

## **BETWEEN VISAS AND TOURISM: SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION, ANALYSIS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the relationship between visa policies and tourism, highlighting their relevance for global mobility and economic development. It aims to identify patterns and trends in scientific research on the topic, analysing how visa policies affect tourism flows and, consequently local economies. The methodology includes a bibliometric analysis of scientific production between 2000 and 2023, using Scopus, WoS and SciELO. The results highlight that visa policies have a significant impact on tourism, with implications for perceptions of safety, equity of access and sustainability. The implementation of technologies such as e-visa improves efficiency and user experience, although challenges remain in their widespread adoption. This analysis provides key information for designing more inclusive and effective public policies aimed at enhancing the benefits of global tourism while minimising its inequalities and adverse effects.

### **Keywords**

Visa Policies, SDG 8.9 - Sustainable Tourism, Bibliometric Analysis, International Human Mobility, Public Policies.

### **Resumo**

Este estudo examina a relação entre as políticas de visto e o turismo, destacando sua relevância para a mobilidade global e o desenvolvimento econômico. Seu objetivo é identificar padrões e tendências na pesquisa científica sobre o tema, analisando como as políticas de visto afetam os fluxos de turismo e, conseqüentemente as economias locais. A metodologia inclui uma análise bibliométrica da produção científica entre 2000 e 2023, usando Scopus, WoS e SciELO. Os resultados destacam que as políticas de visto têm um impacto significativo no turismo, com implicações para as percepções de segurança, equidade de acesso e sustentabilidade. A implementação de tecnologias como o visto eletrônico melhora a eficiência e a experiência do usuário, embora ainda haja desafios para sua adoção generalizada. Essa análise fornece informações importantes para a elaboração de políticas públicas mais



inclusivas e eficazes destinadas a aumentar os benefícios do turismo global e, ao mesmo tempo, minimizar suas desigualdades e efeitos adversos.

#### **Palavras-chave**

Vistos, ODS 8.9 – Turismo Sustentável, Análise bibliométrica, Mobilidade humana internacional, Políticas públicas.

#### **How to cite this article**

Ramos, Edgar Romario Aranibar & Allis, Thiago (2025). *Between Visas and Tourism: Scientific Production, Analysis, and Implications for Research*. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations*. VOL. 16, Nº. 2, November 2025-April 2026, pp. 405-428. DOI <https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.16.2.22>

**Article submitted on 7th January 2025 and accepted for publication on 1st August 2025.**





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### **Introduction**

In today's interconnected world, international mobility has become a cornerstone of socio-economic growth and cultural exchange (Aranibar & Olarte, 2025). Within this landscape, visa policies are far more than administrative procedures; they operate as pivotal instruments shaping tourist flows, cross-border interactions, and the global dynamics of human movement. Yet, the central problem persists: how can governments promote international tourism as a driver of development while simultaneously addressing pressing concerns of security, public health, sustainability, and migration control? This tension underscores the need for a deeper and more systematic analysis of the field.

Tourism, widely recognised as both an economic engine and a cultural phenomenon, has consistently demonstrated its capacity to generate employment, foster investment, and strengthen intercultural understanding. Policies of visa liberalisation and exemption programmes have stimulated arrivals and created tangible benefits for host economies (Whyte, 2008; Recchi et al., 2021; Abuhjeeleh, 2019). At the same time, restrictive or poorly calibrated measures risk producing adverse effects: they may heighten social inequities, exacerbate irregular migration, or strain destination infrastructures. Previous research (Neumayer, 2010; Song et al., 2012; Czaika & Neumayer, 2017) has shed light on these benefits and limitations, but further research is required to assess how these dynamics vary across contexts and to determine strategies that balance economic, social, and security imperatives.

Against this backdrop, the guiding research question of this paper is: what are the main patterns, trends, and thematic orientations of scientific production on visa policies and tourism, and what implications can be drawn for future research and policymaking? To answer this question, the study pursues three specific aims: first, to quantify and categorise the volume of academic output on the subject; second, to identify the dominant themes, methodologies, and disciplinary affiliations; and third, to evaluate the theoretical and practical contributions of this body of research.

Methodologically, the paper employs a bibliometric analysis combined with a systematic review of publications indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and SciELO between 2000 and 2023 in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Following the PRISMA framework, the process



ensured the rigorous identification, screening, and synthesis of relevant studies. Data analysis was supported by bibliometric tools such as Bibliometrix and VOSviewer, enabling the mapping of research streams and thematic interconnections.

The significance of this work lies in its contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of how visa policies intersect with tourism, informing the design of inclusive, efficient, and context-sensitive policies. By revealing both the strengths and the limitations of existing research, this paper advances scholarly debates while offering practical insights for policymakers, international organisations, and tourism managers concerned with mobility governance.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The theoretical framework situates visas within broader discussions of tourism, mobility, and regulation. The methodology section details the bibliometric and systematic review approach. The results are presented through quantitative and qualitative analyses of the literature, followed by a discussion that contextualises these findings within academic and policy debates. The paper concludes by outlining the main implications, limitations, and potential avenues for future research.

## **Theoretical Framework**

International tourism is a multidimensional phenomenon deeply conditioned by the regulatory frameworks of host countries, among which visa policies play a decisive role (Aranibar, 2024). By determining travellers' entry for purposes ranging from leisure and education to business and family reunification, visas not only shape the volume of arrivals but also influence their origin, duration of stay, and overall economic contribution. Restrictions such as excessive requirements, lengthy bureaucratic procedures, or high processing fees act as barriers that constrain mobility and generate asymmetries in global travel opportunities (Karaman, 2016; Artal-Tur et al., 2016). Conversely, innovations such as electronic visas (e-visas) have reduced administrative burdens, improved perceptions of security, and facilitated broader access to destinations (Recchi et al., 2021).

