



Received: 17-02-2026  
Accepted: 27-03-2026

ISSN: 2583-049X

## **Community-Based Tourism and Ethnic Minority Communities in Southeast Asia: A Bibliometric and Systematic Review**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62225/2583049X.2026.6.2.6082>

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### **Abstract**

Community-based tourism (CBT) has emerged as a pivotal model for integrating ethnic minority communities into sustainable tourism development, yet no comprehensive bibliometric review has examined the evolution and knowledge structure of this field specifically within the Southeast Asian (SEA) context. This study addresses this gap by analysing 615 documents indexed in Scopus and Web of Science from 1995 to 2026, using Bibliometrix R and VOSviewer. The corpus — spanning 327 source journals, 1,992 authors, with an annual growth rate of 10.15% — reveals four distinct developmental stages: germination (1995–2004), early growth (2005–2012), diversification (2013–2019), and rapid expansion (2020–2026). Keyword co-occurrence analysis identifies five thematic clusters: (1) ecotourism and Indonesian tourism development; (2) community-based tourism and management; (3) sustainable development and conservation;

(4) Malaysian governance and participation; and (5) Vietnam. The thematic map reveals ecotourism, Indonesia, and tourism development as motor themes, while community-based tourism remains an emerging theme requiring deeper theoretical integration. Content analysis of the 25 most-cited publications (408–56 citations) highlights three dominant theoretical traditions: empowerment theory, social exchange theory, and sustainable livelihoods frameworks. A four-module knowledge framework is proposed, contextualising findings within ASEAN's institutional environment. Significant gaps are identified in cross-national comparative designs, psychological empowerment perspectives, and post-COVID resilience research. This study contributes the first integrated bibliometric map of CBT and ethnic minority research in SEA, providing a structured agenda for future inquiry in the Global South.

**Keywords:** Community-Based Tourism, Ethnic Minority, Southeast Asia, ASEAN, Bibliometric Analysis, Systematic Literature Review, Ecotourism, Sustainable Development, Community Empowerment, Knowledge Framework

### **1. Introduction**

Community-based tourism (CBT) occupies a distinctive position in contemporary tourism scholarship as a model that situates ethnic minority and local communities simultaneously as managers, beneficiaries, and custodians of tourism resources (Scheyvens, 2002; Okazaki, 2008) <sup>[18, 14]</sup>. In the context of Southeast Asia (SEA), this positioning carries particular significance. The ASEAN region encompasses extraordinary ethnic diversity — from Vietnam's 54 officially recognised ethnic groups to Indonesia's more than 300 distinct ethnic communities — while simultaneously confronting mounting pressures of poverty alleviation, heritage preservation, and post-pandemic economic recovery. Since the adoption of the ASEAN Community-Based Tourism Standard in 2016, CBT has been formally positioned as a policy instrument for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1, SDG 10, and SDG 11.

Despite growing academic and policy interest, the CBT literature pertaining to ethnic minority communities in SEA remains fragmented. Existing bibliometric reviews have either focused on CBT at a global level (Tuyen *et al.*, 2025; Kumar *et al.*, 2023) <sup>[22, 9]</sup> or examined ethnic and indigenous tourism without a regional specificity (Cai *et al.*, 2025; Pradhan *et al.*, 2025) <sup>[4, 16]</sup>. No study has yet provided a systematic, data-driven mapping of the knowledge structure, thematic evolution, and research gaps for CBT as it intersects with ethnic minority communities across the ASEAN region specifically. This absence is particularly consequential given that SEA hosts some of the world's highest concentrations of CBT initiatives, yet its representation in international tourism scholarship consistently lags behind Africa, Latin America, and Australia (Tuyen *et al.*, 2025) <sup>[22]</sup>.

This study addresses the gap through a bibliometric analysis of 615 documents (1995–2026) drawn from Scopus and Web of Science, complemented by systematic content analysis of the 25 most-cited publications. Guided by four research questions — concerning publication trends, thematic structure, theoretical frameworks, and future research directions — the study constructs an integrated knowledge framework suited to the developmental and institutional context of ASEAN member states. The contributions are threefold: methodologically, by delivering the first dual-database bibliometric map of this specific intersection; theoretically, by proposing a four-module knowledge framework adapted to Global South conditions; and practically, by identifying a structured future research agenda for scholars, policy-makers, and development practitioners in the region.



