

Article

Understanding the Complexity of Rural Tourism Business: Scholarly Perspective

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to identify and analyze the four core driving forces that shaped the complex picture of rural tourist businesses. These driving forces are marketability, participatory, crisis mitigation and sustainability. This study focused on the scholarly perspective to study and analyze the rural tourism businesses' literature and its link with these four driving forces. By using the bibliometric analysis technique and VosViewer as a visualization tool, the results revealed that less than 50% of rural tourism literature was concerned with local businesses. Regarding the four driving forces, sustainability was the most linked force with the rural tourism businesses' scientific production. Contrarily, a relatively small body of the rural tourism businesses' literature discussed marketability, participatory and crisis mitigation, despite their significant role in the development of these local rural businesses. In addition, the results of this study showed the interest of rural tourism articles in the crisis mitigation pillar, especially recently after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: village tourism; sustainable tourism; community-based tourism; tourism enterprises; SMEs; bibliometric analysis; VosViewer



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1. Introduction

Rural tourism (RT) is a form of sustainable and responsible tourism that allows tourists and travelers to be involved in the daily local communities' life in rural settings that are commonly low-population, agriculture-dominated, have distinct traditional and cultural characteristics and are often poor and marginalized [1,2]. Recently, interest in rural tourism has increased, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, as rural tourism was defined as a natural-based tourism pattern and recognized for its potential to be an alternative to ecotourism [3–7]. This vivid interest in rural tourism was supported by many actors in the tourism industry (e.g., travel agencies, tourism authorities, airline companies, civil society, etc.) as initiatives to promote tourism patterns that connected to natural and environmental activities, enhance the public health for tourists and support local communities' economics.

Regarding "rural tourism" as a complex term, finding a unified precise definition of rural tourism can be described as an arduous mission, as there are enormous definitions that all present the same image of rural tourism as a tourism pattern that connected locals in rural areas with tourists [8,9]. Rural tourism definitions can be found everywhere in the massive tourism literature. For example, Lane and Kastenholz stated that rural tourism is a tourism pattern that depended on local activities, improved markets, modern marketing

knowledge and holistic sustainability-enhancing management techniques used by the local community [10]. Gao and Wu [11] argued rural tourism is a blend of rurality and tourism that also upholds the values of balancing the opinions of various stakeholders and managing them effectively and fairly. Rural tourism is also a form of tourism that promotes a region with particular geographic and socioeconomic viewpoints, making sustainable development a central goal and emphasizing the importance of indigenous communities and the necessity to offer rural experiences [12]. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) provided the most comprehensive definition of rural tourism as “a type of tourism activity in which the visitor’s experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle/culture, angling and sightseeing” [13].

Regardless of what definition or perspective one considers when discussing, studying or analyzing rural tourism, its benefits for both rural local communities and tourists are undeniable. From an economic standpoint, rural tourism has a positive impact on creating job opportunities in the tourism sector, spurring the development of infrastructure in rural areas/regions, supporting local rural communities by increasing the living standards and supporting the existing local business and triggering new business [14,15]. From a sociocultural perspective, rural tourism reduces gender discrimination, reinvigorates culture and traditions in local rural communities, encourages rural areas to be repopulated, enhances the sense of identity and self-esteem of locals and increases the overall satisfaction of local communities [16–18]. Additionally, rural tourism activities have indirect beneficial consequences in locals’ life by motivating specific behavioral patterns such as engaging in physical exercise, practicing self-regulation and raising positive emotions. Concomitantly, rural tourism plays a significant role in the environmental dimension [19,20]. For example, rural tourism contributes to preserving natural resources and biodiversity.

Besides these aforementioned multidimensional positive impacts of rural tourism activities for both rural communities and tourists, there are some possible drawbacks that may result from malpractices. For example, in some cases, rural tourism activities could destroy local communities’ culture, especially if tourists, as well as locals, misunderstand the genuine targets of these activities [21–23]. Additionally, unorganized rural tourism activities could cause what is known as mass tourism, which happens when a large number of tourists are involved in these activities in the same rural area/village at the same time. This mass tourism has many negative impacts on local rural communities, such as congestion, air pollution, littering, pressure and the depletion of natural and rural resources, as well as negatively affecting locals’ mental health [9,24]. Furthermore, the recent promotion of rural tourism activities could contribute to rising the prices of the various services and products in rural areas, which in turn would increase the cost of living [25].

Despite these negative impacts that may result from various rural tourism activities, the positives have still outweighed the negatives, increasing the importance of this type of tourism pattern and bringing it to the attention of the different tourism industry actors globally. However, various negative or positive phenomena as a result of rural tourism activities cannot be generalized. Challenges and conditions that are different in each rural area can be used as a case study but may not necessarily be applicable to other areas. An understanding approach through bibliometric analysis seeks to minimize the gap in understanding of events in studies that have been studied by previous researchers.

This paper addresses the theme of the Special Issue “Translating the Concept of Sustainability into Tourism Practice—Destination Perspectives” by investigating rural tourism destination scientific papers production. The main aim of this article is to understand the complexity of rural tourism businesses through these four driving forces: marketability, participatory, crisis mitigation and sustainability. This analysis will be based on the scholarly records that discussed these rural tourism businesses. Through using a variety of tools and research databases, we will attempt to untangle these difficulties one by one. Understanding the research situation for the rural tourism businesses and its challenges

and complexities in academia will play an important role in improving and developing these businesses in the different geographical rural areas and regions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Marketability in Rural Tourism

As previously mentioned, rural tourism is a form of economic business. Tourism is a commodity, and it refers to the activity and behavior of travelers engaging in travel-related activities or making purchases in tourist destinations to meet their unique demands, both internal and external, in order to fulfil a variety of travel-related goals [26]. Rural tourism can be seen as a type of tourism product, and this perspective highlights the significance of source management and marketing initiatives [27]. Through the creation and exchange of products and the value of reciprocity with others, marketing is a social and management activity that enables individuals and groups to fulfil their needs and desires [28]. As a result, there is significant concern about the items related to product and marketing concerns. Thus, “management of demand” as a part of marketing appears to be the desired strategy in an effort to draw visitors to rural tourism destination [29].

Targeting the right audience with marketing communication messages that emphasize the product’s benefits at the appropriate moment may be essential for marketing efforts to be successful [30]. Entrepreneurs in the rural tourist industry frequently use online platforms for marketing, such as booking.com or Airbnb; thus, this calls for proper support, preparation and market research [31]. Furthermore, increasing and improving marketing and branding in destination management organizations are needed because they will deal with the visitor as their consumers [32]. Basically, the concept of marketability is to determine whether something considered a tourism product in the region is able to be sold.

2.2. Sustainability in Rural Tourism

Environmental, social-cultural and economic considerations are all incorporated into the sustainable tourism idea [33]. Conservation and revitalization make rural tourism activities become sustainable and successful as a destination [11]. The UNWTO also demonstrates how investment-oriented sustainability (green investment/sustainable tourism) in the tourism industry may help to expand the economy, create decent jobs and reduce poverty while also increasing resource efficiency and reducing environmental deterioration [34]. The development of rural tourism also makes an important contribution to the sustainable development [35]. Thus, sustainable tourism refers to methods, programs and regulations that include the needs of the tourism service provider community, which may support or be impacted by tourism initiatives and the environment, in addition to the expectations of tourists about the management of natural resources [34]. In other words, when analyzing the development of a place, it is important to take into account the local environment and community that surround tourism activities to make it concerned with sustainability issues.

Enhancing community livelihoods will determine whether or not the business’ operations are to continue. In order for destination managers’ organizations to be viable, this is a concern [36]. Thus, supporting the evaluation of communities taking part in CBT is another way to investigate the sustainable development [37]. According to UNWTO, the UNEP, the UN Foundation and the Rainforest Alliance in 2008, sustainable tourism itself should have the following objectives: generating the maximum profit for local communities, reducing the negative impact on the local indigenous culture, reducing the damaging impact on the natural environment and contributing to the existence of sustainability planning [38]. So that the analysis of the sustainability principle must be used in order to fulfil the requirements of the present without jeopardizing the potential to fulfil the needs of future generations, sustainability must be practiced. In conclusion, when tourism-related activities increase, issues related to sustainability become an issue that can be avoided.