Despite these advances, a review of academic databases reveals a scarcity of studies that explicitly examine the nexus between tourism and visa policies. Among this limited body of work, Young et al. (2023) highlight the case of a Liberian patient whose access to treatment for advanced head and neck cancer was severely delayed by the complexities of the U.S. visa process. Beyond the immediate health consequences, this case illustrates how restrictive regimes can undermine equity and efficiency in the delivery of cross-border services, raising ethical and administrative dilemmas that extend beyond medical tourism. Such examples underscore the broader challenge of ensuring that visa systems do not reproduce global inequalities by privileging certain categories of travellers while systematically disadvantaging others.

Although some previous studies have addressed specific aspects—such as medical tourism, labour mobility, or regional waiver programmes—there remains a lack of integrative research that comprehensively analyses how visa regimes shape international tourism. Addressing this gap requires moving beyond technical descriptions of entry requirements and situating visas as political and social mechanisms that structure global



mobility. In this sense, incorporating perspectives from international relations, public policy, and law becomes essential for understanding how visas function as instruments of diplomacy, sovereignty, and governance, not merely as administrative tools.

Indeed, visa frameworks often reflect broader geopolitical logics. Initiatives such as the Schengen Agreement in Europe (Wellings, 2022), or MERCOSUR's Residence Agreement in South America (Rivarola, 2021), exemplify how states use visas to negotiate reciprocity, integration, and security. These cases show that liberalisation or restriction policies transcend their immediate effects on tourism flows, operating as signals of political alignment, cooperation, or exclusion (Anastasiadou, 2011). The absence of such interdisciplinary approaches in the literature limits our understanding of the deep interconnections between tourism, mobility, and the international system.

In that line, technological innovations are reshaping the governance of mobility. The integration of digital platforms, big data, and predictive analytics into visa systems offers governments new opportunities to anticipate tourist behaviours, enhance border security, and streamline entry processes (Alauddin & Hassan, 2021). E-visa platforms, biometric identification, and AI-driven risk assessments represent a convergence between e-government and e-tourism that can expand accessibility while simultaneously raising questions of privacy, surveillance, and digital inequality (Adukaite et al, 2014). These developments confirm that visa policies must increasingly be analysed not only through the lens of tourism management but also within broader debates on technology, governance, and human rights.

Taken together, this theoretical framework positions visa policies as complex and multifaceted instruments at the intersection of tourism, governance, and global mobility. By bridging disciplinary gaps and highlighting emerging challenges, it establishes the conceptual basis for analysing the scientific production on visas and tourism, thereby illuminating both the opportunities and limitations that these regimes present for more inclusive and sustainable forms of international travel.

## Method

This study employed a bibliometric analysis using a systematic approach to explore the scientific output on the impact of visa policies on tourism. This method allows for the identification of trends, publication patterns, and key contributions within the field, as indicated by Page et al. (2021). The PRISMA method was implemented to conduct a detailed process of identification, selection, evaluation, and synthesis of relevant studies, following the approach used in similar studies, such as those by Hermosa and Arco (2023) and Quispe et al. (2023). Table 1 provides further details about the procedures.

The document search was conducted in three internationally recognised databases: Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and SciELO, targeting publications in English, Spanish, and Portuguese from 2000 to 2023. The strings employed were "visa AND touris\*", "visa AND turis\*", and "visto AND turis\*" to the title fields, yielding a total of 33, 22, and 1 documents, respectively, prior to the removal of duplicates and the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The search results are detailed in Table 1, which includes a description of the selected documents by database, publication type, and analysed indicators.



**Table 1.** Search Criteria and Analysis Parameters

Database	Scopus	Web of Science	SciELO
<b>Language</b>	English, Spanish, Portuguese		
<b>Analysis Period</b>	2000 – 2023		
<b>Consultation Date</b>	16 September 2024		
<b>Document Types</b>	Scientific articles, conference proceedings, and book chapters		
<b>Source Type</b>	Any indexed source		
<b>Search Field and Terms</b>	TITLE (visa AND touris*) OR TITLE (visa AND turis*) OR TITLE (visto AND turis*)		
<b>Results</b>	23 articles 5 book chapters 2 conference papers 3 review articles Total: 33	19 articles 1 news item 1 conference paper 1 review article Total: 22	1 article Total: 1
<b>Bibliometric Indicators</b>	Quantity Indicators: - Annual scientific output - Scientific output by country - Productivity by institution type Impact Indicators: - Most cited contributions - Impact factor of journals with the highest publication Quality Indicators: - Keywords and relation to other topics - Main research streams or trends (thematic map)		

