Mapping the Landscape of Service Quality in Tourism: A Bibliometric Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry has garnered growing academic and professional attention due to its emergence as one of the fastest-growing business sectors globally. Service quality within tourism is increasingly recognized as a critical driver of economic growth. However, existing literature has yet to offer a comprehensive and satisfactory evaluation of tourism service quality. To address this gap, we conducted a systematic literature review incorporating bibliometric analysis, citation network analysis, and keyword network analysis.This study conducts a bibliometric examination of 2172 research papers published in the Scopus database on Service Quality in the tourism sector until November 2024. The article encompasses a bibliometric analysis, delving into various charts, including top-performing authors, affiliations, countries, institutions, and the most productive journals in Tourism. The insights derived from this analysis will prove invaluable for emerging researchers, professionals, and stakeholders.

Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis, Rstudio, Scopus, Service Quality, Vosviewer

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is widely recognized as a pivotal driver of national socioeconomic development, playing a crucial role in poverty reduction (Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019; Siakwah et al., 2020). Positioned within an intricate and multidisciplinary landscape with diverse supply chain connections, the tourism industry holds significant importance. Following the publication of foundational service quality models by Grönroos (1984) and Parasuraman et al. (1985), a substantial body of research began to emerge on the topic. Since then, service quality has remained a significant area of inquiry within the hospitality and tourism sectors, attracting sustained scholarly attention. Researchers have developed various measurement scales tailored to specific segments within hospitality and tourism (Wong and Fong, 2012), while others have proposed conceptual models to examine the outcomes of service quality in diverse operational contexts (Kim, 2011), reflecting the sector's varied business environments. The growing volume of literature, however, has made it increasingly difficult for scholars to clearly identify research gaps and offer original contributions. To overcome this challenge and uncover future research opportunities, it is essential to undertake a systematic literature review that maps the key themes and trends that have evolved within the domain of service quality in tourism. The impetus behind this bibliometric study stems from the observation that there has been a scarcity of bibliometric analyses bridging the topics of tourism and Service Quality.

