



Enlightening Tourism. A Pathmaking Journal

Journal homepage:
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A Diamond Open Access Journal (No APC, No Submission Fees)

From Knowledge Structure to Pathmaking Tourism Scholarship: Editorial Renewal and Future Research Directions in Enlightening Tourism

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Cite:

Perano, M., García de Soto Camacho, E., Casali, G.L., Duplock, R. (2026). From Knowledge Structure to Pathmaking Tourism Scholarship: Editorial Renewal and Future Research Directions in Enlightening Tourism. *Enlightening Tourism. A Pathmaking Journal*, 16(1), I-XIII. <https://doi.org/10.33776/EUHU/et.v16i1.9796>

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Pathmaking tourism scholarship
Enlightening tourism
Co-word analysis
Bibliometric mapping
Future Research Initiatives
Knowledge structure
Tourism futures
Sustainable tourism
Responsible destination transformation

Article type:

Editorial-scientific paper

This editorial article maps the accumulated knowledge structure of Enlightening Tourism. A Pathmaking Journal (ET) and translates it into a forward-looking research agenda for the journal's renewed editorial phase. The article is grounded in a corpus of 143 ET articles, organised into 53 pre-Scopus articles published between 2011 and 2017 and 90 Scopus-indexed articles published between 2018 and 2026. Author keywords were analysed through co-word analysis, keyword co-occurrence networks, Greedy Modularity clustering, robustness comparison with Louvain community detection, Callon strategic diagramming and Future Research Initiatives (FRI) simulations. This methodological integration represents a distinctive contribution of the paper: rather than using bibliometric mapping only to describe the journal's past, it combines retrospective knowledge-structure analysis with forward-looking FRI simulations to identify under-connected concepts that may inform future research directions, editorial priorities and scholarly development. The results identify 565 unique keywords, 66 retained keywords occurring at least twice, 115 co-occurrence linkages and 11 thematic clusters. Tourism, satisfaction, sustainable tourism and sustainability emerge as basic themes; hotels, India and Antalya appear as niche themes; and sustainable development and COVID-19 occupy the emerging or declining quadrant. The FRI simulations indicate that destination image, tourism marketing, performance, customer satisfaction, travel motivation, perceived risk and smart destinations may operate as bridging concepts for future research. We argue that the next stage of ET should not be understood as a break with its past, but as a disciplined transformation of its accumulated knowledge into a clearer intellectual direction. Pathmaking tourism scholarship is proposed as a way of studying how destinations, firms, communities, ecosystems and institutions create, transform and govern responsible development pathways under conditions of uncertainty, technological change and societal transition. In this renewed phase, ET will prioritise manuscripts that move beyond tourism as an empirical setting and use tourism to advance theory, methods, evidence, policy and responsible practice.

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<https://doi.org/10.33776/EUHU/et.v16i1.9796> | Published by Universidad de Huelva (Spain)

Received 27 July 2026; Received in revised form 13 August 2026; Accepted 13 August 2026 | Available online 13 August 2026

1. Introduction

Enlightening Tourism. A Pathmaking Journal (ET) has been part of the international tourism research landscape since 2011, when it emerged from the intellectual initiative of Professor Alfonso Vargas-Sánchez at the University of Huelva. From its origin, the journal was conceived as an open scholarly space for tourism research capable of connecting destinations, hospitality, management, sustainability, consumer behaviour, technology, cultural heritage and service quality, and related areas of tourism and hospitality studies.

This origin was consistent with a broader scholarly concern for destination management, tourism competitiveness, governance and sustainable development, themes that have also characterised Vargas-Sánchez's contribution to tourism research (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2009, 2011).

One of the major milestones in the journal's evolution was its inclusion in Scopus in 2018, which marked an important step in strengthening its international visibility and scholarly recognition. For this reason, the present paper distinguishes between the pre-Scopus period, covering articles published from 2011 to 2017, and the Scopus-indexed period, covering articles published from 2018 to 2026. This distinction is not evaluative; it is historical and methodological. It allows the journal's accumulated scientific production to be read with greater accuracy and without implying that one phase is more valuable than another.

From October 2022 to December 2025 Professor Elena Carvajal Trujillo served as Editor in Chief of ET, contributing to the journal's continuity after its Scopus inclusion (Carvajal Trujillo, 2026).

Since January 2026 ET has entered a new editorial phase under the co-editorship of Mirko Perano (University of Salerno, Italy) and Elena García de Soto Camacho (University of Huelva, Spain). This transition is accompanied by a revised aim and scope of ET that gives the journal a sharper scientific identity (Enlightening Tourism. A Pathmaking Journal, 2026).

This editorial is written at the point where editorial heritage becomes editorial responsibility. A journal that wishes to grow in quality cannot rely only on declarations of intent. It must read its own past, identify the knowledge structures it has helped to assemble and convert that reading into a disciplined future agenda. A journal is not merely a repository of published articles. It is a knowledge architecture: it selects problems, connects concepts, legitimises methods and helps a scholarly community recognise which questions are worth asking next.

The purpose of this paper is to connect ET's accumulated scientific production with its renewed intellectual direction. It does so through a methodologically distinctive approach that combines journal-level co-word analysis, keyword co-occurrence network mapping, community detection, Callon strategic diagramming and Future Research Initiatives (FRI) simulations. The value of this approach lies in its double movement: it reads the journal's past through its published corpus and uses that reading to identify possible conceptual bridges for future research. In this sense, the paper is not limited to describing what ET has published; it develops an evidence-informed way of translating accumulated knowledge into future editorial and scholarly direction.

First, what conceptual structure emerges from ET's production between 2011 and 2026?

Second, which themes occupy basic, niche, emerging or declining positions within the journal's knowledge structure?

Third, which under-connected conceptual linkages may indicate promising opportunities for future research?

Fourth, how can the journal's accumulated knowledge be translated into an editorial agenda for pathmaking tourism scholarship?

These questions matter beyond ET. Tourism research now sits at the intersection of destination transformation, smart ecosystems, regenerative development, knowledge governance, digital ethics and anticipatory decision-making. This interdisciplinary character is consistent with the longstanding understanding of tourism as a field drawing on multiple disciplinary forms of inquiry (Tribe, 1997). Reading ET's corpus is therefore not only an internal editorial exercise; it is a way to clarify how a journal can contribute to wider debates on how tourism futures are imagined, produced and governed.

