



Culinary tourism: A bibliometric analysis and concept mapping

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Abstract

Culinary tourism has emerged as a new trend in the world tourism market. It has become a manifestation in the tourism sector. Culinary tourism provides a memorable food exploration experience to tourists as a part of cultural tourism. As an emerging and relevant topic, it is important to explore the concept of Culinary tourism in depth with the help of existing research works. This study aims to showcase the bibliometric analysis and concept mapping of Culinary tourism. The information search was carried out in the Scopus database from the year 2015 to 2024. This work helps to identify the key research topic, trend of the research, co-occurrence of keywords in the field of study, and collaboration pattern, etc. 756 articles are selected after putting several checkpoints. Platforms such as Visualization of Similarities (VOS) Viewer and R Studio were used for the study. The study revealed that there was an increase in research in the field of culinary tourism. The present study brought about the performance analysis and concept mapping including citation analysis, co-citation analysis, co-word analysis, and co-authorship analysis.

Keywords: Culinary tourism, food tourism, gastronomy tourism, gastronomic tourism, bibliometric analysis, concept mapping

Introduction

Experiencing food is one of the essential elements of every tourism experience. That's the main reason for the emergence of Culinary tourism or Food tourism and Gastronomic tourism as a new trend in tourism research (Baah *et al.*, 2020) [3]. World Food Travel Association (WFTA) defines Food tourism as "Food tourism is the act of traveling for a taste of place to get a sense of place". The tourism sector is going through a transformation stage from service-centric to experience-centric offerings (Di-Clemente *et al.*, 2020) [6]. Food tourism not only offers a novel experience to visitors but also fosters new kinds of tourist loyalty that benefit the regional agri-food sector (Duarte Alonso *et al.*, 2018) [11]. In the earlier travel and tourism scenario, food was only a physiological need of the tourists. However, the modern era of travel and tourism discloses food as one of the principal motivations of travel (Forgas-Serra *et al.*, 2021) [12].

The integration and growth of a region's culture, ethnicity, terroir, and religion are significantly influenced by its cuisine. It delivers a unique story of destination through taste sensory stimulation (Mengjia *et al.*, 2024a) [30]. Local cuisine has a significant role in attracting tourist, impacting their satisfaction and loyalty to various destinations. The quality of local food is closely related to tourist's motivations and their overall experiences (Ullah *et al.*, 2022) [42]. Engaging in food-related activities can create enjoyable memories that positively influence future purchasing decisions (Stone *et al.*, 2019) [40].

This study aims to impart a new direction for tourism research through the concept of culinary tourism. The present study tries to answer two specific research questions through the innovative approach of bibliometric analysis such as (i) What is the current state of culinary tourism research? and (ii) What should be done in the future on culinary tourism research?

This paper is arranged into five sections. The introduction of the study is presented in the first section. It was followed by

a literature review on culinary tourism research. The study's material and methodology are presented in the article's third section. Finally, the fourth and fifth sections display the findings and discussions and the conclusion of the study respectively.

Objectives of the study

1. To explore and understand the concept of Culinary tourism in depth with the help of existing literature.
2. To identify the research gap associated with Culinary tourism from the available scholarly articles.

Research Methodology

Bibliometrics is a field of study that can give several approaches to carrying out a systematic methodical evaluation of the existing literature and present an overview of different topics to the readers (Hood & Wilson, 2001) [18]. There exists a troupe of bibliometric studies in the field of tourism including bibliometric analysis of tourism research progress (Leong *et al.*, 2021a) [27], a bibliometric analysis of hospitality and tourism research (Palácios *et al.*, 2021a) [27], bibliometric study on ecotourism towards sustainable development (Khanra *et al.*, 2021) [23], a bibliometric analysis of tourism research on sustainability (Niñerola *et al.*, 2019a) [34] and bibliometric analysis of knowledge development in smart tourism research (Johnson & Samakovlis, 2019a) [20].

