



Mapping the Sociology of Tourism in Indonesia: A Bibliometric Visualization of Development and Local Culture (2016–2025)

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ABSTRACT

This study maps the intellectual landscape of sociological research on tourism in Indonesia from 2016 to 2025. Using a bibliometric approach based on Google Scholar data and analyzed through VOSviewer, it identifies thematic trends, knowledge gaps, and shifts in academic focus. The study reveals two dominant themes: tourism development—particularly at the local and village levels—and local cultural identity. Five major clusters are reconstructed: destination development, cultural representation, social critique, gender perspectives, and regional case studies. Recent literature indicates a shift toward more critical, ethical, and community-oriented perspectives. The findings highlight the need for inclusive, culturally grounded tourism development and recommend combining bibliometric analysis with qualitative approaches for more in-depth research

INTRODUCTION

The sociology of tourism has evolved into a critical field within the social sciences, aiming to understand the reciprocal relationship between tourism practices and the social, cultural, economic, and political structures of society (Djana, 2018). In the Indonesian context, tourism is not merely a strategic economic sector but also a site of intercultural encounters, identity articulation, and even social conflict. As such, a sociological approach becomes essential in uncovering the hidden social impacts behind the rhetoric of “tourism development,” which is often examined only through technocratic and economic lenses (Pradana, 2019).

Tourism transformation in Indonesia reveals a paradoxical tendency. On one hand, it offers economic opportunities, cultural revitalization, and regional development. On the other hand, it often produces structural inequality, marginalization of local communities, and the commodification of cultural spaces and natural environments (Dwi Susilo & Dharmawan, 2021), (Anom & Mahagangga, 2020).

In this context, the sociology of tourism has the mandate to deconstruct these inequalities and to expose how local actors negotiate under the pressures of globalization and tourism capitalism.

LITERATURE RIVIEW

Historically, the sociology of tourism in Indonesia has received less scholarly attention compared to other subfields such as the sociology of education, family, or politics. However, in the past decade – particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic – there has been a surge of interest in topics such as tourism sustainability, village-based tourism, and community-driven tourism. This shift signifies an epistemic transformation within tourism studies, opening space for sociological approaches to play a more active role in explaining the social dynamics of tourism development (Pramono, 2025).

Nevertheless, to date, no systematic study has mapped the development of literature and thematic directions in Indonesia’s tourism sociology scholarship. It is crucial for the academic community to understand how the knowledge landscape is shaped – what themes dominate, who the key actors and institutions are, and how thematic connections emerge. Without such mapping, tourism research tends to be sporadic and lacks conceptual synergy. Bibliometric methods offer a promising approach to address this challenge. By analyzing metadata from academic publications, bibliometrics enables researchers to identify publication trends, keyword co-occurrences, and topic evolution over time. Furthermore, this method allows for a visual, systematic, and data-driven reading of the knowledge landscape, yielding objective reflections on the structure and trajectory of a scientific field (Donthu et al., 2021).

This study draws on Indonesian-language academic publications indexed in Google Scholar from 2016 to 2025, retrieved via the Publish or Perish software and analyzed using VOSviewer. The article not only presents thematic mapping but also prioritizes the local context as an object of observation. Particular emphasis is placed on two dominant themes that emerge in the visualizations:

tourism development and local culture—including village tourism, social practices, and the role of local governments.

Through this approach, the study is expected to contribute significantly to the theoretical and practical advancement of tourism sociology in Indonesia. This is especially important given the dominance of economic paradigms in tourism policy and discourse, which often neglect social and cultural perspectives. Moreover, the findings may serve as a basis for stakeholders—academics, policymakers, and local communities alike—to develop tourism governance models that are more equitable, participatory, and context-sensitive.

By tracing the knowledge structure of tourism sociology through a bibliometric lens, this article aims not only to document but also to intervene in the direction of scientific development. It functions as a reflective strategy for identifying research gaps, potential collaboration among scholars, and opportunities for integrating sociological insights into tourism policy and planning in Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a bibliometric approach with an exploratory-descriptive design. Data were retrieved from the Google Scholar search engine using the Publish or Perish (PoP)(Alex Green San Dkgo, 1962),(Bello et al., 2023),(Oppenheim, 2011),(Brown & Lund, 2024) software with the keyword “sociology of tourism,” filtered for Indonesian-language documents published between 2016 and 2025. A total of 50 relevant documents were collected in RIS format and analyzed using VOSviewer(Kaushik & Dangwal, 2023), (Tan et al., 2025),(Li & Zhai, 2025).

