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BEYOND LUXURY CAMPING: RETHINKING GLAMPING FOR LOW-CARBON TOURISM TRANSITIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article rethinks glamping beyond its conventional framing as luxury camping by examining its potential contribution to low-carbon tourism transitions. Using a literature study approach, this paper synthesizes selected studies on glamping, sustainable accommodation, carbon footprint assessment, low-carbon tourism, climate change mitigation, and accommodation-related barriers. The findings indicate that glamping may contribute to low-carbon tourism transitions through four main pathways: low-impact design, sustainable material use, low-carbon operations, and low-carbon guest experience. These pathways suggest that glamping can support carbon reduction when its structures, materials, daily operations, and visitor experiences are aligned with low-carbon principles. However, the review also identifies several barriers that may limit the development of glamping as a credible low-carbon accommodation model, including conceptual ambiguity, limited carbon measurement, operational resource intensity, limited managerial and operational capacity, and greenwashing risk. The article argues that glamping should not be assumed to be sustainable simply because it is in natural environments. Instead, its low-carbon contribution depends on measurable and accountable practices. This study contributes to sustainable tourism literature by positioning glamping as a potential low-carbon accommodation model rather than merely an experiential or luxury-oriented tourism product. Future research should empirically assess the carbon footprint of glamping sites and develop practical indicators for measuring low-carbon glamping performance.

KEYWORDS: Glamping; low-carbon tourism; sustainable accommodation; tourism carbon footprint; low-carbon tourism transition.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tourism is increasingly expected to respond more seriously to climate change, particularly as the sector faces pressure to reduce emissions while maintaining its economic and social contribution (Peeters et al., 2024; Gössling & Lund-Durlacher, 2021). Although sustainable tourism has become an important discourse in tourism studies, climate change mitigation has not always received sufficient attention within this field. Sustainable tourism research is often still shaped by broad sustainability claims, limited system boundaries, incomplete data, and insufficient attention to the main sources of tourism-related emissions (Peeters et al., 2024). This condition indicates the need for tourism studies that engage more directly with carbon reduction, climate accountability, and transition-oriented thinking.

Accommodation is one of the tourism components that deserves closer attention in climate mitigation debates. As part of the tourism value chain, accommodation is associated with energy consumption, resource use, construction, material flows, waste generation, and operational practices (Filimonau et al., 2021; Gössling & Lund-Durlacher, 2021). Carbon footprint assessment in accommodation therefore cannot be limited only to daily operational energy use. It also needs to consider indirect impacts related to buildings, consumer goods, material inputs, and broader life cycle processes (Filimonau et al., 2021). However, much of the existing discussion on accommodation and carbon reduction remains centred on hotels and conventional lodging establishments, while alternative forms of accommodation have received comparatively limited attention in carbon-related research (Filimonau et al., 2021; Sebestyén, 2024).

Glamping has emerged as one such alternative form of accommodation. It combines outdoor recreation, nature-based experience, comfort, and hospitality services, and is commonly understood as a form of camping with glamorous or luxurious features that distinguish it from traditional camping (Craig, 2025). Existing literature shows that glamping has become increasingly relevant in tourism studies, particularly in relation to nature-based tourism, tourist experience, post-pandemic travel preferences, and domestic tourism recovery (Pop et al., 2024; Craig, 2025). However, the academic discussion on glamping remains conceptually uneven. Craig (2025) notes that the literature still shows inconsistent operationalisations of glamping, a reliance on exploratory approaches, and greater attention to glampers than to glamping operator performance. This suggests that glamping has not yet been sufficiently examined from the perspective of how it operates as an accommodation system.

Most existing studies on glamping tend to focus on tourist motivations, experience quality, atmosphere, communication, and market development. For instance, Filipe et al. (2018) examine tourists' motivations and obstacles in choosing glamping, while Sun and Huang (2023) discuss glamping through atmospheric aesthetics and tourist experience-sharing. Pop et al. (2024) also positions glamping as a sustainable response to domestic tourism recovery by highlighting its association with nature, relaxation, ecological practices, and social distancing. These studies are valuable for explaining why glamping is attractive to tourists and how it is experienced. However, they provide limited discussion of how glamping may relate to carbon reduction, resource efficiency, climate mitigation, or low-carbon tourism transitions.

Recent research has begun to address the carbon dimension of glamping more directly. Sebestyén (2024), for example, evaluates the carbon footprint of wooden glamping structures through life cycle assessment and shows that wood-based structures may have carbon mitigation potential when linked to responsible material sourcing and carbon storage. This study is important because it begins to move glamping research toward measurable environmental assessment. Nevertheless, its focus remains mainly on wooden structures, construction materials, and material-based carbon sequestration. Broader questions about glamping as a tourism accommodation model such as how it is operated, managed, experienced, governed, and integrated into destination-level low-carbon transitions remain less developed in the literature.

