

# Tourism-Led Inclusive Growth in Emerging and Developing Economies: A Systematic Literature Review

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## Abstract

The focus of governments around the globe to accelerate economic growth through market-driven policies has resulted merely in increasing GDP while deterring certain groups from becoming a part of their development agenda. This turned the focus of leading international developmental communities toward the concept of inclusive growth that strives to reduce poverty and inequality by creating equitable and productive opportunities for all sections of society, including the often-excluded ones. Considering its profound and wide-ranging impacts on the destination's economy, the tourism industry has been identified as a harbinger of inclusive growth. The conception of tourism-led inclusive growth remains contended in the academic literature. Therefore, as an attempt to contribute to the existing debate, the present study has been undertaken to explore the rapport between tourism and inclusive growth by systematically reviewing the scientific literature and the evolutionary nuances of this research field. The literature for this purpose was derived from the two most renowned databases viz. Scopus and Web of Science. The content analysis of 27 systematically selected articles performed in the present study highlighted a set of seven noteworthy research areas/themes and a variety of topics under each theme that shape the knowledge structure of the underlying research field. The overall analysis calls for further investigations in the tourism sectors of low-income nations to find significant empirical evidence that may validate the hypothesis of tourism-led inclusive growth and signals a need for evidence-based frameworks to harness inclusive growth through tourism development.

## Plain Language Summary

Considering its profound and wide-ranging impacts on the destination's economy, the tourism industry has been identified as a harbinger of inclusive growth. Whilst, the conception of tourism-led inclusive growth remains contended in the academic literature. Therefore, as an attempt to contribute to the existing debate, the present study has been undertaken to explore the rapport between tourism and inclusive growth by systematically reviewing the scientific literature and the evolutionary nuances of this research field. As a method of research, researchers conducted the content analysis of 27

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Data Availability Statement included at the end of the article



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systematically selected articles from two most renowned databases viz. Scopus and Web of Science. Content analysis revealed a set of seven noteworthy research areas/themes and a variety of topics under each theme that shape the knowledge structure of the underlying research field. Overall, the present study revealed that inclusive growth is a promising idea to interrogate for the tourist sector of developing countries, given tourism's significant contribution to national GDP, strong supply chain linkages, and potential to create productive employment opportunities for the cross-sections of society. The overall analysis calls for further investigations in the tourism sectors of low-income nations to find significant empirical evidence that may validate the hypothesis of tourism-led inclusive growth. Moreover, this research signals a need for evidence-based frameworks to harness inclusive growth through tourism development. This piece of research is the earliest attempt to systematically review the extant literature in the area of tourism-led inclusive growth.

### Keywords

economic growth, inclusive growth, poverty, tourism, systematic review

### Introduction

Although economic growth has enabled many people to escape poverty at the global level, in many nations, growth has left certain groups behind and contributed to widening inequality (World Bank Group, 2018). It indicates a need for a development approach that promotes inclusiveness by fostering the participation of disadvantaged groups in the growth process. According to Swaroop (2017), growth becomes inclusive when the poor and vulnerable groups of society do at least as well as the overall population. This means concentrating on fostering the income growth of the bottom 40% and incorporating the objective to stimulate shared prosperity in each nation. As such, inclusive growth focuses on sharing the benefits of growth with unprivileged groups of society and enabling them to achieve at least the nation's average standard of living. Inclusive growth, in the view of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), refers to economic growth that is equitably distributed across society and creates opportunities for everyone (OECD, n.d.).

Moreover, the conception of inclusive growth is well pronounced in the Sustainable Development Goal number 8 (SDG-8) of the United Nations. Tourism is also mentioned in SDG-8 because of its wide-ranging and profound impact on the destination's economy and is adopted by the UNWTO in its 2030 sustainable tourism agenda (Bianchi & Man, 2021). As mentioned in the Global Economic Impacts & trends report of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the tourism sector alone contributes to 10.4% of global GDP, 10.6% of world employment, and 6.8% of the planet's exports (WTTC, 2021). Such remarkable statistics insinuate policymakers and researchers to ponder on the capability of the tourism industry to become a harbinger of inclusive growth and economic prosperity at the global level.

Nevertheless, despite its potential to provide income and employment opportunities to millions of people at the

global level (Seabra & Bhatt, 2022), the hypothesis of tourism-led inclusive growth remains contested in the extant literature (e.g., Bakker & Messerli, 2017; Hampton et al., 2018; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020). To contribute to the existing debate on tourism-driven inclusive growth, the present study has been undertaken to explore the rapport between tourism and inclusive growth by systematically reviewing the scientific literature and the evolutionary nuances of this research field. The literature for this purpose was derived from the two most renowned databases viz. Scopus and Web of Science. The content analysis of 27 systematically selected articles performed in the present study highlighted seven noteworthy research areas/themes and various topics that shape the knowledge structure of the underlying research field. The rationale for choosing this research can be explained through the growing significance of tourism for the destination's economy and the ongoing debate on tourism's potential to reduce poverty and inequality. Therefore, to some extent, the present study can contribute to enhancing the understanding of whether and how the tourism sector can catalyze inclusive growth for vulnerable and poor people in developing nations.