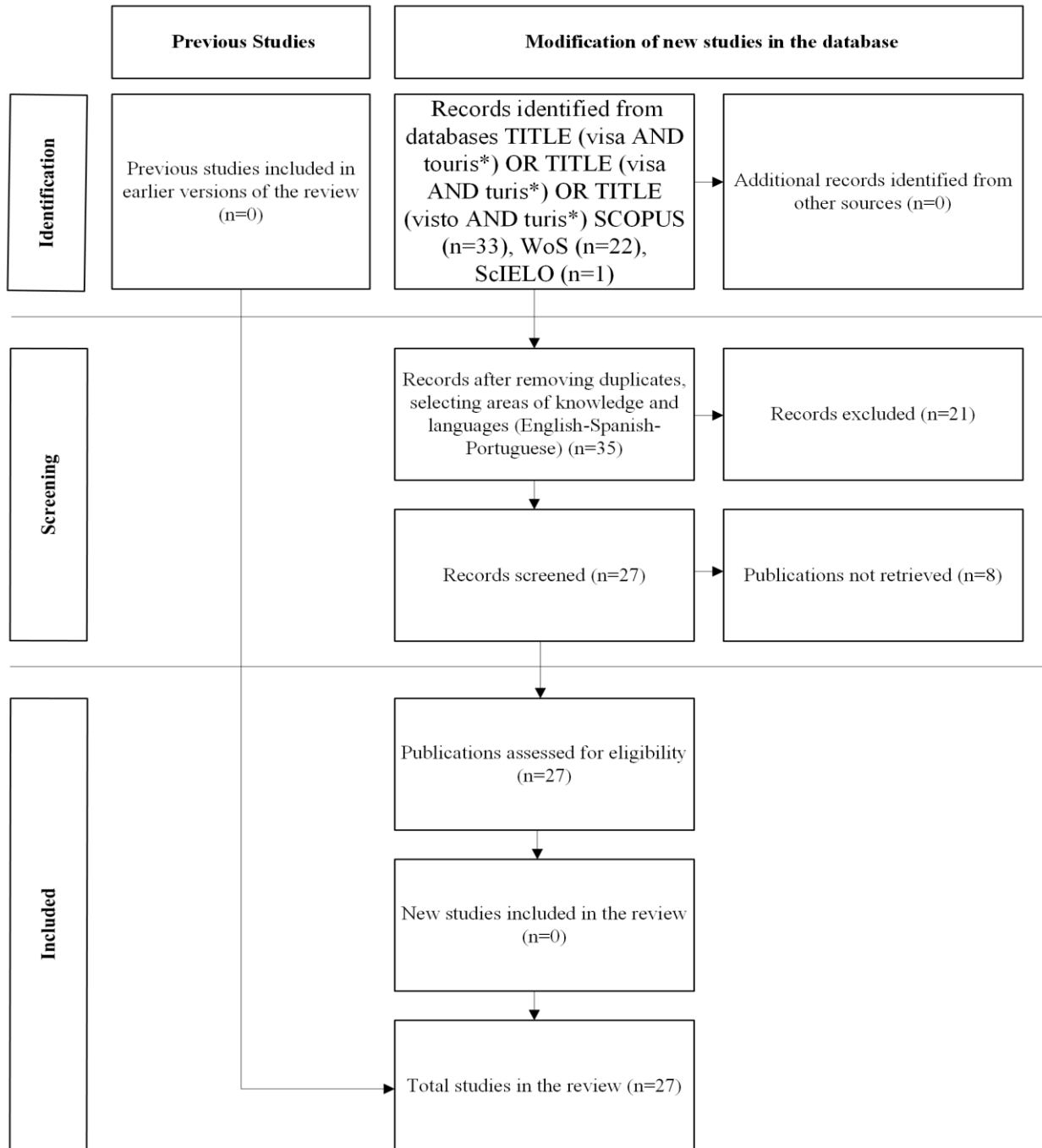
Source: Own elaboration.

Table 1 summarises the methodology used for searching and classifying the documents. From a total of 33 records obtained in Scopus, 22 in WoS, and 1 in SciELO, scientific articles, book chapters, and conference contributions were identified. This table also outlines the bibliometric indicators employed: quantity indicators, such as annual scientific output and productivity by institution type; impact indicators, including the most cited contributions and the impact factor of the journals; and quality indicators, such as the relationship between keywords and emerging thematic trends.

Figure 1 illustrates the systematic review process through a PRISMA flow diagram. This process began with 56 records, which, after rigorous screening based on relevance, duplicate removal, and accessibility, resulted in a final set of 27 documents. The screening stage involved reviewing titles and abstracts to ensure thematic consistency with the study's objective. Subsequently, an exhaustive evaluation of the selected documents was carried out to determine their eligibility and relevance.



**Figure 1.** PRISMA Flow Diagram on Tourism and Visas



Source: Own elaboration.

Specialised tools such as Bibliometrix and VOSviewer were utilised for data analysis, enabling the mapping of key research streams and thematic interconnections. These tools facilitated the examination of quantity, impact, and quality indicators, providing a comprehensive overview of the dynamics within the field of study and their implications for future research.



The combination of Table 1 and Figure 1 ensures a thorough representation of the methodological process, allowing for the replication and validation of the results obtained. This systematic approach guarantees that the findings significantly contribute to the understanding of the intersections between visa policies and tourism.

## Results

### Quantitative Meta-Analysis: 2000–2023

The quantitative synthesis of the 27 studies published between 2000 and 2023 reveals a diversified distribution of research efforts across six thematic categories (see Table 2: Thematic Categorization). *Impact of Visa Policies on Tourist Flows* emerges as the dominant area of inquiry, representing approximately 51% of the sample. Within this category, studies such as Chi et al. (2022) and Yudhistira et al. (2021) consistently report increases in arrivals ranging from 5% to 25% following visa liberalisation measures. The evidence demonstrates not only a significant positive elasticity of demand to visa exemptions, but also heterogeneous effects: while non-traditional destinations often benefited most, traditional hubs occasionally experienced diversion effects, illustrating the complexity of policy outcomes.

*Technology and Visa Processes* represents approximately 11% of the corpus, with studies focusing on the digitisation of visa services. The works from Bangladesh (Akhter et al., 2020; Alauddin & Hassan, 2021) report measurable improvements in processing times and tourist satisfaction following the adoption of online systems, while Adukaite et al. (2014) provide comparative data on the completeness and accessibility of visa information across 165 national tourism offices. Quantitatively, these contributions indicate that digitalisation reduces bureaucratic barriers, potentially broadening inbound flows by improving information quality and transaction efficiency, though significant variation persists between developed and developing contexts.

A further 11% of the reviewed studies fall under *Visa Policies Related to Tourism and Health*. Quantitative evidence here is particularly salient in the context of medical tourism and public health management. Young et al. (2019) document the growing demand for medical visas to the United States, while Weinberg et al. (2016) identify tuberculosis transmission risks among temporary visa holders employed in the U.S. tourism industry. Earlier findings from India (Chinai & Goswami, 2007) estimate the rising contribution of medical tourism to national GDP, with projections tied directly to the facilitation of visa access. These results confirm that health-related visa frameworks constitute both an economic opportunity and a regulatory challenge, especially in balancing patient mobility with public health safeguards.

Regarding *Migration and Tourism*, accounts for around 11% of the reviewed works. Quantitative assessments within this group, particularly in the United States, Australia and Portugal, highlight the extent to which visa-dependent programmes structure labour markets in tourism. For example, Terry (2018) reports recurrent patterns of precarity among J-1 and H-2B visa holders, while Robertson (2016) quantifies the overlapping contributions of student and labour mobility through the 417 and 485 visas in Australia. Together, these findings emphasise that migration-related visas sustain critical segments





of the tourism workforce, though often under uneven and vulnerable conditions, which in turn affects productivity and service quality in destination economies.