2.3. Participatory in Rural Tourism

Participation, in this case, means including interested parties in decision-making via both transparent and participatory procedures [39]. Participatory also refers to involving the public. Moreover, the degree of genuine public participation is correlated with the degree of social influence or control that the public has over the decision-making process [40]. Rural tourism activities enable rural communities with less desirable tourism resources to develop close links with one another and to build a sense of community pride. Moreover, this encourages community participation in the village to become more active [41]. Locally, there are two forms of community involvement: participation in management planning processes and participation in interpretation services for existing outcomes [42]. Thus, maintaining local communities' involvement and essential roles in the management of tourist destinations is one of the most important aspects of maintaining community-based rural tourism. This will ensure that the majority of the advantages and usages stay within the local community itself [2].

Another form of participatory is locality, which is described as the development of an innovative initiative that aimed to facilitate a closer connection between production and consumption and to connect local producers with consumers who looking for traditional products [43]. Local communities appear to be the key to implementing sustainable tourism practices, as they are the ones most impacted by uncontrolled and unsustainable tourism growth [44]. Therefore, people's support for tourist development is determined by how they see the effects of tourism development [45]. As a result, as tourism activities become business activities that are more accessible and involve local communities, participation becomes necessary in the case of tourism villages and is defined as the participation of local communities.

2.4. Crisis/Disaster Mitigation Management in Rural Tourism

Disasters frequently resulted in major decreases in destination image and reputation, an increased concern for safety, damage to infrastructure and the loss of agricultural land, according to the perspective of community-based tourism (CBT) in rural areas [46]. The UN defines a disaster as a significant disturbance of a community or society that has widespread effects on human, material, economic or environmental losses that are more than what the affected community or communities are able to overcome using their own resources [47]. Therefore, crisis/disaster mitigation benefits are becoming community benefits. The welfare values that the community receives as a result of a natural hazard mitigation method are known as social benefits that are accrued by the community [48].

Mitigation seeks to prevent harmful events and, if possible, reduce the severity that occurs and minimize loss and subsequent damage [49]. Thus, mitigation products and services are very relevant objectives so that tourists can travel safely [50]. When managing the spatial overlap between farm and off-farm activities, mitigation is needed so that damage to nature does not spread into a disaster for humans [51]. In the future, there is an urgent need to identify, analyze and better understand the multi-hazard, systemic and cascading nature of the disaster to have an integrated model that can be assisting in the preparation and response to disasters [52]. As a consequence, tourism development must pay attention to natural resources, environmental, community and tourism impact factors to minimize future disasters [36].

3. Materials and Methods

A bibliometric technique was employed in conjunction with desk research and descriptive analysis as the main method for reviewing rural tourism businesses' literature. The goal of the bibliometric analysis is to track the evolution of scientific article publishing and research contributions in a specific research area/field. The essence of the bibliometric analysis technique is to track the evolution of scientific published articles and research contributions in a specific scientific domain [53]. In addition, bibliometric analysis is a commonly used technique in literature review studies in a variety of academic fields [54–56].

This study demonstrates a three-stage methodological process for conducting a bibliometric analysis of the scientific published recorders related to rural tourism businesses.

- Stage (I): Data extraction

The first step for conducting bibliometric analysis in this study is extracting the rural tourism businesses articles from the databases. Accordingly, Scopus was the main database that was relied upon to extract the various published articles related to rural tourism businesses in this study. The Scopus database is considered the world's transdisciplinary largest citation and abstract database [57]. It meets stringent quality standards, and it is simple to access and download datasets from it [19,55,58].

Four proposed search queries were organized to extract the records from the Scopus database, each search query linked rural tourism businesses with one of the aforementioned driving forces that shaped the complicity picture of these businesses (marketability, participatory, crisis mitigation and sustainability). Different keywords and the most common synonyms were used in the form of "loose phrases" that were detected by Scopus as terms enclosed in double quotation. Furthermore, the Boolean operators "OR" and "AND" were employed to find the records. This was also followed by a thorough review by the authors to ensure that the collected publications matched the study's objectives. Table 1 depicted the search queries used for each driving force that affected the rural tourism businesses.

Table 1. Search queries of each rural tourism business driving force.

| Elements | Search Query * |
|-------------------|---|
| Marketability | ((TITLE-ABS-KEY ("rural tourism" OR "rural tourism business*" OR "rural tourism enterprise*")) AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY (village OR mountain OR lake OR river OR coastal OR indigenous OR forest* OR remote OR traditional OR agriculture* OR heritage))) AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY (market*)) |
| Participatory | ((TITLE-ABS-KEY ("rural tourism" OR "rural tourism business*" OR "rural tourism enterprise*")) AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY (village OR mountain OR lake OR river OR coastal OR indigenous OR forest* OR remote OR traditional OR agriculture* OR heritage))) AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY (participat*)) |
| Crisis Mitigation | ((TITLE-ABS-KEY ("rural tourism" OR "rural tourism business*" OR "rural tourism enterprise*")) AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY (village OR mountain OR lake OR river OR coastal OR indigenous OR forest* OR remote OR traditional OR agriculture* OR heritage))) AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY (disaster OR cris* OR risk OR mitigat*)) |
| Sustainability | ((TITLE-ABS-KEY ("rural tourism" OR "rural tourism business*" OR "rural tourism enterprise*")) AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY (village OR mountain OR lake OR river OR coastal OR indigenous OR forest* OR remote OR traditional OR agriculture* OR heritage))) AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY (sustaina*)) |

* Note: The records collected by these research queries were refined by the authors based on their relevance to study objectives.

- Stage (II): Data refinement

The data were extracted from the Scopus database in December 2021. Choosing Scopus as the main database for extracting the relevant articles for conducting the bibliometric analysis was based on various reasons. Firstly, Scopus provide a broader overview of several journals in the intellectual capital field from 1956 to 2020 [59]. Secondly, Scopus also provides access to important, top-notch research being undertaken and published in developing countries due to its greater coverage of emerging markets. This helps many scholars all over the world to have a more comprehensive grasp of fair access to information [60]. Thirdly, selecting Scopus as the main database in this study was supported by the choice of many researchers who conducted bibliometric analysis in different scientific fields using only the Scopus database, including tourism studies, such as [61–63].

The search refinement was quite limited in this study, where any records before 2012 were excluded, as we focused on identifying the rural tourism businesses' challenges in the last 10 years. Papers from 2022 were also omitted because the scientific publication is still ongoing and was not complete yet. The obtained records were downloaded in CSV (comma-separated values) format. These data include various variables such as the author's bibliography, affiliation, keywords and references. Additionally, only English manuscripts were adopted in this study.

- Stage (III): Data analysis

This study relied on VOSviewer as the main software to conduct bibliometric analysis. Despite the fact that there are various bibliometric analysis software and tools (e.g., Bibexcel, R, CitNetExplorer, SciMAT, Gephi, HistCite, etc.), this study selected VOSviewer because it presents collections of comprehensive analyzing and visualization tools such as intellectual networks and cluster graphs [64]. Firstly, the VOSviewer maps feature enables the creation, exploration and visualization of two-dimensional bibliometric networks that are simple to analyze and implement in a specific research topic [58]. Secondly, we examined the item on VosViewer's action panel that contains word clusters. Data analysis is conducted by investigating the visualization results in both network formats: overlay and density. In addition, the word clusters formed by the VosViewer software have been investigated. Each dominant cluster on each research topic (driving force) will show themes based on the most linked keywords that appeared in the articles published on this topic. Generally, keywords are considered one of the most significant components of any research paper that seeks to identify the primary research issues in various scientific research fields [55,65].