Bibliometric Analysis

The term *bibliometrics* is derived from a combination of two Greek words: *biblio*, meaning "book," and *metrics*, meaning "measurement" (Sengupta, 1992). Bibliometric analysis refers to the scientific and quantitative evaluation of scholarly publications using statistical methods (Sengupta, 1992). In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the number of bibliometric studies, rising from 437 in 2010 to 1,701 in 2019 (Donthu et al., 2021). The objectives of bibliometric analysis are multifaceted, including the summarization of key features within the literature, identification of emerging research trends and thematic domains, and highlighting potential avenues for future research (Atsız et al., 2022).
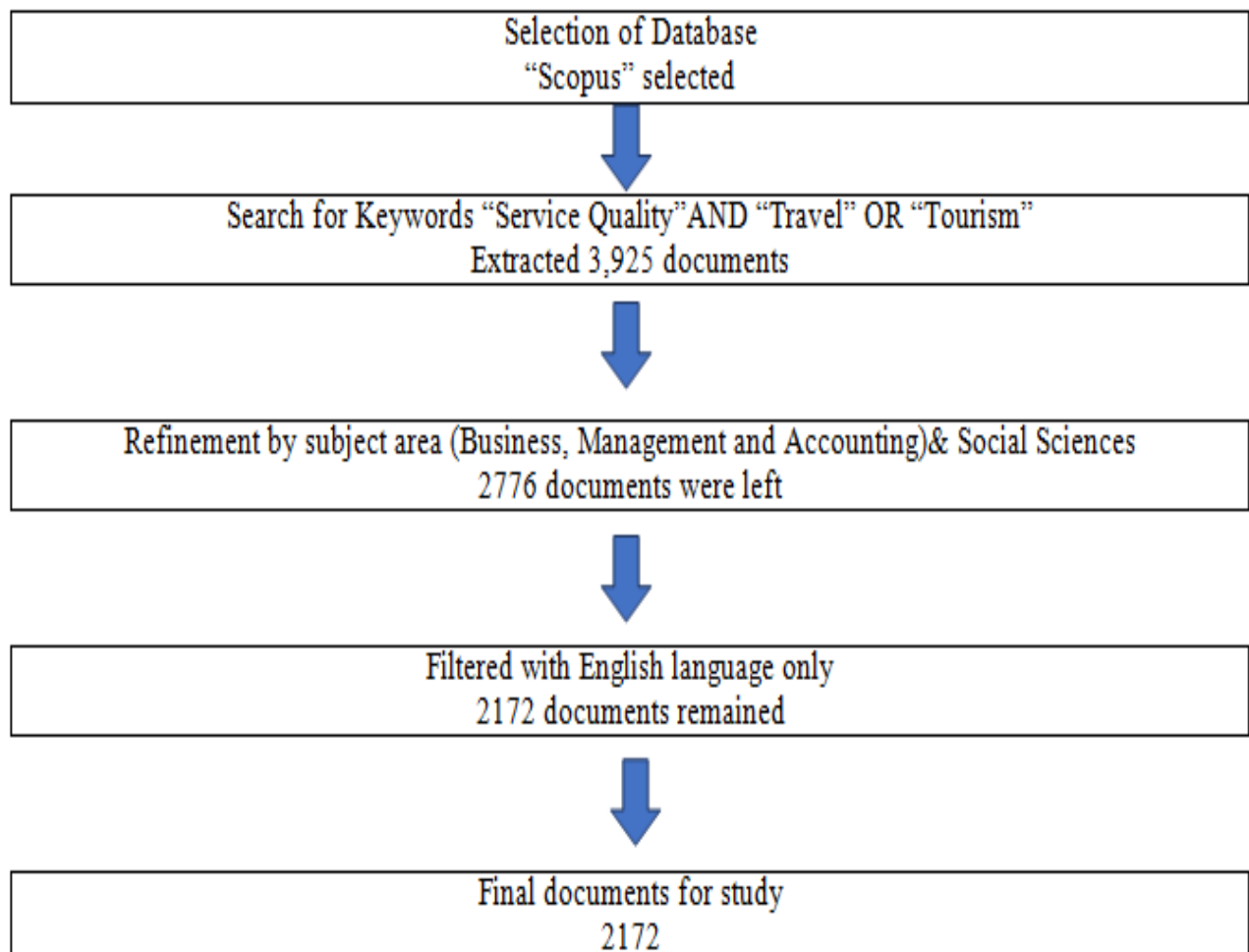
The primary aim of the present bibliometric analysis is to identify the most prolific authors, influential countries, leading academic journals, and high-impact research articles, as well as to conduct a comprehensive keyword analysis. Additionally, the study offers recommendations for future research directions to both scholars and policymakers and proposes potential solutions to existing challenges in the field. Utilizing the web-based Biblioshiny interface integrated with the R-package and VOSviewer, this study adopts a bibliometric approach designed to improve the objectivity and reliability of literature reviews by minimizing subjective bias. Accordingly, the present research sets out the following objectives to explore and synthesize the key findings from prior studies on service quality within the context of the tourism sector:

1. What are the predominant facets of Service Quality literature within the domains of tourism?
2. What are the noteworthy trends and fundamental thematic areas in Service Quality literature within the realms of tourism?
3. What insights can be derived from the study of previous literature, and what agendas can be formulated for future exploration?

Methods (Data Source & Retrievel)

To conduct an effective bibliometric analysis within a specific research domain, it is essential to select a comprehensive and reliable database that encompasses a wide range of relevant literature (Sánchez et al., 2017). Among the available options, *Scopus* and *Web of Science* are widely recognized as the most reputable databases for bibliometric research (Baas et al., 2020; Pranckute, 2021). For the purposes of this study, *Scopus* was chosen due to its extensive coverage and robust indexing of academic publications (Elsevier, 2020). Additionally, Scopus is particularly suitable for this research, as it offers strong representation in the fields of social sciences and humanities, which are closely aligned with tourism studies.

The data retrieval was conducted on November 30, 2024. An initial search using the keywords ("Service Quality" AND "Travel" OR "Tourism") within the "Title, Abstract, and Keywords" fields yielded a total of 3,925 documents related to service quality in the context of tourism. To enhance relevance, the dataset was further refined by limiting the subject areas to *Business, Management, and Accounting* and *Social Sciences*, resulting in a total of 2,776 documents. Editorials, notes, and retracted articles were excluded from the analysis. Only peer-reviewed research articles were selected for the final examination.