The category *Tourism and Security Issues* comprises 8% of the total, with a marked emphasis on the dual role of visas as facilitators and barriers under conditions of perceived risk. Kolker and Platzer (2021), for instance, estimate that nationals from Visa Waiver Program countries contributed nearly USD 190 billion to the U.S. economy, underscoring the magnitude of security-related visa facilitation. Complementarily, Cheng (2012) demonstrates that demand in Hong Kong is highly sensitive not only to visa policies but also to external shocks such as SARS, where the impact of health security concerns outweighed economic variables. This category quantifies the delicate balance between liberalisation and control, with evidence pointing to both large gains and significant vulnerabilities.

Finally, *Economic Implications* accounts for 8% of the studies, consolidating research that directly measures macroeconomic impacts of visa policies. Pham et al. (2018) estimate that a rise in visa fees for Chinese tourists would generate GDP losses exceeding potential revenue gains, with the elasticity of demand demonstrating a stronger negative effect than projected fiscal recovery. Similarly, Li and Song (2013) apply econometric models to show that restrictive visa measures during the Beijing Olympics produced unexpected negative economic externalities, contradicting the expected tourism boom. Together, these results provide robust quantitative evidence that poorly calibrated visa regimes can generate long-term inefficiencies and undermine the strategic role of tourism as a driver of national growth.

In terms of research provenance, the countries that contribute most significantly to the study of the relationship between visas and tourism are the United States, South Korea, and the United Kingdom, accounting for approximately 60% of the reviewed publications. Authors from the United States lead in studies on the economic effects of visa liberalisation on international tourist flows, while South Korea focuses on reciprocity agreements and their impact on regional tourism. The United Kingdom, in turn, contributes research exploring the relationship between tourism accessibility and security perceptions, a key topic in the post-pandemic scenario. Other countries such as Spain, Australia, and Indonesia have also made significant contributions in this area, examining both the economic and social and cultural effects of visa policies.

Moreover, there is a relatively stable trend in scientific production on visas and tourism over the past five years, especially between 2019 and 2023. During this period, studies have increasingly adopted quantitative approaches and broad data analyses to better understand how visa exemption policies affect tourist behaviour and the local economies of tourist destinations. This trend reflects a continued interest in balancing the benefits of simplified access with the need to ensure security and sustainability, adapting to current challenges in international tourism.

**Table 2.** Thematic Categorization

#	Title	Authors
	<b>Impact of Visa Policies on Tourist Flows</b>	
1	Regional visa-waiver program for open tourism development	Kim, T., Bae, E., & Kim, D. (2023).



2	Visa waivers, multilateral resistance and international tourism: some evidence from Israel	Beenstock, M., Felsenstein, D., & Rubin, Z. (2015)
3	Causal effect of tourist visa exemption schemes on international tourist arrivals	Chi, P.-Y., Lee, K.-C., & Chang, K.-I. (2022).
4	Heterogeneous effects of visa exemption policy on international tourist arrivals: Evidence from Indonesia	Yudhistira, M., Sofiyandi, Y., Indriyani, W., & Pratama, A. P. (2021).
5	"Your papers for a tourist visa": A literary-biographical consideration of isaac bashevis singer in Warsaw, 1923-1935	Stromberg, D. (2021).
6	Visa-free travel to sri kartarpur sahib: Historic pilgrimage and religious tourism from indian punjab to Pakistan punjab	Chawla, T., Hassan, R., & Kaur, D. (2020).
7	The Impact of Tourist Visas on Intercontinental South-South Migration: Ecuador's Policy of "Open Doors" as a Quasi-Experiment	Freier, L., & Holloway, K. (2019)
8	The role of visa exemption in Chinese tourists' decision-making: a model of goal-directed behavior	Song, H., Lee, C.-K., Reisinger, Y., & Xu, H.-L. (2017)
9	Do travel visa requirements impede tourist travel?	Lawson, R., & Roychoudhury, S. (2016)
10	The pernicious impact of visa restrictions on inbound tourism: the case of Turkey	Karaman, A. (2016)
11	Examining the impact of visa restrictions on international tourist flows using panel data	Artal-Tur, A., Pallardó-López, V., & Requena-Silvente, F (2016)
12	The ideologies of national security and tourist visa restrictions	Webster, C., & Ivanov, S. (2016)
13	Would a single regional visa encourage tourist arrivals in southern Africa?	Douglas, A., Lubbe, B., & Kruger, E. (2012)
14	The impact of visa-free entry on outbound tourism: A case study of South Korean travellers visiting Japan	Lee, C.-K., Song, H.-J., & Bendle, L. (2010)
<b>Technology and Visa Processes</b>		
1	Technology Application for Visa and Immigration for Tourists in Bangladesh+B24	Akman, E., Karaman, A., & Kuzey, C. (2021)
2	Visa and Immigration for Tourists in Bangladesh	Akhter, N., Hassan, A., & Alauddin, M. (2020)
3	When e-gov deals with tourists: The case of visa information	Adukaite, A., Gazizova, E., & Cantoni, L. (2014)
<b>Visa Policies Related to Tourism and Health</b>		
1	Review of inbound medical tourism and legal details of obtaining a visa for treatment of head and neck cancer	Young, L., Vimawala, S., Ahmad, N., Kushnir, V., Bonawitz, S., Brody, J., Enriquez, M., & Koshkareva, Y. (2019)
2	Tuberculosis among temporary visa holders working in the tourism industry — United States, 2012–2014	Weinberg, M., Cherry, C., Lipnitz, J., Nienstadt, L., King-Todd, A., Haddad, M. B., Russell, M., Wong, D., Davidson, P., McFadden, J., & Miller, C. (2016)
3	Medical visas mark growth of Indian medical tourism.	Chinai, R., & Goswami, R. (2007)
<b>Migration and Tourism</b>		
1	Mobility through investment: Economics, tourism, or lifestyle migration? Narratives of Chinese and Brazilian golden visa holders in Portugal	De Fatima Amante, M., & Rodrigues, I. (2022)
2	Precarity and guest work in U.S. tourism: J-1 and H-2B visa programs	Terry, W. (2018)
3	Intertwined Mobilities of Education, Tourism and Labour: The Consequences of 417 and 485 Visas in Australia	Robertson, S. (2016)
<b>Tourism and Security Issues</b>		
1	Adding countries to the visa waiver program: Effects on national security and tourism	Kolker, A., & Platzer, M. (2021)
2	Tourism demand in Hong Kong: Income, prices, and visa restrictions	Cheng, K. (2012)
<b>Economic Implications</b>		
1	The economic impacts of a changing visa fee for Chinese tourists to Australia	Pham, T., Nghiem, S., & Dwyer, L. (2018)



2	Economic impacts of visa restrictions on tourism: A case of two events in china	Li, S., & Song, H. (2013)
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Source: Own elaboration.