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Overview of the Rural Tourism Businesses Literature

Based on metadata search results on the Scopus database, 678 articles were obtained from 2012–2021 that focused on rural tourism businesses/enterprises. Using VOSviewer software, the co-words intellectual network has been extracted and divided into five main clusters, as shown in Figure 1 below. These clusters were formed based on the total link strength of the items/words in the total network. The first cluster is the red cluster whose main theme was "rural tourism territory". In this red cluster, the largest six keywords were territory, Spain, Italy, municipality, farm and mountain, respectively. This was not surprising based on the theme of this cluster, which discussed the various geographical areas where rural tourism businesses were established. Most of the case studies discussed in this cluster's articles were in popular destinations in Spain and Italy, which reflects the importance of rural tourism activities in these territories.

In RT cluster 1, the largest keyword is "territory", and this is not surprising because the concept of a specific area characterizes RT activities. "Spain" and "Italy" are the second and third largest words due to documents of case studies conducted in that region. The linkages of authors from Spain and Italy with authors from China, the USA and the United Kingdom in other clusters also affect the production of articles that make Spain and Italy popular (see Figure 1). They ("Spain" and "Italy") are dominating due to the volume of documents and, in particular, the strong links between authors from Spain and Italy and those from China, the USA and the UK.

Additionally, the rest of the strongly linked keywords in this red cluster still enhance this cluster's main topic, such as Europe, countryside and biodiversity. This means that regionally, other European countries could be attractive places for further research, for example, Visegrad Group countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia). "Municipality" as a regional-level unit seems to be the focus of discussion on RT activities. This is in line with activities typical of the municipality, such as farming and agrotourism. Encouraging agricultural activities will also create a more sustainable combination for potential future research [66]. Investment and facility are also keywords used in line with the tourism phenomenon. Seeing how important the countryside is, the European Regional

Development Fund (ERDF) as one of the five European Structural and Investment Funds also finds it useful by targeting rural tourism projects in the EU [67].

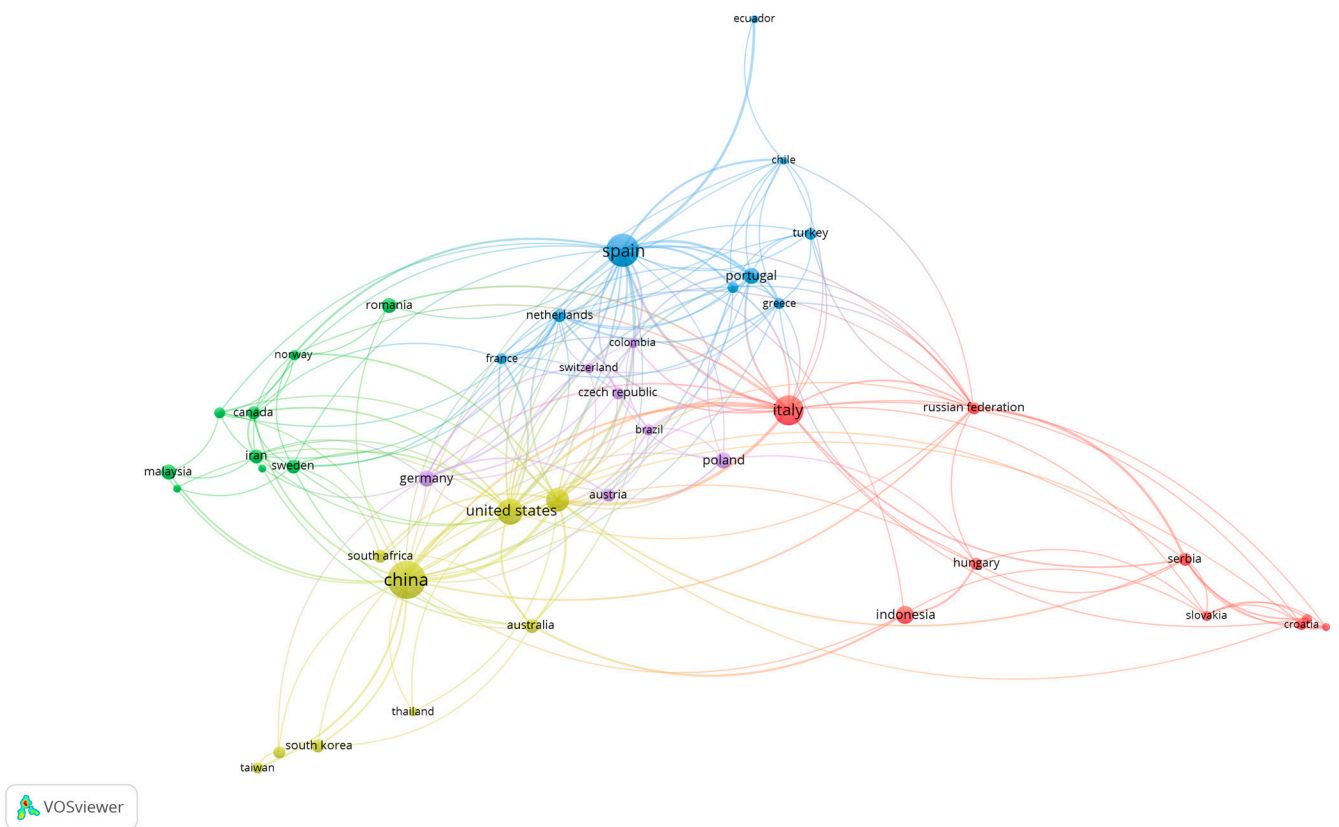


Figure 1. Country-based co-authorship Legend; Nodes: represent keywords (the size of the node represents the frequency of the keywords); Links: represent relations between keywords; Link Thickness: represents the words strength. Note: clusters formed based on three parameters in VosViewer software (clusters resolution 1.00, minimum cluster size 1 and merge small clusters).

Moving to cluster 2 (green cluster), the main concept of it was “rural tourism organizers”. The strongest keywords in this cluster were government, interview, empowerment, villager, improvement and livelihood. The importance of this green cluster theme is that the official support of rural tourism businesses plays a significant role in the continuity of these businesses. Additionally, this government support for rural tourism businesses will influence the local community, especially farmers.

In the cluster 2 breakdown (see Figure 2), “government” and “local communities” have an equal line in the issue of RT. The role of farmers and matters related to improving livelihoods and poverty problems can also be seen.

Ecotourism and household activity are also less frequently used keywords. Yet, farming has come to be associated with rural tourism. However, ecotourism is only recognized as a generic subject that is currently being discussed as seen in Figure 2 above. Therefore, a chance to uncover more specialized subjects for rural tourism activities that are connected to ecotourism and the local community appears. As a result, there is a gap that might be developed for further research, for example on rural tourism activities in the coastal area, special interest tourism in nature activities, and endemic bird watching or avitourism in rural area.

The blue third cluster of the articles discussed rural tourism business was focused on the “facilities of rural tourism businesses”. All the keywords in this cluster (e.g., transformation, function, resources, building, etc.) were centered around the strongest word in this group, China. China is currently a pioneer country in various economic fields

including tourism, it is likely to show a strong link between other keywords included in the structure.

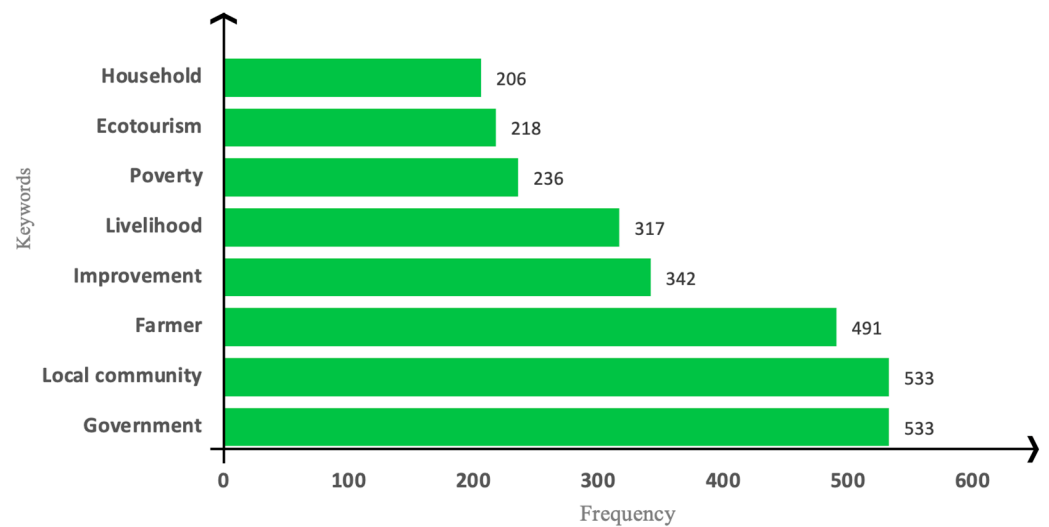


Figure 2. Cluster 2 breakdown.