2. Enlightening Tourism and the move towards pathmaking tourism scholarship

2.1. Editorial heritage and new phase of ET

The renewed aim of ET positions the journal as an international, double-blind peer-reviewed, Diamond Open Access outlet publishing high-quality research in tourism, hospitality and tourism business studies. The journal now advances pathmaking tourism scholarship by focusing on how destinations, firms, communities, ecosystems and institutions create, transform and govern new pathways of responsible development, strategic value creation, knowledge, innovation and technology-enabled change. This revised aim provides the conceptual lens through which the journal's accumulated production is interpreted in this article.

The renewed editorial phase does not reject ET's history; it clarifies what that history can become. The journal's accumulated production shows a broad and diverse engagement with tourism, hospitality, destinations, sustainability, technology, behaviour and management. The task now is to transform this breadth into sharper scholarly direction. Openness remains part of ET's identity, but openness must be accompanied by selectivity, contribution and methodological credibility.

The renewed editorial direction also invites ET to look more carefully at the international dimension of the research it publishes. This is not simply a matter of indicators or rankings, but primarily one of scientific conversation: tourism is rarely shaped within the boundaries of a single place, and the knowledge we publish should be able to travel across contexts. ET will therefore particularly welcome papers developed through international collaboration, comparative perspectives, or research teams bringing together different academic traditions and territorial viewpoints. At the same time, studies focused on a single destination, region, firm, or community remain important when they help readers understand something beyond the case itself. What matters is that authors make this connection clear: why does this context matter, and what can the international tourism research community learn from it?

2.2. Defining pathmaking tourism scholarship

In our understanding, pathmaking tourism scholarship explains how tourism actors create, stabilise, contest, transform and govern development pathways. It focuses on the ways destinations, firms, communities, ecosystems and institutions mobilise knowledge, capabilities, technologies, relationships and values to make some tourism futures more possible, more legitimate and more responsible than others.

Pathmaking does not simply mean studying novelty. It means studying how tourism systems move, why they remain locked into certain trajectories, how they become capable of change and what kinds of value and responsibility are created through that change (Garud & Karnøe, 2001; Sydow et al., 2009; Garud et al., 2010). This perspective connects tourism research with broader debates on path dependence, path creation, knowledge management, intellectual capital, emerging technologies,

dynamic capabilities, open innovation, forecasting, digital transformation, responsible management and sustainability.

For ET, this approach also has an editorial implication. Strong tourism research should not merely apply established concepts to tourism as a convenient empirical setting. It should use tourism to advance theory, methods, evidence, policy or responsible practice. A destination, hotel, community, technology or market segment is not theoretically meaningful simply because it is empirically available. It becomes meaningful when it reveals mechanisms, tensions, capabilities, governance choices or ethical consequences that speak to wider scholarly conversations.

2.3. Contribution and structure of the article

The article makes three contributions.

First, it documents ET's accumulated knowledge structure from 2011 to 2026 through the analyses reported below. In doing so, it treats a journal's corpus as a source of reflexive evidence about the questions, concepts and linkages that have shaped its intellectual trajectory.

Second, it translates a mapped knowledge structure into a future research agenda. The article does not present future directions as generic themes, but as pathways derived from the journal's own conceptual configuration: basic themes that require deeper theoretical consolidation, niche themes that require stronger integration, and emerging or declining themes that require renewed relevance.

Third, it articulates the editorial vision of ET's new phase. The journal will prioritise manuscripts that are theoretically grounded, methodologically rigorous, internationally relevant and capable of advancing pathmaking tourism scholarship. ET's pathmaking turn asks authors to move beyond tourism as a convenient empirical context and to treat tourism as a site for theory-building, method-building, evidence-building and responsibility-building. The remainder of the article is organised as follows. Section 3 presents the methodology. Section 4 reports the results of the keyword co-occurrence, thematic mapping, strategic diagram and FRI simulations. Section 5 discusses the findings as a knowledge-structure reading of ET. Section 6 develops future research directions for pathmaking tourism scholarship. Section 7 outlines editorial implications for future submissions. Section 8 concludes.

3. Methodology

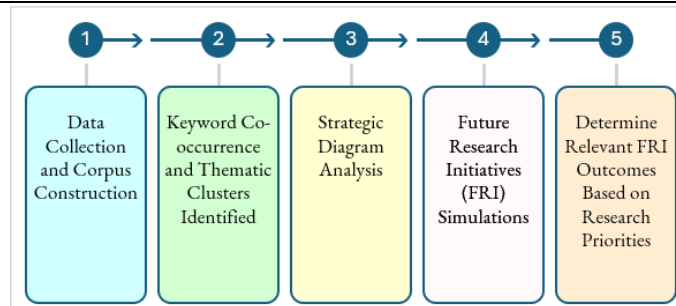
The methodology developed in this scientific-editorial paper is applied to the corpus of articles published in ET, while also offering a framework that may contribute to broader methodological discussions in tourism and management research. Bibliometric analysis and science-mapping methods are widely used to delineate the intellectual and conceptual structure of research fields (Zupic & Čater, 2015; Donthu et al., 2021). However, traditional bibliometric analyses provide limited guidance on where future research may be most productive.

The FRI methodology extends conventional science mapping through a systematic and reproducible workflow that identifies and prioritises promising future research questions and opportunities, providing researchers with an evidence-informed basis for designing future qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies, while also informing subsequent theory development.

This study introduces the FRI methodology – a structured analytical procedure that integrates established bibliometric techniques to systematically identify and prioritise future research opportunities. Figure 1 provides an overview of the FRI methodology applied in this study. The methodology comprises five sequential stages:

1. *Data Collection, corpus construction and keyword extraction.* Articles published in this journal are compiled into a bibliographic corpus. Author keywords are extracted, and punctuation and capitalisation are standardised for subsequent analyses.
2. *Keyword co-occurrence and thematic clusters identified.* A keyword co-occurrence network is built to identify relationships among keywords. The Greedy Modularity community detection algorithm is then applied to identify thematic clusters representing the journal's core research themes.
3. *Strategic diagram analysis.* Each thematic cluster is characterised by its density (internal cohesion) and centrality (external connectedness) scores. These metrics are used to position clusters in a Callon strategic diagram, providing an overview of the journal's thematic structure and the developmental status of each research theme.
4. *Future Research Initiatives (FRI) simulation.* Potential intra- and inter-cluster keyword linkages are systematically evaluated using the FRI procedure to identify and prioritise research opportunities with the greatest potential to strengthen existing themes and advance emerging research areas.
5. *Interpretation of FRI outcomes in relation to research priorities.* In the final stage, the highest-ranked intra- and inter-cluster FRI outcomes are interpreted in relation to the journal's observed knowledge structure and renewed editorial scope. This step considers their potential to consolidate established themes, connect niche or weakly integrated domains, and support theoretically meaningful directions for pathmaking tourism scholarship. The purpose is not to convert structural potential automatically into research priorities, but to combine the computational evidence with scholarly and editorial interpretation.