### Literature Review

#### *Tourism-Inclusive Growth Nexus*

A significant portion of available literature on tourism-led inclusive growth was found to discuss the nexus between tourism and inclusive growth (Adeniyi et al., 2021; Bakker, 2019; Bakker & Messerli, 2017; Hampton et al., 2018; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020; Osinubi et al., 2021; Rout et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2022). Considering its growing significance in terms of generating productive employment and GDP contribution, the tourism sector is cogitated as a harbinger of inclusive growth (Adeniyi et al., 2021; Hampton et al., 2018; Prasad & Kulshrestha, 2015; Rout et al., 2018), subjected that development policies succeed in creating equal business opportunities,

strong supply chains, and significant jobs for each section of host community (Hampton et al., 2018). The expenditure incurred by foreign tourists positively impacts the local economy by generating several direct and indirect employment opportunities (Prasad & Kulshrestha, 2015). Thus, if appropriately managed, tourism supply chains can foster inclusive growth by creating suitable job opportunities for economically weaker sections of society. While examining the link between foreign direct investment (FDI) and inclusive growth of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Wang et al., (2022) noted that tourism development has a threshold effect in the route of FDI promoting SIDS' inclusive growth. Their research implied that specific tourism development initiatives should be put into place to leverage SIDS' inclusive growth based on various threshold impact levels. In contrast, Jeyacheya and Hampton (2020) found FDI to drive exclusive growth in Southeast Asia.

Though it is clear that tourism as a labor-intensive industry has enough potential to create productive employment for youth, women, rural residents, and the previously excluded ones, there is still a need to determine how tourism can promote inclusive growth (Bakker & Messerli, 2017). While studying the association between tourism and inclusive growth in Turkey and Nigeria, Osinubi et al. (2021) found that tourism stimulates inclusive growth in Turkey. In contrast, there was no evidence to relate tourism and inclusive growth in the case of Nigeria. Nevertheless, they argued that the tourism industry in both nations has the remarkable potential to become an effective engine of inclusive economic growth, subject that the sector is repositioned for improved performance by implementing policies focusing on a significantly more significant contribution of tourism to the real GDP. Another study in the context of India by Rout et al. (2018) and Rout et al. (2016) revealed the validity of the tourism-led growth hypothesis, but only in the long run. The policy implication stemming from their study advised mobilizing tourism as a critical economic sector through promotional strategies to secure sustainable and inclusive growth in the long run (Rout et al., 2018). Government policies should focus on expanding tourism infrastructure and attracting more domestic and international tourists to position tourism as a driver of long-run growth (Rout et al., 2016). The investigation of 45 African countries by Adeniyi et al. (2021) and Southeast Asia by Jeyacheya and Hampton (2020) identified only a marginally positive impact of tourism development on inclusive growth. In fact, sectors' receipts and expenditures were observed to aggravate inclusive growth. Thus, to steer toward tourism-driven inclusive growth, policymakers need to attend to ownership patterns and destination governance (Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020)

along with developing novel tourist areas and activities to draw more tourists, which would increase the sector's contribution to the economic prosperity of local community (Adeniyi et al., 2021).

### *Inclusive Growth and Poverty Alleviation*

The tourism industry has been applauded for its potential to leverage inclusive growth by uplifting the unprivileged sections of society and reducing inequality (Akarsu, 2022; Bakker, 2019; Bakker et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2012; Musavengane et al., 2019; Rout et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2022; Zhang & Zhang, 2022). Inclusive growth emphasizes the nexus between economic growth, inequality, and poverty alleviation (Bakker, 2019). Due to its enormous potential to absorb an unskilled workforce, tourism can be identified as a pro-poor development approach (Njoya & Nikitas, 2020). Therefore, inclusive growth seems worthwhile for developing nations to address the critical issues of poverty and inequality (Adeniyi et al., 2021; Hampton et al., 2018). However, the positive trends noticed in rising visitor numbers clubbed with market-led government policies at several destinations restrict benefits to disadvantaged sections of society (e.g., Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2021; Hampton et al., 2018). An interrogation of China's transport infrastructure and income disparity by Zhang and Zhang (2022) observed tourism to significantly impacts inequality. However, the effect is minimal, calling for necessary government interventions to stimulate tourism-led inclusive growth. To have a favorable impact of tourism development on inclusive growth, policymakers must strive for economic growth that ensures equitable income distribution (Akarsu, 2022). It implies that governments need to develop the tourism industry to offer significant and equal economic gains to the community members (Adeniyi et al., 2021; Akarsu, 2022).

In contrast to pro-poor tourism, which is a short to medium-term project-level approach, tourism-driven inclusive growth is a macro-level and long-term growth approach (Bakker & Messerli, 2017). According to Bakker (2019), providing inclusive employment opportunities and confirming that each section of society has equal availability of such opportunities are crucial elements for the tourism industry to become a catalyst for inclusive growth. Significant constraints to these elements include education quality & access, road infrastructure quality, political instability & safety, tourism prioritization, and degree of entrepreneurship & market responsiveness (Bakker et al., 2020). Proper identification and treatment of these constraints would prove influential in extending the tourism sector's contribution to mere economic growth toward inclusive growth (Bakker, 2019; Bakker et al., 2020). Apart from their participation in the labor force, positioning people with low incomes as

entrepreneurs through policies fostering local innovation can stimulate social inclusiveness and productive outcome (Hall et al., 2012). It helps to recognize the integral role of employment and entrepreneurship for the tourism industry to become an effective engine of economic growth and social prosperity.

While interrogating the pro-poor nature of the tourism industry in India, Sharma et al. (2022) noted a positive impact of tourism development on alleviating poverty in the long term, whereas rising inflation worsened poverty in the short term. Therefore, they suggested for a rapidly-growing economy like India, stabilize prices, improve tourism efficiency, and develop the sector to achieve inclusive growth in the country. Moreover, the participation of unprivileged communities in the tourism system and their inclusion in decision-making is pivotal for the states to reconfigure their power relations and thereby strive for effective pro-poor development (Musavengane et al., 2019).