A total of 81 abstracts of the 678 articles that were discovered discussed rural tourism in China. The majority of the abstracts in the articles discuss rural tourism development, rural urbanization, rural restructuring, tourism's impact on nature and social life, the developing infrastructure and the global tourism industry that reflects the live activities in China. This is congruent with what the VosViewer cluster breakdown study showed (see Figure 3).

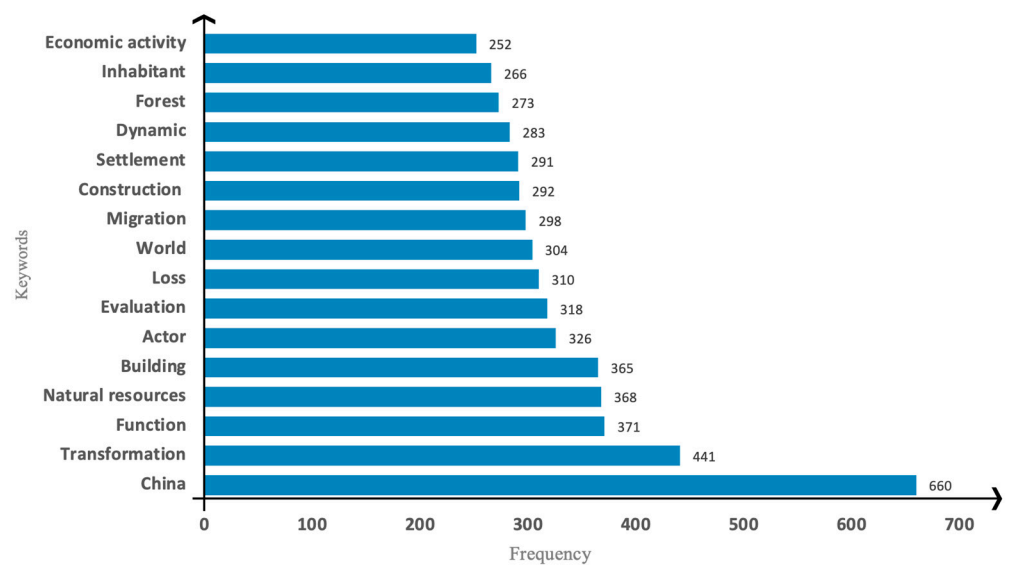


Figure 3. Cluster 3 breakdown.

The existence of keywords such as building, construction, actor, migration, transformation and evaluation in this cluster accordance with the most articles' abstracts about China shows that there is dynamic progress in the rural tourism industry in China, which makes it an important future research direction for studies interested in rural tourism businesses.

In cluster 4, the yellow cluster, the main theme was "rural tourism satisfaction". The keyword "destination" was the dominant keyword in research on rural tourism in this chapter, followed by keywords such as visitors, food, motivation and satisfaction. This

cluster reflects tourist satisfaction as a significant pillar that guarantees the future of rural tourism activities. Finally, the purple cluster, which is considered the weakest cluster in the rural tourism research area, had the theme “rural tourism as a natural tourism pattern”. Conservation, protected area, and view were the dominant keywords in this cluster. Figure 4 shows the five clusters for the rural tourism research umbrella.

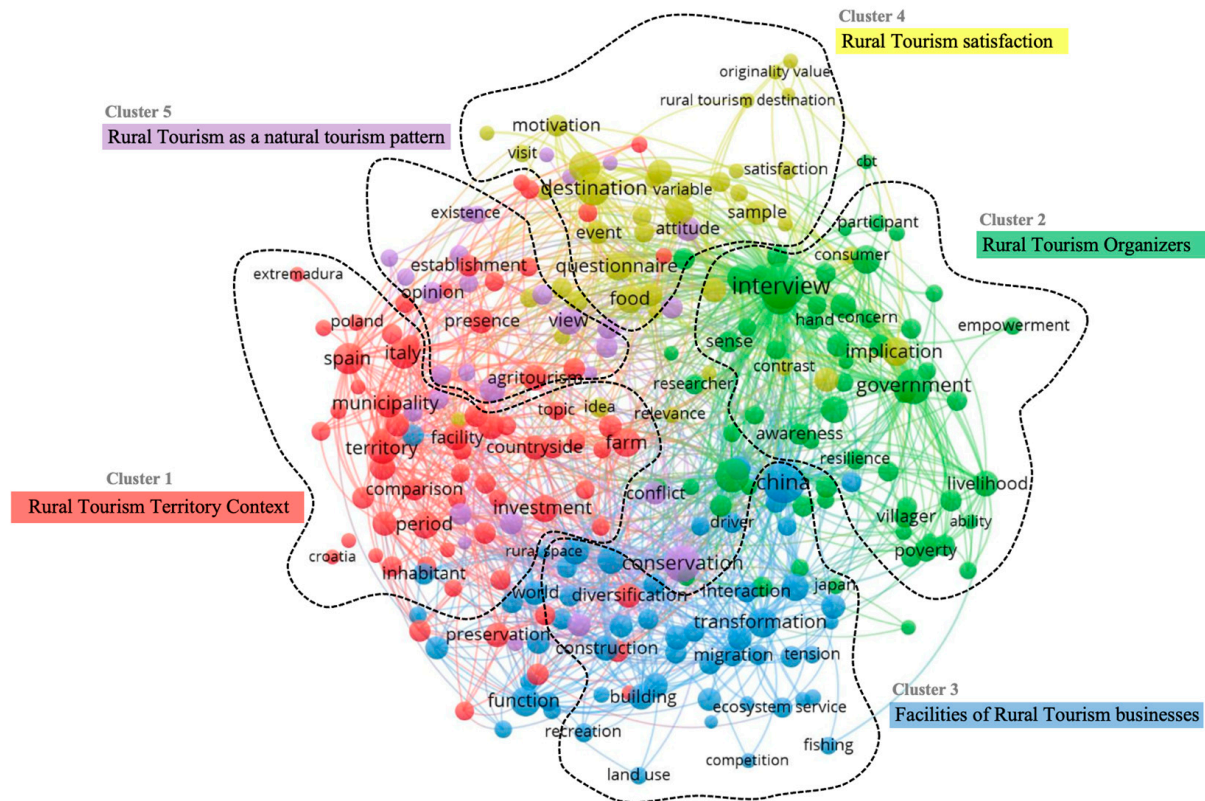


Figure 4. Co-word analysis network of rural tourism businesses. Legend; Nodes: represent keywords (the size of the node represents the frequency of the keywords); Links: represent relations between keywords; Link Thickness: represents the words strength. Note: clusters formed based on three parameters in VosViewer software (clusters resolution 1.00, minimum cluster size 1 and merge small clusters).

4.2. Rural Tourism Businesses Literature Response to Driving Forces (Marketability, Participatory, Crisis Mitigation and Sustainability)

Before analyzing the relation between rural tourism businesses literature and each driving force, a revision process was carried out by researchers to identify whether the 678 records were directly relevant to this study’s objectives or not. Consequently, 372 articles were excluded from the dataset. A total of 306 articles were relevant to this study’s interest, and these articles were divided based on the four driving forces (marketability, participatory, crisis mitigation and sustainability). Articles discussing the rural tourism businesses from a sustainability perspective appeared at the top of the list by 62% ($n = 189$), followed by articles that discussed the role of locals in the participation in rural tourism businesses by 19% ($n = 58$), then articles focused on rural tourism businesses marketing ideas and strategies by 14% ($n = 43$) and finally the articles addressing the idea of the ability of rural tourism businesses to mitigate different crises, risks and disasters (5%; $n = 16$), as shown in the following Figure 5.