Visualization was conducted in three modes:

1. Density Visualization - displaying the intensity of keyword occurrences.
2. Network Visualization - mapping the relationships between terms or thematic clusters.
3. Overlay Visualization - showing the temporal evolution (by year) of keywords.

Inclusion criteria consisted of scholarly documents (journal articles, conference proceedings, books) with thematic relevance and open-access availability. Manual validation was performed on the exported RIS data to ensure accuracy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

General Description

This study maps the scientific landscape of tourism sociology in Indonesia using a bibliometric approach based on Indonesian-language publications from the period 2016–2025. Utilizing Publish or Perish and Google Scholar as data sources, and VOSviewer as the primary tool for visual analysis, the study examines the structure of academic literature through keyword representation, thematic connectivity, and the chronological development of research topics.

Network Visualization (NV) maps the semantic relationships between terms in the analyzed literature on the sociology of tourism. In this visualization, terms that frequently appear together within the same documents form stronger connections. As a result, several thematic clusters emerge, each representing a distinct area of scholarly focus and differentiation. One of the central nodes in this visualization is the term “tourism development,” which serves as a focal point connected to various other terms such as “region,” “village tourism,(Sugianto et al., 2016)” “successful tourism development,” and “village development analysis.”

The central position of “tourism development” in the network highlights that development remains a core anchor of discourse in tourism sociology. However, its connections to terms like “Selopanggung village,” “Nagan Raya Regency,” and “Banyuwangi” indicate that the discussion around tourism development is no longer confined to the national level but has shifted toward localized and micro-level contexts. This phenomenon points to the strengthening of contextual and community-based approaches in tourism planning and implementation.

The term “cultural tourism” forms another strong node, connected to specific geographic areas such as “West Nusa Tenggara,” “Burake,” and “Bali during the pandemic.” These connections suggest that local culture and community identity play a significant role in academic discourse. The narrative of cultural tourism is not merely about attractions but serves as a space for representation, negotiation of meaning, and preservation of social values(Pradana, 2019),(R.Abd Fatah, 2019),(Sangaji et al., 2024), (Fatah, 2024).

More critically, NV also reveals smaller thematic clusters that reflect emerging concerns over the ethical and social impacts of tourism development. Terms such as “prostitution practices,” “injustice,” and “threats of environmental damage” form a micro-network that demonstrates growing awareness of tourism’s darker dimensions. Although these clusters are not yet dominant, their presence is vital as a sign of resistance against the traditionally technocratic and positivist narratives of tourism planning.

From this network, one can observe a methodological shift within Indonesia’s tourism sociology. The once-dominant explanatory approaches focusing on social structure are increasingly complemented – or even replaced – by interpretive and critical perspectives that explore how communities construct meanings around tourism in their daily lives. This aligns with Susilo and Dharmawan’s assertion that the sociology of tourism must address ecological and moral dimensions within the relationships between tourists, local communities, and the state.(Dwi Susilo & Dharmawan, 2021)

The appearance of terms such as “feminine” and “competition” within the network further signals the inclusion of gendered and political-economic readings of tourism. While their connections to central nodes are not particularly strong, their emergence is meaningful. It reflects a growing consideration of intersectional dimensions in the field, particularly as tourism practices intersect

with sensitive social boundaries such as sexuality, power relations, and spatial control.

Overall, NV illustrates not only the popularity of certain terms but also the directional formation of discursive clusters within academic literature. These clusters reveal that tourism sociology in Indonesia is beginning to branch out and experience thematic specialization. This marks an important development, indicating the intellectual and practical maturation of the field.

Interpretasi Overlay Visualization (OV)

