

The Role of Tourism Msmes in Local Economic Development: Systematical Literature Review

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Abstract

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the tourism sector have a strategic role in local economic development, especially in developing countries and community-based tourism destinations. This study aims to systematically review scientific literature related to the contribution of tourism MSMEs to local economic development in the period 2013 to 2025. Using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach referring to the PRISMA guidelines, 38 selected scientific articles were critically analyzed to explore research trends, key findings, study gaps, and future policy directions. The results of the analysis show that tourism MSMEs not only provide direct economic impacts, such as job creation and increasing regional income, but also contribute to cultural preservation, community empowerment, and post-pandemic destination regeneration. Recent studies emphasize the importance of local entrepreneurial ecosystems, digitalization, and social capital as determining factors for the success of MSMEs. The literature also underlines the paradigm shift towards regenerative tourism that positions MSMEs as the main actors in sustainable development. This study recommends the need for synergy between public policy, community assistance, and technological innovation to strengthen the competitiveness of tourism MSMEs in an inclusive and resilient manner. This study is expected to be an academic and practical reference in supporting the formulation of local economic development strategies that are oriented towards sustainability and social justice.

Keywords: Economic, MSMEs, Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has long been recognized as a strategic sector in driving economic growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation, especially in developing regions (Khan et al., 2020;

UNWTO, 2018). Amid the dynamics of globalization and economic decentralization, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the tourism sector play an important role as the main drivers of the local

economy (Novelli, 2020; Purnomo, 2025). Tourism MSMEs include various types of businesses such as accommodation, culinary, handicrafts, tourist transportation, and tour guide services, which directly contribute to regional income and community empowerment (Hulu et al., 2021; Sugiharti, 2023).

The presence of tourism MSMEs not only has an economic impact, but also supports the preservation of local culture, community involvement, and sustainable development (Maziliauske, 2024; Sari, 2025). In the context of local economic development, MSMEs function as catalysts for social and economic change, especially in rural areas and developing destinations (Bahreisy et al., 2025; Santoso, 2025). However, the contribution of tourism MSMEs still faces various challenges, such as limited access to capital, lack of managerial training, and dependence on the tourist season (Hlengwa, 2018; Ramli et al., 2021, Ramli et al., 2022).

Previous literature shows that the development of tourism MSMEs can create a multiplier effect on other sectors such as agriculture, crafts, and transportation (Lajara, 2016; Rachman, 2020). In addition, MSMEs can also function as a strategic instrument in efforts to decentralize the economy and distribute tourism benefits more evenly (Gbatu, 2025; Setiowati, 2024). Therefore, understanding the dynamics of the role of MSMEs in local economic development is very relevant, especially in the context of economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic which shows the vulnerability but also the resilience of this sector (Agarwal et al., 2023;

Lesmana, 2023; Mohanty & Mohanty, 2025; Ragoobur et al., 2023).

This study aims to systematically review the literature that discusses the role of tourism MSMEs in local economic development. Through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this study will identify key themes, research trends, study gaps, and policy recommendations that have been discussed in the last two decades. By understanding the contributions and challenges of tourism MSMEs comprehensively, it is hoped that the results of this study can provide direction for the development of more inclusive and sustainable policies in the context of the local economy.

METHOD

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to gain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the role of tourism MSMEs in local economic development. SLR was chosen because it allows researchers to identify, critically assess, and synthesize the results of previous studies in a systematic and structured manner. This approach refers to the latest version of the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines (Dea et al., 2021) which emphasizes transparency and replication in the implementation of scientific literature reviews. The literature review process is carried out in several stages, starting with identifying the main research question, namely: "What is the contribution and role of tourism sector MSMEs in driving local economic development based on the results of studies in the last five years?" In

addition, this review also explores the supporting and inhibiting factors for the contribution of MSMEs, as well as strategies that have proven effective in supporting local economic growth through this sector.