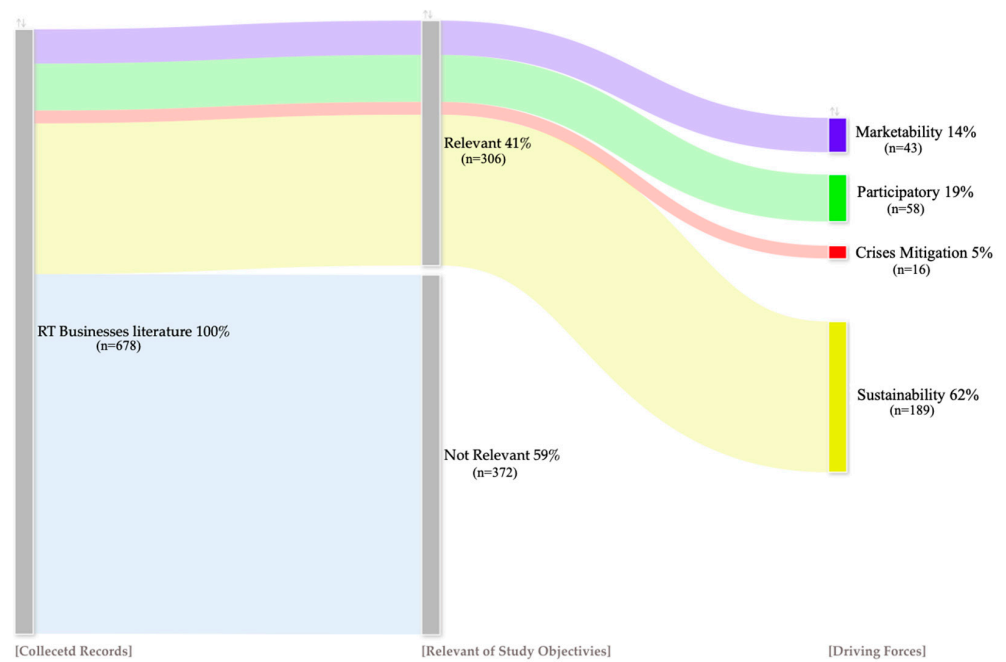


Figure 5. Segmentation of the rural tourism businesses literature based on the four driving forces.

4.2.1. Rural Tourism Businesses Literature and Marketability

Based on the analysis of the 43 articles that depicted the relationship between rural tourism businesses and marketability using VosViewer, Figure 6 shows the intellectual network of the most frequented keywords. The main keywords that shaped this network were tourism, development, marketing, study and rural area. As all these words are considered core general words in the rural tourism field, this driving force, “marketability”, represented the second least important driving force for rural tourism businesses based on the scientific published articles. This may be due to the specialness and uniqueness of the rural tourism business, which is particularly preferred by tourists compared to other tourism patterns, which in turn reduces the motivational factors of these businesses to be more innovative and creative during marketing their different rural products and services. However, authors can help improve the discoverability of their work by adopting more concise terminology, such as by utilizing words that have distinct, unambiguous meanings [68]. Thus, marketing in rural tourism activities can be seen as a common topic that can be developed more.

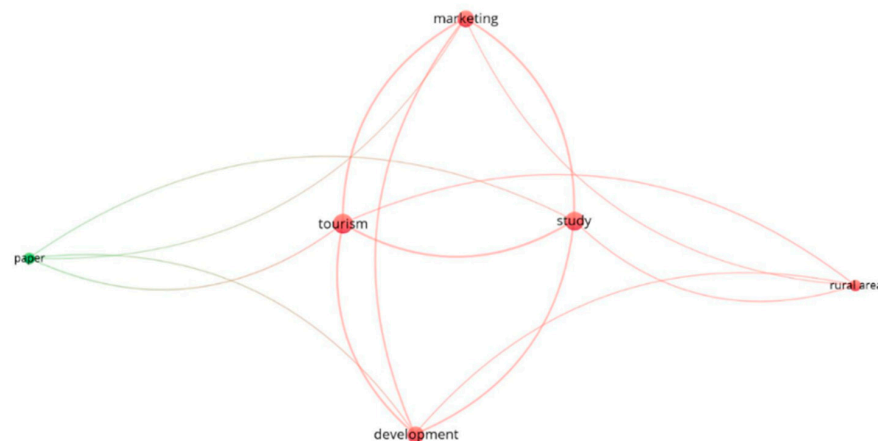


Figure 6. Co-word analysis network of the literature representing the relationship between rural tourism businesses and marketability.

Marketability will be a promising area for future studies, as mentioned by Kastenholz et al. [29], who views marketing as a component of management in the rural tourism business. Marketing, according to Kotler & Armstrong [28], comprises numerous marketing mix elements, namely product, price, place, promotion and targeting consumers—which is the strategy in Gad Mohsen & Dacko’s research [30]—that can be further expanded. This implies that there are opportunities for research on rural tourism in every aspect of marketing. Methods for doing market research can also be specifically deepened, especially those related to internet marketing strategies, which Khartishvili et al. [31] previously investigated. However, in the following circumstances, various settings might be employed.

4.2.2. Rural Tourism Businesses Literature and Participatory

A total of 58 articles represented the relationship between rural tourism businesses literature and participatory factors. The co-word analysis network shows that there are two main clusters that can describe this relationship, as shown in Figure 7. The first cluster (red cluster) focused on the participation processes linked with the case study location. Keywords such as participation, China, area, village, case study, development and rural tourism were the core keywords in this cluster. The second cluster was only about the local community, where we can find keywords such as local community, data and study. The main topics of these two clusters reflect the importance of the location and the local community in determining the performance of rural tourism businesses such as China [69]. The villagers’ acceptance may also happen if they believe they are gaining benefits from the initiatives that help their community [70]. Understanding this issue will open up opportunities for future research on citizen participation in the tourism business.

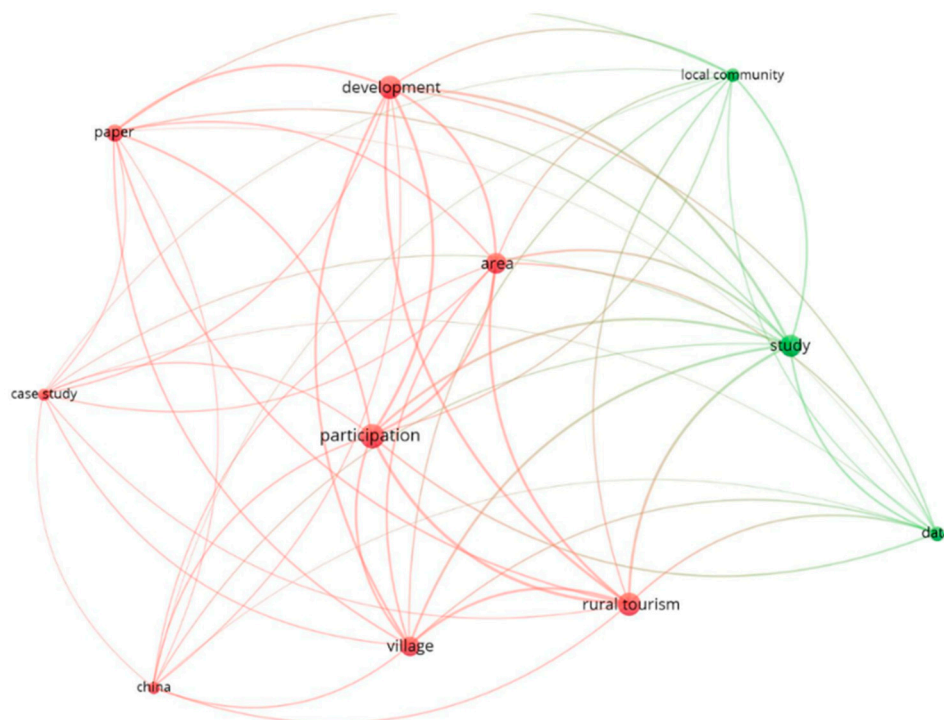


Figure 7. Co-word analysis network of the literature representing the relationship between rural tourism businesses and participatory.