Table 3 presents an annual breakdown of scientific production on tourism and visas between 2007 and 2023. Over these years, variability in the number of publications is observed, with periods of high and low production reflecting the fluctuating interest of the academic community in this field of study. Since 2007, when two publications were recorded, interest remained moderate, with significant peaks in 2016 and 2021, when 8 and 4 articles were published, respectively. This increase could be associated with changes in international policies or events that directly impacted mobility and tourism, such as the tightening or easing of visa issuance in various regions of the world.

**Table 3.** Annual Scientific Production on Tourism and Visas

2007	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
2	1	2	2	3	1	8	2	2	2	2	4	2	1

Source: Own elaboration.

Although the years 2020 and 2021 coincided with the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and severe disruptions to international mobility, the four works published in 2021 (n=4) do not explicitly address pandemic-related restrictions or recovery strategies. Instead, their thematic orientations show continuity with pre-existing lines of research. For example, Yudhistira et al. (2021) measured heterogeneous effects of visa exemptions in Indonesia, Stromberg (2021) offered a literary-biographical reflection on mobility barriers in interwar Europe, Alauddin and Hassan (2021) examined digital innovations in Bangladesh, and Kolker and Platzer (2021) analysed the U.S. Visa Waiver Program in the context of security, with a short light in health issues. These studies reveal that the academic production of 2021 did not shift to directly incorporate COVID-19 as an explanatory framework, but rather extended ongoing debates on flows, governance, technology, and security. The clustering of publications in this year thus reflects productivity in established research lines rather than an immediate response to the pandemic.

By contrast, the single paper published in 2023 illustrates a different dynamic. Its focus on a regional visa exemption programme in Jeju demonstrates that scholarly attention remained concentrated on the structural and long-term effects of visa facilitation rather than short-term pandemic contingencies (Kim et al., 2023). The decline to one publication may therefore be interpreted less as a sign of “post-pandemic stabilisation” and more as an indication of thematic reorientation towards context-specific policy experiments and regional governance frameworks. The absence of direct engagement with COVID-19 between 2021 and 2023 underscores that, despite the pandemic’s evident disruption of tourism, academic research on visas did not immediately integrate this factor into its analytical core. Instead, the field appears to have prioritised structural



questions of accessibility, technology, labour, and security, leaving the pandemic as a contextual backdrop rather than a central object of study.

Table 4 highlights the institutions and authors with the highest production in tourism and visa-related topics. The university with the most contributions is The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, with a total of two publications attributed to the author Lee, C., who appears to be one of the most active academics in this field. This institution, along with others such as Clemson University and Kyung Hee University, represents a significant source of knowledge in the domain of tourism and visas, specifically in the United States, Hong Kong, and South Korea.

**Table 4.** Leading Producers in Tourism and Visa Research

No.	Institution(s)	Author(s)	Country(ies)	Source
1	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (2)	Lee, C. (2)   School of Tourism and Entertainment, Kyung Hee University (South Korea)	United States of America (7)	Tourism Geographies (2)
2	Clemson University (2)	Hassan, A. (2)   The Tourism Society (United Kingdom)	Hong Kong (5)	Journal of Travel Research (2)
3	Kyung Hee University (2)	-Aluddin, M. (2)   Department of Business Administration, International Islamic University Chittagong (Bangladesh)	South Korea (3)	Tourism Economics (2)
4	City University of Hong Kong (2)	Song, H. (2)   College of Tourism and Fashion, Pai Chai University (South Korea)	United Kingdom (3)	Annals of Tourism Research (2)
5	Clemson University (2)	-	Bangladesh (2)	-
6	International Islamic University (2)	-	Turkey (2)	-
7	-	-	Australia (2)	-

Highest Production

Source: Own elaboration.

The analysis of these results indicates that research on tourism and visa policies is relatively dispersed rather than concentrated, with no single institution or author exerting clear dominance. Each of the universities and scholars listed with two contributions represents about 7.40% of the total corpus, while those with three contributions account for 11%, and the highest producers, with five and seven works respectively, represent



18% and 25.93%. This distribution shows that although there are recurrent contributors such as Lee, Song, Hassan, and Alauddin, academic production is spread across institutions in Asia, the United States, and other regions. In terms of disciplinary affiliations, the leading authors are rooted primarily in tourism, hospitality, and business administration, but notably, the field of international relations is absent, despite its evident relevance for analysing mobility, sovereignty, and cross-border governance. The journals where these works are published, such as *Tourism Geographies*, *Journal of Travel Research*, and *Tourism Economics*, emphasise quantitative and policy-oriented analyses centred on tourist flows, visa restrictions, and economic impacts. Taken together, these patterns suggest that the corpus, while modest in volume, is plural in institutional and regional representation, yet still narrow in disciplinary scope, leaving space for a stronger incorporation of perspectives from international relations, public policy, and law.

Table 5 displays the studies that have had the greatest impact in the field of tourism and visas, measured by the number of citations received. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University once again leads in this area, with research by authors such as Goswami, R., achieving up to 116 citations. This high level of impact suggests that the research from this institution has significantly influenced the field, possibly due to the relevance of its findings for visa policy and its implications for tourism.

