keywords.

Thematic maps were also created in our study, taking into account density and centrality and categorized into four different

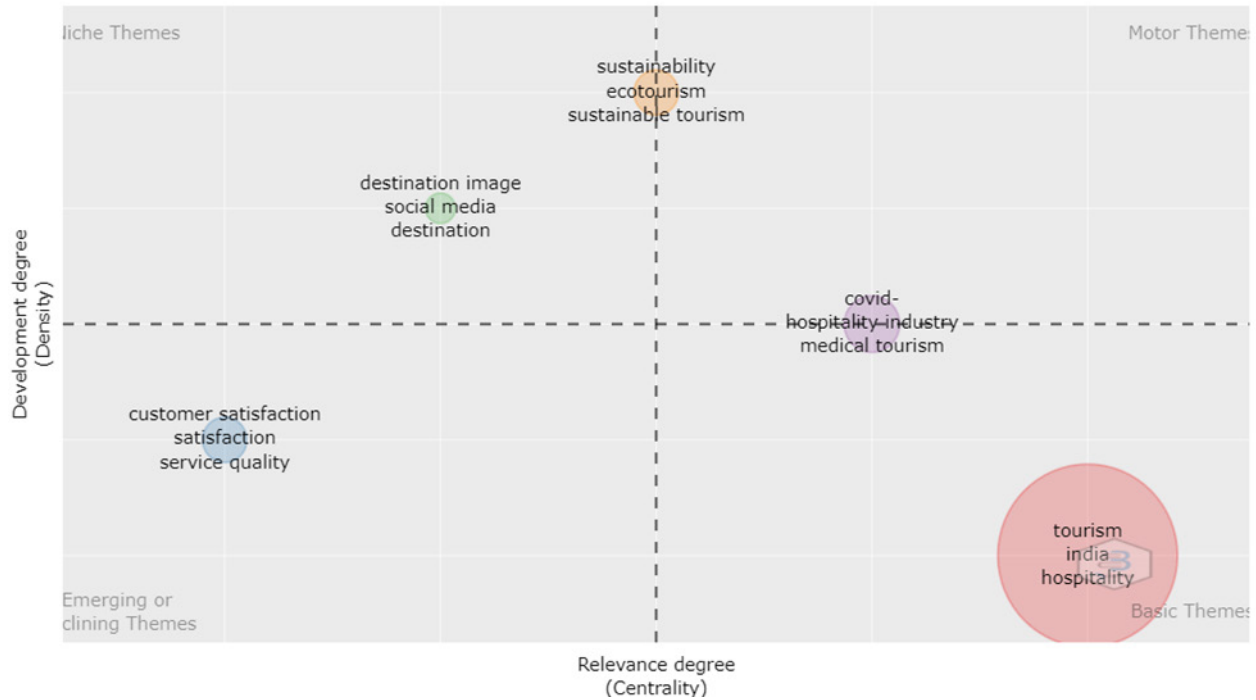


Figure 9: Thematic map of themes from 2012 to 2021.