The forms of community participation that have been expressed by Suvdantsetseg et al. [42] can be further investigated. Moreover, management planning processes and participation in interpretation services for existing outcomes can be explored to find out the activities involved in that engagement in a more detailed form. As a result, we will be able to understand more about the role of rural tourism communities in tourism activities in

their region by exploring the gap. Exploration of the uniqueness of local products can also be an interesting topic because the uniqueness of each destination will certainly be specific. This is in line with the opinion of Quaranta et al. [43] that a typical locality can connect the needs of visitors. However, the impact of tourism development, which was researched by Rasoolimanesh et al. [45], is also good to study in order to find out the opinion of residents about their role in a tourist village.

4.2.3. Rural Tourism Businesses Literature and Crisis/Disaster Mitigation

We obtained 16 manuscripts that linked rural tourism businesses with crisis/disaster mitigation. Figure 8 depicted the co-word network divided into three clusters. The main large cluster in the context of research on rural tourism businesses and crisis mitigation, the red cluster, contained these main keywords: interview, number, rural area, resilience, important role, resident, COVID, and pandemic. One interesting point related to this cluster was the appearance of COVID as the main keyword, which reflects the interest of rural tourism businesses literature in managing the negative consequences of this pandemic [3,4,7,46–48,71]. The second cluster, the green cluster, focused on the protected areas in connection with recreation and sustainable development as a tool for crisis mitigation in the rural tourism industry and its businesses. That enhanced the perspective of rural tourism as a natural-based tourism pattern, which plays an important role in the crisis mitigation [5,6,72,73]. The third cluster discussed employment and its relation to biodiversity under the crisis mitigation concept in rural tourism. Biodiversity is an important issue in the future because many rural tourism activities depend on it and the environment has a positive determinant effect [74].

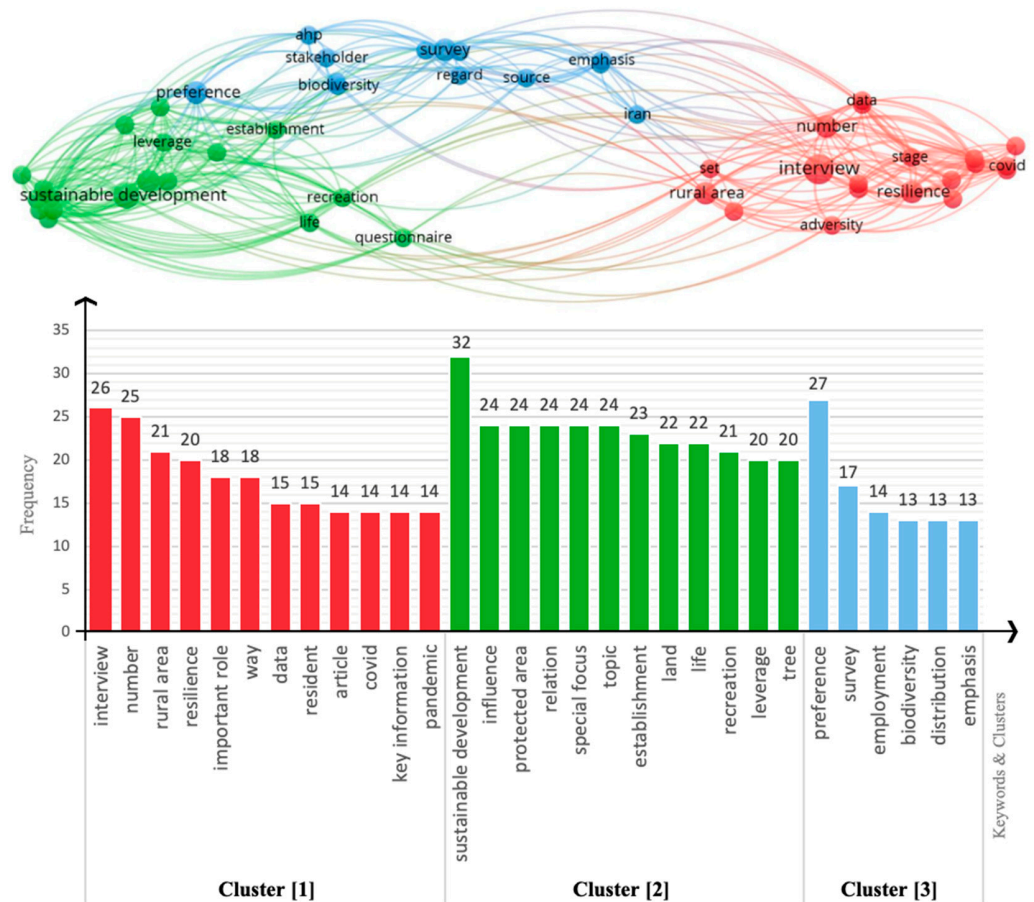


Figure 8. Co-word analysis network of the literature representing the relationship between rural tourism businesses and crisis mitigation.

There is still a lack of manuscripts dealing with crisis/disaster mitigation in this field, which will result in a significant gap in the literature on this subject. The percentage of manuscript production regarding crisis/disaster mitigation related to tourism is still small, accounting for only 5% (see Figure 5). According to Kamarudin et al. [46], a crisis that is not resolved will negatively affect a variety of aspects of the tourist village. This is in line with the statement of Miller et al. [49] that mitigation is important as a preventive measure for tourism village managers. Thus, this could be a research gap to explore more extensively. Future attention will be given to minimizing potential future disasters, as stated by Su et al. [36], and will be paid if there is more research on crisis/disaster mitigation. Additionally, Sasaki et al.'s [51] suggestion that spatial management is a crucial issue that can be connected to biodiversity, protected areas and pandemic prevention research, as seen in VosViewer's clusters, should be addressed.

4.2.4. Rural Tourism Businesses Literature and Sustainability

The perspective that rural tourism businesses are in line with the sustainability concept has been addressed by many researchers. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) asserted that the principle of sustainability should be applied to all forms/patterns of tourism; that it had to be applied to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development; and that a balance had to be struck between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability [75]. Traditional mass tourism has some significant disadvantages for the environment; thus, rural tourism can be a valuable complement and alternative [35].

Furthermore, this was confirmed by the number of publications connecting rural tourism businesses and sustainability compared to the other three driving forces investigated in this study (marketability, participatory and crisis mitigation). With 62% (n= 189) of the articles published in rural tourism businesses scientific area, sustainability was the most important driving force that attracted the attention of academic studies in this field of rural tourism. Next, Figure 9 depicted the keywords network of the literature-linked rural tourism businesses to sustainability divided into four main clusters.