Selection of Database
"Scopus" selected

Search for Keywords "Service Quality" AND "Travel" OR "Tourism"
Extracted 3,925 documents

Refinement by subject area (Business, Management and Accounting)& Social Sciences
2776 documents were left

Filtered with English language only
2172 documents remained

Final documents for study
2172

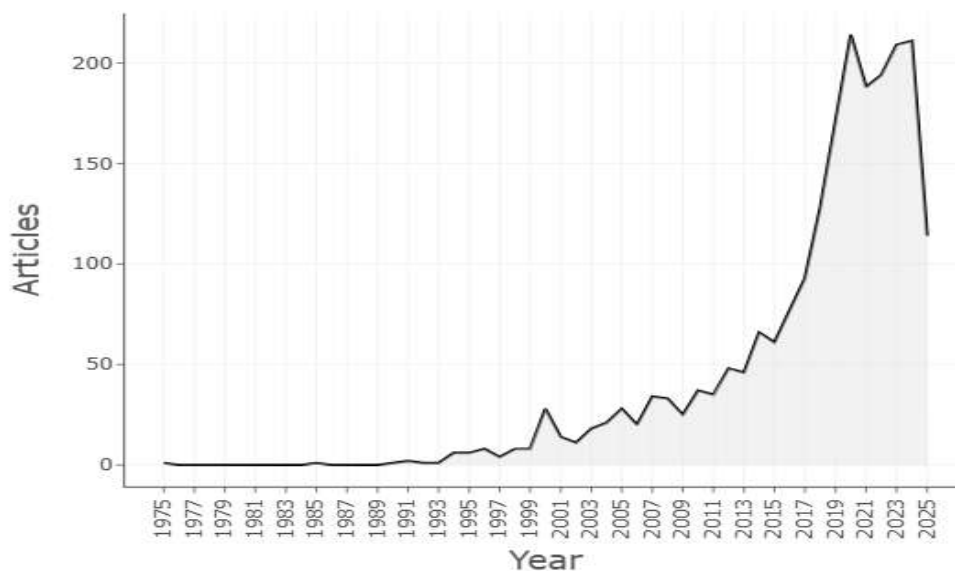**Figure. 1: Method adopted for refining documents for the research**

Results and Discussions (Publications and Citations Pattern)

The descriptive analysis of 2172 research publications that were taken from the Scopus database and focused on the Service Quality in the tourism industry is presented in Figure -2.

Fig. 2: Descriptive Features of Service Quality in the area of Tourism

The bibliometric analysis covers a substantial timespan from 1975 to 2025 (including pre-prints articles), encompassing a total of 2,172 documents sourced from 480 distinct journals, books, and conference proceedings. This body of literature has experienced a notable annual growth rate of 9.94%, reflecting increasing academic interest in the field of service quality within the travel and tourism sector. The contributions come from 5,072 unique authors, with 230 documents being single-authored. On average, each document has approximately 3.04 co-authors, and 28.27% of the publications involve international collaborations, indicating a significant degree of global scholarly engagement. The dataset includes 5,757 unique author-provided keywords and references a total of 110,226 sources, underlining the richness and diversity of the research landscape. The average age of the documents is 7.36 years, and each document receives an average of 32.81 citations, which points to a moderate to high academic impact and ongoing relevance of the topic in scholarly discourse.

Fig. 3: Annual scientific production of articles on Service Quality in Tourism

The Fig. 3 provides a graph illustrates the annual publication trend of articles related to service quality in the context of tourism and travel from 1975 to 2025. In the initial years, specifically from 1975 to the early 1990s, the number of publications remained very low, with minimal activity in the field. Starting around the mid-1990s, there is a gradual increase in scholarly interest, followed by a more noticeable upward trend from the early 2000s onwards. A significant surge in publications is observed after 2010, with a sharp rise leading to a peak in 2019, where over 200 articles were published. Although there was a slight dip in 2020, the publication rate remained relatively high through 2023 and 2024. However, a decline appears in 2025, which could be attributed to incomplete data for the year at the time of analysis. Overall, the graph highlights a growing academic engagement with service quality in tourism, especially in the last decade, reflecting its increasing importance as a research domain.