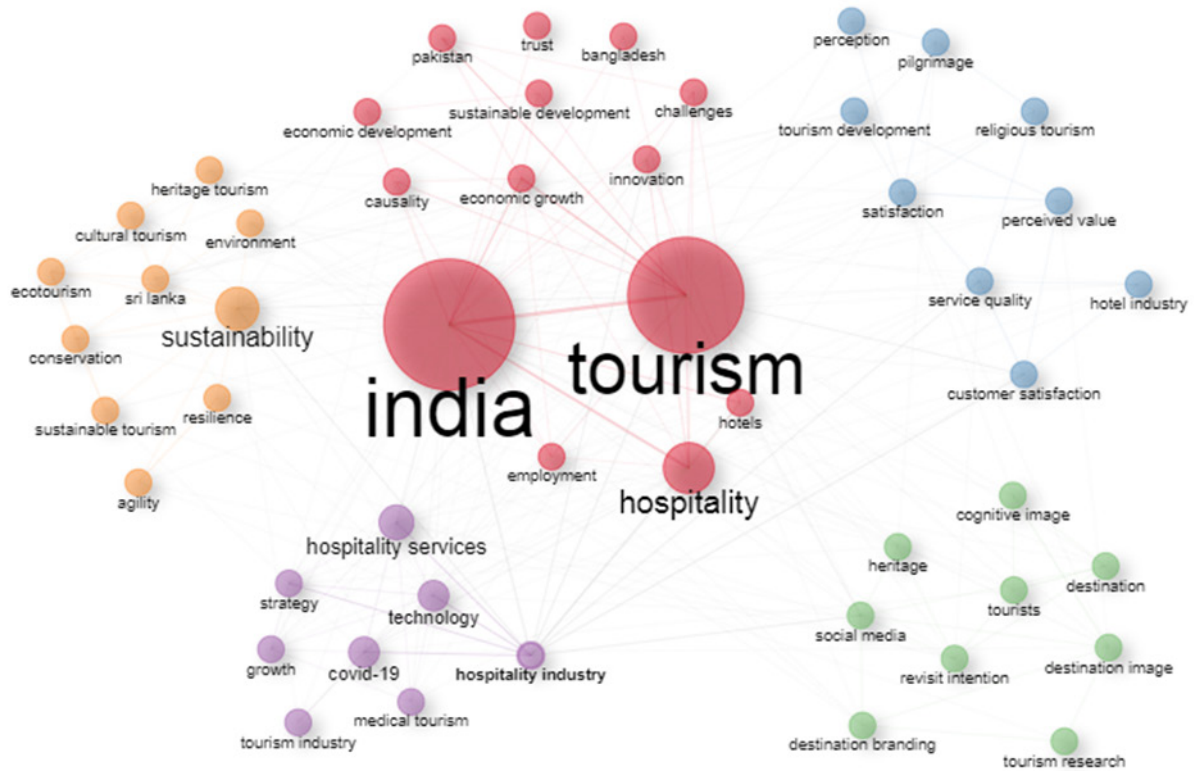


Figure 10: Conceptual structure map of keywords from 2012 to 2021.

topological regions. The density measures the development of the chosen theme, while centrality measures the importance of the selected theme.^[41] The horizontal axis, that is, centrality, explores

how a theme interacts with other themes in a network cluster. As a result, centrality measures a theme's importance in the growth of a research topic by highlighting external connections between

themes.^[42] A high-density theme is one where a set of keywords is often associated with the same papers.^[42] High density and centrality show “motor” or “driving” themes in the upper right quadrant (first quadrant). The upper left quadrant (second quadrant) depicts “specific and under-represented” themes that are nevertheless topics of “rapid development”, demonstrated by high density but low centrality. Topics in the bottom left quadrant (third quadrant) have been used but have seen a declining trend, demonstrated by low centrality and density. Finally, “basic” themes are found in the lower right quadrant (fourth quadrant), characterized by high centrality but low density; these topics are relevant for scientific research as functional topics.^[43]

This thematic analysis produces a network of themes and their relationships that represents a field’s conceptual space, providing a comprehensive understanding of research topics’ development.^[44,45] The conceptual structure tool in Biblioshiny, which was run in R software to extract the top 50 most frequently used authors’ keywords, was used to investigate the thematic structure of this study. We investigated the co-occurrences of authors’ keywords by grouping them into three ranges: 1992 to 2001, 2002 to 2011 and 2012 to 2021, to discover the thematic structure of research that has emerged in the sub-region. These keywords were utilized in a co-occurrence analysis to determine the conceptual framework, as well as in a cluster analysis to group articles with similar themes. In addition, the keyword analysis was expanded to become a thematic analysis. After that, a visualization of conceptual structure maps was created, depicting the contextual structure of the authors’ keywords that occurred in the analysis.

Themes between 1992 and 2001

Figure 5 shows the thematic map of themes that evolved within this period. It is observed that meager research is evident in this period, as only one ‘motor’ cluster, namely ‘Asia’, was developed. This indicates that ‘Asia’ was the main focus of research, the driving and promising topic for future study, due to its high centrality and density. No clusters were formed in the second and third quadrants. However, in the basic theme quadrant, one cluster developed. ‘Tourism’ and ‘ethics’ were the main topics in this cluster, signaling the importance of ethics as an area of research in tourism during that period. Figure 6 provides a visualization of the conceptual structure map, depicting the 50 most frequently occurring keywords in this range. It was observed that thematic analysis resulted in the formation of two cluster labels. In our findings, ‘tourism’ recorded the highest theme frequency (4 occurrences)

Themes between 2002 and 2011

Figure 7 depicts a thematic map of research topics that evolved throughout this period. The upper-right quadrant, called the motor theme, has well-developed topics. In this quadrant,