**Table 5.** Highest Impact in Tourism and Visa Research

Highest Impact	No.	Institution(s)	Author(s)	Country(ies)
	1	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (86)	Goswami, R. (116)	Hong Kong (145)
	2	Suleyman Sah University (82)	Chinai, R. (116)	United States of America (119)
	3	Marmara University (82)	Lee, C. (90)	South Korea (90)
	4	Massey University (82)	Balli, H. (82)	United Kingdom (44)
	5	Hang Seng Management College (82)	Balli F. (82)	Turkey (22)
Most Influential Articles	No.	Title	Author(s)	Citations
	1	Medical visas mark growth of Indian medical tourism	Chinai, R. Goswami, R.	116
	2	Impacts of exported Turkish soap operas and visa-free entry on inbound tourism to Turkey	Balli, F., Balli, H., Cebeci, K.	82
	3	Tourism demand in Hong Kong: Income, prices, and visa restrictions	Cheng, K.	59
4	The role of visa exemption in Chinese tourists' decision-making: a model of goal-directed behavior	Song, H., Lee, C., Reisinger, Y., Xu, H.	54	



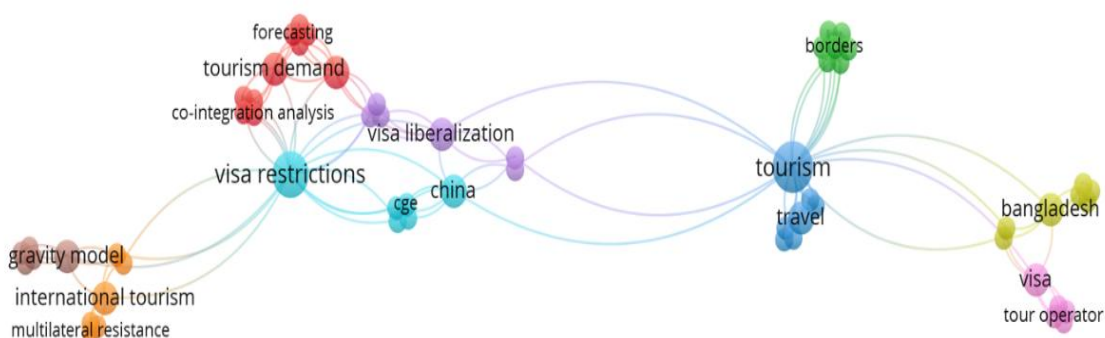
5	Economic impacts of visa restrictions on tourism: A case of two events in china	Li, S., Song, H.	44
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Source: Own elaboration.

The analysis of these results shows that influence in tourism and visa research is not measured only by the number of publications but also by their citation impact, with the numbers in parentheses indicating the total citations attributed to each institution, author, or country. For example, Goswami and Chinai's joint work on medical visas has accumulated 116 citations, making it the most influential contribution in the field, while Balli et al.'s study on Turkish soap operas and visa-free entry has 82 citations, and Cheng's work on Hong Kong tourism demand has 59. This distribution suggests a relatively dispersed field where no single actor dominates, as institutions such as The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Suleyman Sah University, Marmara University, Massey University, and Hang Seng Management College.

On the other hand, Figure 2 presents a mapping of the main research themes in tourism and visas, categorised using relevant keywords. This diagram illustrates the connections between key terms such as "visa liberalisation," "tourism demand," "visa restrictions," "tour operator," and "borders," which cluster to represent different research foci in this area. The visualisation identifies relationships between concepts and how they group into various themes, offering a structured view of the predominant and emerging topics at the intersection of tourism and visa policies.

**Figure 2.** Themes in Tourism and Visas Based on Keywords



Source: Own elaboration

The keyword mapping reflects a thematic organisation highlighting several areas of focus. Terms such as "visa liberalisation" and "visa restrictions" are central themes strongly connected to "tourism demand" and "international tourism", indicating academic interest in how visa policies directly influence tourism demand. Visa liberalisation policies and travel restrictions are analysed in the context of their impact on international tourist flows



and destination accessibility, particularly in countries like China and Bangladesh, which are mentioned in the diagram.

Other terms such as "borders" and "travel" suggest the connection between mobility and the physical and regulatory boundaries faced by tourists, while terms like "tour operator" suggest a focus on the actors who facilitate or mediate the travel experience within the context of visa restrictions. Additionally, keywords related to econometric and analytical models, such as "gravity model" and "co-integration analysis", indicate the use of advanced quantitative tools to study tourism demand and flow dynamics.

Specific topics such as "visa-free travel" and "visa exemption" demonstrate interest in the effects of visa exemptions on tourism, particularly in emerging markets and destinations aiming to enhance their appeal through more flexible access policies. The combination of these keywords highlights the complexity of the interactions between tourism, mobility, and regulation, as well as the growing interest in travel facilitation policies that seek to balance security and accessibility to maximise tourism's economic impact.

### **Qualitative Meta-Analysis: Emerging Themes in Visas and Tourism**

Analysing predominant themes and their trends is particularly relevant in bibliometric studies, as it enables an understanding of the evolution and connections within a field of research (Trip et al., 2021). In this context, the thematic development within this area of knowledge is discussed below.

### **Impact of Visa Policies on Tourist Flows**

Visa policies represent a critical element in the international mobility of tourists and the configuration of global tourist flows. Previous studies show that these policies significantly influence the number of international arrivals and the choice of tourist destinations. Visa restrictions, which increase the cost and time required to obtain entry permits, can act as barriers for potential tourists, discouraging travel to countries with more restrictive policies. This particularly affects economies that rely on tourism as a source of income (Chi et al., 2022; Yudhistira et al., 2021; Stromberg, 2021). According to Song et al. (2017) and Artal-Tur et al. (2016), it is estimated that visa restrictions reduce bilateral tourist flows by an average of 40%, while their absence can increase flows to alternative destinations by 17%.

The impact of visa policies also depends on the region and economic context. In OECD countries, the implementation of visa exemptions has been shown to contribute to increased arrivals and tourism revenue, although this relationship is not always linear. Chi et al. (2022) and Freier and Holloway (2019) highlight that factors such as the quality of tourism services and the perception of safety play a key role in tourists' final decision-making. In developing countries, such as Ecuador, the opening of borders for tourism has brought economic benefits but also challenges, including an increase in irregular migration. This indicates that, in some cases, visa exemptions must be implemented cautiously to balance the benefits of tourism with local security concerns (Chawla et al., 2020; Webster and Ivanov, 2016).