Collectively, these five stages provide a systematic, reproducible framework for identifying existing research themes and exploring future research opportunities within a journal corpus.

Figure 1. Future Research Initiatives Process Overview

Source: Authors' own elaboration

3.1. Data Collection, Corpus Construction and Software

This study used a combined corpus of 143 articles from ET. Two data sources were included: the first comprised 53 articles published before the journal was indexed in Scopus, and the second comprised 90 Scopus-indexed articles published between 2018 and 2026. After cleaning and standardising the dataset column formats, keywords from both datasets were merged into a single corpus for analysis.

While co-citation is used to analyse the structure of a research field, co-word analysis is used to analyse the conceptual structure of a research domain (Cobo et al., 2011). The methodological foundation of co-word analysis is that co-occurrence between key terms or keywords can be used to characterise the content of documents within a corpus (Callon et al., 1991; López-Herrera et al., 2009). Author keywords were selected as the unit of analysis because they provide concise representations of the principal concepts addressed in individual articles. Keywords from both datasets were standardised to ensure consistency in spelling, capitalisation, and formatting before analysis. Python (version 3.14.0 with IDLE) and the associated libraries pandas, NetworkX, Matplotlib, math and itertools were used in this study.

3.2. Keyword Co-occurrence Network and Thematic Cluster Identification

A keyword co-occurrence network was constructed from the keywords in the combined corpus. In this network, each keyword represents a node, while links (edges) between nodes indicate that two keywords appeared together within the same article. Network-based approaches have also become established tools for analysing relationships and structural configurations in tourism research (Baggio et al., 2010). Edge weights were determined by the number of articles in which the keyword pair co-occurred. Keyword co-occurrence networks are widely used in bibliometric studies because they provide a visual and quantitative representation of the conceptual structure of a body of literature (van Eck & Waltman, 2010; Cobo et al., 2011). Highly interconnected keywords often indicate established and well-developed areas of research activity, whereas weakly connected or isolated keywords may represent emerging, specialised, or under-developed topics (Duplock, 2026). To improve network interpretability and reduce the influence of rare concepts, only keywords appearing in at least two articles were retained for analysis. This threshold was selected to reduce noise associated with one-off keyword occurrences while retaining sufficient conceptual diversity for exploratory analysis.

Thematic structures were identified using the Greedy Modularity community detection algorithm. Community detection seeks to identify groups of keywords (clusters) that are more strongly connected to one another than to the remainder of the network. The Greedy algorithm was selected for its computational

efficiency, transparency, and widespread use in exploratory network studies (Clauset et al., 2004; Smith et al., 2020). The method iteratively combines nodes to maximise modularity, thereby revealing clusters that represent coherent thematic areas within the journal's historical knowledge structure.

To assess the robustness of the thematic solution, results were also compared with those obtained using the Louvain community detection algorithm (Blondel et al., 2008). Both approaches produced highly similar cluster structures, suggesting that the identified themes were not an artefact of a particular clustering method and providing additional confidence in the stability of the thematic interpretation. The clusters identified through Greedy Modularity optimisation were assigned a cluster number and are labelled with the highest-frequency keyword within the cluster. These cluster identifiers remained unchanged throughout the subsequent Callon strategic mapping and simulation processes. This ensured direct comparability between network visualisation, thematic positioning, and simulated future linkage analyses.

3.3. Strategic Diagram Analysis

The identified thematic clusters were subsequently positioned within a two-dimensional strategic diagram using the framework proposed by Callon et al. (1991). The diagram is defined by two complementary dimensions: density (ordinate) and centrality (abscissa), which together provide insight into the developmental status and strategic importance of themes within the journal's knowledge structure.

Density reflects the degree of internal cohesion within a thematic cluster and indicates its conceptual development and maturity. Clusters with high density are characterised by strong interconnections among constituent keywords, suggesting a well-developed and internally coherent research area (López-Herrera et al., 2009; Cobo et al., 2011). Density was calculated as the ratio of observed internal links to the total number of possible internal links within each cluster.

Centrality reflects the extent to which a thematic cluster is connected to other clusters within the network, thereby indicating its overall strategic importance within the field's broader intellectual structure. Clusters with high centrality occupy a more influential position because they maintain stronger connections across multiple thematic areas (López-Herrera et al., 2009; Cobo et al., 2011). Centrality was calculated as the sum of links connecting a cluster to all other clusters in the network (i.e., the total number of external links). After calculating density and centrality, each cluster was positioned on the strategic diagram according to its values. The vertical and horizontal reference lines mark the mean density and mean centrality across all clusters. Consequently, thematic positions are interpreted relative to the overall network structure rather than as absolute measures of thematic development. Clusters with zero values for both

centrality and density were excluded from the strategic diagram because they lacked internal cohesion and external connectivity. The combination of density and centrality allows themes to be classified into four broad categories. Motor themes exhibit high density and high centrality, indicating strong internal development and substantial influence on the wider field. Basic themes display high centrality but comparatively lower density, suggesting broad relevance but less internal cohesion. Niche themes exhibit high density but low centrality, reflecting specialised areas of research that are internally developed yet relatively isolated from the broader literature. Emerging or declining themes display low density and low centrality, indicating topics that are either in an early stage of development or experiencing reduced scholarly attention. The strategic diagram provides an overview of the journal's thematic structure, identifying the principal research themes, their relative developmental status, and their connectedness within the corpus. This classification provides a useful foundation for the subsequent simulation analysis, which examines how themes may evolve and transition between quadrants over time.

3.4. FRI Simulations

The FRI procedure evaluates hypothetical conceptual relationships that are currently absent from the literature within a corpus. The underlying premise is that new knowledge can emerge through the integration of previously disconnected network concepts (Chen et al., 2009; Chen, 2012; Sebastian & Chen, 2021). Rather than narrating future research paths from current research directions, the FRI procedure seeks to identify conceptually plausible relationships that may represent future scholarly investigative opportunities.

Two complementary simulation strategies were employed. The first involved intra-cluster simulations, which examined the absence of relationships between keywords belonging to the same thematic cluster. Intra-cluster simulations are particularly relevant when the objective is to identify opportunities for thematic consolidation and development (for themes or clusters in the emerging and basic quadrants). New conceptual relationships within a theme may strengthen internal coherence, enhance theoretical integration, and contribute to the maturation of an existing research area (Duplock, 2026).