‘attitude’ and ‘pilgrimage’ emerged as hot and essential topics of research and should be explored further. Research on pilgrimage tourism gained momentum in this period. This is consistent with the findings of Hyde and Harman,^[46] who established that researchers during this time period have spawned new knowledge about temporal pilgrimage sites and have thrown light on the secular facet of pilgrimage. The position of Cluster 1 indicates its highest density among these keywords and their importance. The niche theme quadrant developed three clusters. Cluster 1 includes ‘entrepreneurship’, ‘business plan’ and ‘tourism and hospitality’, while Cluster 2 includes ‘travel’ and Cluster 3, ‘ecotourism’, indicating that these areas of research have evolved but are isolated and the said themes must be viewed with a different perspective. The emerging quadrant has clusters with lower centrality and density. ‘Religious tourism’, ‘tourism impact’ and ‘Varanasi’ are the neglected and marginal areas of research and there is a substantial need for particular focus. The basic theme quadrant developed two clusters which include topics that are well-developed and important to the field of hospitality and tourism research. Cluster 2, on the other hand, includes ‘hotel’, ‘hospitality services’ and ‘Kerala’. It can be observed that the thematic analysis resulted in nine main clusters. Finally, Figure 8 provides overlay visualization on the conceptual structure map of keywords within this range, with a color gradation based on the scores calculated by the Biblioshiny software.

Themes between 2012 and 2021

As shown in the thematic map (Figure 9), it is observed that the topics ‘destination image’, ‘social media’ and ‘destination’ formed a cluster in the niche theme quadrant. This means that these topics, though they developed good attention (density), were of low importance (centrality). In the emerging or declining quadrant, ‘customer satisfaction’, ‘satisfaction’ and ‘service quality’ formed the only cluster. Finally, one cluster emerged in the lower-right quadrant, known as the basic theme quadrant. This quadrant explains themes that are crucial for the subject area. ‘Tourism’, ‘India’ and ‘Hospitality’ were the topics that formed a cluster in this quadrant. Lastly, the conceptual structure map (Figure 10) shows the visualization of the keywords developed within this timeframe.

Summary of Key Research Areas during the period from 1992 to 2021

During the period from 1992 to 2021, the focus of tourism and hospitality research in the South Asian region evolved significantly. In the initial phase from 1992 to 2001, the research was relatively meager, with a predominant focus on ‘Asia’ as a key ‘motor’ theme, indicating a strong interest in the region as a primary subject of study. The themes of ‘tourism’ and ‘ethics’ also emerged, highlighting the importance of ethical considerations in tourism. Between 2002 and 2011, the research expanded to

include themes like 'attitude', 'pilgrimage', 'entrepreneurship', 'business plan', 'travel', 'ecotourism' and 'religious tourism'. This period also saw a growth in studies on 'pilgrimage tourism', reflecting a deepening understanding of its various facets. The most recent decade, from 2012 to 2021, marked a shift towards digital influence in tourism with themes like 'destination image', 'social media' and 'destination' forming key areas of study. Additionally, 'customer satisfaction', 'satisfaction' and 'service quality' emerged as crucial topics, suggesting a growing focus on the consumer experience in the hospitality sector.

CONCLUSION

This study conducts a bibliometric analysis of 1,003 tourism and hospitality research articles from South Asia indexed in Scopus over 1992-2021, providing a succinct overview of the field's development and current trends. From 1992 to 2021, a gradual increase in South Asian tourism and hospitality research publications was observed, peaking in the last decade. Around 72.3% of these Scopus-indexed articles garnered citations, with 2013 being the most cited year. The study by Manaktola and Jauhari (2007)^[47] emerged as the most cited, among the top five surpassing 100 citations, marking the influence and popularity of these works. India dominates South Asian tourism and hospitality research, contributing 88% of articles, with an upward trajectory expected. The country markedly outpaces regional publications, aligning with insights from bibliometric analyses.^[48] The journal "Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes" leads in publishing these articles between 1992 and 2021, with India maintaining prominence in top journals.^[6,49]

Institutional publications demonstrate their contribution to the intellectual body of knowledge in a study discipline.^[30] Law and Cheung^[50] stated that institutions with higher research performance enhance their public image. As a result, tourism and hospitality scholars are interested in institutional performance and contributions.^[51] This study examines the contribution of institutions to tourism and hospitality research publications. Results from this study show that in India, the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee stands out as the most prolific institute with the highest number of research articles. In Pakistan, Hazara University, the University of Agriculture Faisalabad and COMSATS University Islamabad are notable. In Bangladesh, the University of Dhaka is notable. The University of Colombo and the University of Sri Jayewardenepura are the most prolific in Sri Lanka and in Nepal, Tribhuvan University is the leading fecund institution. The Ministry of Agriculture in Bhutan and the Maldives National Chamber of Commerce and Industry are the most notable in Bhutan and Maldives, respectively. The findings from the study show that there is no remarkable degree of centralization in the network of institutional collaboration among institutes in the sub-region. Therefore, we suggest that

researchers should carry out more scientific collaborations in the future.