**2. Methodology**

**2.1 Data collection and search strategy**

Data were retrieved from two complementary databases: Scopus (Elsevier) and Web of Science Core Collection (Clarivate), selected for their comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed tourism, sustainability, and social science literature (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016) [11]. The following search string was applied to Title-Abstract-Keywords fields:

**Search String (Scopus — TITLE-ABS-KEY)**  
 ("community-based tourism" OR "community based tourism" OR "CBT" OR "village tourism") AND ("ethnic minority" OR "indigenous" OR "indigenous people\*" OR "tribal" OR "minority community" OR "ethnic group\*" OR "hill tribe\*" OR "local community") AND ("Southeast Asia" OR "ASEAN" OR "Vietnam" OR "Thailand" OR "Indonesia" OR "Malaysia" OR "Cambodia" OR "Myanmar" OR "Laos" OR "Philippines" OR "Mekong") Timespan: 1995–2026 | DocTypes: Article, Review | Language: English

After deduplication and removal of incomplete records, a corpus of 615 documents was retained for analysis. The final dataset encompasses 327 source journals, 1,992 unique authors, and 1,563 author-assigned keywords. No minimum citation threshold was applied at the data collection stage to preserve temporal coverage, including recent publications.

**2.2 Analytical Procedures**

Bibliometric analysis was conducted using Bibliometrix R (version 4.x; Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) and VOSviewer (version 1.6.x; van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Five analytical procedures were applied: (1) annual scientific production and growth rate analysis; (2) country and institutional collaboration network mapping; (3) keyword co-occurrence network analysis (minimum co-occurrence = 2); (4)

thematic mapping using the Callon centrality-density model; and (5) co-citation analysis of journals and authors. Complementary content analysis was conducted on the 25 most-cited publications (threshold: ≥56 total citations). Each paper was coded inductively across four dimensions: dominant research theme, theoretical framework, methodological approach, and geographic context. Inter-rater reliability was assessed via Cohen's Kappa on a 20% random subsample ( $\kappa = 0.81$ , indicating strong agreement).

**3. Results**

**3.1 Descriptive overview of the corpus**

The final corpus comprises 615 documents published across 327 source journals between 1995 and 2026, with an annual growth rate of 10.15%. The average document age is 5.41 years, and the average citation count per document is 12.31. These figures indicate a field in active expansion with a relatively recent publication centre of gravity, consistent with the post-2015 intensification observed in related literature (Tuyen *et al.*, 2025) [22].

**Table 1:** Main Information of the Bibliometric Corpus

Indicator	Value
Timespan	1995–2026
Total documents	615
Source journals	327
Annual growth rate	10.15%
Total authors	1,992
Single-authored documents	74
Authors per document (average)	3.81
International co-authorship	7.154%
Author's keywords (DE)	1,563
Average document age	5.41 years
Average citations per document	12.31

**Source:** Bibliometrix R analysis of Scopus + WoS corpus (n = 615, 1995–2026).

**3.2 Publication trends and developmental stages**

Annual scientific production reveals a non-linear growth trajectory with four identifiable stages (Fig 1). The germination stage (1995–2004) was characterised by sparse output (fewer than 10 publications per year), dominated by foundational case studies primarily from Indonesia and Thailand. The early growth stage (2005–2012) marked theoretical consolidation, coinciding with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) and the Millennium Development Goals era. Publication volume rose to 15–25 per year, with Malaysia and the Philippines emerging as prominent research sites.



**Fig 1:** Main Information

The diversification stage (2013–2019) saw both geographic and methodological expansion (30–50 publications per year), driven by the adoption of the SDGs (2015) and the

ASEAN Community-Based Tourism Standard (2016). The rapid expansion stage (2020–2026) represents the highest output to date, reflecting intensified interest in post-COVID-19 resilience, digital transformation of CBT, and renewed policy focus on ethnic minority livelihood recovery across the ASEAN region. This trajectory aligns with broader patterns identified in the CBT literature (Tuyen *et al.*, 2025) [22] and the ethnic tourism bibliometric literature (Cai *et al.*, 2025) [4].

### 3.3 Country and institutional collaboration

Country collaboration analysis (Fig 2) reveals that Indonesia, Australia, and Malaysia constitute the three most productive national contributors, with Indonesia exhibiting the highest total document count. The dominance of Indonesia is consistent with its exceptionally high ethnic diversity (over 300 groups) and the country's longstanding policy commitment to CBT as a poverty reduction instrument. Australia's prominence reflects active scholarly engagement from institutions such as Griffith University and James Cook University, which maintain extensive research programmes on sustainable tourism in the Indo-Pacific.