The second involved inter-cluster simulations that examined absent relationships between keywords across different thematic clusters (relevant to niche and emerging themes). Inter-cluster simulations are relevant when the objective is to identify opportunities for thematic integration and knowledge transfer across previously separate research domains. Such connections may facilitate interdisciplinary development and generate novel research perspectives that bridge established thematic boundaries. For each simulation, a hypothetical edge of weight one was added between two previously unconnected keywords, and the network simulation metrics were recalculated. Using a uniform edge weight ensured that all simulated relationships were evaluated under the same conditions and prevented simulation outcomes from being influenced by arbitrary assumptions about relationship strength. The potential influence of each simulated linkage was assessed using the FRI score derived from the expression:

$$FRI = ((\Delta BC + \Delta E) / 2) \times 1000$$

where ΔBC represents the change in betweenness centrality between two keywords (before and after a linkage simulation), and ΔE represents the change in entropy between the same two keywords (before and after the linkage simulation). After introducing the hypothetical linkage, these two metrics were summed and then averaged. The resulting FRI scores were

multiplied by 1000 to improve numerical readability and facilitate visual comparison across simulated linkages. The scaling operation does not affect the relative ranking of the simulated relationships.

Betweenness centrality was used to assess how a simulated relationship strengthened connections between thematic domains within the network, with measures computed using the standard NetworkX weighted betweenness centrality algorithm. Conceptually, this measure captures the extent to which a new linkage connects previously separated areas of the knowledge structure.

A local Shannon entropy measure was calculated for each keyword from the distribution of weighted connections to neighbouring keywords. Entropy reflects the diversity of a keyword's local network relationships, with higher values indicating more evenly distributed connections and lower values indicating concentration within a smaller number of relationships. Combining betweenness centrality and entropy enables the FRI metric to capture both bridging importance and the structural diversity introduced by new intra- or inter-keyword linkages (Duplock, 2026). Integrating changes in betweenness centrality with Shannon's local entropy identifies simulated keyword linkages that can enhance thematic cohesion and the structural integrity of the journal's knowledge network.

All simulated keyword pairings were ranked by their FRI scores. The highest-ranked intra- and inter-cluster relationships were then examined as potential opportunities for future thematic development and integration within the journal's historical knowledge structure.

3.5. Determine Relevant FRI Outcomes Based on Research Priorities

The final stage translates the structural opportunities identified through FRI into candidate future research directions. This prospective approach builds on Chen et al.'s (2009) proposition that hypothetical connections between disparate areas of existing knowledge networks could be computationally evaluated to identify candidates for potentially transformative future discoveries. FRI operationalises this proposition by systematically simulating candidate network connections and evaluating the structural changes associated with their introduction. The highest-ranked simulations identify relationships with comparatively high potential to alter the configuration of the existing knowledge network. These relationships are subsequently examined for their conceptual coherence, theoretical potential and relevance to the journal's evolving research agenda. This stage combines computational foresight with scholarly interpretation: FRI identifies where potentially consequential changes in the intellectual landscape may occur, while domain knowledge determines how those structural opportunities might be developed into meaningful research questions and programmes. The resulting process moves beyond mapping established research structures towards the systematic identification of plausible pathways through which those structures might evolve.

4. Results

4.1. Data Collection and Keyword Composition

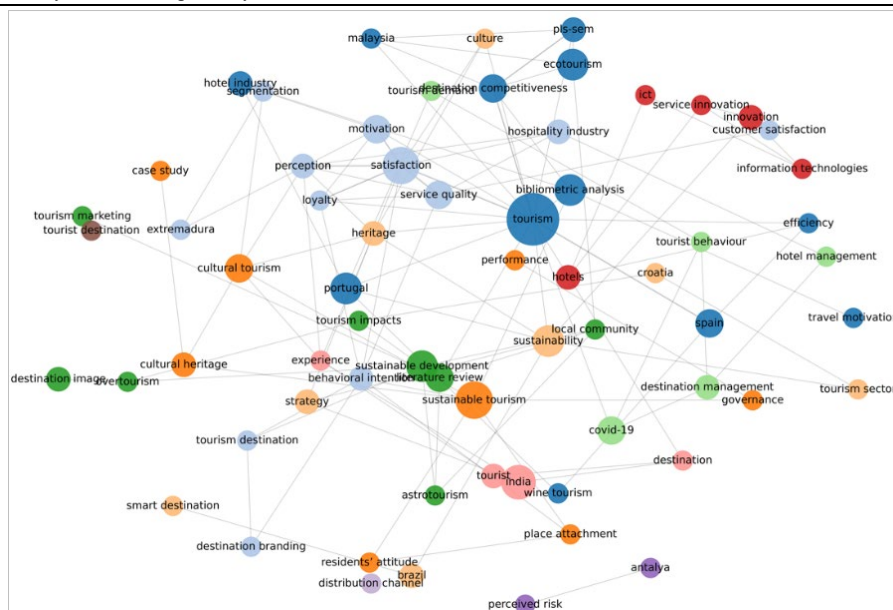
The combined corpus contained 143 articles and 565 unique keywords; 66 of these keywords occurred at least twice in the corpus, yielding 115 co-occurrence linkages (edges). The 143 articles in this corpus, with their source file, article title, author keywords and parsed keywords, are displayed in Appendix A. The 66 retained keywords and their corpus frequencies are presented in Appendix B.

4.2. Keyword Co-occurrence Network and Thematic Identification

The Greedy Modularity clustering algorithm generated 11 clusters from the raw keyword co-occurrence counts, using the 66

author keywords that occurred at least twice in the corpus. The keywords and their co-occurrence relationships are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Greedy Modularity Network Map of Keyword Co-occurrences



Note. Only author keywords with an occurrence frequency of ≥ 2 are displayed (n = 66)

Source: Authors' own elaboration

The Greedy Modularity keyword network revealed a set of interconnected yet distinct thematic domains or clusters, as indicated by their distinct nodal colours in Figure 2 and, more formally, by the differentiated clusters and their keyword components in Table 1. The largest clusters were associated with tourism and satisfaction, sustainability, sustainable development and sustainable tourism, tourism destinations, COVID-19, and

hotel technological innovation. While tourism, satisfaction, and several sustainability clusters emerged as the dominant thematic domains, the relative density and centrality of these clusters varied considerably, indicating differences in their maturity, internal cohesion, and connectivity within the journal's broader knowledge structure.