This gap is important because glamping should not be assumed to be sustainable simply because it is in natural settings. Nature-based accommodation may support environmental awareness and lower-impact experiences, but it may also create ecological pressure if development, operations, and visitor expectations are not carefully managed (Filimonau et al., 2021; Gössling & Lund-Durlacher, 2021). Luxury-oriented facilities, comfort expectations, energy demand, water use, waste generation, transport access, and material choices may influence whether glamping supports or contradicts low-carbon tourism objectives. Therefore, the issue is not merely whether glamping can be labelled as sustainable, but how its potential contribution to low-carbon tourism can be critically examined.

The development of glamping as a low-carbon accommodation model may also face barriers similar to those experienced in the wider accommodation sector. Studies on hotel and accommodation carbon management show that carbon reduction is often constrained by limited understanding, limited commitment from business owners, difficulty in measurement, lack of stakeholder coordination, competing interests, risky investment, data limitations, lack of standard methodology, and limited resources (Chan, 2021; Apolloni et al., 2024). These barriers may be particularly relevant for glamping, especially when operations are small-scale, located in nature-based areas, and lack formal systems for monitoring energy, water, waste, and emissions. However, how these barriers specifically apply to glamping remains insufficiently discussed.

Based on these gaps, this article aims to examine how glamping can be reconsidered beyond its dominant framing as luxury camping and explored as a potential accommodation model within low-carbon tourism transitions. Using a literature study approach, this article synthesises relevant studies on glamping, sustainable accommodation, carbon footprint assessment, low-carbon tourism, and accommodation-related barriers. The article is guided by two research questions: (1) How can glamping contribute to low-carbon tourism transitions? and (2) What challenges and barriers limit the development of glamping as a low-carbon accommodation model?

Through this review, the article seeks to clarify the conceptual position of glamping in low-carbon tourism debates and identify areas that require further theoretical and empirical development. Rather than assuming that glamping is inherently sustainable, this article treats its low-carbon potential as a question that needs to be critically assessed through the existing literature.

2.0 LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 Glamping as Nature-Based Accommodation

Glamping is a form of nature-based accommodation that combines outdoor experiences with comfort, amenities, and hospitality services. It is commonly understood as camping with glamorous or luxurious features that distinguish it from traditional camping (Craig, 2025). In tourism literature, glamping is often associated with closeness to nature, relaxation, privacy, safety, comfort, and distinctive tourist experiences (Filipe et al., 2018; Pop et al., 2024).

However, many existing studies still approach glamping mainly from the perspective of tourist experience, motivation, atmosphere, and communication. For example, Sun and Huang (2023) examine glamping through atmospheric aesthetics, physical environment, situational interaction, and experience-sharing behaviour. This shows that glamping has mostly been discussed as an experiential tourism product. Its position as an accommodation system with possible environmental and carbon implications remains less developed. Therefore, this study uses glamping as nature-based accommodation as the starting point for moving beyond the idea of glamping as merely luxury camping and for examining its possible role in low-carbon tourism transitions.

2.2 Low-Carbon Tourism Transition

Low-carbon tourism transition refers to a shift towards tourism systems that reduce carbon emissions through energy efficiency, renewable energy, resource efficiency, behavioural change, and carbon accountability. Peeters et al. (2024) argue that climate change mitigation has not always received sufficient attention in sustainable tourism research. This indicates the need for tourism studies that engage more directly with carbon reduction and system-level change.

However, glamping needs to be examined carefully. Its location in natural settings does not automatically make it low carbon. Its contribution to low-carbon tourism depends on how it is designed, constructed, operated, managed, and connected to the wider destination system. This concept therefore provides the broader lens for rethinking glamping not only as a tourism product, but also as a possible accommodation model within low-carbon tourism transitions.

2.3 Carbon Footprint of Tourist Accommodation

Tourist accommodation contributes to carbon emissions through operational energy use, building construction, material use, waste, water consumption, and consumer goods. Filimonau et al. (2021) argue that carbon footprint assessment in accommodation should not be limited to hotel operations, because indirect material inputs and outputs may also create significant environmental impacts. Gössling and Lund-Durlacher (2021) also highlight that accommodation has mitigation potential through energy efficiency, renewable energy, building design, service redesign, guest involvement, and staff training.