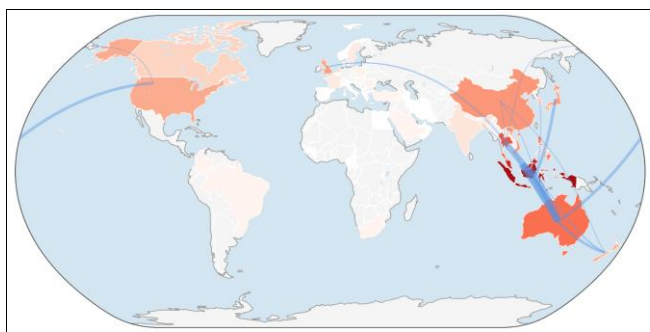


Fig 2: Countries' collaboration world map

International co-authorship stands at 7.154%, indicating that while the field is geographically concentrated, meaningful cross-border collaboration exists, particularly between SEA institutions and partners in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Vietnam, though emerging as a case study site, appears as a largely isolated node in the collaboration network (visible as the orange cluster in the co-occurrence map), suggesting that Vietnamese CBT scholarship remains primarily domestically oriented and has yet to be fully integrated into the ASEAN-wide research community.

### 3.4 Thematic map: Keyword structure and quadrant analysis

The Callon thematic map (Fig 3) positions keyword clusters across two axes: Relevance degree (Centrality) on the horizontal axis and Development degree (Density) on the vertical axis. The resulting four-quadrant structure reveals differentiated roles for the field's core constructs.

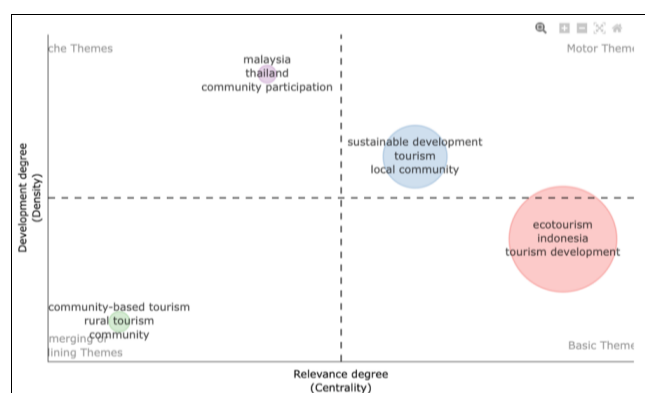


Fig 3: Thematic map

Table 2: Thematic Map - Quadrant Classification of Core Keywords

Quadrant	Label	Keywords	Interpretation
I — Upper Right	Motor Themes (High Centrality, High Density)	ecotourism; indonesia; tourism development	Well-developed, internally coherent, and centrally linked to the broader field. These themes constitute the structural core of CBT research in SEA. Their dominance reflects the predominance of Indonesian ecotourism case studies and the persistent framing of CBT as a development mechanism.
II — Upper Left	Niche Themes (Low Centrality, High Density)	malaysia; thailand; community participation	Specialised and internally dense but weakly connected to the broader network. Malaysia and Thailand have generated substantial country-specific literatures on community participation that remain under-integrated with wider ASEAN discourse.
III — Lower Right	Basic Themes (High Centrality, Low Density)	sustainable development; tourism; local community	Foundational constructs with high cross-field relevance but low internal specialisation. These themes serve as bridges across clusters and represent the shared vocabulary of CBT scholarship.
IV — Lower Left	Emerging/Declining Themes (Low Centrality, Low Density)	community-based tourism; rural tourism; community	Paradoxically, the label 'community-based tourism' itself falls into this quadrant — indicating that although it is the nominal focus of the field, it functions more as a descriptive tag than as a theoretically dense construct. This signals a critical gap: the need to develop CBT as a theoretically integrated framework rather than a merely descriptive category.

Source: Bibliometrix R thematicMap() analysis. Quadrant boundaries set at median Centrality and Density values.

The positioning of 'community-based tourism' in the emerging/declining quadrant — alongside 'rural tourism' and 'community' — is a particularly significant finding. It suggests that CBT as a construct has not yet achieved the theoretical density required for it to serve as a structuring framework in its own right. This is consistent with the theoretical fragmentation identified by Tuyen *et al.* (2025) [22] and underscores the contribution of the knowledge

framework proposed in Section 5 of this paper.

### 3.5 Keyword co-occurrence network: Five thematic clusters

VOSviewer analysis of keyword co-occurrences (minimum co-occurrence = 2) produces five distinct clusters, visualised in Fig 4. The clusters are interpreted as follows:

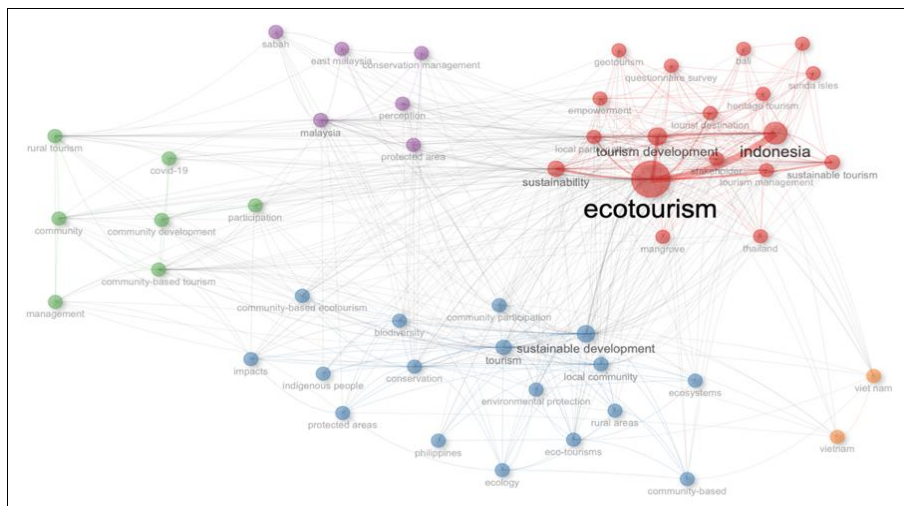


Fig 4: Co-occurrence network

Table 3: Five Keyword Clusters: Names, Core Keywords, and Theoretical Associations

Cluster	Name	Core keywords	Theoretical anchors	Representative countries
Red (Largest)	Ecotourism & Indonesian Tourism Development	ecotourism; indonesia; tourism development; sustainability; tourist destination; stakeholder; heritage tourism; tourism management; sustainable tourism; bali; mangrove; geotourism	Sustainable Development Theory; Stakeholder Theory; Ecosystem Services	Indonesia (dominant); Thailand
Green	CBT & Community Management	community-based tourism; community; community development; rural tourism; management; participation; covid-19	Community Participation Theory; Social Capital Theory; Resilience Theory	Malaysia; Thailand; Philippines
Blue	Sustainable Development & Conservation	sustainable development; tourism; local community; biodiversity; conservation; community participation; indigenous people; impacts; protected areas; ecology; rural areas; ecosystems	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework; Conservation Biology; Ecosystem Services	Philippines; Indonesia; Malaysia
Purple	Malaysian Governance & Protected Areas	malaysia; east malaysia; sabah; conservation management; protected area; perception	Institutional Theory; Protected Area Management	Malaysia (dominant); Borneo region
Orange	Vietnam (Isolated node)	vietnam; viet nam	Emerging — no dominant theoretical anchor yet established	Vietnam

Source: VOSviewer co-occurrence network, minimum co-occurrence = 2. Cluster labels assigned by authors through content review.

Three observations merit emphasis. First, the red cluster's dominance reflects the disproportionate weight of Indonesian ecotourism scholarship — a finding consistent with Indonesia's position as the most productive country in the corpus. Second, the isolation of Vietnam as a single-country cluster, disconnected from the broader network, confirms that Vietnamese CBT research has not yet been integrated into regional discourse, despite Vietnam's rich ethnic minority landscape. Third, the absence of a dedicated cluster for empowerment or cultural heritage — both prominent in the global ethnic tourism literature (Cai *et al.*, 2025) <sup>[4]</sup> — points to a substantive gap in SEA-specific CBT scholarship.

### 3.6 Analysis of Most-Cited Literature

#### 3.6.1 Citation landscape

The 25 most-cited publications in the corpus range from 408 total citations (Okazaki, 2008) <sup>[14]</sup> to 56 citations (Phuc, 2023 <sup>[15]</sup>; Tseng, 2019), with a combined total exceeding 3,400 citations. Annualised citation rates — which control for publication age — reveal that several recent papers have achieved exceptional impact: Thompson (2022) <sup>[20]</sup> at 14.80/year, Ocampo (2018) at 20.67/year, and Phuc (2023) <sup>[15]</sup> at 14.00/year suggest accelerating scholarly interest in quantitative and sustainability-focused approaches.