Table 1. Greedy Modularity Clusters and their Core Characteristics

Cluster No.	Number of Keywords	Top Keyword (Cluster label)	Top Keyword Frequency	Keywords
1	12	Tourism	14	Tourism; Bibliometric analysis; Destination competitiveness; Ecotourism; Efficiency; Hotel industry; Malaysia; PLS-SEM; Portugal; Spain; Travel motivation; Wine tourism
2	12	Satisfaction	7	Satisfaction; Behavioral intention; Customer satisfaction; Destination branding; Extremadura; Hospitality industry; Loyalty; Motivation; Perception; Segmentation; Service Quality; Tourism destination
3	8	Sustainable tourism	7	Sustainable tourism; Case study; Cultural heritage; Cultural tourism; Governance; Performance; Place attachment; Residents' attitude
4	8	Sustainability	5	Sustainability; Brazil; Croatia; Culture; Heritage; Smart destination; Strategy; Tourism sector
5	8	Sustainable development	5	Sustainable development; Astrotourism; Destination image; Literature review; Local community; Overtourism; Tourism impacts; Tourism marketing
6	5	Covid-19	4	Covid-19; Destination management; Hotel management; Tourism demand; Tourist behaviour
7	5	Hotels	3	Hotels; ICT; Information technologies; Innovation; Service innovation
8	4	India	6	India; Destination; Experience; Tourist
9	2	Antalya	2	Antalya; perceived risk
10	1	Distribution channel	2	Distribution channel
11	1	Tourist destination	2	Tourist destination

4.3. Strategic Diagram Outcomes

The Callon strategic diagram in Figure 3 positions each thematic cluster based on its relative density and centrality within the keyword network. Four clusters, C1-tourism, C2-satisfaction, C3-

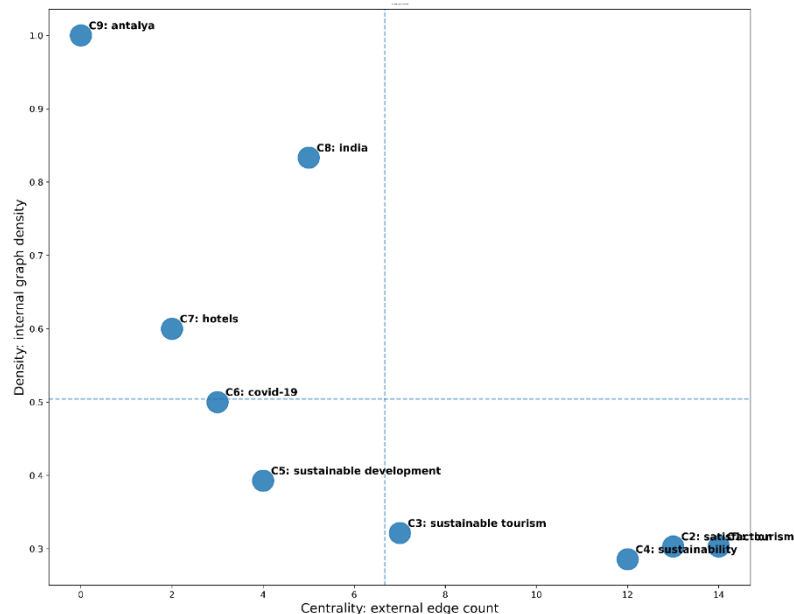
sustainable tourism and C4-sustainability, occupy the Basic Theme quadrant, indicating that these topics play a prominent interconnective role in the journal's overall thematic structure. Three clusters, C7-hotels, C8-India and C9-Antalya, are

positioned within the Niche Theme quadrant, suggesting specialised research areas characterised by relatively strong internal cohesion but limited influence on the broader thematic landscape. By contrast, C5-sustainable development and C6-COVID-19 are located within the Emerging or Declining quadrant, indicating themes that are currently less developed and less integrated within the journal's knowledge structure. Collectively, the results suggest a thematic landscape comprising a small number of established themes together with several specialised and developing research domains. Themes 10 and 11 were removed from this Callon strategic visualisation because each cluster contained only one keyword, and each keyword had

no linkages to any other node in the network. As a result, the centrality and density metrics for both clusters were (0,0).

While the Callon strategic diagram offers a useful overview of the relative positions and development of thematic domains, it does not indicate how these themes might be strengthened or further developed. The next stage of the analysis therefore applies the FRI framework to evaluate potential keyword linkages that could enhance thematic cohesion within clusters and strengthen the corpus' overall thematic structure. In doing so, the framework provides an evidence-based approach for identifying promising future research directions.

Figure 3. Callon Strategic Diagram with Themes' Quadrant Positioning



Note. Labels for C1 and C2 overlap slightly; tourism is positioned immediately to the right of satisfaction

Source: Authors' own elaboration

4.4. FRI Simulations Outcomes

The 15 intra- and inter-keyword combinations with the highest FRI scores are presented in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. The highest-ranked intra-cluster simulations centre on the tourism, sustainable tourism, sustainability, and sustainable development clusters, suggesting that these domains offer the most prominent structured opportunities for strengthening internal thematic cohesion. Several highly ranked linkages involve concepts related to destination image, tourism marketing, performance, governance, customer satisfaction, residents' attitudes, and smart destinations, indicating potential pathways for further conceptual development in these themes and keywords.

Among the top inter-cluster combinations (see Table 3), the highest-ranked simulations consistently featured the Antalya niche theme, indicating that this specialised research domain is relatively isolated from the journal's broader thematic structure. The strongest simulated keyword linkages connected Antalya to travel motivation, customer satisfaction, performance, smart destinations, destination image, and tourism marketing. These findings suggest that future studies integrating destination-specific contexts with broader themes in tourism management and consumer behaviour may strengthen thematic integration within the journal's knowledge base.

More broadly, the FRI results indicate that destination image, tourism marketing, performance, customer satisfaction, and travel motivation may serve as important bridging concepts that connect

otherwise separate research areas. These concepts may therefore represent particularly promising avenues for future research and publication in the journal. Collectively, the findings demonstrate that the FRI framework moves beyond the descriptive identification of themes to identify specific concept linkages that may strengthen thematic cohesion and integration within a research domain. In doing so, the framework provides a systematic, evidence-based approach to identifying potential future research directions within a specific journal or, more broadly, across a research domain.

4.5. Determine Relevant FRI Outcomes Based on Research Priorities

At the final stage, the highest-ranked intra- and inter-cluster FRI outcomes were interpreted in relation to ET's existing knowledge structure and renewed editorial scope. Their relevance was considered in terms of their potential to consolidate established themes, connect niche or weakly integrated domains, and support theoretically meaningful directions for pathmaking tourism scholarship. This interpretive step informed the discussion developed in Section 5 and the future research directions presented in Section 6, particularly in relation to responsible destination transformation, knowledge and capabilities, innovation and technology, anticipatory governance, ethics, sustainability and methodological advancement. The simulated linkages were therefore treated as structured opportunities for

scholarly development rather than as predictions or automatically determined research priorities.