National case studies provide evidence of the heterogeneous effects of visa policies. In Indonesia, for example, visa exemptions have shown varied effects depending on the country of origin of tourists and specific destinations within the country. This increase was notably higher in less traditional destinations and among tourists from developed countries, suggesting the need for tailored strategies to maximise the benefits of such policies (Yudhistira et al., 2021; Freier and Holloway, 2019). Similarly, the Chinese and Korean markets demonstrate that the expectation of visa exemptions can influence travel intentions, encouraging visits to destinations with flexible access policies. This underscores the importance of combining visa exemption policies with promotional campaigns and improvements in tourism service infrastructure to optimise their economic impact (Lawson and Roychoudhury, 2016; Lee et al., 2010).

In addition to general visa policies, visa waiver programmes emerge as a crucial tool for facilitating tourism from specific nationalities and mitigating traditional barriers that limit the flow of international visitors. These programmes, by reducing costs and simplifying entry procedures, have proven effective in generating significant increases in tourist arrivals. A notable example is Israel, where partial and full visa waivers increased tourism by 48% and 118%, respectively, demonstrating how the removal of restrictions can catalyse tourism and thereby contribute to the economic development of strategic destinations (Beenstock et al., 2015).

In the context of specific regional programmes, the visa waiver programme in Jeju, South Korea, stands out as a unilateral initiative applied solely to this region. Implemented to boost tourism in Jeju, this programme allowed visa-free access for tourists from certain countries, with a positive impact on tourism demand for the island. The data reflect how such programmes, when aligned with regional development policies, can significantly increase visits, despite challenges such as the need for direct flights to the destination or visa-free transit policies at selected airports to facilitate access (Kim et al., 2023).

At the regional level, initiatives such as the unified visa for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have been proposed to facilitate cross-border tourism and simplify the entry process. Inspired by the Schengen visa system, this policy could reduce barriers and boost tourism in less developed countries, where international tourist flows remain low due to factors such as perceived insecurity and limited infrastructure (Douglas et al., 2012). These schemes not only promote bloc-wide tourism but also facilitate trade and other cross-border interactions that can generate significant economic and social benefits for local communities.

Similarly, the case of visa waiver programmes in Europe, such as the Schengen Agreement, demonstrates how coordinated and multilateral policies can foster not only tourism but also economic development and regional integration. By eliminating border controls between member countries, Schengen has promoted the free mobility of people, goods, and services, establishing itself as a reference model for removing barriers to tourism and trade on a larger scale (Beenstock et al., 2015).

The relationship between South Korea and Japan is a clear example of the benefits of visa waivers in a high-demand context. Following the implementation of the visa waiver in 2006, the number of South Korean visitors to Japan increased by 25% in the second year, resulting in a significant increase in tourism sector revenues. This exemplifies the economic potential of such policies in established tourism markets and reinforces the





importance of analysing their impact in each context to maximise their benefits (Lee et al., 2010; Karaman, 2016).

In this way, the elimination or simplification of visa policies can serve as a strategic tool to promote international tourism. However, their effectiveness depends on a comprehensive approach that considers security factors, infrastructure, and destination image. Countries with well-planned visa strategies can benefit significantly but must consider the particularities of their context and adapt their promotion and management policies to maximise the economic and social potential of tourist flows (Studzińska, 2014; Balli et al., 2013).

### **Technology and Visa Processes**

The integration of advanced technologies in visa processes has been essential for improving efficiency and accessibility in international mobility, with significant implications for tourism. Akhter et al. (2020) argue that e-Government and e-Tourism platforms, which facilitate the electronic management of visa procedures, have significantly simplified tourist access to various destinations by reducing time and entry requirements. In this regard, Adukaite et al. (2020) add that tourism websites in various countries provide detailed information on visa applications, including steps, timelines, and required documents. This digitalisation has improved the relationship between tourists and governmental authorities, enabling more effective travel planning by making information accessible from anywhere.

The quality of the information provided on these websites is a critical aspect for the success of e-Visa systems, as a clear and comprehensive presentation of requirements directly influences the tourist's experience and perception of the destination. Alauddin and Hassan (2021) emphasise that quality information on digital channels helps overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, which is essential for hassle-free access. The ease of applying for a visa online and obtaining permission without needing to visit an embassy represents progress not only in terms of accessibility but also in optimising the resources of authorities.

Moreover, the use of big data and predictive analytics in visa technology systems enables governments to anticipate tourist behaviour patterns and adjust their policies and services in real time (Akhter et al., 2020). These advanced tools facilitate more secure and efficient management of tourist flows, helping to balance accessibility with security. In this context, Adukaite et al. (2020) note that the digitalisation of visa processes within the realm of e-Tourism fosters a convergence of user-oriented technological and governmental efforts, with the potential for global expansion towards more accessible and secure tourism.

### **Visa Policies Related to Tourism and Health**

The intersection between visa policies and medical tourism plays a crucial role in accessing specialised healthcare treatments. It is highlighted that international patients face numerous obstacles in the process of obtaining medical visas, often delaying access to urgent treatments. Young et al. (2019) discuss an illustrative case in which a patient



from Liberia with advanced head and neck cancer had to overcome complex legal and administrative barriers to receive treatment in the United States, underscoring the need to simplify processes to facilitate quicker access to international medical care.

In addition, visa policies related to public health have been adapted in some countries to address the transmission of infectious diseases. According to the policy analysis of tourist destinations by Weinberg et al. (2016), certain countries have implemented medical examination requirements as a prerequisite for obtaining visas. This approach aims to mitigate the risks associated with communicable diseases, though the inconsistent application of these policies has limited their effectiveness. Notably, the need for a coordinated international framework to ensure uniform health checks for travellers is emphasised.