**Table 4:** Top 25 Most-Cited Publications in the CBT × Ethnic Minority × SEA Corpus

#	Author (Year)	Journal	Total Citations	TC/Year	Norm. TC	Key theme
1	Okazaki E (2008) <sup>[14]</sup>	J Sustain Tour	408	21.47	2.94	CBT governance; empowerment model
2	Cole S (2006) <sup>[7]</sup>	J Sustain Tour	393	18.71	1.89	Community participation; Indonesia
3	Walpole M (2000)	Ann Tour Res	245	9.07	1.00	Wildlife tourism; local benefit
4	Sin H (2010)	Geoforum	222	13.06	4.61	Volunteer tourism; ethics
5	Ocampo L (2018)	Ecol Indic	186	20.67	9.34	Sustainability index; Philippines
6	Farsani N (2014)	Geoheritage	137	10.54	3.77	Geoparks; community
7	Walpole M (2001)	Conserv Biol	133	5.12	3.11	Ecotourism; conservation
8	Masud M (2017)	Ocean Coast Manage	98	9.80	4.09	Marine CBT; Malaysia
9	Priatmoko S (2021)	Sustainability	85	14.17	6.95	CBT resilience; Indonesia
10	Chong K (2020) <sup>[6]</sup>	Asia Pac J Tour Res	83	11.86	6.55	Sabah; indigenous community
11	Chan J (2021) <sup>[5]</sup>	Sustainability	83	13.83	6.79	Post-COVID CBT
12	Ng S (2017)	Tour Manage	82	8.20	3.42	Stakeholder; Malaysia
13	Schellhorn M (2010) <sup>[19]</sup>	J Sustain Tour	81	4.76	1.68	Development discourse; SEA
14	Buckley R (2002) <sup>[3]</sup>	J Sustain Tour	77	3.08	1.00	Ecotourism governance
15	Kamisan P A (2013)	Asian Soc Sci	75	5.36	3.23	Community participation; Malaysia
16	Thompson B (2022) <sup>[20]</sup>	Tour Manage	74	14.80	8.10	CBT digital transformation
17	Noorashid N (2021)	Sustainability	64	10.67	5.23	COVID-19 impact; Brunei
18	Bottema M (2012)	Ocean Coast Manage	62	4.13	4.56	Coastal CBT; Indonesia
19	Kunjuraman V (2017)	Tour Manag Perspect	60	6.00	2.50	Indigenous CBT; Sabah
20	Sin H (2014)	Geoforum	59	4.54	1.62	Orphanage tourism
21	Roslan Z (2021)	Sustainability	58	9.67	4.74	Post-COVID; Malaysia
22	Kim M (2019)	Sustainability	58	7.25	4.43	Residents' perception; SEA
23	Kinnaird M (1996)	Oryx	58	1.87	1.76	Ecotourism; Indonesia (early)
24	Tseng M (2019)	J Clean Prod	56	7.00	4.28	Sustainable supply chain; CBT
25	Phuc H (2023) <sup>[15]</sup>	J Sustain Tour	56	14.00	6.50	Vietnam; ethnic minority CBT

**Source:** Bibliometrix R analysis. TC = Total Citations; TC/Year = annualised citation rate; Norm. TC = normalised citation count.

#### 3.6.2 Research themes in highly cited literature

Content analysis of the 25 most-cited papers identifies three dominant thematic groupings. The first and largest grouping — comprising approximately 40% of the sample — addresses ecotourism governance and conservation (Okazaki, 2008 <sup>[14]</sup>; Cole, 2006 <sup>[7]</sup>; Walpole, 2000, 2001; Buckley, 2002 <sup>[3]</sup>; Kinnaird, 1996). These papers collectively establish the foundational tension between community empowerment aspirations and the practical constraints of nature-based tourism management, a tension that continues to animate the field. The second grouping — approximately 32% — centres on sustainability and livelihood outcomes, with particular attention to indicator development (Ocampo, 2018), coastal and marine tourism (Masud, 2017; Bottema, 2012), and post-COVID resilience (Priatmoko, 2021; Chan, 2021 <sup>[5]</sup>; Roslan, 2021). The third grouping — approximately 28% — addresses participation, governance, and indigenous community dynamics, spanning Malaysian Borneo (Chong, 2020 <sup>[6]</sup>; Kunjuraman, 2017),

mainland Southeast Asia (Phuc, 2023; Schellhorn, 2010) <sup>[15]</sup>, <sup>[19]</sup>, and regional policy contexts (Ng, 2017; Kamisan, 2013).

#### 3.6.3 Theoretical frameworks

Theoretical analysis of the highly cited corpus reveals three dominant frameworks. First, empowerment theory, operationalised most influentially through Okazaki's (2008) <sup>[14]</sup> stepladder model, provides the normative foundation for assessing CBT success. Okazaki's framework posits that genuine community empowerment requires progression through psychological, social, political, and economic dimensions — a model widely replicated across Indonesian and Malaysian contexts. Second, social exchange theory underpins the majority of resident attitude studies (Kim, 2019; Kamisan, 2013), positioning community support for tourism as a function of perceived benefit-cost ratios. Third, sustainable livelihoods frameworks (SLF) structure the livelihood-focused literature (Phuc, 2023 <sup>[15]</sup>; Masud, 2017), linking CBT outcomes to household capital assets (natural, physical, human, social, financial).