### *Inclusive Growth and Community Participation*

The above discussion reveals the prominence of local community participation for development to be inclusive and efficient in poverty alleviation. However, capacity building via community-based tourism initiatives is paramount for the communities to ensure their participation, organize themselves, and make effective decisions (Imbaya et al., 2019). Capacity development initiatives focusing on local innovation instead of internationalization would provide opportunities and valuable knowledge sources to otherwise excluded communities (Hall et al., 2012). This would even result in reducing leakage from the local economy. According to Jeyacheya and Hampton (2020), a gradual shift of employment and ownership patterns away from the local community and associated economic leakages can exacerbate local poverty, a core aspect of inclusive growth.

Community-based tourism can be adopted to develop prospects of employment and ownership for the disadvantaged sections of the local community, who often remain excluded from the development benefits (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2021). To reap the eloquent outcome from the community participation initiative for inclusive growth, the challenges in power relations, finance, and cultural precepts shall be prioritized during planning and execution (Imbaya et al., 2019). A very unique study on integrating pastoralists (herding community) of Mongolia in tourism products by Shircliff (2020) reported that although tourism uses nomadism as a significant resource and has the potential to stipulate benefits and inclusive growth, the existing policies reflect precarious nature toward pastoralists. The study recommended

greater cooperation of tourism businesses with pastoralists to foster sustainability and fairer inclusion.

### *Inclusive Growth and Social Sustainability*

Sustainability of pro-poor development will remain a challenge, except if the essential human needs are satisfied and tourism principles and procedures are well-defined to sustain the multiple stakeholders, including unprivileged ones (Musavengane et al., 2019). Tourism development fueled by adequate investment and equal distribution of cost/benefits among different socioeconomic groups would prove effective in attaining sustainability (Akarsu, 2022). To achieve equitable and sustainable growth, the tourism industry needs to foster inclusive growth by tackling the issue of social injustice (Cahyadi et al., 2018). Promoting social justice, equity, and sustainability is a must to ensure a more just and responsible future for everyone concerned (Shircliff, 2020). Being efficiently managed and regulated by inclusive policies, tourism can promote social justice, reduce poverty, and strive for sustainable development (Bakker et al., 2020). A political economy critique by Bianchi and Man (2021) claimed that the World Tourism Organization's sustainable tourism agenda, modified, sustained, inclusive, and decent terms, is still blind to the exploitative market capitalism that fuels and maintains indecent work in tourism. They argued that the agenda is erroneous and precarious as it ignores the crucial issues of environmental and social justice, which are paramount to steering an effective dialogue on sustainability. Therefore, it is imperative to consider the social dimension of development alongside the economic dimensions to ensure inclusive and justified benefits to disadvantaged communities (Wang et al., 2022).

To strive for sustainable and inclusive growth in low-income economies, it is pivotal to ensure social inclusion and empowerment of excluded groups like women, who seldomly participate in the workforce due to deterring norms and culture of rural areas (Uduji et al., 2021). Equitable participation of disempowered groups through a cooperative and democratic institutional framework would not only promote dialogue but also provide these groups with the ability to impact the institution's policies and strategic intent (Bianchi & Man, 2021).

### *Agriculture-Tourism Linkages*

The linkage between tourism and agriculture is a way through which economics can combat rural inequality and poverty by reducing leakages and ensuring benefits for the local community (Njoya & Nikitas, 2020). The discussions on agritourism depict its efficiency in decreasing food imports, improving farm profitability, creating

alternative livelihood, and stimulating inclusive growth for smallholders (Shah et al., 2022). Additionally, agrotourism can help rural agricultural communities, including stallholders, boost their export potential and reap greater benefits from the development process. The development of the tourism sector can be instrumental in fostering inclusive growth in the agriculture sector, which will have a broader opportunity in terms of increased supply of products to the tourism and allied sectors (Cahyadi et al., 2018). This leads to an understanding that the supply chain linkages between tourism and agriculture are imperative in securing inclusive growth. Research on linkages between agriculture and tourism in Lushoto, Tanzania by Anderson (2018) found the prevalence of qualitative and quantitative mismatch between local agricultural supply and the tourism sector's demand deterring the optimal linkages and opportunities for the farmers from participating in tourism. In the view of Anderson, tourism is more purposeful if it positively influences the life of the local poor, and in the rural areas where the population is mostly engaged in agricultural activities, the prospects of agrotourism and insertion of local people in local value chains are crucial for achieving inclusive growth.

A study on Vietnam by Hampton et al. (2018) also noticed some economic linkages of the tourism industry with the local supply chain, advocating the potential to explore further opportunities for local agriculture. Thus, minimizing leakages and strengthening backward linkages would effectively secure significant development benefits for the local community (Anderson, 2018; Hampton et al., 2018; Njoya & Nikitas, 2020). Another exciting investigation on developing tourism in Nigeria for transformative and inclusive growth by Uduji et al. (2021) reveals the potential of strengthening agro-tourism linkages through corporate social responsibility (CSR) interventions of multinational corporations to fuel economic growth and structural transformation. Though the existing literature demonstrates ample potential to foster inclusive growth through agritourism development, the outcome of such interventions must not displace the crucial role of agriculture in sustaining national food security (Njoya & Nikitas, 2020; Shah et al., 2022).