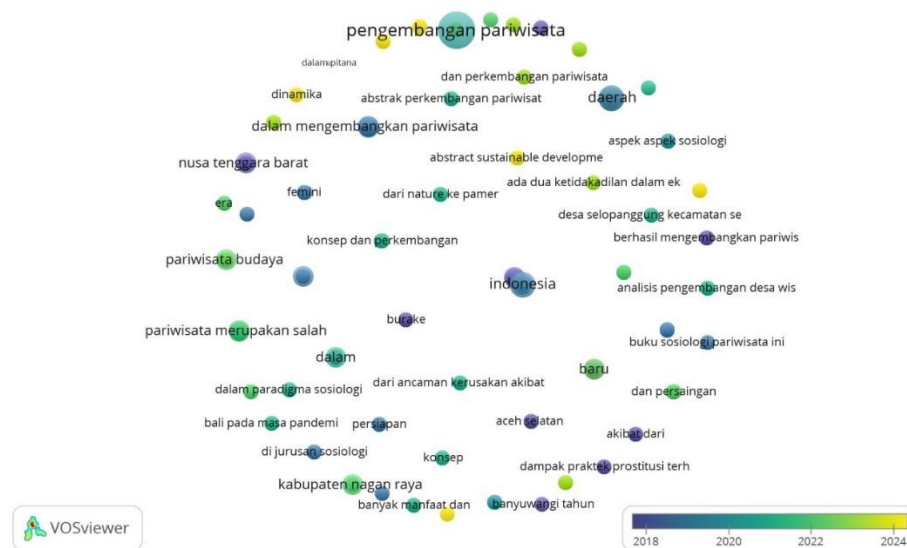


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization

Overlay Visualization (OV) in VOSviewer presents the temporal dimension of terms that appear in the literature. In this visualization, each term is color-coded based on its average year of appearance. Dark blue indicates terms that emerged earlier (around 2016–2018), while green to yellow signifies more recent terms (2022–2025). This visualization reveals a thematic transformation in Indonesian tourism sociology over the past decade.

Terms such as “tourism development,” “Indonesia,” and “cultural tourism” appear early and are marked in dark blue. This indicates that, during the initial phase, the primary focus of the literature was on the development of the tourism sector and its structural relationship with the state. Publications from this period were largely driven by agendas such as infrastructure development, tourism promotion, and strategies for boosting local economies (Pramono, 2025)

Over time, however, the color spectrum began to shift toward green and yellow, indicating the emergence of newer, more micro-level and reflective terms. Terms such as “Selopanggung village,” “prostitution practices,” “justice in ec,” and “Banyuwangi year” began to appear after 2020 and became particularly prominent after 2022. These terms reflect a growing academic concern with the social, cultural, and ethical dimensions of tourism practice, including dynamics of exclusion, value conflicts, and local community resistance. The appearance of terms like “feminine” and “competition” within the yellow spectrum further suggests that recent studies have begun to explore the gendered dimensions and political-economic power relations embedded in tourism. In this

context, OV offers critical insight into how the sociology of tourism is not a static field but one that evolves in response to tangible social changes occurring on the ground, including the effects of the pandemic, developmental inequalities, and shifts in tourist lifestyles.

This transformation also illustrates a paradigm shift from descriptive and policy-oriented topics to more interpretive and critical themes. In other words, OV helps to identify a shift in intellectual orientation – from merely depicting tourism practices to unpacking the structures of power, values, and ideology that underpin them. This aligns with Pradana's assertion that the sociology of tourism should focus on the meaning, rather than merely the function, of tourism activity (Pradana, 2019).

This, OV does not merely map chronological trends; it also illustrates an epistemic shift within the study of tourism sociology. The temporal dimension in OV becomes crucial in identifying the phases of discourse formation, the dominance of particular ideas, and the intersections between social change and academic response. This is especially relevant for guiding future research trajectories, particularly in strengthening sociological approaches that are sensitive to local dynamics.

Visualization of Interpretation Density (DV)