In the current study, we have conducted a bibliometric analysis of culinary tourism to know the concept and trend of that particular tourism activity. The documents from the Scopus database retrieved in the second week of April 2025 are used for bibliometric analysis by using the search string "culinary tourism" or "food tourism" or "gastronomy tourism" or "gastronomic tourism" and publication year > 2014 and < 2025 and limited to the subject area, "Business, Management and Accounting" or "Social Science" or "Economics, Econometrics and Finance" or "Environmental Science") or "Agricultural and Biological Science" and

limited to the document types in "Article" and limited to the language in English". The search filters 756 articles within a period of ten years ranging from 2015 to 2024^[30]. The filtered 756 articles were

exported from Scopus in the format of Bibtex. Table 1 depicts the extraction procedure of research documents based on culinary tourism from the Scopus database.

Table 1: Data extraction procedure

Procedure	Steps	Search Filters	Number of Documents
Information search	1	Search words: "Culinary tourism" OR "Food tourism" OR "Gastronomy tourism" OR "Gastronomic tourism"	1579
Information search	2	Year: 2015–2024	1337
Information search	3	Subject areas: Business, Management and Accounting; Social Science; Environmental Science; Agricultural and Biological Science; Economics, Econometrics and Finance	1223
Information search	4	Document type: Article	812
Information search	5	Language: English	763
Information search	6	Records after deleting duplicates and unrelated studies	756

Source: Scopus, April 2025

The final selection of the 756 articles was carried out by the researcher by incorporating some inclusion and exclusion criteria for bibliometric analysis. Two distinct tools such as the Biblioshiny application and Visualization of Similarities (VOS) Viewer were employed to carry out bibliometric analysis and concept mapping of Culinary tourism. VOS Viewer offers a graphical representation with network visualization, where the connection between items indicates their degree of association. The size of the circle reflects the relevance of each item, while their positions and colors help in grouping related items (Laengle *et al.*, 2017).

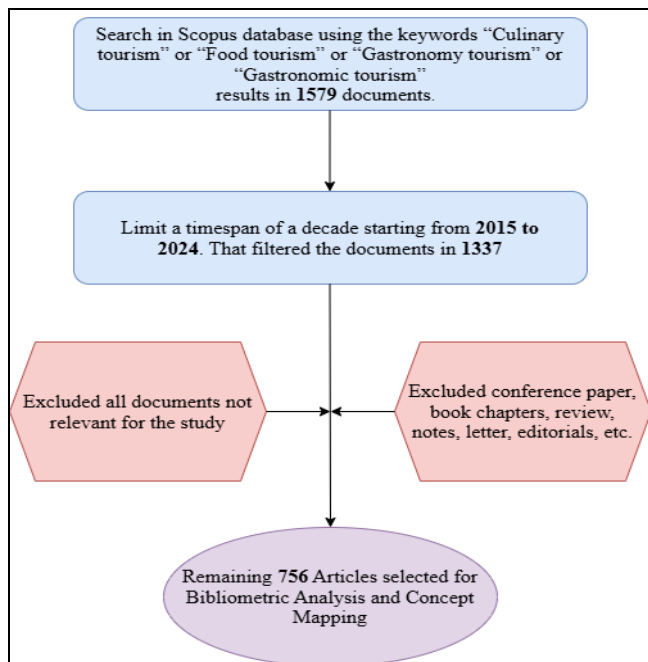


Fig 1: An illustration of the study's research methodology

Review of Literature

1. Understanding bibliometric analysis

Bibliometric analysis has gained a lot of popularity in business research in recent years (Donthu *et al.*, 2020; Khan *et al.*, 2021)^[9, 22]. Researchers perform Bibliometric analysis for several purposes, including examining the intellectual structure of a specific discipline in the existing literature and identifying new trends in article and journal performance, collaboration patterns, and research elements (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, *et al.*, 2021; Verma & Gustafsson, 2020)^{[7,}