### ***Role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)***

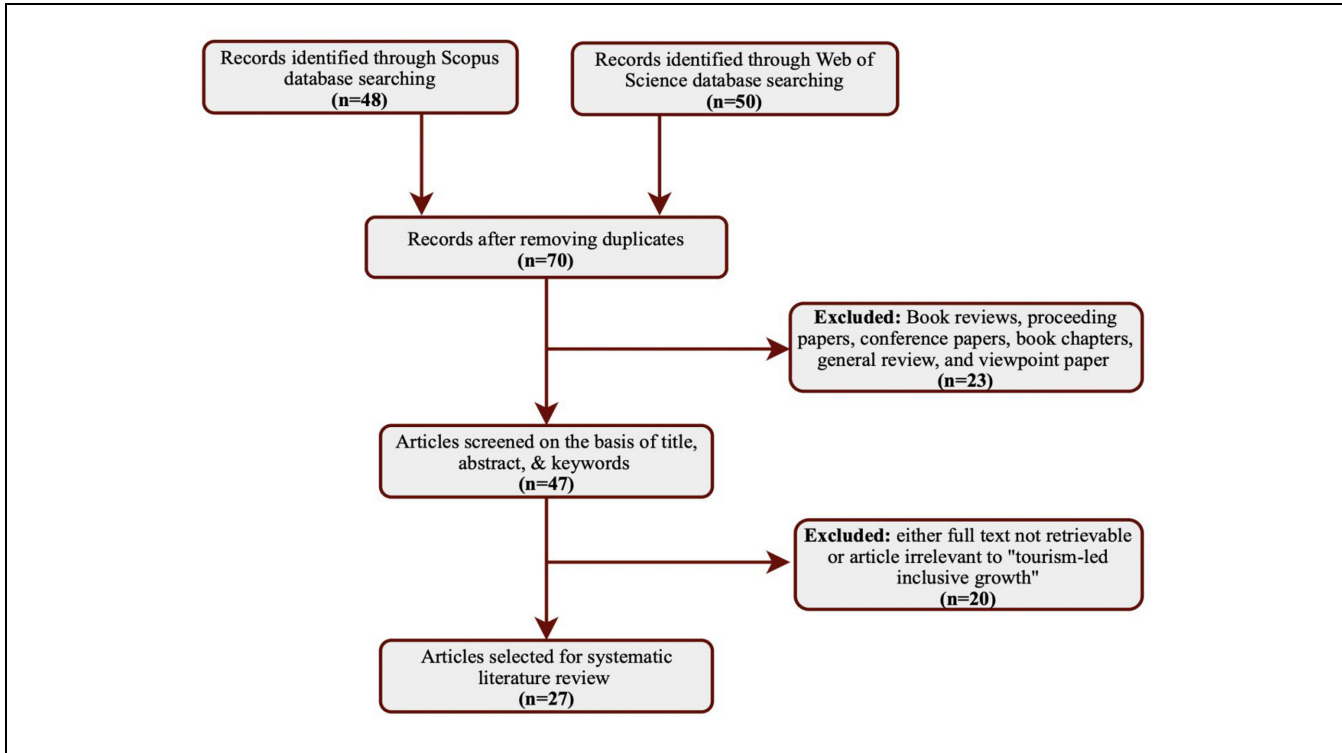
A couple of studies on inclusive growth in tourism were found to discuss the role of digital technology in achieving balanced regional growth. A study on the Puglia region of Italy by Lucia et al. (2021) stressed that enhanced diffusion and adoption of digital technology in the tourism industry could serve as a key factor for low-income regions to secure sustainable and inclusive

growth by creating more effective ways of management and novel forms of businesses like digital start-ups. Regional spotlight research on Apulia in Italy by Vecchio and Passiante (2017) contended that the marketing and management of the region guided by smart specialization will help in providing a more personalized experience to the tourists and ensure broader socioeconomic well-being to the host community, thereby developing a regionally-integrated and knowledge-based industry. They argued that it would play a significant role in achieving the European Union's objective of more inclusive, sustainable, and intelligent growth. Interventions in terms of digital marketing, knowledge transfer, and intelligent improvements in service provision through digitalization and big data can foster the degree of informativeness of the tourism industry and thus target to achieve greater community well-being (Wang et al., 2022).

### **Methodology**

In order to review, synthesize, and decipher the academic literature and the evolutionary nuances in the research field of tourism-led inclusive growth, this research draws from a set of 27 articles systematically selected articles. The articles under review were retrieved from the two most comprehensive and worldwide popular databases viz. Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). The underlying research field, that is, tourism-led inclusive growth, is interdisciplinary, as it comprises two major disciplines: tourism management and economics. Therefore, the Web of Science was selected due to its interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary coverage in all areas of science (Vieira & Gomes, 2009). While, the Scopus database was chosen due to its greater coverage of tourism journals (Wijesinghe et al., 2019). These databases were also selected due to their quality in terms of precision, expertise conducting literature-based studies (Bhatt et al., 2022), and convenience in retrieving bibliometric data (Donthu et al., 2021).

The present research is guided by the PRISMA protocol established by Moher et al. (2009) and recently introduced to tourism and hospitality researchers by Pahlevan Sharif et al. (2019). However, the protocol is adapted to fit the objective of the present study. After defining the keywords for performing a search query in databases, the researchers unanimously developed the study eligibility criteria to systematically retrieve, screen, and select the records for this study. Before entering the search query in databases, researchers performed a quick review of the top 20 articles on inclusive growth in the tourism industry, resulting from a general search in Google Scholar—the largest and most powerful academic search engine for tracing a wide array of scholarly literature (Noruzi,



**Figure 1.** Flow chart of the study selection process.

2005). This initial review helped to differentiate inclusive growth from topics such as pro-poor growth or poverty alleviation. Bakker and Messerli (2017) argued that inclusive growth is a macro-level, long-term approach, different from the short/long-term and project-based concept of pro-poor growth. Therefore, the only keywords, chosen by the researchers for entering the search query in the databases include “Inclusive Growth” AND “Tourism.”