This discussion is important for glamping because its physical and operational characteristics differ from conventional hotels. Glamping may use lighter structures, semi-permanent units, modular designs, and natural materials. At the same time, luxury-oriented facilities such as air conditioning, hot water systems, restaurants, laundry services, and transport access may still increase emissions if they are not managed carefully. For this reason, a carbon footprint perspective helps this study

examine glamping beyond its natural image and consider whether its accommodation system can genuinely support low-carbon tourism objectives.

2.4 Low-Carbon Glamping Potential

The potential contribution of glamping to low-carbon tourism may come from low-impact site design, lightweight or modular structures, local or renewable materials, energy-efficient operations, waste reduction, nature-based guest experiences, and local value chains. Sebestyén (2024) shows that wooden glamping structures may have carbon mitigation potential through carbon storage, responsible timber sourcing, prefabrication, and life cycle assessment.

However, existing carbon-related research on glamping remains limited, especially because it focuses mainly on wooden structures and material-based carbon storage. The broader potential of glamping as a low-carbon accommodation model still needs to be examined through other aspects, such as operations, guest behaviour, water and waste management, energy use, governance, and destination integration. This concept is central to the first research question because it helps explore how glamping may contribute to low-carbon tourism transitions without assuming that such contribution is automatic.

2.5 Barriers to Low-Carbon Glamping

The development of glamping as a low-carbon accommodation model may face several barriers. Chan (2021) shows that carbon footprint reduction in hotels is often constrained by limited understanding, limited owner commitment, measurement difficulties, weak stakeholder coordination, competing interests, and investment risks. Apolloni et al. (2024) also identify data-gathering difficulties, lack of standard methodology, lengthy decision-making processes, and limited resources as barriers to carbon footprint analysis among accommodation providers.

These barriers are relevant to glamping because many glamping businesses may operate on a small or medium scale, are in nature-based areas, and may not yet have mature systems for measuring and managing carbon emissions. In addition, the luxury aspect of glamping may create tension between comfort expectations and low-carbon principles if it leads to high energy, water, and material consumption. By examining these barriers, this study can address the second research question and assess the limitations that may prevent glamping from developing into a credible low-carbon accommodation model.

3.0 METHODS

This study adopts a literature study approach to examine how glamping can be rethought beyond luxury camping and positioned within low-carbon tourism transitions. This approach is considered appropriate because the link between glamping and low-carbon tourism is still relatively underdeveloped in the existing literature. Most previous studies discuss glamping in relation to tourist experience, atmosphere, motivation, and nature-based accommodation, while studies that directly connect glamping with carbon reduction remain limited.

The literature used in this study was taken from the collected articles relevant to glamping, sustainable tourism, low-carbon tourism, carbon footprint assessment, sustainable accommodation,

hospitality carbon management, climate change mitigation, and climate adaptation in tourism. In total, 30 articles were initially reviewed. These articles were first examined based on their titles, abstracts, keywords, publication year, research focus, and key contributions.

The screening process was conducted by assessing each article's relevance to the study title and research questions. Articles were included if they discussed at least one of the following themes: glamping**,** low-carbon tourism**,** carbon footprint of accommodation**,** sustainable accommodation**,** barriers to carbon reduction, or climate-related challenges in tourism accommodation. Articles that discussed tourism only in general terms, without a clear connection to glamping, accommodation, or carbon reduction, were not prioritised.

From this screening process, 18 articles were considered relevant to the study. Among them, 14 articles were treated as core references because they directly supported the main argument of the paper. These core references include studies on glamping reviews and bibliometric trends, tourist experience, carbon footprint assessment of accommodation, life cycle assessment of wooden glamping structures, climate change mitigation in sustainable tourism, and barriers to carbon reduction in accommodation businesses.

The selected literature was analysed using thematic synthesis. The analysis began by identifying key ideas from each article, such as glamping experience, nature-based accommodation, carbon footprint, life cycle assessment, energy efficiency, material use, carbon measurement, and implementation barriers. These ideas were then grouped into broader themes: glamping beyond luxury camping**,** carbon footprint of tourist accommodation**,** potential contribution of glamping to low-carbon tourism, and barriers to low-carbon glamping development.