PROMINENT FEATURES OF SERVICE QUALITY RESEARCH IN THE AREA OF TOURISM

a) **Top Performing Authors**

Table 1: Top Performing Author in terms of No. of Citations & No. of Documents					
Rank	**Author**	**TC**	**Rank**	**Author**	**Documents**
1	Beirao g	875	1	Zhang y	16
2	Sarsfield cabralja	875	2	Wang y	14
3	Otto je	873	3	Chen y	13
4	Ritchie jrb	873	4	Liu y	12
5	Su l	818	5	Wang x	12
6	Jauhari v	714	6	Law r	11
7	Manaktola k	714	7	Li j	11
8	Law r	688	8	Chen x	10
9	Dellolio l	671	9	Li s	10
10	Cats o	661	10	Su l	10

Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of the most influential authors in the field of service quality in tourism, measured by two key performance indicators: total number of citations (TC) and number of published documents. The left section of the table ranks authors based on the total number of citations their works have received. Authors Beirao G and Sarsfield Cabral JA share the top position, each with 875 citations, indicating a high scholarly impact. Otto JE and Ritchie JRB follow closely with 873 citations each, while Su L ranks fifth with 818 citations. Other notable contributors include Jauhari V and Manaktola K with 714 citations, and Law R with 688 citations.

The right section of the table ranks authors according to their publication output. Zhang Y leads with 16 documents, followed by Wang Y with 14, and Chen Y with 13. Liu Y and Wang X each have 12 publications, indicating consistent scholarly productivity. Law R, also noted for citation impact, appears in both sections, highlighting his dual contribution in terms of quantity and influence. Su L similarly features in both categories, demonstrating a strong research presence. Overall, the table highlights key academic contributors whose research has significantly shaped the discourse on service quality in the tourism domain.

Most Influential Countries

Table 2: Most Influential Countries in terms of Publications		
Rank	**Country**	**Frequency**
1	China	1268
2	U.S.A	595
3	India	339
4	Malaysia	337
5	Spain	288
6	Australia	286
7	Indonesia	251
8	UK	212
9	South Korea	201
10	Turkey	191

Table 2 presents the top ten most influential countries based on the frequency of publications in the field under study. China ranks first with a significant margin, contributing 1,268 publications, indicating its leading role in academic research within this domain. The United States follows in second place with 595 publications, demonstrating strong engagement and scholarly output. India holds the third position with 339 publications, closely followed by Malaysia with 337, reflecting active research participation in these Asian countries.
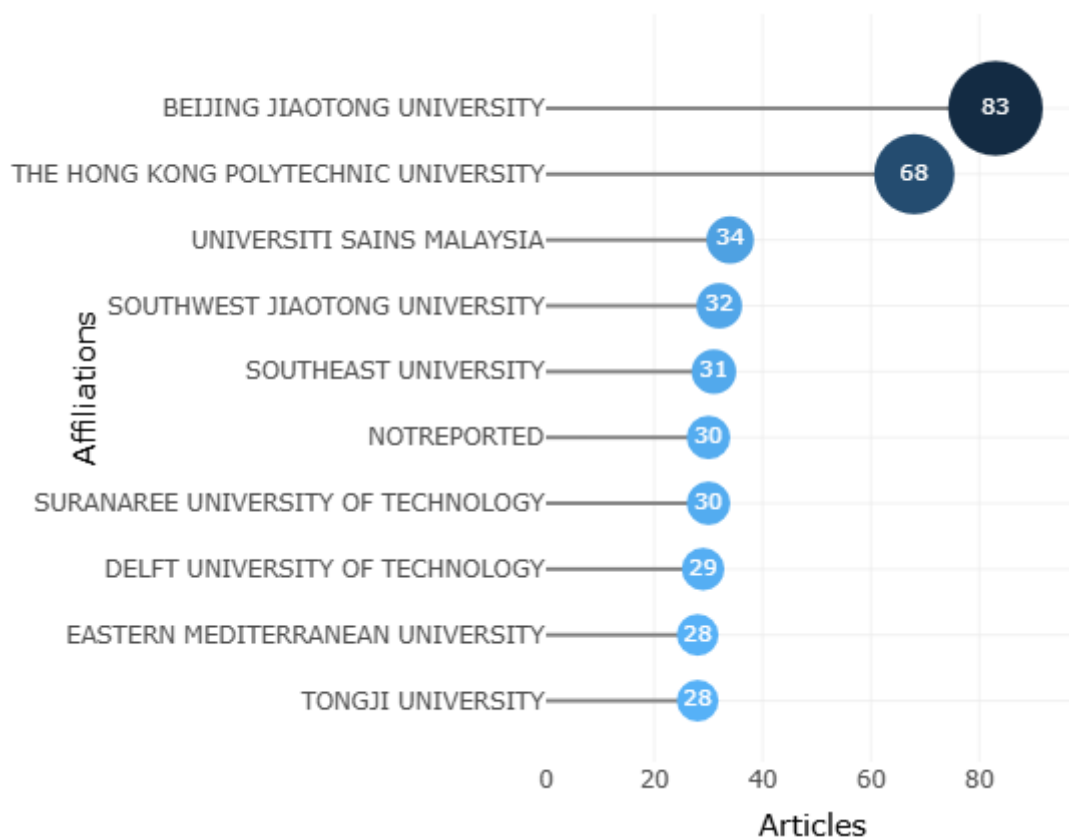
Spain and Australia occupy the fifth and sixth positions with 288 and 286 publications, respectively, suggesting their robust academic contributions. Indonesia, with 251 publications, ranks seventh and shows growing involvement in the field. The United Kingdom, South Korea, and Turkey complete the list, with 212, 201, and 191 publications,