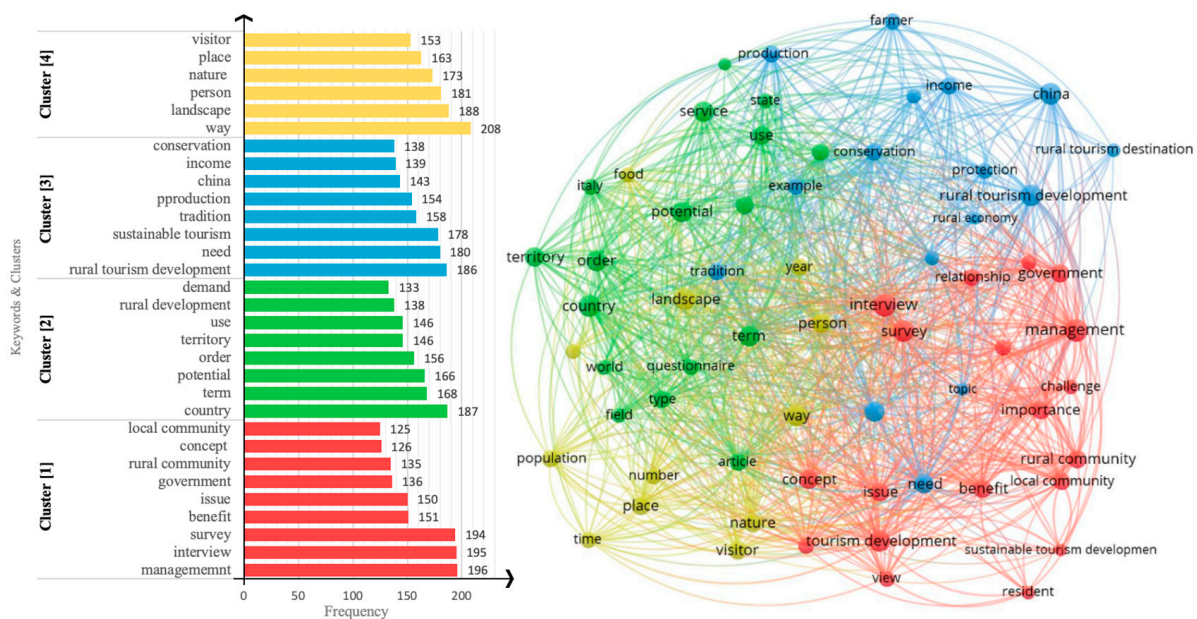


Figure 9. Co-word analysis network of the literature representing the relationship between rural tourism businesses and sustainability.

The first cluster (red cluster) included many articles under the theme “rural tourism businesses management”. Keywords such as management (n = 196), interview (n = 195),

survey (n = 194), benefit (n = 151), issue (n = 150) and government (n = 136) were the most frequent words in this cluster (see Figure 9). Additionally, this cluster highlighted the importance of government management policies and strategies in boosting/declining the rural tourism businesses [76], as well as the importance of the various tools/techniques (e.g., interviews, surveys, etc.) that can be used to collect data about these businesses in order to build a robust and precise database and information system.

The second cluster (green cluster) focused on the published articles concerned about “rural tourism businesses’ settings”. The main keywords in this cluster were country, term, potential, order and territory, with frequency scores between 187 and 146, as shown in Figure 7. This cluster confirms that the different case studies’ geographical areas will lead to different criteria for achieving sustainability for rural tourism businesses [77]. “Sustainable rural tourism businesses” was the main theme of the third cluster (blue cluster). This is shown by the presence of keywords such as rural tourism development, sustainable tourism, production and conservation. Finally, the fourth cluster (yellow cluster) focused on articles interested in the “potential of rural tourism businesses”. Way, landscape, person, natural, place and visitor were the core keywords in this cluster, with frequency values of 208, 188, 181, 173, 163, and 153, respectively (see Figure 9).

Sustainable tourism and environmental topics have been linked in many earlier studies. This is consistent with Gao & Wu’s view [11], and it is supported by the findings of the VosViewer analysis, which note that the words “income” and “demand” are not the predominant words. The need to include the concept of economy in sustainability was hinted at by Zapata [37], Jin et al. [33] and UNWTO [34] and should be addressed. However, it has not developed into a topic that is expressly articulated to address the issue of economic sustainability in the rural tourism community. In other words, examining rural tourism through the lens of a micro-economy will be interesting for future research.

5. Complexity of Rural Tourism Business: Marketability, Participatory, Crisis/Disaster Mitigation and Sustainability

The economic conceptual kernels of rural tourism presented it as a broad-based plan to support rural communities’ economics [78], as well as a tool for poverty alleviation. This consideration of rural tourism activities as an economic tool creates many businesses and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) based on these different tourism activities. These businesses are considered essential supporters of the continuity and prosperity of the rural tourism pattern in general.

Rural tourism as a form of tourism activity terms can be identified as business as well when it is connected to business-related topics (e.g., marketing, management, investment and consumption) [68]. Rural tourism businesses are considered a fast-growing tourism sector in many countries, especially in EU territories, such as Hungary, France, Poland, Italy and the Czech Republic. These rural tourism businesses share about 10 to 20% of the income generated by the tourism sector in the European Union countries [79]. According to estimations of the coefficient of elasticity, spending on rural development will increase 191.49 times for every 1% increase in direct grants and market-related spending. This suggests a synergistic relationship between financial costs for the growth of rural tourism and the capacity to significantly boost other rural development areas [80]. Thus, supporting rural tourism as a form of business is proven to boost the economy.

By analyzing the various literature that discussed the businesses creation lifecycle in different fields related to rural tourism such as agritourism/agrotourism, farm tourism, community-based tourism (CBT), rural tourism (RT) and community-based rural tourism (CBRT) as seen on Table 2, we developed a conceptual framework for the rural tourism businesses including the main four driving forces that shaped the complex picture of these enterprises, as well as affected its developing, as shown in following Figure 10. The lifecycle of establishing a rural tourism business goes through four different stages, relying on four main elements: resources, local community, businesses and management elements (see Figure 10).

Table 2. Related issues on RT.

| Topic(s) | Issues | Contributor(s) |
|---------------------------------|--|----------------|
| RT | Sociocultural, environment impacts of tourism and the role of entrepreneur community connection in rural tourism development | [81–83] |
| RT & Marketability | Sustainable behavior to build experience visitors, visitor segmentation, and destination branding. Integration of general provisions with local stakeholders and create travel program involvement for boosting popularity and imagery of the destination | [26,29,31,32] |
| RT & Sustainability | Cooperative for equitable distribution, appropriate benefit sharing. The participation of local governments, businesses and residents in tourism concern to livelihood, natural resource, and socio cultural. Boosting awareness of planning and enhancing the knowledge base used to make decisions about sustainable tourism management | [11,35,36,84] |
| RT & Participatory | Community participation on residents' support for tourism development. Collaboration and involvement of the related inter-organizational stakeholders by the local community. Developing social networks with the local government and corporate sector to increase levels of trust and social capital. | [2,41,43,45] |
| RT & Crisis/Disaster Mitigation | The local government has not taken social risks into account, and reflected in local policy. Products and services mitigation are very relevant objectives. Common problem affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure the safety of tourists, ensure that health problems will be contained. Managing of spatial overlap between farm and off-farm activities. Community resilience in combining of internal and external factors. Disasters and climate change both should be addressed locally, and local knowledge and understanding must be used to help local decision-making. | [36,46,50–52] |

The process of establishing rural tourist businesses begins with the presence of some tourist resources and potentials in rural areas and territories such as stunning rural landscapes, local food productions, farms, local handicrafts and customs and traditions [85]. Although the two do not always boost each other's productivity, tourism and agriculture can coexist harmoniously [86]. After the availability of tourism resources and the potential to carry out rural tourism activities comes the role of local communities in marketing and preparing these resources for different rural tourism activities. The role of the human element (local communities) is instrumental in the rural tourism businesses creation lifecycle, where the locals act as hosts, vendors, guides and organizers of the various rural tourism activities [87,88].

The third element in the lifecycle of rural tourism businesses is "business establishment"; the enterprises' concepts shifted from theoretical ideas to projects on the ground in the tourism activities term [68]. In this stage, the various challenges and complexities confronting rural tourism businesses arise as a result of being a part of the market economy. Examples of these challenges that shape the complex picture of rural tourism businesses are competition, freedom, government intervention, self-interest, private property, currency exchange, monopoly policies and other labor market challenges. These challenges were a major factor in the emergence of the fourth element of the tourism business lifecycle:

management. Management is a pivotal element in the lifecycle of rural tourism businesses, and it consists of many sub-elements that help to thrive or collapse this type of business, for instance, the study and analysis of rural tourism supply and demand for local products and services (taking into consideration changing tourist preferences and behaviors, as well as competition), understanding the various marketing strategies, the study of the rural tourism system from various perspectives (tourists, tourism operators, community organizations, government, tourism authorities and others), attention to the environmental dimension in the management of rural tourism business and finally, considering innovation and creativity as tools for achieving the sustainability of this business.