The search in Scopus was performed on January 20, 2023 and in Web of Science on January 25, 2023. While the search terms were entered using the advanced search engine of databases, title-abstract-keywords was selected in the field option to fetch the most relevant documents. As depicted in Figure 1, the search criteria resulted in 48 results in Scopus and 50 records in Web of Science. It was decided not to further refine the results in a database, since the number of documents that resulted was already moderate. There were 28 duplicates within the 98 records as mentioned above, which were immediately eliminated. Of the remaining 70 documents, the researchers decided to retain journal articles for systematic review, because such articles are subject to peer-reviewed, justifying the quality grounds. This led to the elimination of 23 records including book reviews, proceeding papers,

conference papers, book chapters, general reviews and viewpoint papers. Accordingly, the eligibility criteria applied to screen the articles for this systematic review - the English language articles, published in peer-reviewed journals, specific to inclusive growth in the tourism sector, and full-text available. Eventually, applying the said criteria resulted in eliminating 20 ineligible documents, of which 19 were irrelevant to the topic and just 1 article was irretrievable. Hence, a total of 27 articles were finally selected for systematic review. These articles were published between 2012 and 2022.

The review procedure adopted in the present study comprises a thematic content analysis of 27 shortlisted articles. The major themes/research areas identified after the full-text review are depicted in Table 1. These themes have resulted based on title-abstract-keywords screening as well as the full-text review of selected papers. During the review process, researchers focused specifically on the objective, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion section of each paper. The theme-wise synthesized literature is presented in the literature review section of the this paper. The citation analysis represented in the last two columns of Table 2 was conducted to understand the impact of different papers. The citation count for this purpose was adopted from Google Scholar—the largest

**Table 1.** Key Research Areas and Topics Identified.

Key research areas/themes identified	Topics identified under research areas	Studies pertinent to the identified topics	%
Tourism-inclusive growth nexus	The causal relationship, tourism-led growth, supply chains, ownership, employment generation, employment multiplier, host community, tourism receipts & expenditure, the impact of foreign tourist arrivals, emerging/ developing economies, foreign direct investment, threshold effect	Osinubi et al. (2021), Hampton et al. (2018), Rout et al. (2018), Adeniyi et al. (2021), Bakker and Messerli (2017), Rout et al. (2016), Wang et al. (2022), Jeyacheya and Hampton (2020), and Prasad and Kulshrestha (2015),	9/27 = 33.33
Poverty and inequality	Pro-poor tourism, income inequality, power relations, social entrepreneurship, transportation infrastructure	Musavengane et al. (2019), Bakker (2019), Hall et al. (2012), Sharma et al. (2022), Akarsu (2022), Bakker et al. (2020), Zhang and Zhang (2022), and Rout et al. (2016),	8/27 = 29.63
Agriculture-tourism linkages	Backwards and forward linkages, agritourism development, corporate social responsibility, smallholders, value chain analysis, livelihood portfolio	Njoya and Nikitas (2020), Hampton et al. (2018), Uduji et al. (2021), Shah et al. (2022), Cahyadi et al. (2018), and Anderson (2018)	6/27 = 22.22
Community participation	Capacity building, local innovations, local control, disadvantaged community members, community-based tourism, pastoralists, host communities	Imbaya et al. (2019), Hall et al. (2012), Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2021), Shircliff (2020), and Jeyacheya and Hampton (2020)	5/27 = 18.52
Constraints to inclusive-growth	Community challenges, binding constraints, diagnostic framework	Bakker (2019), Imbaya et al. (2019), Bakker and Messerli (2017), and Bakker et al. (2020)	4/27 = 14.81
Social sustainability	Sustainable development Goals (SDGs), resilience, social inclusion, women empowerment, sustainable tourism	Musavengane et al. (2019), Uduji et al. (2021), and Bianchi and Man (2021)	3/27 = 11.11
Role of ICT	Residents' attitudes, digital technology, smart specialization, balanced regional development, big data	Lucia et al. (2021) and Vecchio and Passiante (2017)	2/27 = 7.41

scholarly database covering the widest array of scientific literature (Noruzi, 2005).