respectively. These figures illustrate a diverse global research landscape, with significant contributions from both developed and emerging economies, underlining the international relevance and interest in the subject area.

In examining the Fig.4 highlights the top ten academic institutions based on the number of published articles, indicating their research productivity and influence in the relevant field. Beijing Jiaotong University stands out as the most prolific institution, with a total of 83 publications, demonstrating a significant contribution to scholarly output. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University follows closely with 68 articles, reflecting its strong research engagement and international academic presence.

Universiti Sains Malaysia ranks third with 34 publications, showing notable participation from Southeast Asia. Southwest Jiaotong University and Southeast University contribute 32 and 31 articles respectively, underscoring the prominent role of Chinese institutions in this research area. Interestingly, a category labeled"Not Reported" also appears with 30 articles, possibly indicating contributions from unaffiliated or undisclosed institutions.

Suranaree University of Technology in Thailand also recorded 30 publications, followed by Delft University of Technology (Netherlands) with 29, reflecting Europe's involvement in the field. Eastern Mediterranean University and Tongji University both contributed 28 articles each, further highlighting the diverse international landscape of academic research. Overall, the chart underscores the dominant presence of Asian institutions, particularly from China and Malaysia, in shaping the discourse through a high volume of scholarly publications.

Fig. 4: Top Productive Institution on Service Quality

Fig. 5 illustrates the top academic journals ranked by the number of published documents, offering insight into the primary sources disseminating research in the field. *Sustainability (Switzerland)* emerges as the most prolific source, contributing 134 documents, signifying its strong orientation toward sustainable development themes within tourism, transportation, and hospitality sectors. Following closely is *Tourism Management* with 104 documents, reaffirming its reputation as a leading and highly impactful journal in tourism research.

Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice ranks third with 57 publications, reflecting a substantial focus on transport-related policy discussions. It is followed by the *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality and Tourism*, which has published 52 documents, indicating a specialized emphasis on quality and service dimensions in the hospitality industry.

The *Journal of Air Transport Management* (48 publications) and *Transportation Research Part C: Emerging Technologies* (47 publications) highlight the growing relevance of air transport and technological advancements in shaping tourism and mobility trends. Meanwhile, the *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research* and *Transport Policy* each contributed 43 documents, indicating regional and policy-focused perspectives.

The *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* with 40 publications and the *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing* with 36 publications round out the top ten, showcasing the breadth of topics ranging from operational management to consumer behaviour. Collectively, the data underscore the interdisciplinary and international nature of tourism and transport research, with a noticeable emphasis on sustainability, policy, and quality assurance as dominant thematic areas.

Fig. 5: Most relevant sources based on the number of documents

Most Influential Research Papers

Table 3 highlights the top ten most cited research articles in the field of service quality, particularly within the contexts of transport, tourism, and hospitality. The leading article, authored by Beirão and Cabral (2007), examines public and private transport preferences and has received 875 citations, reflecting its substantial academic influence. Close behind is the work of Otto and Ritchie (1996), which investigates the dimensions of the tourism service experience and has been cited 873 times.