Furthermore, medical tourism has also been promoted as an economic development strategy in countries that have adopted specific medical visas. These visas, designed to facilitate the entry of patients seeking advanced treatments, have been successfully implemented in countries such as India, attracting thousands of medical tourists annually. However, Chinai and Goswami (2007) point out that, while these policies generate significant revenue, their impact on the equity of the local healthcare system remains a matter of debate, as access for the local population could be affected in favour of medical tourists.

### **Economic Implications**

Visa policies have a direct impact on national economies, particularly in sectors reliant on tourism. According to Pham et al. (2018), increases in visa fees can deter tourists, negatively affecting the gross domestic product (GDP) of host countries. An example is Australia, where the implementation of multiple-entry visas with high fees led to a 21% decline in Chinese tourist arrivals, resulting in significant economic losses that exceeded the revenue generated by visa fees. This case underscores the need for balanced visa policies that maximise revenue without compromising tourist demand.

International events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics highlight the complex interactions between visa policies and economic benefits. During this event, visa restrictions significantly reduced tourism revenue, causing losses of approximately \$964 million (Li and Song, 2013). However, easing visa policies can reverse these trends, as projections indicate that relaxing restrictions could lead to a significant increase in global tourism and generate billions in additional revenue. These findings emphasise the importance of designing visa policies that balance mobility facilitation with security, thereby optimising economic benefits for host economies.

### **Tourism and Security Issues**

International tourism depends not only on open and facilitative migration policies but also on the perception of safety in tourist destinations. Security policies associated with visa waiver programmes, such as the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) in the United States, are notable for their dual benefits: promoting tourism while maintaining high security standards. According to Kolker and Platzer (2020), the VWP imposes stringent security



requirements, such as the mandatory use of electronic passports and participation in information-sharing systems on terrorism and crime via INTERPOL. This dual function aims to balance tourism promotion with protection against potential threats.

On the other hand, Cheng (2012) highlights that the perception of risk is a crucial determinant of tourism demand, particularly following events such as terrorist attacks or health crises. The implementation of visible security measures, such as biometric controls and pre-travel checks, can alleviate tourists' fears and foster greater confidence in destinations. This is especially relevant in contexts where tourism is a major source of income, such as Hong Kong, which has implemented specific policies to ensure tourist safety while promoting economic growth in the sector.

### **Migration and Tourism**

The relationship between migration and tourism has been reinforced by temporary mobility programmes that integrate work, study, and travel, reshaping labour and social dynamics in host countries. In Australia, for example, temporary work visas such as categories 417 and 485 allow young people to work, study, and travel, generating intersections between tourism and migration policies where work and educational experiences contribute to broader economic goals, such as labour diversification and regional tourism growth (Robertson, 2016). In the United States, programmes such as J-1 and H-2B visas have been essential to meeting seasonal demand in the tourism industry, particularly in hospitality and entertainment. However, these programmes have been criticised for producing precarious labour conditions, including low wages and limited access to social benefits. In this context, Terry (2018) stresses the importance of a more balanced approach that protects workers' rights while addressing the economic needs of the tourism sector. The growing reliance on migrant labour raises further questions about how visa policies can adapt to meet market demands without undermining equity and community cohesion.

Alongside these schemes, privileged mobility programmes such as Portugal's golden visas illustrate another dimension of the migration-tourism nexus, where residency permits are granted to individuals with substantial economic capital through real estate investment. As Amante and Rodrigues (2020) argue, these programmes not only promote elite migration but also stimulate residential and cultural tourism in key destinations such as Lisbon and Porto. This phenomenon highlights how international mobility is increasingly oriented towards the pursuit of desired lifestyles, reflecting the complexity of motivations that underpin contemporary migration. Together, these cases reveal the dual role of visa frameworks: on one hand, sustaining critical labour segments in tourism through temporary and seasonal schemes, and on the other, promoting elite forms of mobility that reconfigure urban spaces and local economies.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The bibliometric review of scientific production on visa policies and their impact on tourism revealed significant insights into how mobility regimes shape international tourist flows and the socio-economic dynamics of destinations. The evidence shows that visa



exemptions and facilitation programmes consistently stimulate arrivals, with countries such as Israel and South Korea reporting notable increases in revenues after adopting more flexible entry schemes. These findings confirm that easing entry requirements can function as a powerful policy instrument for boosting tourism competitiveness. At the same time, however, they also highlight inherent risks. Destinations that liberalise access without parallel investments in infrastructure, environmental management, or cultural preservation face the danger of overcrowding, resource depletion, and weakened cultural sustainability. This indicates that the benefits of visa liberalisation are highly contingent on the capacity of destinations to integrate facilitation policies with responsible tourism planning.

A second contribution of the study lies in highlighting the transformative role of technology in visa processes. E-visa platforms, big data, and predictive analytics have significantly improved the efficiency of managing tourist flows, offering more secure and user-friendly experiences. These developments illustrate how the convergence between tourism management and digital governance is reshaping mobility practices. Yet, the results also reveal that technological adoption is uneven across regions, raising questions of equity in access. Moreover, visa programmes such as temporary work visas and golden visas demonstrate that, while economically beneficial, they often exacerbate inequalities by privileging certain groups of travellers or investors, thereby reinforcing socio-economic asymmetries within tourism systems.

Building on these findings, the paper suggests that future research should strengthen interdisciplinary approaches that bridge tourism studies with international relations, public policy, and law. Such integration would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how visas operate simultaneously as instruments of tourism management and foreign policy. Policymakers are encouraged to design visa frameworks that balance openness with sustainability, prioritise inclusivity, and incorporate technological tools responsibly.

This study is not without limitations. The reliance on bibliometric methods, while useful for identifying patterns and trends, does not capture the full complexity of policy implementation at the national or regional level.

In conclusion, visa policies emerge as complex governance tools at the intersection of mobility, security, and development. Their potential to promote tourism growth is evident, but their effectiveness ultimately depends on context-sensitive strategies that reconcile economic objectives with social equity and sustainability. By mapping the state of knowledge on visas and tourism, this study contributes to advancing both scholarly debates and the formulation of more inclusive and effective mobility policies for the future.

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