The next step is a literature search conducted through several reputable international scientific databases, namely Scopus, as the main source in this study. The keywords used in the search process include combinations such as "Tourism", "MSMEs", "Economic", with a publication time limit from January 2013 to May 2025. The initial search results are filtered by referring to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria include articles in English or Indonesian, published in peer-reviewed journals, have a primary focus on the relationship between tourism MSMEs and local economic development, and contain empirical data, case studies, or theoretical discussions. The exclusion criteria include articles that are not available in full-text, editorials, opinions, or non-scientific articles.

All articles obtained were screened in a step-by-step manner using the PRISMA flow model, which included an identification stage with a total of 118 documents. Then a second screening filtered the documents based on their type, specifically articles and book chapters, which reduced the number to 51 documents. The third and final screening focused on the language of the documents, retaining only English-language publications, which kept the number at 38 documents. After completing all screening phases, the final number of documents included in the review remained at 38 documents. This

methodical approach demonstrates a rigorous selection process to ensure that the review only includes relevant and appropriate academic literature that meets all the specified criteria. This can be seen in Figure 1 below.

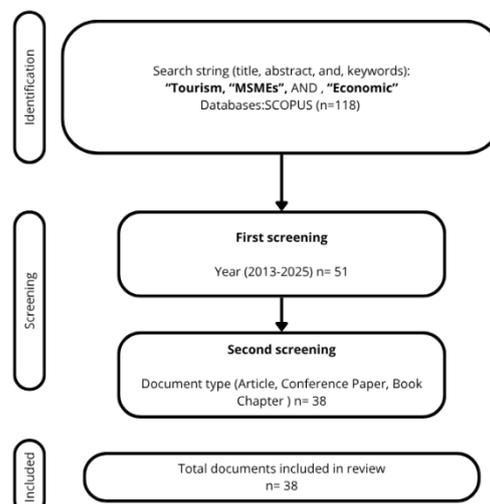


Figure 1. Research methodology

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of the role of tourism msmes in local economic development are presented. Information about the main information, Annual Scientific Production, Most Cited Countries, Most Global Cited Document, Most Relevant Affiliations, Wordcloud will be provided and analyzed. Finally, important topics are extrapolated from the 38 selected articles using keyword occurrence analysis.

Main Information

The results of the literature systematization show that the topic of the role of tourism MSMEs in local economic development has become an increasing concern in academic literature, especially in the last seventeen years. From the results of the search and selection, 38 scientific

articles were selected that met the inclusion criteria based on the context of tourism MSMEs and their relationship to economic development at the local level. The articles cover a variety of research methods, ranging from qualitative studies, community-based case studies, to quantitative and mixed-methods approaches. These studies come from various developing and developed countries, with a focus on regions such as Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam), Sub-Saharan Africa, and several Southern European countries. In general, the literature reviewed shows that tourism MSMEs have a strategic position as drivers of the local economy, both in terms of direct contribution to regional GDP and from social aspects such as community empowerment and cultural preservation.



Figure 2. Main information

Figure 2 above presents the main information from the results of bibliometric analysis of a number of scientific publications covering the period from 2013 to 2025. During this period, there were 38 documents published and reviewed from 29 different sources or journals, with an annual growth rate of 14.35%. This figure shows that the topic being studied has experienced significant development from year to year. There are a total of 140 authors who contributed to these documents, but

only three of them produced a single publication without collaboration. The level of international collaboration is also quite striking with a percentage of 15.79%, indicating the involvement of cross-country researchers in this topic. The average number of authors per document is 3.76 people, which illustrates the strong collaborative culture in this study.

Furthermore, there are 135 keywords (Author's Keywords) used by the authors, reflecting the diversity of focus or issues raised in the publication. The references used in the entire document reached 1,555, indicating a fairly strong theoretical and empirical basis. The average age of the documents analyzed was 2.82 years, indicating that the literature used was relatively new and relevant to current developments. In addition, each document in this analysis received an average of 3,816 citations, reflecting the level of influence or impact of these publications among academics. Overall, these data show a fairly active, collaborative, and literature-based research dynamic in the field of study analyzed, so that it can be a strong basis for further exploration or development of advanced scientific studies, especially for postgraduate students who are preparing a thesis or dissertation.