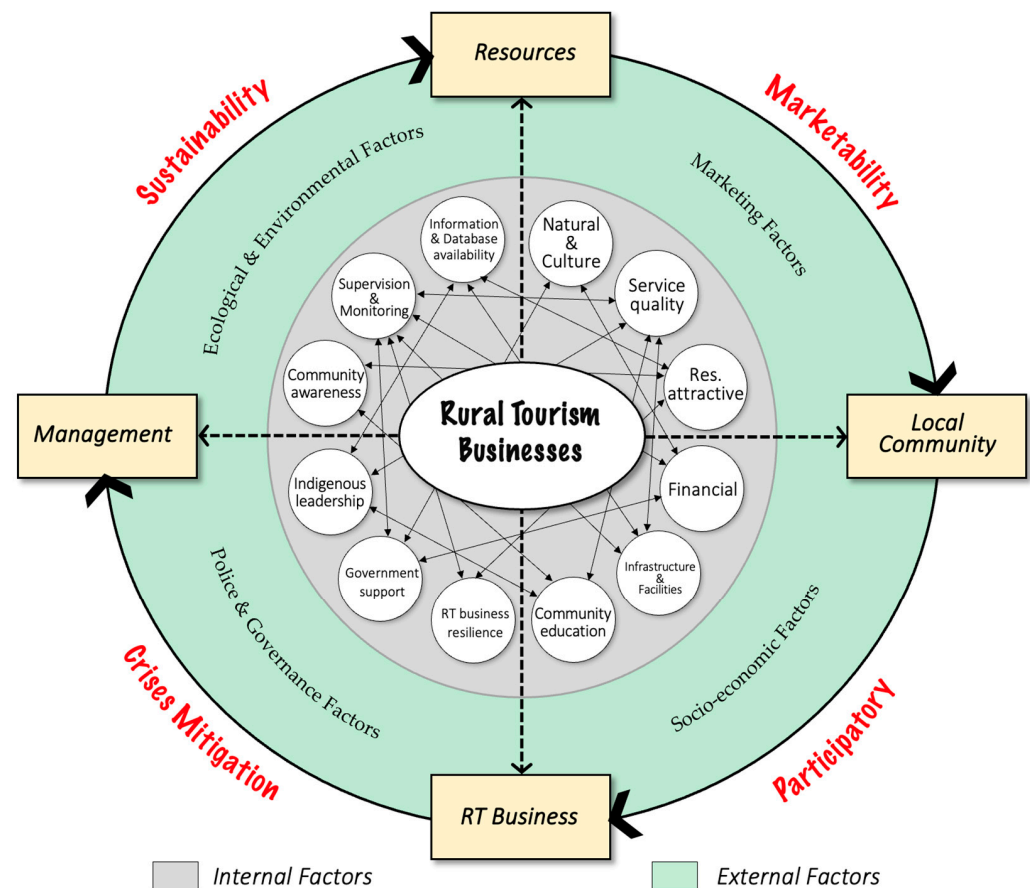


Figure 10. This conceptual framework of rural tourism businesses lifecycle.

Regarding the driving forces that control the aforementioned rural tourism businesses lifecycle, there are four core forces: marketability, participatory, crisis mitigation and sustainability. Firstly, marketability is considered one of the most significant tools that determined the future direction of any business [89]. Understanding marketing as a part of rural tourism businesses leads to a deeper and more applicable understanding of how the available rural tourism resources can be optimized [90]. Additionally, the marketability of the rural tourism businesses is affected by many external and internal factors, such as the availability of natural and cultural resources in the peripheral environment, the presented services' quality and the attractiveness of the rural resource. Secondly, the participation process of locals in the rural tourism businesses is a critical issue that needs more attention from the various tourism industry actors. Rural livelihoods are attractive to many tourists, making them an opportunity for rural tourism businesses which become an illustration of the participatory concept in all its aspects [91]. Community participation in the various types of rural tourism businesses is influenced by many factors, such as community education, financial factors (i.e., factors that influence the businesses' value,

such as capital, cash flow, assets, risk factor, etc.), and infrastructure and facilities factors (e.g., logistics, labor, construction and transportation). The third driving force in the rural tourism businesses is crisis mitigation, which is considered a source of concern for different activities and SMEs, especially in light of COVID-19 pandemic issues. The main factors that affect the crisis mitigation for rural tourism businesses are government support, the actual businesses resilience and indigenous leadership skills. Finally, sustainability represents the fourth driving force for rural tourism businesses' performance. The Brundtland Report of 1987 presented the local businesses as largely responsible for the present notion of sustainable development, especially in rural areas and regions [92]. The main factors that support the sustainability of the various rural tourism businesses are community awareness, long-term supervision and monitoring and the availability of different information kinds and databases related to these businesses. The following Figure 10 depicted the conceptual framework for the rural tourism businesses lifecycle, including the core four driving forces that influence these businesses.

Rural tourism is a business that continues to grow positively in the world. Apparently, roughly 15% of the total accommodation capacity of Europe is represented by rural tourism establishments [93]. The broadening, deepening and regrinding processes—which collectively make up the primary axis of rural development—are pervasive throughout the rural area. Due to its ability to create local jobs, encourage outside investment and support traditional businesses, rural tourism has become a “development tool” for many communities looking to diversify their economies [94]. Furthermore, stakeholders should come to an agreement on what defines sustainable destination development and how it may be meaningfully operationalized in order to achieve sustainability in the tourism destinations [95].

6. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

For the past 10 years, the content in the literature on rural tourism (RT) has covered a wide range of topics [12,96]. The variety of many key terms and clusters demonstrates the breadth of rural tourism study themes. This study focused on understanding and analyzing one of the most economic powers of the rural tourism industry which is rural tourism businesses. The study relied on scientific literature to understand the rural tourism businesses from the perspective of four main driving forces: marketability, participatory, crisis/disaster mitigation and sustainability. Understanding rural tourism businesses from the perspective of these four driving forces will illustrate and dismantle the complex picture of these businesses which will help to develop them and enhance the participation of the local communities and stakeholders in these businesses [89,97,98]. The idea of RT development is no longer simple and fragmented, as seen in Table 2 above, and it actually parallels changes in other worldwide concerns. The issues of marketability, participatory, and disaster/crisis mitigation related as a whole to RT scientific production present both a challenge and an opportunity to discuss their linkage deeply. Thus, discussion, in combination with the other RT mainstream sectors, is needed. All academics agree that it is critical to connect RT development with concepts like marketability, sustainability, participation or crisis mitigation. Furthermore, it can present future research opportunities with the topic of RT and marketing, sustainability, participation, and disaster/crisis mitigation combined.

This study used the bibliometric analysis technique as a mean literature review method for the rural tourism business articles and their relation to the four aforementioned driving forces. Additionally, this study depended on VosViewer as a visualization tool. The main aim of this research is to analyze the relationship between rural tourism businesses and the four driving forces from a scholarly perspective. This aim will open the door for finding potential research gaps, as well as design more focused comprehensive studies as a guide for the future research directions for rural tourism businesses.

Generally, the findings revealed that less than 50% of the published articles in the rural tourism field had an interest in local rural businesses/enterprises. Sustainability was the main driving force that connected to the literature of the rural tourism businesses compared

to the other driving forces (e.g., marketability, participatory and crisis/ disaster mitigation). Although this is considered a shortage in the scientific production that covers the link between rural tourism businesses to these three driving forces (marketability, participatory and crisis/ disaster mitigation), it can be seen as a great potential opportunity for future researchers to examine these three aspects and their relationship to rural tourism businesses, which will enrich the literature in this particular and unique tourism area.

Regarding the limitations of this study, bibliometric analysis parameters are considered the main concern here. From choosing the main database for collecting records in this study (e.g., Scopus) to the different selected excluded criteria (e.g., searching period, subject area, document types, language, publication stage, etc.). As a result, this study could be enhanced in the future with different studies that depend on various databases (e.g., Web of Science-WOS), research topics, timeframes or bibliometric analytic parameters or software, as well as conducting content analysis or other qualitative analysis approaches to confirm these study findings or scrutinize it.

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