Notably absent from the highly cited literature are the authenticity theory, commodification theory, and host-guest interaction frameworks that dominate the global ethnic tourism literature (Cai *et al.*, 2025) <sup>[4]</sup>. This divergence reflects a fundamental difference in disciplinary orientation: while global ethnic/indigenous tourism scholarship is grounded primarily in cultural anthropology, CBT research in SEA is anchored in development studies, environmental management, and tourism management. This distinction has important implications for knowledge integration, as explored in Section 5.

### 3.6.4 Methodological landscape

Methodologically, the highly cited literature is dominated by survey-based quantitative methods (48%), particularly Likert-scale questionnaires measuring community attitudes, empowerment levels, and sustainability indicators. Case studies constitute the second most common approach (32%), predominantly single-country studies in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Mixed-methods designs account for approximately 12%, while purely qualitative approaches (interviews, ethnography) represent 8%. The recent high-impact papers by Thompson (2022) <sup>[20]</sup> and Phuc (2023) <sup>[15]</sup> signal a methodological shift toward structural equation modelling and mixed-method longitudinal designs, consistent with broader trends in tourism research.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 The paradox of CBT as an emerging theme

The thematic map's placement of 'community-based tourism' in the emerging/declining quadrant — despite being the nominal focus of the entire corpus — represents the study's most counterintuitive finding and arguably its most theoretically significant. This positioning does not indicate that CBT is declining as a research topic; the 10.15% annual growth rate decisively contradicts such an interpretation. Rather, it reveals that CBT functions as a descriptive label applied across highly heterogeneous studies without the internal theoretical coherence required to anchor a distinct thematic cluster. The construct's low centrality indicates that 'community-based tourism' is not the primary connective tissue linking papers in the corpus; instead, papers are linked through their geographic focus (Indonesia, Malaysia), their substantive orientation (ecotourism, sustainable development), or their methodological approach.

This finding has a direct implication for future research design: studies that position CBT as their primary theoretical contribution — rather than merely their descriptive context — are urgently needed. Okazaki's (2008) <sup>[14]</sup> stepladder model and Scheyvens' (2002) <sup>[18]</sup> empowerment framework represent the most-cited attempts to theorise CBT distinctively, yet both are now over fifteen years old and have not been substantially revised in light of post-COVID challenges, digital transformation, or the ASEAN policy context. The development of a contemporary, SEA-specific CBT theory constitutes one of the field's most pressing intellectual needs.

### 4.2 The Indonesia-centric bias and its consequences

The dominance of Indonesia in the motor themes quadrant and the largest co-occurrence cluster reflects both the country's exceptional CBT infrastructure and its scholarly productivity. However, this concentration creates a significant distortion in the regional knowledge base. The

characteristics of Indonesian CBT — large archipelago geography, strong national ecotourism policy (ESDM framework), Balinese tourism heritage, and marine biodiversity contexts — are not representative of mainland SEA contexts such as Vietnam's upland minority communities, Myanmar's Karen and Shan border tourism, or Laos's ethno-ecotourism in the Mekong corridor. The risk of generalising Indonesian findings to the broader ASEAN context is substantial.

Vietnam's isolation as a single-node cluster is particularly striking given that the country's 53 officially recognised ethnic minority groups (accounting for approximately 14% of the population) represent one of the most significant CBT populations in the region. Phuc (2023) <sup>[15]</sup> in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* represents one of the few high-impact studies specifically addressing Vietnamese ethnic minority CBT, achieving a normalised citation score of 6.50 — indicating strong receptivity from the international community when such research is produced. The systematic underproduction of Vietnamese CBT scholarship in international journals represents a structural gap with both academic and policy consequences.

### 4.3 Theoretical divergence from the global ethnic tourism literature

A comparison between the theoretical landscape identified in this study and that documented by Cai *et al.* (2025) <sup>[4]</sup> for the global ethnic tourism literature reveals a striking divergence. While authenticity theory, commodification theory, and host-guest interaction theory constitute the theoretical core of global ethnic tourism scholarship, none of these frameworks appear in the highly cited CBT × SEA literature. Conversely, empowerment theory, sustainable livelihoods frameworks, and conservation biology are central to SEA-focused CBT research but peripheral in the global ethnic tourism corpus.

This divergence is not merely a matter of disciplinary preference; it reflects fundamentally different research questions. Global ethnic tourism scholarship asks: what happens to culture when it is performed for tourists? SEA-focused CBT scholarship asks: does tourism participation improve community welfare and preserve natural resources? The former question is anthropological and interpretive; the latter is developmental and evaluative. A productive future research agenda would bring these two traditions into dialogue, exploring how cultural performance dynamics (authenticity, commodification, identity negotiation) shape the welfare outcomes (empowerment, livelihood security, social capital) that CBT researchers seek to maximise.