## Results

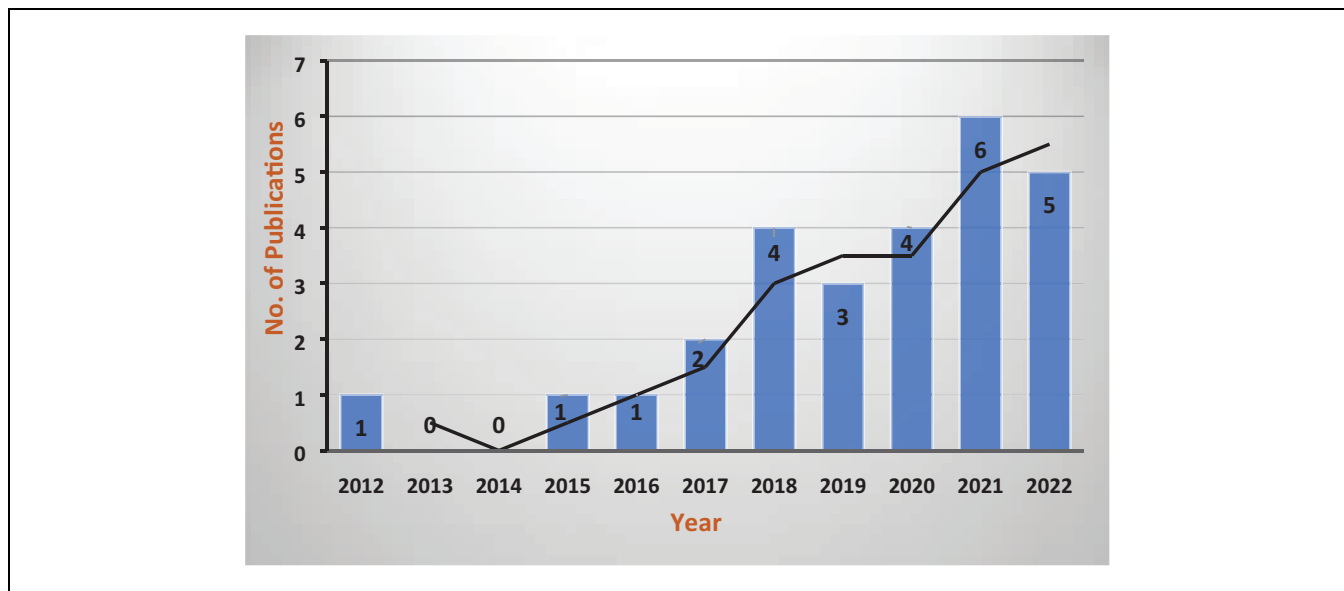
Based on a systematic review of 27 articles, the present study recognizes “tourism-led inclusive growth” as a pivotal area of research, steering mounting interest in the scientific community. Though there are noteworthy studies on particular sector-driven inclusive growth, the literature focused specifically on tourism-led inclusive growth is scanty (Bakker & Messerli, 2017; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020). Figure 2 illustrates the annual scientific production in the tourism-led inclusive growth research field. Based on the underlying study eligibility criteria, the first study specific to inclusive growth in the tourism industry is merely a decade older, drawing evidence from the Brazilian tourism sector. The study was published in 2012 by Hall, Matos, Sheehan, & Silvestre. Following the lag of 2 years, the second article on the topic was published in 2015, after which scientific production became regular and took an upward trend. The Moving average trendline shown in Figure 2 is also reflecting a clear upward trend in the number of publications with a

maximum number of articles contributed in 2021 ( $n = 6$ ) and 2022 ( $n = 5$ ). This helps to decipher tourism-led inclusive growth a novel field of research, gaining popularity among contemporary scholars.

As depicted in Table 1, this research led to the identification of 7 key research areas, namely “Tourism-inclusive growth nexus,” “Poverty and inequality,” “Agriculture-tourism Linkages,” “Community participation,” “Constraints to inclusive-growth,” “Social sustainability,” and “Role of ICT.” Out of 27 articles reviewed, 33.33% were found to discuss the nexus between tourism and inclusive growth. The most prominent topics studied in this research area include the causal relationship between tourism and inclusive growth, the tourism-led growth hypothesis, supply chains, ownership, tourism receipts and expenditure, employment effect, and threshold effect. Unsurprisingly, the discussions were centered around developing nations. Another pertinent area, that is, poverty and inequality were discussed in nearly 29.63% of articles. The major topics covered in this area mainly include pro-poor tourism, income inequality, power relations and social entrepreneurship for inclusive growth. A notable number of studies (about 22.22%) were found to discuss the link between tourism and agriculture,

**Table 2.** Overview of the Systematically Reviewed Articles.

S. no.	Author & year	Methodology	Geographical area	Total citations	Average annual citations
1	Bakker (2019)	Conceptual/theoretical	—	245	61.3
2	Bianchi and Man (2021)	Conceptual/theoretical	—	113	56.5
3	Hall et al. (2012)	Qualitative	Brazil	475	43.2
4	Hampton et al. (2018)	Qualitative	Vietnam	87	17.4
5	Jeyacheya and Hampton (2020)	Qualitative	Southeast Asia	50	16.7
6	Uduji et al. (2021)	Quantitative	Nigeria	33	16.5
7	Zhang and Zhang (2022)	Quantitative	China	15	15
8	Imbaya et al. (2019)	Qualitative	Kenya	50	12.5
9	Vecchio and Passiante (2017)	Research note	Apulia, Italy	69	11.5
10	Bakker and Messerli (2017)	Conceptual/theoretical	—	64	10.7
11	Anderson (2018)	Qualitative	Lushoto, Tanzania	41	8.2
12	Musavengane et al. (2019)	Conceptual/theoretical	Sub-Saharan Africa	31	7.8
13	Sharma et al. (2022)	Quantitative	India	6	6
14	Njoya and Nikitas (2020)	Quantitative	Senegal	17	5.7
15	Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2021)	Conceptual/theoretical	Hanoi, Vietnam	11	5.5
16	Lucia et al. (2021)	Mixed-method	Puglia, Italy	8	4
17	Bakker et al. (2020)	Mixed-method	North Macedonia	10	3.3
18	Rout et al. (2018)	Quantitative	India	12	2.4
19	Cahyadi et al. (2018)	Quantitative	Bali, Indonesia	12	2.4
20	Akarsu (2022)	Quantitative	Balkans and Anatolia, Europe	2	2
21	Prasad and Kulshrestha (2015)	Quantitative	India	10	1.3
22	Rout et al. (2016)	Quantitative	Odisha, India	9	1.3
23	Shah et al. (2022)	Qualitative	Fiji	1	1
24	Shircliff (2020)	Qualitative	Mangolia	3	1
25	Osinubi et al. (2021)	Quantitative	Turkey and Nigeria	1	0.5
26	Wang et al. (2022)	Quantitative	China & Small Island Developing States	—	—
27	Adeniyi et al. (2021)	Quantitative	Africa	—	—