Manaktola and Jauhari's (2007) study on consumer behaviour toward green practices in India's lodging industry ranks third with 714 citations. The impact of digital content in destination marketing is explored by Pan et al. (2007) in their highly cited study (582 citations) on travel blogs. Dell'Olio et al. (2011) contribute to public transport research by identifying user expectations regarding service quality, amassing 499 citations. Hui, Wan, and Ho's (2007) research on tourist satisfaction and repeat visitation in Singapore follows with 485 citations.

In more recent scholarship, de Kervenoael et al. (2020) explore human-robot interactions in hospitality, garnering 418 citations, while Jung et al. (2015) analyze the adoption of augmented reality technologies in theme parks, cited 409 times.

Earlier foundational works, such as Fick and Brent Ritchie's (1991) framework for measuring service quality in tourism (402 citations) and Pizam and Ellis's (1999) analysis of customer satisfaction metrics in hospitality enterprises (389 citations), remain integral to contemporary research. Collectively, these highly cited studies underscore the diverse methodological approaches and thematic evolution within service quality literature.

Table 3: Top Performing Research Articles in Service Quality				
Rank	Title of the Paper	Authors	Year	No of Citations
1	Understanding attitudes towards public transport and private car: A qualitative study. *Transport policy*, *14*(6), 478-489.	Beirão, G., & Cabral, J. S.	2007	875
2	The service experience in tourism. *Tourism management*, *17*(3), 165-174.	Otto, J. E., & Ritchie, J. B.	1996	873
3	Exploring consumer attitude and behaviour towards green practices in the lodging industry in India. *International journal of contemporary hospitality management*, *19*(5), 364-377.	Manaktola, K., & Jauhari, V.	2007	714
4	Travel blogs and the implications for destination marketing. *Journal of travel research*, *46*(1), 35-45.	Pan, B., MacLaurin, T., & Crotts, J. C.	2007	582
5	The quality of service desired by public transport users. *Transport Policy*, *18*(1), 217-227.	Dell'Olio, L., Ibeas, A., &Cecin, P.	2011	499
6	Tourists' satisfaction, recommendation and revisiting Singapore. *Tourism management*, *28*(4), 965-975.	Hui, T. K., Wan, D., & Ho, A.	2007	485
7	Leveraging human-robot interaction in hospitality services: Incorporating the role of perceived value, empathy, and information sharing into visitors' intentions to use social robots. *Tourism Management*, *78*, 104042.	de Kervenoael, R., Hasan, R., Schwob, A., & Goh, E.	2020	418
8	The determinants of recommendations to use augmented reality technologies: The case of a Korean theme park. *Tourism management*, *49*, 75-86.	Jung, T., Chung, N., &Leue, M. C.	2015	409
9	Measuring service quality in the travel and tourism industry. *Journal of travel research*, *30*(2), 2-9.	Fick, G. R., & Brent Ritchie, J. R.	1991	402
10	Customer satisfaction and its measurement in hospitality enterprises. *International journal of contemporary hospitality management*, *11*(7), 326-339.	Pizam, A., & Ellis, T. (1999).	1999	389

All Keywords analysis in the context of Service quality in Tourism

The word cloud presented above is a bibliometric visualization derived from the Scopus database, focusing on research publications related to service quality in tourism. The prominence and size of each term indicate its frequency of occurrence and relative significance in the literature.

The most dominant themes include "travel behaviour,""public transport,""perception,""travel time,""tourist behaviour," and "tourist destination," suggesting that these are central research areas receiving considerable scholarly attention. Other frequently occurring terms such as "tourism management,""quality of service,""urban transport," and "transportation planning" reflect key components and interdisciplinary connections within the broader context of tourism and transport studies.

Additionally, geographic terms like "China" and "United States" highlight regions of significant empirical focus, while phrases such as "ecotourism,""tourism development,""accessibility," and "sustainable development" suggest emerging and policy-relevant areas.

The presence of methodological keywords such as "regression analysis,""questionnaire survey," and "numerical model" indicates a diverse range of analytical techniques applied in this field.