## 5. A Knowledge Framework for CBT and Ethnic Minority Communities in Southeast Asia

Building on the analytical findings and guided by the framework design criteria of Dang and Le-Hoai (2019) <sup>[8]</sup> — independence, logical structure, and comprehensiveness — this study proposes a four-module knowledge framework for CBT and ethnic minority communities in SEA (Fig 5). The framework integrates research context, theoretical perspectives, core knowledge and issues, and methodological approaches, while explicitly positioning SEA within a Global South epistemological context distinct from Western-dominated frameworks.

### **Module 1: Research Context — ASEAN's Institutional and Cultural Specificity**

The first module foregrounds the distinctive contextual conditions that shape CBT knowledge production in SEA. Unlike the African or Latin American contexts that dominate existing CBT scholarship, SEA is characterised by (1) a developmental state tradition in which national governments play an active, directive role in CBT policy (Vietnam's Decree 168/2017, Thailand's CBT Institute, Indonesia's Village Fund Programme); (2) multi-layered colonial legacies — French Indochina, British Malaya, Dutch Indies, American Philippines — that have produced differentiated institutional arrangements for ethnic minority governance; and (3) ASEAN's multilateral CBT framework, which creates a supranational policy environment not present in other developing regions. These contextual specificities require that Western theories be critically adapted rather than directly applied, and that cross-national comparative research within SEA be prioritised over single-country case studies.

### **Module 2: Theoretical Perspectives — An Integrative Framework**

The second module identifies the theoretical core of SEA-focused CBT scholarship and proposes an integrative architecture. Three primary theoretical traditions have been identified: (1) empowerment theory (Okazaki, 2008; Scheyvens, 2002) <sup>[14, 18]</sup>, which provides normative criteria for CBT success; (2) social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which explains community support for tourism as a rational benefit-cost calculation; and (3) sustainable livelihoods frameworks (Ashley & Roe, 1998 <sup>[2]</sup>; Chambers & Conway, 1992), which link tourism participation to multi-capital household outcomes. Two emerging theoretical traditions require integration: resilience theory (Walker *et al.*, 2004), which has become essential for understanding post-COVID community adaptation; and institutional theory (North, 1990; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), which explains how formal and informal rules shape CBT governance across ASEAN's diverse political economies.

The framework proposes that these five theoretical strands be integrated around a central construct: ethnic minority community agency. Agency-centred theorising would bridge empowerment's normative aspirations, social exchange's behavioural mechanisms, livelihoods' capital assessments, resilience's adaptive capacities, and institutional theory's structural constraints — providing a coherent conceptual architecture currently absent from the field.

### **Module 3: Core Knowledge and Issues — Five Thematic Domains**

The third module organises the field's core knowledge into five thematic domains derived from the co-occurrence cluster analysis. The ecotourism and tourism development domain (red cluster) constitutes the field's empirical backbone, driven by Indonesian research and established in the motor themes quadrant. The CBT and community

management domain (green cluster) addresses participation, governance, and COVID-19 resilience, and is the domain most proximate to empowerment theory. The sustainable development and conservation domain (blue cluster) bridges environmental and social sustainability, anchoring CBT in global SDG discourse. The governance and protected area management domain (purple cluster), concentrated in Malaysian Borneo, addresses the specific challenges of tourism development in biodiversity-rich regions with significant indigenous populations. The Vietnam and mainland SEA domain (orange cluster) is the smallest and most isolated, representing the greatest gap relative to the population of ethnic minority CBT communities in the region.

### **Module 4: Methodological Architecture — Bridging Depth and Scale**

The fourth module addresses the methodological landscape and its limitations. The predominance of survey-based quantitative methods (48% of highly cited papers) reflects the field's developmental studies orientation but creates blind spots around cultural dynamics, power relations, and subjective experience. The framework recommends a methodological pluralism that combines: (1) structured quantitative approaches (PLS-SEM, fsQCA) for testing theoretical models across large samples; (2) in-depth qualitative methods (ethnography, narrative inquiry, participatory rural appraisal) for capturing the lived experience of ethnic minority communities; (3) longitudinal designs to track CBT community trajectories across development stages and external shocks; and (4) comparative case study designs across two or more ASEAN countries to overcome the single-country bias that currently limits theoretical generalisability.

## **6. Future Research Directions**

### **6.1 Limitations of the current literature**

Four structural limitations characterise the current state of CBT × ethnic minority research in SEA. First, geographic concentration in Indonesia and Malaysia has produced a corpus that does not adequately represent the ethnic minority CBT landscape of Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, or the Philippines — countries that together account for a substantial proportion of SEA's ethnic diversity. Second, the theoretical divergence from global ethnic tourism scholarship (documented in Section 4.3) has left critical questions about cultural identity, authenticity, and commodification unaddressed within the SEA context. Third, the dominance of cross-sectional survey methods has produced snapshot assessments of community attitudes without the longitudinal data needed to evaluate CBT's long-term developmental outcomes. Fourth, post-COVID resilience, while appearing in recent publications, has not yet been theoretically integrated — studies address recovery empirically without connecting findings to resilience theory or institutional adaptation frameworks.