These themes were then synthesised to answer the two research questions: (1) How can glamping contribute to low-carbon tourism transitions? and (2) What challenges and barriers limit the development of glamping as a low-carbon accommodation model? Since this study is based on literature, it does not calculate the actual carbon footprint of glamping sites. Instead, it provides a conceptual synthesis of existing studies to identify possible pathways and limitations in positioning glamping as a low-carbon accommodation model.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Potential Contribution of Glamping to Low-Carbon Tourism Transitions

Glamping can contribute to low-carbon tourism transitions when its design, construction, operations, and management are aligned with carbon reduction principles. Craig (2025) describes glamping as a form of camping with glamorous or luxurious features that distinguish it from traditional camping. Pop et al. (2024) also associates glamping with nature-based experiences, relaxation, ecological practices, and domestic tourism recovery. These characteristics suggest that glamping has potential relevance to low-carbon tourism, although this potential depends on how the accommodation model is developed. This finding is consistent with bibliometric studies indicating that glamping has gained increasing scholarly attention as an emerging form of accommodation, although its academic development remains relatively limited and fragmented (Laksmi et al., 2024; Kumar and Ahmed, 2023).

Low-impact accommodation design represents one possible pathway for glamping to support low-carbon tourism. Filimonau et al. (2021) show that the carbon impact of accommodation is not limited to daily operations, but also includes construction, material use, waste, and consumer goods. In this regard, glamping may offer potential advantages when it adopts lighter, semi-permanent, modular, or prefabricated structures that reduce construction intensity and land disturbance. Practices such as modular cabin design, natural ventilation, and the use of recycled materials may further support low-impact design and technology in glamping development (Laksmi et al., 2025). However, this contribution remains conditional on whether these design choices genuinely reduce material use and ecological pressure.

Sustainable material use can also strengthen the low-carbon potential of glamping. Sebestyén (2024) demonstrates that wooden glamping structures may support carbon mitigation when responsible timber sourcing, prefabrication, and life cycle thinking are applied. This finding suggests that material choice matters in low-carbon glamping, especially when renewable, reusable, or locally sourced materials are used. However, natural materials should still be assessed carefully because their use does not automatically guarantee a lower carbon impact.

Low-carbon operations are equally important in determining glamping's contribution to low-carbon tourism. Gössling and Lund-Durlacher (2021) explain that accommodation-related mitigation can be supported through energy efficiency, renewable energy, passive design, water-saving systems, service redesign, staff training, and guest involvement. These strategies are relevant to glamping because daily operations, including lighting, hot water, cooling, food services, laundry, and waste management, can influence its carbon performance. Integrated water and energy use, comprehensive waste management, and plastic reduction may further support operational efficiency in glamping sites (Laksmi et al., 2025). Therefore, glamping can contribute to low-carbon tourism when its operations are managed to reduce energy, water, and waste intensity.

Guest experience may also become part of glamping's low-carbon contribution. Filipe et al. (2018), Sun and Huang (2023), and Pop et al. (2024) show that tourists are attracted to glamping because of nature, relaxation, privacy, comfort, and atmosphere. These experiential qualities may create opportunities to encourage more responsible behaviour, such as saving energy, using water carefully, reducing waste, and participating in nature-based activities. However, this depends on whether the guest experience is designed around environmental awareness rather than excessive luxury consumption. Environmental education delivered through digital guides, school programs, and staff capacity building further suggests that the glamping experience can be connected to climate awareness and more responsible visitor behaviour (Laksmi et al., 2025).

Overall, glamping may contribute to low-carbon tourism transitions through four main pathways: low-impact design, sustainable material use, low-carbon operations, and low-carbon guest experience. These pathways should be understood as potential contributions, not as automatic outcomes. Glamping should not be considered low carbon simply because it is in a natural setting.

4.2 Challenges and Barriers to Developing Glamping as a Low-Carbon Accommodation Model

Conceptual ambiguity remains one of the key barriers to developing glamping as a low-carbon accommodation model. Craig (2025) notes that the glamping literature still faces inconsistent conceptualisation and operationalisation. Existing studies also tend to frame glamping mainly in relation to tourist experience, nature-based accommodation, atmosphere, and post-pandemic travel preferences (Pop et al., 2024; Sun and Huang, 2023). Similarly, glamping research continues to centre on themes such as accommodation, tourist experience, word of mouth, and tourist resources, while explicit discussions of low-carbon tourism and climate mitigation remain less prominent (Laksmi et al., 2024; Kumar and Ahmed, 2023). This suggests that glamping has not yet been sufficiently examined as an accommodation system with measurable carbon implications.

Carbon measurement is another major barrier. Filimonau et al. (2021) show that accommodation-related carbon impacts involve operational energy, construction, material use, waste, water, and indirect inputs. Apolloni et al. (2024) also identify data-gathering difficulties, lack of standard methodology, lengthy decision-making processes, and limited resources as barriers to carbon footprint analysis among accommodation providers. These issues may be especially relevant for glamping operators if they do not yet have formal systems to monitor energy, water, waste, and emissions.