Overall, the word cloud captures the conceptual landscape and research hotspots, providing a snapshot of how service quality in tourism is studied from various thematic and disciplinary perspectives.
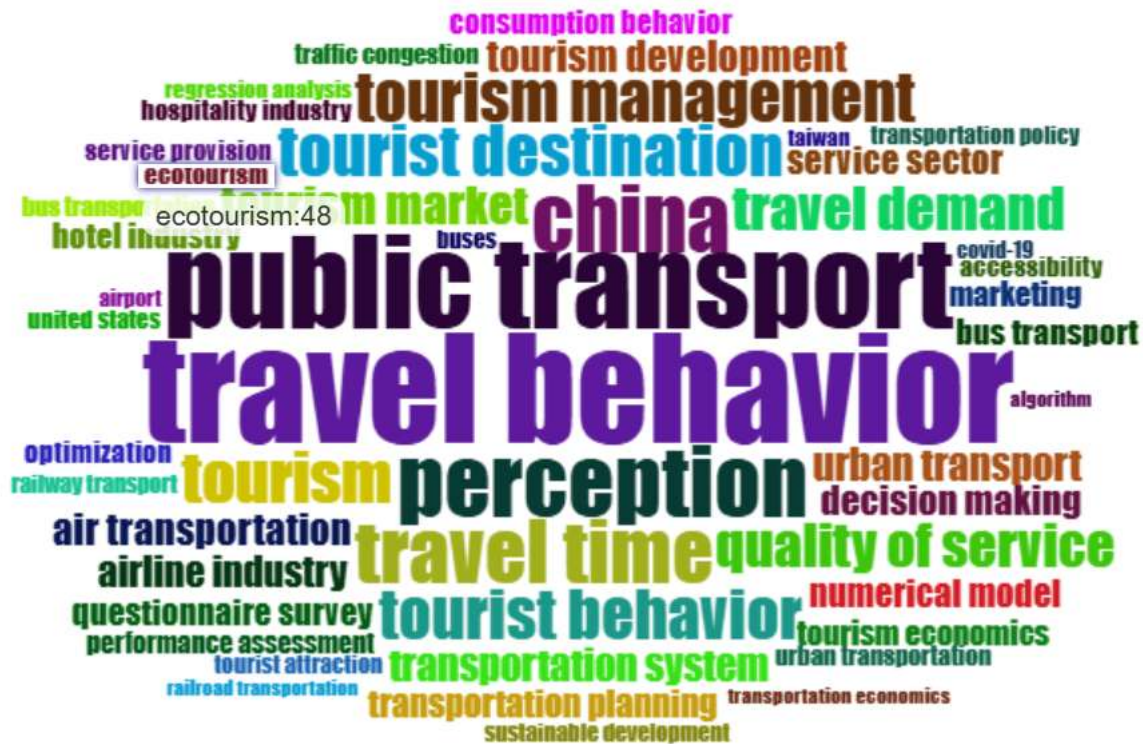
Fig. 6: Word cloud

Significant Trends and Core Thematic Areas of Service Quality in Tourism

In order to gain a deeper grasp of the fundamental themes and patterns of the literature on Service Quality in the domains of tourism research, keyword plus is utilised to find the many connections between words.
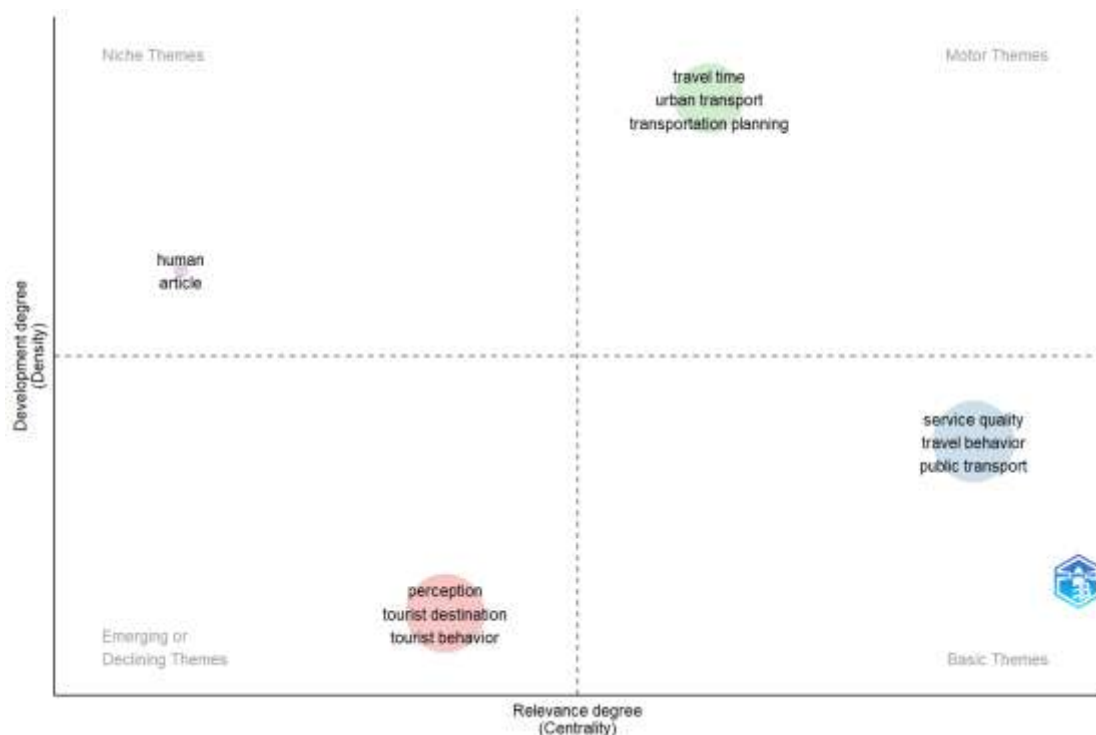
Thematic Map