**Table 5:** Future Research Directions for CBT × Ethnic Minority × SEA

S. No	Direction	Key gap	Proposed research	Theoretical anchors
1	Cross-national comparative studies	Single-country dominance prevents generalisable theory; ASEAN policy comparisons absent	Comparative PLS-SEM or fsQCA studies across 2–3 SEA countries (e.g. Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia); evaluation of ASEAN CBT Standard implementation across member states	Institutional Theory; Comparative Policy Analysis; Multi-level Governance
2	Cultural dynamics in ethnic CBT	Authenticity, commodification, and identity negotiation absent from SEA literature despite prominence in global ethnic tourism scholarship	Ethnographic studies of cultural performance dynamics in Vietnamese, Thai, and Filipino ethnic minority CBT sites; integration of commodification theory with empowerment frameworks	Authenticity Theory; Commodification Theory; Cultural Capital (Bourdieu)
3	Psychological empowerment	Structural and economic empowerment dominate; psychological dimension (efficacy, identity, meaning) neglected	PLS-SEM models of psychological empowerment antecedents and outcomes in ethnic minority CBT; cross-generational studies of identity and participation	Psychological Empowerment Theory (Spreitzer); Self-Determination Theory
4	Post-COVID resilience	COVID-19 impact documented empirically but not theoretically integrated; resilience as capacity vs. outcome unclear	Longitudinal mixed-methods tracking of CBT communities (2019–2024); development and validation of a Community Resilience Scale for SEA CBT contexts	Resilience Theory (Walker <i>et al.</i> ); Adaptive Cycle Framework; Social-Ecological Systems
5	Digital transformation of CBT	Digital platforms' role in ethnic minority CBT growing but theoretically underexplored; digital divide implications unstudied	Studies of OTA/social media adoption by ethnic minority CBT communities; digital empowerment vs. dependency dynamics; AI-assisted CBT management	Technology Acceptance Model; Digital Divide Theory; Platform Economics

Directions prioritised based on gaps identified in thematic map, cluster analysis, and highly cited literature review.

**7. Conclusions**

This study delivers the first comprehensive bibliometric and systematic review of community-based tourism and ethnic minority community research in Southeast Asia, drawing on a corpus of 615 documents spanning 1995 to 2026. Four principal conclusions emerge. First, the field is growing rapidly (10.15% annually) but is geographically concentrated in Indonesia and Malaysia, with Vietnam and mainland SEA significantly underrepresented relative to their ethnic diversity and CBT potential. Second, the paradoxical positioning of 'community-based tourism' as an emerging rather than motor theme in the thematic map signals a critical theoretical deficit: CBT in SEA remains a descriptive category rather than a theoretically integrated framework. Third, the field's theoretical anchors — empowerment theory, social exchange theory, and sustainable livelihoods frameworks — diverge substantially from global ethnic tourism scholarship's cultural-anthropological tradition, creating an under-exploited opportunity for theoretical cross-fertilisation. Fourth, the highly cited literature cluster around post-2020 publications (Thompson, 2022; Chan, 2021; Phuc, 2023) [20, 5, 15] with high normalised citation scores indicates that the field is entering a period of theoretical renewal, receptive to methodologically sophisticated and theoretically grounded interventions.

The four-module knowledge framework proposed in Section 5 — integrating ASEAN's contextual specificity, five theoretical traditions, five thematic domains, and a methodological pluralism agenda — provides a structured foundation for this renewal. For researchers, the framework identifies the most productive theoretical intersections and

geographic gaps. For policy-makers, it highlights the inadequacy of applying Indonesian or Malaysian CBT models to mainland SEA contexts without contextual adaptation. For development practitioners, it underscores the urgency of longitudinal evaluation designs and community-level resilience assessment.

This study has three principal limitations. First, the restriction to English-language publications underrepresents scholarship published in Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Vietnamese, and Malay — languages in which substantial CBT research exists. Future studies should incorporate multilingual databases. Second, the absence of reference data in the corpus (References = 0 in Bibliometrix output) prevented co-citation network analysis, limiting the identification of foundational intellectual influences. Third, the content analysis of 25 highly cited papers, while informed by Cohen's Kappa validation, remains subject to the interpretive judgements of a single primary coder. Notwithstanding these limitations, this study contributes a rigorous, data-driven foundation for advancing CBT and ethnic minority scholarship in Southeast Asia and the broader Global South.

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