Table 2. Top 15 Simulated Intra-cluster linkages

Simulation type	CI_1	CI_2	CI_1_label	CI_2_label	Keyword 1	Keyword_2	Delta betweenness centrality	Delta entropy	FRI_score	Keyword 1 freq	Keyword 2 freq	Rank
Intra-cluster	5	5	Sustainable development	Sustainable development	Destination image	Tourism marketing	0.02	1.39	704.43	3	2	1
Intra-cluster	3	3	Sustainable tourism	Sustainable tourism	Case study	Performance	0.00	1.39	695.55	2	2	2
Intra-cluster	3	3	Sustainable tourism	Sustainable tourism	Performance	Residents' attitude	0.02	1.10	557.23	2	2	3
Intra-cluster	4	4	Sustainability	Sustainability	Smart destination	Tourism sector	0.02	1.10	557.10	2	2	4
Intra-cluster	1	1	Tourism	Tourism	Travel motivation	Wine tourism	0.01	1.10	555.35	2	2	5
Intra-cluster	2	2	Satisfaction	Satisfaction	Customer satisfaction	Extremadura	0.01	1.10	554.59	2	2	6
Intra-cluster	3	3	Sustainable tourism	Sustainable tourism	Case study	Residents' attitude	0.01	1.10	553.74	2	2	7
Intra-cluster	2	2	Satisfaction	Satisfaction	Customer satisfaction	Destination branding	0.01	1.10	553.41	2	2	8
Intra-cluster	3	3	Sustainable tourism	Sustainable tourism	Case study	Governance	0.01	1.10	553.14	2	2	9
Intra-cluster	4	4	Sustainability	Sustainability	Croatia	Smart destination	0.01	1.10	553.00	2	2	10
Intra-cluster	1	1	Tourism	Tourism	Hotel industry	Travel motivation	0.00	1.10	550.87	3	2	11
Intra-cluster	4	4	Sustainability	Sustainability	Culture	Smart destination	0.03	0.98	503.59	2	2	12
Intra-cluster	5	5	Sustainable development	Sustainable development	Astrotourism	Destination image	0.02	0.98	502.68	2	3	13
Intra-cluster	4	4	Sustainability	Sustainability	Smart destination	Strategy	0.02	0.98	501.26	2	3	14
Intra-cluster	3	3	Sustainable tourism	Sustainable tourism	Cultural heritage	Performance	0.02	0.98	501.01	3	2	15

Table 3. Top 15 Simulated Inter-cluster linkages

Simulation type	CI_1	CI_2	CI_1_label	CI_2_label	Keyword_1	Keyword_2	Delta betweenness centrality	Delta entropy	FRI_score	Keyword 1 freq	Keyword 2 freq	Rank
Inter-cluster	1	9	Tourism	Antalya	Travel motivation	Antalya	0.09	1.39	737.38	2	2	1
Inter-cluster	1	9	Tourism	Antalya	Travel motivation	Perceived risk	0.09	1.39	737.38	2	2	2
Inter-cluster	2	9	Satisfaction	Antalya	Customer satisfaction	Antalya	0.09	1.39	737.38	2	2	3
Inter-cluster	2	9	Satisfaction	Antalya	Customer satisfaction	Perceived risk	0.09	1.39	737.38	2	2	4
Inter-cluster	3	9	Sustainable tourism	Antalya	Case study	Antalya	0.09	1.39	737.38	2	2	5
Inter-cluster	3	9	Sustainable tourism	Antalya	Case study	Perceived risk	0.09	1.39	737.38	2	2	6
Inter-cluster	3	9	Sustainable tourism	Antalya	Performance	Antalya	0.09	1.39	737.38	2	2	7
Inter-cluster	3	9	Sustainable tourism	Antalya	Performance	Perceived risk	0.09	1.39	737.38	2	2	8
Inter-cluster	4	9	Sustainability	Antalya	Smart destination	Antalya	0.09	1.39	737.38	2	2	9
Inter-cluster	4	9	Sustainability	Antalya	Smart destination	Perceived risk	0.09	1.39	737.38	2	2	10
Inter-cluster	5	9	Sustainable development	Antalya	Destination image	Antalya	0.09	1.39	737.38	3	2	11
Inter-cluster	5	9	Sustainable development	Antalya	Destination image	Perceived risk	0.09	1.39	737.38	3	2	12
Inter-cluster	5	9	Sustainable development	Antalya	Tourism marketing	Antalya	0.09	1.39	737.38	2	2	13
Inter-cluster	5	9	Sustainable development	Antalya	Tourism marketing	Perceived risk	0.09	1.39	737.38	2	2	14
Inter-cluster	1	5	Tourism	Sustainable development	Travel motivation	Destination image	0.03	1.39	708.80	2	3	15

5. Discussion: Reading ET's knowledge structure as a pathmaking agenda

5.1. ET as a knowledge architecture

The results show that ET has developed a diversified knowledge structure rather than a single narrow thematic identity. Tourism, satisfaction, sustainable tourism and sustainability appear as basic themes: they are connected to the wider corpus and have helped hold the journal's conceptual network together. Yet their position as basic rather than motor themes also indicates that centrality alone is not enough. A theme may be important without yet being sufficiently consolidated, theoretically sharpened or internally cohesive.

This finding has a clear scholarly implication. The future of ET cannot be built by accumulating more papers under broad labels such as tourism, satisfaction or sustainability. These themes remain important, but they must be reworked through stronger theoretical lenses, clearer constructs, more robust methods and more explicit explanations of how they shape tourism development pathways. In the next phase of ET, familiar topics will need unfamiliar contributions. A manuscript on sustainability, satisfaction, destination image or tourism behaviour will not be strengthened by topical relevance alone. It will need to show what it explains that previous studies did not explain, what it measures more convincingly, what it theorises more carefully, or what it allows scholars and practitioners to see differently.

5.2. From empirical locality to transferable explanation

The niche position of hotels, India and Antalya should not be interpreted as a weakness. Niche themes can provide empirical depth, contextual sensitivity and sectoral specificity. The issue is not whether a study is local, national or international in its empirical design. The issue is whether it produces knowledge that travels. A single destination, hotel, region or community can offer an internationally relevant contribution when it reveals mechanisms, tensions or choices that help scholars understand comparable problems elsewhere. ET should therefore welcome situated research that transforms context into insight, not context into description.