Authors who are prolific and influential have also been a popular concept for bibliometric research in tourism and hospitality.^[25] In this study, we identified the influential authors in the region based on citations received. Jauhari V. is found to be the most prominent author in India. Adnan Hye Q. M. emerges as a notable author in Pakistan and Hafiz R. is the most dominant in Bangladesh. Results from this study reveal Mohamed Mustafa A. M. as the most prolific in Sri Lanka, whereas Sharma E. also emerges as a notable author in Nepal.

The study has also presented an overview of key research trends in terms of keywords and themes over the past three decades. The thematic maps that depict research topics provide an overview of each topic's location in a quadrant, comparing density and centrality.^[43] This gives an idea of the current status of research on topics that have not received much attention.^[52] The conceptual structure of keywords explored in this study will be helpful to scholars and suggest future exploration of relevant topics.

Further we recognize the potential for further refinement and expansion of the bibliometric and thematic analysis methodologies employed. Building on the foundational work of this research, future iterations can incorporate more advanced data processing techniques, such as natural language processing or machine learning algorithms, to enhance the accuracy and depth of thematic mapping. This could allow for a more nuanced understanding of complex themes and trends in tourism and hospitality research. Additionally, the methodological framework of our study, particularly the use of Biblioshiny in R for thematic analysis, shows promise for application in other domains. Its adaptability to different datasets and research contexts makes it a valuable tool for exploring and identifying key trends and themes in various fields of study. By continually updating and refining these methodologies, future research can provide even more comprehensive insights into the evolving landscape of academic research, not only in tourism and hospitality but also in other interdisciplinary areas.

Implications

The study's ultimate goal is to provide a comprehensive overview of relevant tourism and hospitality research trends in the South Asian sub-region. The study's findings will be an essential source of knowledge for the tourism and hospitality academic community. Practically and theoretically, this will help scholars understand the evolution, development and advances in this area of study.^[22] The mapping of bibliographic data gives significant insight into the present status of tourism and hospitality research on topics that have yet to attract researchers' attention. The study established that the current areas of research in the field of tourism and hospitality, which provide a theoretical foundation,

are tourism, ethics, hotels, hospitality services, Kerala, India and the internet. The themes that are promising and potent for future research include pilgrimage, attitude and Asia. Subjects that are midway and may either enter into motor themes in the future or may revert to the basic themes' quadrant, depending on the situation of gaining or losing relevance and development, include economic growth, cointegration, Granger causality, COVID, medical tourism, etc. Conservation and biodiversity merged into eco-tourism and shifted to the upper quadrant in the 2012-2021 period, gaining density. Another important revelation of the research is that sustainability and eco-tourism are themes that may enter into the motor or promising themes in the coming future, or they may transpose into the basic theme quadrant. The study's findings have the potential to aid researchers in discovering and addressing research gaps in the sub-region. Finally, the study can also aid industrial practitioners and policymakers in making strategic decisions.

Limitations of the study

This study provides an extensive overview of tourism and hospitality research trends in South Asia using various bibliometric indicators and analyzing data primarily from the Scopus database. However, it's essential to recognize a few limitations. Primarily, our reliance on Scopus, while beneficial, may not encompass all available studies, potentially overlooking significant research found in other databases like Web of Science or Google Scholar. Additionally, the focus on peer-reviewed articles excludes other forms of scholarly communication such as conference papers and books, which could contain vital insights and developments in this field. This study's concentration on South Asia also means its findings might not be fully applicable in other regions. Moreover, while our bibliometric analysis was comprehensive, the omission of certain indicators like engagement metrics, user demographics and temporal patterns may limit the depth of our understanding. Acknowledging these limitations is crucial as they highlight areas for future research, suggesting the inclusion of diverse data sources and a broader range of indicators to provide a more nuanced and multidimensional perspective on the evolving dynamics of tourism and hospitality research.

Directions for future research

For future research, several promising directions can be identified. Firstly, there is a scope for deepening the exploration of digital and social media's impact on tourism, particularly in the context of destination branding and traveler decision-making. Secondly, the burgeoning field of eco-tourism and sustainable tourism practices offers ample opportunities for research, especially in light of environmental concerns and sustainable development goals. Thirdly, the areas of customer satisfaction and service quality in the hospitality industry remain ripe for further investigation, especially in understanding and enhancing the guest experience.

Moreover, the growing importance of ethics in tourism suggests a need for research focused on responsible and sustainable tourism practices. Finally, given the rapid development and expansion of the tourism sector in South Asia, studies on emerging markets, niche tourism areas and under-represented regions within South Asia could provide valuable insights and contribute significantly to the field. These future research directions, grounded in the evolving trends and themes identified in the past three decades, promise to enrich the field of tourism and hospitality research in the South Asian region.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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