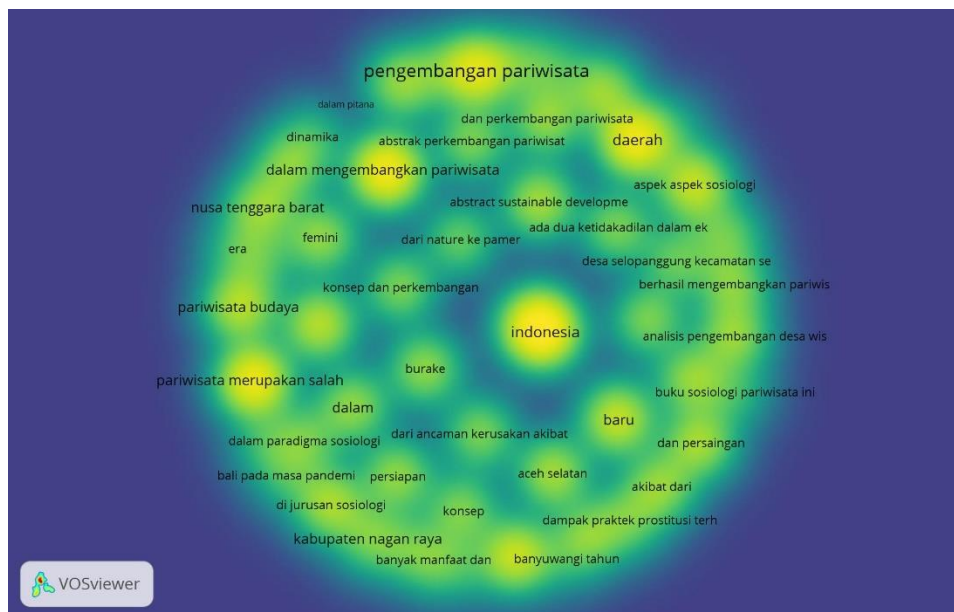


Figure 3. Density Visualization

Density Visualization (DV) presents the intensity of inter-term connectivity based on their frequency and conceptual proximity in the analyzed documents. In this visualization, yellow represents areas with high term density – areas most frequently discussed or highlighted in publications – while green and blue indicate medium to low intensity. This visualization helps identify dominant terms that serve as the axis of discourse in the sociology of tourism literature in Indonesia.

From the DV results, it is evident that “tourism development” and “Indonesia” are the two densest terms, marked by a striking yellow color. These two terms become centers of gravity, indicating the orientation of the literature over the past decade, in which tourism development has continuously been positioned as a strategic instrument of national development. This aligns with government policies on community-based tourism and tourist villages, which have become subjects of study across campuses and research institutions (Adhitama & Suryanto, 2020).

Terms such as “region,” “cultural tourism,” and “tourism is one of” also appear in the yellow-green spectrum, indicating high discussion intensity but beginning to expand into the interpretive realm. These topics show that the literature is beginning to explore the impact of development on local identity and community sustainability. This context reinforces the argument that tourism development cannot be separated from sociological critiques of center-periphery inequalities and the tension between cultural preservation and commodification (Wijayanto & Sutopo, 2022).

Furthermore, the DV also reveals dense terms such as “Bali during the pandemic,” “Burake,” “West Nusa Tenggara,” and “Selopanggung village,” indicating a trend toward local-contextual studies. These locations have become case studies that portray tourism not only as an economic phenomenon but as a site of social conflict, cultural representation, and expressions of local identity. This is in line with the “place-based sociology” approach that emphasizes the importance of space in understanding social processes (Gieryn, 2000).

Interestingly, some terms such as “prostitution practices,” “damage impacts,” and “injustice in...” appear in areas colored green to dark blue. This indicates that studies on the dark sides or negative impacts of tourism are still not mainstream in the sociological literature. Yet, global literature has extensively addressed such issues within frameworks like “dark tourism,” “tourism gentrification,” and “tourism-based inequality” (Cheong & Miller, 2000).

From an epistemological perspective, DV affirms that the sociology of tourism in Indonesia remains oriented toward the narrative of development, although it is beginning to shift toward more critical and reflective directions. This visualization reveals an intensity map that can serve as a basis for formulating future research agendas, including creating space for topics that have received less academic attention.

Thus, DV not only illustrates the density of the literature but also serves as a tool to read the imbalance in scholarly attention. This is important so that knowledge production does not merely reinforce the dominance of certain discourses but encourages the articulation of more inclusive and participatory alternative narratives.

Cluster Reconstruction

Based on the Network Visualization (NV), five main clusters can be reconstructed that are relevant to the development of tourism and local culture in Indonesia: (1) the Destination Development Cluster, (2) the Culture and Local Identity Cluster, (3) the Social Critique and Tourism Ethics Cluster, (4) the Gender and Representation Cluster, and (5) the Regional Case Study Cluster.

This reconstruction was carried out by combining an analysis of semantic relationships and the thematic significance of terms within the visualization network.

The first cluster, Destination Development (Jaelani, 2018; Sri Widari, 2022), revolves around the terms “tourism development” (Jaelani, 2018; Nurasih, 2018; Fahad & Endrayadi, 2017; Sri Widari, 2022; Jamal Al-Amin & Afrizal Tjoetra, 2022; Susanti, 2022), “region,” and “tourist village” (Nursafitri et al., 2020; Pradana et al., 2024; Prasiasa & Widari, 2024; Gunawan, 2016; Himawati et al., 2021; Cahyani & Ganefo, 2020; Januarti, 2017). This reflects literature oriented toward policy, local economic development strategies, and the creation of tourist attractions. This cluster can serve as a foundation for strengthening policy based on local data and community aspirations, with attention to the uniqueness of each region.