5.3. Sustainability and crisis as unfinished integration projects

The position of sustainable development and COVID-19 in the emerging or declining quadrant should not be read as evidence of marginality. It suggests that these themes have entered ET's knowledge structure but have not yet become sufficiently integrated with the journal's broader conceptual network. This is particularly important for the journal's renewed scope. Sustainable development needs to be connected more explicitly with destination governance, community well-being, business responsibility, climate adaptation, performance measurement and SDG-oriented transformation. Crisis research, similarly, should move beyond event-specific response and examine how tourism systems learn, remember, adapt and reorganise under conditions of disruption (Ritchie & Jiang, 2019; Sigala, 2020; Gössling et al., 2021).

The value of crisis research lies not only in documenting the effects of disruption, but in explaining how disruption changes what tourism actors know, what they consider legitimate and what futures become possible. Crises should not be treated only as interruptions to tourism development. They should also be studied as moments that reveal the strength, fragility and ethical foundations of tourism pathways (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

5.4. FRI linkages as structured opportunities

The FRI simulations identify absent or under-developed keyword relationships that could strengthen ET's conceptual network. These linkages are not predictions of what the field will study. They are structured opportunities: concept pairings that can help scholars formulate sharper research questions, build theoretical bridges and design studies with stronger integrative potential.

The top intra-cluster linkages point toward thematic consolidation. Destination image and tourism marketing can be connected to responsible branding, digital influence, place-based value creation, overtourism and community legitimacy; case study and performance can support more rigorous evaluation of sustainable tourism interventions; performance and residents' attitudes can connect competitiveness with social licence, well-being and governance; and smart destination linkages with tourism sector, strategy and culture can shift digital tourism research from technological adoption to strategic and ethical transformation. Taken together, these linkages illustrate how greater internal conceptual integration may strengthen existing thematic domains. The rapid development of AI and GenAI also broadens the research agenda surrounding emerging technologies in tourism. Beyond examining technological applications and performance, future studies should increasingly address their ethical, epistemic, and governance implications through context-sensitive and discipline-specific approaches (Santos et al., 2026). The top inter-cluster linkages point toward thematic integration. Antalya and perceived risk, while representing a place-specific niche, become more powerful when connected to travel motivation, customer satisfaction, performance, destination image, tourism marketing and smart destinations. More broadly, these results suggest that future ET manuscripts should build bridges across domains rather than remain confined to isolated constructs, contexts or literatures. The journal's future contribution will therefore depend not only on the topics it publishes, but also on the quality of the connections it enables among concepts, methods, contexts and responsibilities.

6. Future research directions for pathmaking tourism scholarship

6.1. Responsible destination pathmaking and institutional transformation

Future research on destinations should move beyond evaluating whether destinations are sustainable, competitive or attractive. It should examine how destinations become capable of changing their development pathways. This requires attention to institutional arrangements, governance capacities, stakeholder conflicts, community legitimacy, climate adaptation, overtourism, investment choices and the distribution of value. From a pathmaking perspective, the central question is not only what kind of destination exists today, but how destinations acquire the capacity to imagine, negotiate and govern more responsible futures.

6.2. Knowledge management, intellectual capital and dynamic capabilities in tourism ecosystems

The renewed scope of ET opens substantial space for knowledge management and intellectual capital research. In tourism ecosystems, knowledge is rarely held by a single actor; it is distributed across firms, public institutions, communities, platforms, workers, visitors and intermediaries. Tourism organisations, destination management organisations, networks and communities need to be studied as knowledge systems that create, share, absorb, protect and reconfigure knowledge. Future

studies can examine human, relational, structural and digital capital; organisational learning; absorptive capacity; knowledge transfer; and dynamic capabilities in tourism ecosystems (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Grant, 1996; Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007). Tourism pathways change when knowledge is not only possessed, but mobilised. Future ET research should also consider the pathmaking role of tourism work: talent attraction, decent work, skills, employer branding and human capital shape whether destinations and hospitality ecosystems can actually deliver responsible transformation (Lo et al., 2025).

6.3. Innovation, open innovation and strategic value (co) creation

Innovation should be studied not as a generic promise of improvement, but as a distributed and governed process through which tourism actors create, negotiate and capture value. Future studies may examine service innovation, business model innovation, open innovation, entrepreneurial ecosystems and value co-creation in tourism and hospitality (Chesbrough, 2003; Hall & Williams, 2008; Hjalager, 2010). The most valuable contributions will be those that explain how innovation changes relationships among firms, destinations, communities and visitors, and how such changes can support long-term viability, inclusion and responsibility.

6.4. Emerging technologies, artificial intelligence and smart destination governance

The presence of smart destination, ICT, information technologies and innovation in ET's corpus provides a foundation for a more ambitious research stream on technology-enabled tourism (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015; Gretzel et al., 2015). Recent scholarship on smart hospitality frames technology not as a set of isolated tools, but as an infrastructure for agile business ecosystems in networked destinations. Future research should therefore move beyond adoption and acceptance models alone. Artificial intelligence, metaverse technologies, data infrastructures, digital twins, platforms, robotics and algorithmic decision-making reshape how tourism actors access information, co-create value, learn, allocate resources and govern responsibility (Buhalis et al., 2023; Aldawsari et al., 2025; Buhalis, 2025). For ET, technology becomes a pathmaking issue when it changes the conditions under which tourism futures are imagined, selected, experienced and managed.

6.5. Tourism futures, forecasting, foresight and anticipatory governance

Tourism futures research should not be limited to forecasting demand. It should examine how destinations, firms and institutions anticipate uncertainty, prepare for alternative futures and make strategic choices before pressures become irreversible (Vecchiato, 2012; Yeoman, 2012). Forecasting, foresight, scenario planning, predictive analytics, real-time data and anticipatory governance can help tourism scholarship move from reactive explanation to responsible preparation. Forecasting becomes pathmaking when it not only anticipates what may happen, but also informs choices about which futures should be encouraged, avoided or transformed.

6.6. Ethics, business ethics and responsible value (co)creation

Future tourism research should place ethics and business ethics at the centre of value (co)creation. Responsible marketing, platform fairness, privacy and data ethics, labour dignity, inclusion, gender equality, accessibility, community rights, environmental justice and the ethical governance of AI-enabled tourism systems should be treated as core research problems rather than peripheral implications. ET's pathmaking orientation requires that competitiveness, innovation and growth be assessed together with responsibility, including ethical factors in decision-making (Casali & Perano, 2021; Craft & Shannon, 2025).