44]. The increase in publications utilizing bibliometrics can be largely attributed to the overall expansion of scientific research itself (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, *et al.*, 2021)^[7]. The comprehensive coverage of bibliometric data collection is made easy through scientific databases such as Scopus and Web of Science (Donthu, *et al.*, 2021)^[7], and the use of bibliometric software and packages like VOS Viewer, R Studio, Gephi, and Leximancer provide a pragmatic way for bibliometric analysis, which has increased scholarly interest in bibliometric analysis recently (Hood & Wilson, 2001)^[18]. The bibliometric approach has been applied in a variety of business research field, such as marketing (Gao *et al.*, 2021; Valenzuela *et al.*, 2017; Ye *et al.*, 2021)^[10, 43], tourism (Johnson & Samakovlis, 2019; Palácios *et al.*, 2021^[20, 37]; Leong *et al.*, 2021^[27]; Niñerola *et al.*, 2019), finance (Linnenluecke *et al.*, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2019^[29, 47]; Goyal & Kumar, 2021^[15]; Xu *et al.*, 2018), management (Gaviria-Marin *et al.*, 2019; Merigó & Yang, 2017^[14, 32]; Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, *et al.*, 2021; Nobanee *et al.*, 2021)^[7]. Performance analysis and Science mapping are the two categories of tools used for bibliometric analysis techniques, where the former emphasizes research constituent contribution while the latter concentrates on the connections among research constituents (Donthu *et al.*, 2021)^[10].

2. Understanding culinary tourism

Culinary tourism is a travel experience where visitors enjoy, eat, or explore branded local culinary sources (Smith & Honggen, 2008)^[39]. According to Nelson (2016)^[33], Culinary tourism emphasizes tourism that is driven by tourist's desire to experience and learn about local cuisine. One of the most accurate measures of demand for tourism is considered as food experience nowadays (Stone *et al.*, 2019)^[40] and one of the main tenets of the present tourism industry is the desire to travel for culinary motives (Kim *et al.*, 2009)^[25]. Food has been considered a powerful instrument for destination positioning and promotion (Hjalager & Richards, 2002)^[17]. Researchers have been looking into culinary tourism as a way to boost local tourism and economic growth since it is one of the most important factors in attracting travelers to a place (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010)^[1]. Experiencing local cuisine in different tourist destinations can be viewed as a journey to various customs and cultures (Kim & Eves, 2012)^[24].

According to Choe & Kim (2018) [5], A significant part of forming the nation's identity was the interaction between tourism and regional food as well as the importance of local cuisine in social culture. Traveler's level of satisfaction, inclination to return, and recommendation of the food destination all seem to be influenced by food-related activities (Stone *et al.*, 2019b) [40]. Food tourism impacts tourist satisfaction and destination reputation (Henderson, 2009) [16]. It displays the role of cuisine in improving the travel experience and attracting tourists to specific destinations (Mengjia *et al.*, 2024b) [30].

Analysis and Discussion

The present study makes use of two software Bibiometrix and VOS Viewer for bibliometric representation of the selected documents from the Scopus database. Bibliometrix is an R language written package used to perform bibliometrics analysis (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) [2].

1. Performance Analysis

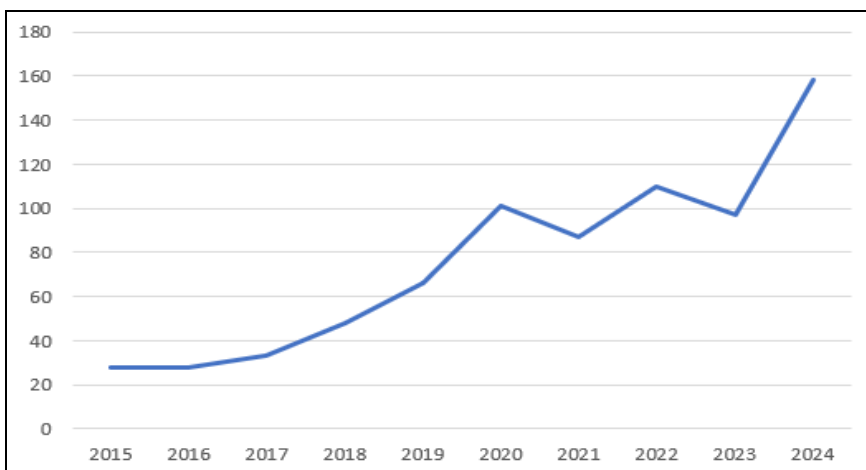
The area of Culinary tourism has seen a remarkable expansion, with a publication growth rate of 21.2% per year projected from the year 2015 to 2024, reflecting a rising academic interest. Table 2 displays the performance of filtered documents from the Scopus database. The selected 756 articles have been published between 2015 to 2024 across 238 sources with a substantial body of literature,

indicating a relatively new but evolving field of study. Each article chosen for the study receives an average of 19.55 citations, demonstrating its applicability in scholarly discourse. A worldwide research effort is shown in 1718 authors who contributed, the average of 2.92 co-authors per document, and 29.37% of publications with international co-authorships. A total of 954 Keyword Plus and 2226 Author's Keywords were employed in the keyword analysis of the study, confirming different thematic explorations of Culinary tourism research.