Annual Scientific Production

Scientific production on this theme shows an increasing trend in the period from 2019 to 2024. A significant spike occurred since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020), when academic attention to local economic resilience increased sharply. Many articles published in 2021 to 2023 highlighted how tourism MSMEs were

able to adapt and become the foundation of economic recovery in many tourism destinations, especially in developing countries. This reflects the high relevance of the thematic to contemporary challenges such as the global health crisis, digitalization, and economic decentralization.

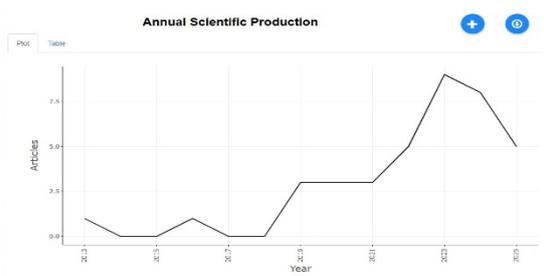


Figure 3. Annual scientific production

Figure 3 above shows the Annual Scientific Production graph, which represents the number of scientific publications per year during the period 2013 to 2025. Based on the curve shown, it can be seen that scientific production was initially relatively low and fluctuating, even tending to stagnate between 2013 and 2018, with the number of articles published never exceeding two articles per year, and even reaching zero in several years, such as 2014, 2015, and 2017. However, since 2019 there has been a consistent increase, marked by a stable production of three articles per year during the period 2019 to 2021. This phenomenon indicates the growing scientific attention to the topic being studied.

The peak of scientific productivity occurs in 2023, when the number of publications reaches more than eight articles, making it the year with the highest scientific contribution throughout the observation period. This spike is most likely due to the increasing urgency of the topics

discussed, the development of global issues, or more intensive academic support and research policies. Although there is a decrease in the number of articles in 2024 and 2025, the trend still shows a higher number compared to the early period of the decade, which was around five articles per year. Overall, this graph indicates a significant growth in research interest and productivity on the issues being studied, and reflects positive academic dynamics despite still facing annual fluctuations. For master's students, understanding this trend in scientific production is important in formulating the urgency and contribution of the chosen research topic.

Most Cited Countries

In terms of author country of origin and case studies, Indonesia is the country that appears most frequently in publications, followed by Thailand, Vietnam, Kenya, and South Africa. These countries have strong community-based tourism characteristics and rely heavily on MSMEs as the backbone of tourism economic activities. In addition, a number of publications from Europe such as Italy and Spain have contributed through studies on digital transformation and social innovation in the tourism MSME sector.

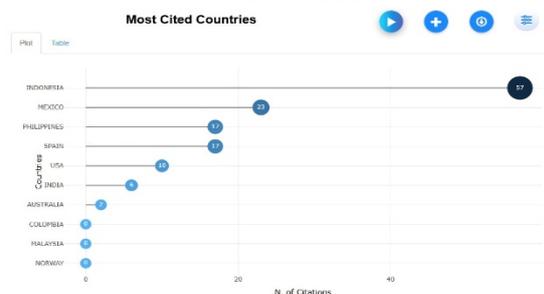


Figure 4. Most cited countries

Figure 4 above displays a visualization of the Most Cited Countries, which is a list of countries that receive the most citations in the scientific publications analyzed. From the graph, it can be seen that Indonesia occupies the highest position with the number of citations reaching 57, making it the country with the most recognized scientific contribution in this study. This figure reflects the strong position of Indonesia as a reference center in the research topics discussed, and indicates that publications from Indonesia have high citation power in the international academic community. In second place, there is Mexico with 23 citations, which also shows an important role in global scientific discourse, although the number is still far below Indonesia.

Meanwhile, the Philippines and Spain are tied for third place with 17 citations each. This indicates that developing countries are also starting to show competitiveness in producing relevant and quality scientific works. The United States, which is usually dominant in various scientific fields, only received 10 citations, followed by India with 6 citations and Australia with 2 citations. Interestingly, three other countries – Colombia, Malaysia, and Norway – did not receive any citations at all in this analysis. The disparity in the number of citations between countries could reflect various factors, such as differences in research focus, level of publication accessibility, and thematic relevance to global and local contexts.