6.7. Branding, satisfaction, behaviour and market transformation

The FRI results highlight destination image, tourism marketing, customer satisfaction, travel motivation and perceived risk as bridging concepts. Future research should use these concepts to move consumer behaviour studies beyond segmentation and intention models alone. Branding, satisfaction and motivation matter when they help explain how markets are formed, how destination meanings circulate, how trust is built or lost, how digital influence shapes travel choices and how visitor behaviour affects communities, sustainability and destination transformation. In this perspective, consumer behaviour research becomes pathmaking when it explains not only why tourists choose, but how those choices reshape destinations, markets and responsible tourism pathways.

6.8. Sustainable, regenerative and SDG-oriented performance

The strategic diagram places sustainability-related themes at the centre of ET's accumulated knowledge structure, but the future challenge is to strengthen their internal theoretical and measurement coherence. Future work should examine how sustainable, regenerative and SDG-oriented tourism performance is defined, measured, governed and contested across destinations, firms and communities. Regenerative tourism should be treated not simply as a stronger version of sustainability, but as a shift from reducing harm to creating net-positive outcomes for places, communities and socio-ecological systems (Inversini & Buhalis, 2025). Studies can address SDG contributions, circularity, climate adaptation, social licence, resident well-being, ecosystem regeneration and evidence-based policy evaluation.

6.9. Methodological advancement in tourism business research

A quality-oriented editorial trajectory requires stronger methods. ET should attract methodological contributions and empirically rigorous designs, including longitudinal studies, comparative research, mixed methods, causal inference, experiments, configurational methods, bibliometric and science-mapping studies, qualitative comparative analysis, network analysis, machine learning and transparent open-science practices. Methodological sophistication should never become ornament. It should make the research question more answerable, the evidence more credible and the contribution more difficult to ignore.

7. Editorial implications for authors and future submissions

The renewed aim of ET should be read as both an invitation and a standard. The journal welcomes research in tourism, hospitality and tourism business studies, but topical fit alone will not be

sufficient. Authors should make clear what problem their manuscript addresses, why that problem matters to an international scholarly conversation and how the study contributes to pathmaking tourism scholarship. Strong submissions will begin with a consequential research problem rather than with a destination, sector, method or variable. They will show how tourism can help scholars understand broader questions of knowledge, innovation, technology, governance, ethics, sustainability, competitiveness and responsible transformation.

First, this problem-oriented approach does not reduce the value of context-specific studies. Destinations, firms, communities and tourism settings remain essential sources of insight when they illuminate broader theoretical, methodological, empirical, policy or practice-oriented questions. In this renewed phase, ET particularly welcomes research that uses tourism to better understand how knowledge, innovation, technology, governance, ethics and sustainability interact in shaping responsible tourism pathways.

Second, methodological credibility will be central to editorial evaluation. Quantitative and qualitative studies should clearly describe their research design and process. Quantitative studies should also report measurement quality, model assumptions, effect interpretation and robustness checks where relevant. Qualitative studies should make sampling, coding, triangulation, reflexivity and evidence-to-claim logic visible. Conceptual papers should offer argumentative rigour and theoretical novelty. Review papers should be systematic, reproducible and agenda-generating.

Third, international relevance should be demonstrated, not assumed. International relevance does not require multi-country data. A single-country or local case can be internationally relevant when it explains a phenomenon of broader significance, advances theory, develops method, enables comparison or produces evidence that can inform responsible practice elsewhere. At the same time, ET encourages submissions developed through international co-authorships, comparative perspectives and research collaborations that bring together different academic traditions, institutional contexts and territorial viewpoints. Such collaborations can strengthen the interpretive depth, theoretical reach and international visibility of tourism research, particularly when they help authors move beyond context-specific description towards contributions that speak to wider scholarly conversations.

Fourth, implications should be proportionate to evidence. Theoretical, practical, managerial, policy and community implications should follow from the findings rather than repeat generic recommendations. In its renewed phase, ET encourages authors to make the policy relevance of their research more explicit when the evidence allows it. This means clarifying how findings may inform public decision-making, destination governance, tourism planning, sustainability strategies, community well-being, crisis preparedness, digital regulation or responsible innovation. Policy implications should not be written as broad statements of desirability. They should identify the actors concerned, the decisions at stake, the conditions under which the findings may apply and the limits of the evidence provided. ET will give priority to manuscripts that connect scholarly contribution with responsible practice and public value, without reducing research to consultancy advice or unsupported policy prescription.

Fifth, future submissions should engage the journal's core domains: tourism futures, strategic management, knowledge management, intellectual capital, emerging technologies, forecasting, innovation, open innovation, ethics, business ethics, sustainability and responsible destination transformation. The

strongest manuscripts will not merely mention these domains; they will show how these domains interact in the making of responsible tourism pathways.

8. Conclusion

The analyses reported in this article show that ET has accumulated a broad and diverse knowledge base around tourism, satisfaction, sustainable tourism, sustainability, destination competitiveness, hospitality, technology, cultural tourism and service quality. They also show that the journal's future development depends on the capacity to connect these themes more strongly, theoretically and methodologically. The strategic diagram and FRI simulations indicate that concepts such as destination image, tourism marketing, performance, residents' attitudes, smart destinations, customer satisfaction, perceived risk and travel motivation can serve as bridges for future research. These bridges matter because the next stage of ET should not be defined by thematic expansion alone, but by conceptual integration and scholarly contribution.

The pathmaking turn is therefore both an intellectual proposition and an editorial commitment. ET will continue to be open access, but openness must be accompanied by contribution. It will continue to welcome diverse tourism research, but diversity must be accompanied by rigour. It will continue to value practice, but practice must be supported by evidence. This is the direction through which ET can move from publishing tourism research to shaping pathmaking tourism scholarship.

9. Limitations

This paper is limited to the corpus of a single journal (ET) and, despite the statistical analysis performed on the available data, it may not be representative of the broader tourism research literature. In particular, some of the smaller clusters are based on specific locations and may therefore appear limited to particular geographical areas. Nevertheless, these clusters may also provide useful insights for comparable locations around the world that share similar socio-economic and political contexts.

The FRI findings should be considered within the scope of this initial application. In addition, FRI provides computational foresight rather than deterministic prediction: it identifies plausible strategic network connections with the potential to produce comparatively substantial changes in the observed knowledge structure but does not predict whether those connections will subsequently be pursued. Nor should structural potential be equated automatically with theoretical or practical importance, which requires subsequent scholarly evaluation. These limitations notwithstanding, FRI provides a systematic means of moving beyond retrospective bibliometric description by identifying and prioritising plausible future research opportunities.

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Funding:

This research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.