Table 2: Data Overview

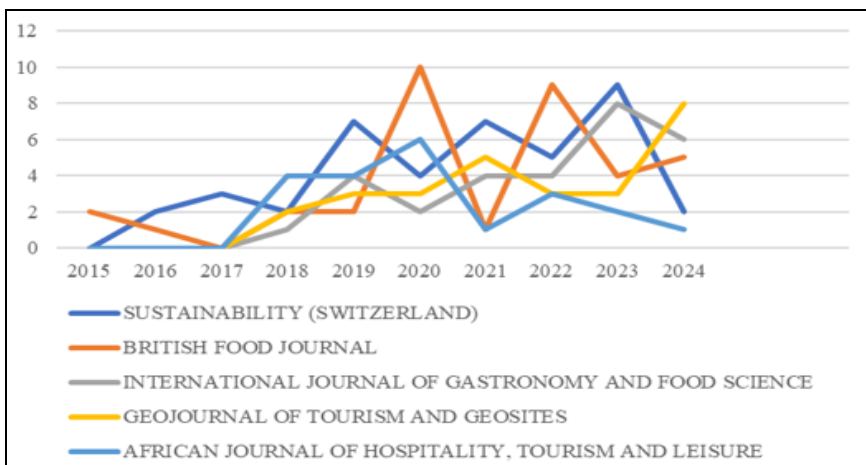
Time frame	2015:2024
Total Sources	238
Total Documents	756
Percentage of Annual Growth Rate	21.2
Average Age of Documents	4.05
Average Citations per Documents	19.55
Total References	38334
Keywords Plus (ID)	954
Author's Keywords (DE)	2226
Total Authors	1718
Authors of single-authored Documents	112
Single-authored Documents	134
Co-Authors per Documents	2.92
Percentage of International co-authorships	29.37
Total selected Articles	756

Source: Biblioshiny



Source: Biblioshiny

Fig 2: Annual scientific production of the documents



Source: Biblioshiny

Fig 3: Sources' production over time

The document's yearly scientific production reveals that, after 2018 there is consistent growth in Culinary tourism research. It indicates the importance and growth of research in tourism research. The data shows that 158 Articles were published in the year 2024. This discloses the new trend in tourism research such as Culinary tourism or Food tourism. That hike may also be due to external factors like global tourism trends, sustainability concerns, and post-pandemic recovery affecting research interest.

Fig 3 displays that, there is a significant increase in scholarly output on culinary tourism in the majority of journals during the period 2015 to 2024. Sustainability (Switzerland) and the British Food Journal have become prominent contributors, exhibiting a high level of interest from the viewpoints of food studies and sustainability showing peaks in 2023 and 2020, respectively. Recent years have seen an ongoing spike in the International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science, which emphasizes the experiential and scientific facets of Culinary tourism. The Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites shows a growing focus on geographical and cultural aspects with a peak in 2024. At that time the "African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism, and Leisure" indicated fluctuations in outputs, which may be a sign of emerging regional research interest or resource-driven variability.

Table 3: Average Citation per Year

Year	Mean TC per Article	No. of article	Mean TC per Year
2015	51.32	28	4.67
2016	48.04	28	4.80
2017	40.12	33	4.46
2018	39.56	48	4.94
2019	30.42	66	4.35
2020	25.45	101	4.24
2021	19.11	87	3.82
2022	13.75	110	3.44
2023	6.56	97	2.19
2024	2.45	158	1.23

Source: Scopus database

Table 3 reveals that the average citation per article (Mean TC per Article) and average citation per year (Mean TC per Year) from 2015 to 2024 explicitly show a downward trend, even though the number of publications (N) has consistently increased over time, particularly since 2020. This implies that recent papers are facing more competition in the scholarly landscape and have had less time to gather citations.