The second cluster, Culture and Local Identity (Aulia et al., 2024), emerges from the interrelation of “cultural tourism” (Nurdin, 2016; Suastini et al., 2021; Saputra & Pinasti, 2015; Waluya et al., 2021; Aulia et al., 2024), “Bali” (Yamashita & Picard, 1999; Prasiasa et al., 2023; Kamajaya & Nugroho, 2020), “Burake” (Medi, 2018), and “West Nusa Tenggara” (Purwata, 2019; Jaelani, 2018; Hamzana, 2018). This cluster emphasizes the importance of a cultural approach in tourism development. Culture is not only a tourism object but also a symbol of identity and a means of expressing community values. In this context, it is crucial to formulate tourism development models that are not extractive toward culture but rather serve as spaces for regenerating values (Yamashita & Picard, 1999).

The third cluster, Social Critique and Tourism Ethics, is seen in the connection of terms like “prostitution practices” (Saputra & Pinasti, 2015), “environmental damage,” and “injustice” (Prasiasa et al., 2023; Ahmad & Yunita, 2019). Though still minor, this cluster is important as an indicator of critical awareness regarding the excesses of tourism development. The emergence of these narratives shows that tourism does not always produce uniform benefits, but often leaves behind inequality, marginalization, and value conflicts.

The fourth cluster, Gender and Representation (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Arieta et al., 2022; Ahmad & Yunita, 2019), (Djana, 2024) centers on terms like “feminine” and “competition.” Although not yet widely developed, this cluster shows that tourism studies are beginning to consider gender dimensions and political economy. It opens up opportunities to develop an intersectional perspective in understanding social relations in tourism contexts, including women’s roles, body representation, and labor inequality.

The fifth cluster is Regional Case Studies, with nodes such as “Selopanggung village” (Kurnia, 2021), “Nagan Raya Regency” (Jamal Al-Amin & Afrizal Tjoetra, 2022), and “Banyuwangi” (Nursafitri et al., 2020; Fahad & Endrayadi, 2017). This affirms that sociological studies of tourism increasingly value local context as a basis for analysis. This approach is essential to understanding micro and specific social dynamics and contributes to the development of adaptive and contextual tourism models.

Through this reconstruction, it can be affirmed that the literature on the sociology of tourism in Indonesia holds great potential to contribute to inclusive, sustainable, and equitable tourism development. Strengthening cross-cluster studies will enrich sociological analysis and reinforce the role of social sciences in guiding the direction of national tourism sector development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study affirms that the sociology of tourism in Indonesia has undergone significant development during the 2016–2025 period, particularly in responding to the dynamics of development, cultural preservation, and social change at the local level. Through a bibliometric approach and VOSviewer visualization, it is identified that dominant topics still revolve around the themes of “tourism development” and “local culture,” reflecting two main poles of academic concern: the logic of development and the logic of culture.

The Network Visualization (NV) illustrates the strong semantic relationships between terms, forming five main clusters: destination development, local culture, social critique, gender perspectives, and regional studies. Meanwhile, the Overlay Visualization (OV) indicates a shift in recent literature toward critical issues such as the social impact of tourism, gender, and inequality. The Density Visualization (DV) highlights the highest intensity in themes related to national tourism development and local interpretations of cultural identity.

The cluster reconstruction presented in this study generates a thematic map that can serve as a foundation for formulating research agendas and evidence-based policies. Strengthening community-based literature, integrating local values in tourism planning, and critically addressing exploitative tourism practices are essential areas that need to be expanded. In other words, the sociology of tourism should emerge not only as a discipline that explains social phenomena but also as one that challenges and reconstructs social realities.

The practical implications of this study highlight the importance of integration between academics, government, and local communities in formulating the direction of tourism development. Academics can facilitate evidence-based analysis; the government can design policies that are adaptive to socio-cultural dynamics; and communities can serve as key actors in sustaining local values. This aligns with the “sociology for society” approach, which positions social science as a tool for social emancipation.

Methodologically, this study demonstrates that bibliometric approaches using Google Scholar and visualization tools such as VOSviewer can be effectively employed to evaluate, reflect on, and redefine academic directions in local contexts. However, limitations related to data completeness and platform bias should be critically addressed in future research. Therefore, synergy between quantitative and qualitative approaches is strongly recommended.

Ultimately, the sociology of tourism in Indonesia is at a crucial juncture to consolidate itself as a strategic field of study—not only to understand social transformations in tourism destinations, but also to guide development that is more humane, just, and rooted in local wisdom. With the cluster reconstruction

presented in this study, the future of tourism sociology can be built on a scientific foundation that is reflective, critical, and transformative

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