**Figure 2.** Annual scientific production.

addressing critical topics such as backward and forward linkages, agritourism, smallholders, value chain analysis, and livelihood portfolio. Further, 18.52% of articles were

observed to explore the significance of community participation while achieving inclusive growth in the tourism sector. These papers demonstrated the significance of



topics like community-based tourism, capacity building, local innovations, and local control in securing inclusive growth by ensuring the participation of disadvantaged people of the host community in the tourism sector. Other important research areas identified in the present study constitute 14.81% of articles on constraints to inclusive growth, focusing on topics viz. community challenges, binding constraints, diagnostic framework and 11.11% of articles on social sustainability scattered around sustainable development goals, social inclusion, resilience, women empowerment, and sustainable tourism. The last category, the role of ICT in securing inclusive growth was observed in some 7.41% of publications, conferring topics such as Residents' attitudes, digital technology, smart specialization, and big data.

An overview of 27 articles systematically reviewed in the current research is presented in Table 2. Through the analysis of citations, it comes out that the top two publications in terms of average annual citations were contributed by Bakker (2019) and Bianchi and Man (2021). Both articles were conceptual and just 2 to 4 years old. The researchers discovered the need to further conceptualize/theorize the research field of tourism-led inclusive growth. Other impactful publications include the contribution of Hall et al. (2012), Hampton et al. (2018), and Jeyacheya and Hampton (2020) The latter two of these three investigations revealed a clear need for empirical evidence from low-income countries to support the argument for tourism-led inclusive growth (see Hampton et al., 2018; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020). A list of other impactful articles can be traced from Table 2. The review as a whole discovered a significant qualitative as well as quantitative need for both conceptual and empirical research, to further advance the research field of tourism-led inclusive growth.

## Discussion

The seven major research themes presented in Table 1 illustrate the outcome of the content review of 27 systematically selected articles. Of the seven major research areas identified, a variety of studies were found to discuss the core idea, that is, the nexus between tourism and inclusive growth (Adeniyi et al., 2021; Bakker & Messerli, 2017; Hampton et al., 2018; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020; Osinubi et al., 2021; Rout et al., 2016, 2018; Wang et al., 2022). Pointing to its rising significance in terms of GDP contribution and generating productive employment opportunities for the local community, scholars were found to establish the case that proclaims the tourism industry as a catalyst of inclusive growth (Adeniyi et al., 2021; Hampton et al., 2018; Prasad & Kulshrestha, 2015; Rout et al., 2018). The possibility of creating equal opportunities and strong

forward as well as backward linkages of the tourism supply chain was found to support the argument of authors while declaring inclusive growth as a promising concept to investigate for the tourism industry (Bakker, 2019; Hampton et al., 2018; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020). In light of a limited number of conceptual studies specific to tourism-led inclusive growth, with exceptions including Bakker and Messerli (2017) and Jeyacheya and Hampton (2020), this review points out a significant need for scholarship to better conceptualize the research field. Although the potential of the tourism industry to promote inclusive growth is voiced out by international development organizations, the recent investigations, including Adeniyi et al. (2021) in 45 African countries, Osinubi et al. (2021) in Nigeria, and Jeyacheya and Hampton (2020) in southeast Asia did not find any significant evidence to support the claim. That said, there remains a question mark on how tourism contributes to inclusive growth. This shred of limited evidence indicates the pressing need for further investigations in the tourism sectors of developing economies.

Another pertinent premise emerging from the present study voiced tourism-led inclusive growth as a panacea for reducing poverty and inequality among the individuals at the base of the pyramid (Akarsu, 2022; Bakker, 2019; Bakker et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2012; Musavengane et al., 2019; Rout et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2022; Zhang & Zhang, 2022). The ability of the tourism industry to utilize even unskilled manpower (Njoya & Nikitas, 2020) and share benefits with disadvantaged members of society who often remain excluded was found as the major reason while advocating tourism for poverty (Akarsu, 2022; Hall et al., 2012; Rout et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2022). A few studies in the present systematic review found significant empirical evidence to support the hypothesis (Rout et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2022). In contrast, a significant number of studies for instance in Vietnam (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2021; Hampton et al., 2018), Southeast Asia (Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020), China (Zhang & Zhang, 2022), Africa (Adeniyi et al., 2021), and Nigeria (Osinubi et al., 2021) denotes either marginal or no evidence to accept tourism as a panacea for poverty and inequality. However, the noteworthy contribution of tourism to the national economies, evident through the reports of leading international organizations like UNWTO (2020) and WTTC (2020) persuades us to infer that the existing policy environment supports economic growth, but lacks the social perspective that is must achieve inclusive growth.

Another distinguished trend identified within the articles contended the linkages between the tourism industry and the agriculture sector to foster inclusive growth (Anderson, 2018; Cahyadi et al., 2018; Njoya & Nikitas, 2020; Shah et al., 2022; Uduji et al., 2021). In our

viewpoint, a significant concentration of poverty in rural areas and agriculture being the major economic activity in the countryside provides justification for strengthening tourism-agriculture linkages. An attempt to explore such linkages (especially backward) can prove instrumental in creating a broader set of opportunities for the rural poor (Anderson, 2018; Cahyadi et al., 2018) and also reducing leakages from the rural economy (Njoya & Nikitas, 2020). Nevertheless, any effort to foster agro-tourism linkages must not ignore the crucial role of agriculture in maintaining national food security (Njoya & Nikitas, 2020; Shah et al., 2022).