Most Global Cited Document

Some of the most widely cited documents in this literature include

the article by Brouder et al. (2020) which discusses the implications of COVID-19 on the tourism MSME landscape and the need for a regenerative approach in destination planning. Prayag's article (2025) also stands out with its theorization of the resilience and adaptation of small-scale tourism businesses in the face of crisis. Meanwhile, the study by Lew et al. (2024) on the concept of regenerative tourism is an important reference in encouraging a new paradigm of local economic development based on sustainable values.



Figure 5. Most global cited documents

Figure 5 displays the Most Global Cited Documents graph, which shows the ten most cited documents globally in the analyzed studies. From the visualization, it can be seen that the article written by Escoto BEB in 2019 and published in the journal Sustainability is the publication with the highest number of citations, namely 23 times. This shows that the document has a significant influence on global scientific discourse and is a primary reference in the field studied. In second and third place are two documents that both received 17 citations, namely the article by Esparza-Aguilar JL in 2016 published in Tourism Economics, and the work of Kurniawati E in 2022 in the African

Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure. Both of these documents appear to make important contributions to the development of relevant theories or practices in the tourism and economic sectors.

Furthermore, there are three documents that each received 10 citations, namely articles (Kwan et al., 2020; Liang, 2021; Oster et al., 2023), which were published in journals that focus on the themes of sustainable tourism, environment, and development. The article by Astawa (2025) in *Cogent Economics and Finance* received nine citations, followed by two other publications from Choe (2025) and Bagus (2025), each with seven citations. Finally, the article by Kusumawardhani (2024) in the journal *J Hum Right Cult Leg Syst* recorded six citations. This distribution of citations shows that scientific contributions come from various years and various journals, reflecting the diversity of perspectives and the breadth of issues that are of concern to researchers in this study.

Most Relevant Affiliations

The most active higher education institutions publishing literature on this topic include Universitas Gadjah Mada (Indonesia), Chiang Mai University (Thailand), University of Pretoria (South Africa), and University of Trento (Italy). The involvement of these universities reflects their role in encouraging community-based research, local policy interventions, and social innovation in the tourism MSME sector.



Figure 6. Most relevant affiliations

Figure 6 shows the visualization of Most Relevant Affiliations, which are the affiliations of institutions that are most often involved in scientific publications based on the number of articles produced. From the graph, it can be seen that Sebelas Maret University is ranked at the top with a contribution of 10 articles, making it the most productive institution in the context of this study. This superiority indicates a high commitment from the institution in encouraging research, especially in fields that are relevant to the study theme. This position also shows that Sebelas Maret University can become one of the significant centers of scientific development, both nationally and internationally.

The other four institutions that each contributed six articles were the Research Center of Macroeconomics and Finance, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram, and University of Santo Tomas. The involvement of institutions across countries in this publication shows that the topics studied have global relevance, and that international collaboration is an important aspect in the production of contemporary science. Meanwhile, several other universities such as Semarang State University, Padjadjaran University, National Education University, and University

of North Sumatra each contributed four articles, indicating active involvement although on a more moderate scale. Bina Nusantara University completes this list with three scientific publications.

Wordcloud

Keyword analysis of all articles shows dominant terms such as "Tourism", "MSMEs", AND "Economic" This shows the main focus of the literature is not only on economic growth, but also on the social and ecological dimensions that are closely related to the role of MSMEs in the tourism sector.



Figure 7. Wordcloud

The wordcloud image above represents a visualization of the most frequently occurring keywords in the analyzed collection of scientific documents. In the context of this study, a larger word size indicates a higher frequency of occurrence, indicating that the topic has significant relevance and relevance in various publications. The words "Indonesia" and "ecotourism" appear to dominate the word cloud, indicating that Indonesia is the main research location and the theme of ecotourism is a central topic in various academic studies. This is in line with the global trend that emphasizes sustainable

development and the potential of natural tourism in Indonesia.