Operational resource intensity may also limit glamping's low-carbon potential. The luxury element of glamping can increase resource consumption when comfort expectations lead to the use of air conditioning, hot water systems, private bathrooms, restaurants, laundry services, lighting, and transport-intensive access. Gössling and Lund-Durlacher (2021) show that accommodation emissions are closely related to energy use, service design, and guest-related consumption. This means that glamping may reproduce carbon-intensive accommodation patterns if luxury facilities are prioritised without low-carbon operational controls.

Managerial and operational capacity may also constrain the development of low-carbon glamping. Chan (2021) identifies limited understanding, limited owner commitment, measurement difficulties, insufficient stakeholder coordination, competing interests, and investment risks as barriers to carbon footprint reduction in hotels. Similarly, Apolloni et al. (2024) highlight limited resources and methodological difficulties in carbon footprint analysis among accommodation providers. Hassanli and Ashwell (2018) further note that small accommodation providers often face financial, operational, and knowledge-related constraints when implementing sustainability practices. These issues are relevant to glamping because many glamping businesses operate on a small or medium scale. In addition, capacity limits and over tourism risks may accompany glamping development, indicating that managerial capacity and destination control remain important supporting concerns (Laksmi et al., 2025).

Greenwashing risk also requires attention. Natural settings and eco-friendly imagery may create the impression that glamping is automatically sustainable. However, Filimonau et al. (2021) and Peeters et al. (2024) emphasise that sustainability claims need to be supported by appropriate system boundaries, data, and attention to actual emission sources. Without carbon measurement,

transparent reporting, or operational standards, sustainable or low-carbon claims in glamping may remain difficult to verify.

Overall**,** the main barriers to low-carbon glamping include conceptual ambiguity, limited carbon measurement, operational resource intensity, limited managerial and operational capacity, and green washing risk. These barriers show that glamping's role in low-carbon tourism a transition is still conditional and requires further conceptual and empirical development. This indicates the need for further empirical assessment and a clearer conceptual positioning of low-carbon glamping within future glamping research agendas (Laksmi et al., 2024; Kumar and Ahmed, 2023; Laksmi et al., 2025).

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

This article re-examines glamping beyond its conventional understanding as luxury camping by exploring its potential contribution to low-carbon tourism transitions. The results show that glamping may support low-carbon tourism, but this potential is conditional rather than inherent. Its contribution depends on the extent to which its design, material use, operations, and guest experience are aligned with carbon reduction principles.

Glamping may contribute to low-carbon tourism transitions through four main pathways: low-impact design**,** sustainable material use**,** low-carbon operations, and low-carbon guest experience. Low-impact design may help reduce construction intensity and land disturbance when glamping uses lighter, semi-permanent, modular, or prefabricated structures. Sustainable material use may support carbon mitigation when materials are responsibly sourced and considered through life cycle thinking. Low-carbon operations may reduce energy, water, and waste intensity through more efficient daily practices. Low-carbon guest experience may also encourage more responsible tourist behaviour when nature-based experiences are designed around environmental awareness rather than excessive luxury consumption.

Several barriers may limit the development of glamping as a low-carbon accommodation model. The results identify five main barriers to developing glamping as a low-carbon accommodation model, namely conceptual ambiguity, limited carbon measurement, operational resource intensity, limited managerial and operational capacity, and green washing risk as the main challenges. Conceptual ambiguity limits the positioning of glamping as an accommodation system with measurable carbon implications. Limited carbon measurement makes low-carbon claims difficult to verify. Operational resource intensity may occur when luxury facilities increase energy, water, material, and service consumption. Limited managerial and operational capacity may constrain the ability of glamping businesses to implement and monitor low-carbon practices. Green washing risk may arise when natural settings and eco-friendly imagery are used without measurable carbon evidence.

Glamping should therefore not be assumed to be sustainable simply because it is in natural environments. A nature-based setting may provide opportunities for lower-impact tourism, but its low-carbon contribution depends on measurable and accountable practices. This article concludes that low-carbon glamping should be understood as a conditional model whose contribution depends

on low-impact design, sustainable material use, low-carbon operations, low-carbon guest experience, carbon measurement, and accountable management practices.

This study contributes to sustainable tourism literature by positioning glamping as a potential low-carbon accommodation model rather than merely an experiential or luxury-oriented tourism product. Future research should empirically examine the carbon footprint of glamping sites, compare glamping with other accommodation types, analyse guest behaviour in low-carbon glamping experiences, and develop practical indicators for measuring and managing low-carbon performance in glamping operations.

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