Figure 7 – Thematic Map

The thematic map presented in Figure 7, depicted above, delineates the correlation between centrality (on the x-axis) and density (on the y-axis). The significance of research themes is evaluated based on their centrality, while their evolution is assessed by density. The visual representation is segmented into four quadrants: upper left, upper right, lower left, and lower right. In the upper left quadrant, themes exhibit high centrality but low density, indicating their isolation despite being highly developed. Conversely, the upper right quadrant portrays themes with both high density and centrality, indicating their importance and robust development. The lower left section of the illustration encompasses emerging or declining themes within the research area. In the lower right quadrant of the thematic map, fundamental or cross-cutting themes are depicted, showcasing low density but high centrality. This arrangement offers a comprehensive overview of the diverse developmental stages and importance levels of various research themes in the field.

The figure 7 provides a thematic map in the context of Service Quality in Tourism, showcasing various clusters of related terms and their centrality measures within each cluster. The thematic map categorizes key research themes in the domain of service quality based on their relevance (centrality) and development (density). In the top-right quadrant, labeled as Motor Themes, the cluster comprising "travel time,""urban transport," and "transportation planning" is both well-developed and highly relevant, indicating that these topics are central and influential within the field. The bottom-right quadrant, representing Basic Themes, includes "service quality,""travel behaviour," and "public transport," which are essential and widely addressed themes but require further internal development. In the top-left quadrant, the Niche Themes "human" and "article" are conceptually mature but exhibit limited relevance to the broader research context, suggesting a specialized or isolated focus. Lastly, the bottom-left quadrant identifies "perception,""tourist destination," and "tourist behaviour" as Emerging or Declining Themes, signifying either nascent areas needing more scholarly attention or topics that are losing prominence. This map thus provides a comprehensive overview of the intellectual structure and research dynamics within the service quality domain.

CONCLUSION

This bibliometric study offers a comprehensive overview of the research landscape surrounding service quality in the tourism sector. By analyzing 2,172 peer-reviewed documents from the Scopus database, the study highlights the increasing scholarly attention to this topic, particularly since the early 2000s. The annual growth rate of nearly 10% and the widespread international collaboration underscore its global relevance. Prominent contributors both authors and countries were identified, with China, the United States, and India emerging as key players in terms of publication volume. Influential authors such as Beirao G, Otto JE, and Ritchie JRB were noted for their citation impact, while Zhang Y and Wang Y led in publication count. The analysis also identified major journals, core thematic areas, and emerging trends shaping the discourse on service quality in tourism.The findings serve as a valuable resource for future researchers, offering insights into existing research gaps and directions for further exploration. This study not only reinforces the significance of service quality in shaping tourism experiences but also encourages the academic community to continue investigating this multifaceted domain. By mapping the evolution and impact of existing literature, it contributes meaningfully to the advancement of both theoretical knowledge and practical applications in tourism research.

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