Scholars in the extant literature were also noticed to stress the need in terms of the local community's greater participation in the travel trade sector for securing inclusive growth. The arguments in this context cast light on the need for capacity building (Imbaya et al., 2019), fostering local innovations (Hall et al., 2012), and better engagement of the local community in employment and ownership (Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020) is must uplift the disadvantaged section of the host community. However, while prioritizing such opportunities for the local community, it is a must to evaluate the binding constraints which deter the tourism industry from being a harbinger of inclusive growth (Bakker et al., 2020). Addressing such constraints will contribute to the transformation of tourism from a mere tool of market-driven economic growth to an effective engine of viable inclusive growth.

A handful of studies in the reviewed literature were found to discuss the conception of social sustainability alongside inclusive growth. The argument of this stream of authors voiced the need for a tourism system that can accommodate cross-sections of society (Musavengane et al., 2019) and confirm the equitable distribution of cost/benefits among different socioeconomic groups (Akarsu, 2022) in the long run. However, the current agenda of the World Tourism Organization, adorned by the use of striking terminologies like "sustained" and "inclusive growth" scarcely extends beyond the prevailing hierarchies of exploitative market capitalism (Bianchi & Man, 2021). This argument allows international developmental organizations to develop more equitable and democratic approaches to tourism development.

The content analysis identified few studies that applauded the role of ICT in achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (Lucia et al., 2021; Vecchio & Passiante, 2017). Such studies were found to make case for the smart specialization in the overall process of tourism management and marketing (Vecchio & Passiante, 2017) and developing novel forms of businesses like digital start-ups (Lucia et al., 2021) to leverage more sustainable inclusive, and intelligent growth. We found a set of two papers in our list of selected articles specifically

focused on ICT; surprisingly, both studies were based on Italian tourist destinations. The review led to an understanding that proper adoption of ICT by contemporary tourist destinations would contribute to stimulating balanced regional growth. The overall analysis helps to identify the tourism industry as a catalyst for inclusive growth. Yet, a dearth of sufficient empirical evidence still supports this claim. Hence, democratic and equitable policies are necessitated at host destinations to provide benefits of tourism development to the cross-sections of society, especially the often-excluded ones.

## Conclusion

In a nutshell, the present study revealed that inclusive growth is a promising idea to interrogate for the tourist sector of developing countries, given tourism's significant contribution to national GDP, strong supply chain linkages, and potential to create productive employment opportunities for the cross-sections of society. However, the studies in the extant literature (e.g., Adeniyi et al., 2021; Hampton et al., 2018; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020; Osinubi et al., 2021) indicates a lack of significant evidence to accept the tourism industry as a catalyst of inclusive growth. There remains a need for developing more equitable and democratic principles, practices, and policies to forward the tourism sector on the path of inclusive growth. The mere use of catchy terms like sustainability, inclusive growth, and decent work in the development agenda of international organizations (see Bianchi & Man, 2021) is not a panacea for the widespread poverty and inequality in the developing and underdeveloped part of the world. There is an urgent need to look beyond the market-driven growth policies (Bianchi & Man, 2021; Hampton et al., 2018) and establish a better framework that meets the need for viable and inclusive growth. This will help the host communities to transform economic growth into a more viable and inclusive development approach that meets the needs of every member of society. The overall analysis calls for further investigations in the tourism sectors of low-income countries to find significant empirical evidence that may validate the hypothesis of tourism-led inclusive growth. Moreover, the findings of this systematic review signal researchers and policymakers to ponder on developing more efficient policies that also help the often-excluded shareholders to become a part of the development agenda by reducing leakages, strengthening backward linkages, creating more equitable and productive employment opportunities, and understanding the role of ICT in tourism development.

The research field of tourism-led inclusive growth is almost a decade older, with limited but growing literature, which emerged around 2013 (Jeyacheya &

Hampton, 2022). While the existing studies reveal an overarching need for further studies in the area of inclusive growth, specific to the tourism sector (see Adeniyi et al., 2021; Hampton et al., 2018; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020, 2022). The present study makes an early attempt to systematically review the extant literature in tourism and inclusive growth, retrieved from two of the most renowned and largest databases viz. Web of Science and Scopus. The study not only contributes to identifying the most significant themes pertinent to the underlying research filed, but also reveals the growing importance of tourism-led inclusive growth in academic literature and among international development organizations like the World Bank, OECD, etc. This piece of research also contributes to shaping the knowledge structure of the research field and led to the identification of a handful of topics under various research areas (see Table 1) that can be perceived as imperative for future research in the area of tourism-led inclusive growth. Though the present research has significantly contributed to understanding the scientific nuances of the literature that evolved around inclusive growth in the tourism sector, future researchers are encouraged to include an even better combination of keywords. Additionally, the present study is based only on journal articles, so, future researchers can focus on books, book reviews, conference papers, book chapters, and other documents to further extend the results of the present study.

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### Ethical Approval

The present study is totally based on review of existing literature and complies with all ethical standards.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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### Data Availability Statement

All relevant data generated and analyzed during this research were collected from the Scopus and Web of Science databases, which may be accessed with the help of the search query mentioned in the Methodology section.

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