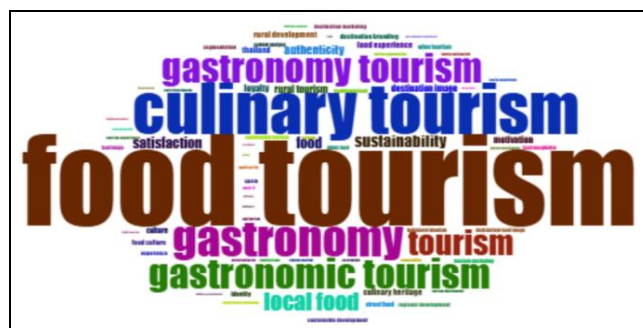
Table 4: Most relevant sources

Sl.No.	Journals	Documents
1	Sustainability (Switzerland)	41
2	British Food Journal	36
3	International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science	29
4	Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites	23
5	African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure	21
6	International Journal of Tourism Research	18
7	Tourism Management Perspectives	18
8	Journal of Culinary Science and Technology	15
9	Tourism Recreation Research	15
10	Current Issues in Tourism	14

The most relevant sources in culinary tourism presented in Table 4 disclose that "Sustainability (Switzerland)" is the most prominent source in Culinary tourism with 41 articles, demonstrating a strong focus on sustainable practices in gastronomy-related tourism. "The International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science" and the "British Food Journal" also provide substantial contributions, emphasizing the multidisciplinary aspect of culinary tourism by integrating tourism, hospitality, and food studies. The journals such as the African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure and the Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites highlight the regional and geographic components of culinary tourism. A strategic and modern approach to conceptualizing culinary tourism as part of larger tourism planning and policy discussions is suggested by journals like Tourism Management Perspectives and Current Issues in Tourism. The diversity of academic interest in culinary tourism, ranging from sustainability and culture to management and regional development is demonstrated in articles across these journals.

2. Conceptual Mapping

Conceptual mapping is a pivotal tool within bibliometric analysis for visualizing and analyzing the intellectual structure of a research domain (Donthu *et al.*, 2021) [22]. Bibliometric analysis employs conceptual mapping to assess the relationships and impacts of publications, authors, institutions, countries with a specific research area, and trends and future research directions (Pessin *et al.*, 2022) [42]. This meticulous method, which is frequently used on large databases of scientific literature, aids in spotting trends, patterns, and the significance of studies performed on an area of interest (Baker *et al.*, 2020) [4].



Source: Biblioshiny

Fig 4: Keyword Cloud

Table 4: Most relevant words

Terms	Frequency
Food tourism	226
Culinary tourism	126
Gastronomy	90
Gastronomic tourism	76
Gastronomy tourism	74
Tourism	63
Local food	45
Sustainability	31

Source: Biblioshiny

The word cloud (Fig 4) and Table 5 "Most relevant words" reveal that food tourism appears 226 times in the relevant document, which indicates that, it is the most commonly used phrase by the researcher to define this sector. The

Fig 6 depicts the network of co-authorship among nations in the field of culinary tourism research. Each node in the figure stands for a country, and the links signify collaborative research activities. The size of each node indicates the number of publications or the strength of collaborations. It reveals that countries such as Spain, the United States, Australia, and Thailand are prominent contributors to culinary tourism research. Different colours shown in the figure illustrate clusters of nations that frequently work together, indicating regional or cultural partnerships in their research. Here it displays the close connections among European and Latin American countries or within Asia-Pacific nations. In summary, the visualization underscores a globally spread interconnection in the research community, with significant collaborative links spanning different continents.

Conclusion

The bibliometric analysis offers an in-depth analysis and understanding of themes and trends of culinary tourism research through performance analysis and concept mapping of selected 756 articles from the Scopus database for the period 2015 to 2024. The present study reveals a steady growth in scholarly publications, exhibiting the rising significance of culinary tourism research. This spike of interest depicts a broader trend towards experimental travel, where tourists seek authentic and immersive encounters with local cultures through food. Food experiences, gastronomic identity, local culture, and tourism development are the major themes identified through concept mapping of culinary tourism research. The findings of the bibliometric analysis in culinary tourism research highlight previous and future research endeavours, and direct researchers to identify potential obstacles, resource availability, gaps, and challenges in the literature related to hospitality and tourism research. The current study serves as a foundational reference for academics, practitioners, and policymakers to deepen their understanding of the concept of culinary tourism and to contribute to the future research agenda.

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