In addition, words such as "empowerment", "Mexico", and "North America" also appear in relatively large sizes, indicating a balanced attention to the empowerment of local communities and the involvement of other regions outside Southeast Asia, such as Latin America and North America. The word "empowerment" indicates a focus of research on increasing the capacity of individuals or communities in the tourism sector and the local economy. Topics such as "information systems", "policy making", "economic impact", and

"social development" indicate a multidisciplinary approach in this study, which not only emphasizes the tourism aspect, but also includes the realm of public policy, information technology, and socio-economic impacts.

Other keywords such as "covid-19", "sustainability", "entrepreneur", and "environmental impact" also reflect academic awareness of contemporary issues, including the impact of the pandemic on the tourism sector and the importance of entrepreneurship in local economic recovery. This word cloud reflects the dynamics and diversity of scientific approaches used in related studies, while also providing guidance for postgraduate students in understanding research trends, formulating research problems, and building conceptual frameworks that are relevant to current scientific developments.

Discussion

The results of the literature systematization in this study indicate that tourism MSMEs play a central role in supporting local economic development through various channels: increasing community income, creating jobs, strengthening cultural identity, and post-crisis recovery. The findings of 38 scientific documents reviewed consistently highlight the dual contribution of MSMEs—namely as economic entities as well as socio-cultural actors integrated with local communities. First, from an economic perspective, tourism MSMEs have been proven to be able to drive regional economic growth through direct involvement in the tourism value chain. Their

presence not only supplies the needs of tourists (accommodation, food, transportation), but also creates a multiplier effect on other sectors such as agriculture, crafts, and local services. This is in line with the findings of Widawski (2023) and Nguyen (2020) who emphasize the role of MSMEs in distributing economic benefits more evenly.

Second, the aspects of resilience and adaptation are important themes in post-COVID-19 pandemic discussions. Several studies highlight the ability of MSMEs to adapt to crisis conditions through community-based innovation and digital transformation. For example, studies by Brouder et al. (2020) and Prayag (2021) show that MSMEs with social networks and digital access are more resilient to disruption. The transformation towards a regenerative tourism model also strengthens the position of MSMEs as actors of change that prioritize ecological sustainability and social welfare (Lew, A., 2023). Third, from a policy and institutional perspective, support for tourism MSMEs still faces various challenges. Access to financing, managerial training, and favorable regulations are still major obstacles, especially in developing countries. However, this study also noted a shift in policy towards a participatory and collaborative approach involving universities, local governments, and NGOs in strengthening the capacity of MSMEs (Iskandar et al., 2023; Santos et al., 2021)

Fourth, social capital and community empowerment factors are the main determinants of MSME success in the long term. Digital literacy, local networks, and social

trust have been shown to strengthen MSMEs' ability to compete and survive. This concept is strengthened by the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach that places MSMEs in a dynamic relationship with their surroundings, both in terms of market, technology, and support structures. Interestingly, the literature also shows that there are geographical and thematic disparities in the distribution of studies. Countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam dominate the study cases, while regions such as Latin America and Africa are still underrepresented. This indicates the need for research expansion to other regions and a more inclusive approach to the local context. Overall, this discussion emphasizes that tourism MSMEs are not just small-scale economic actors, but are strategic development agents. In the future, strengthening tourism MSMEs needs to be directed not only at the economic side, but also at creating a support system that encourages innovation, social justice, and long-term sustainability.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that tourism MSMEs have a strategic role in supporting local economic development, both through direct contributions to the gross regional domestic product (GRDP) and in strengthening the social and cultural structures of local communities. Tourism MSMEs have proven to be key actors in creating jobs, empowering communities, and preserving local values. These findings strengthen the position of MSMEs as drivers of local transformation, especially when they are supported by

an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem—including access to capital, digitalization, social networks, and supportive policy interventions.

This study uncovers challenges such as limited access to financing, low managerial and digital literacy, and uneven policy attention across regions. A collaborative, cross-sectoral approach is needed between the government, academics, the private sector, and local communities to develop policies that support the competitiveness and sustainability of MSMEs. This study makes an important contribution to enriching the literature on tourism-based local economic development and can serve as a basis for developing more responsive and participatory policies. For future researchers, it is recommended to explore comparative studies across regions and expand the scope of methodologies to capture the dynamics of tourism MSMEs in greater depth and context.

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