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Charting the Evolution of Art Tourism Research: Trends, Keyword Networks, and Thematic Clusters

Parviz Pourkarimi * Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism Management, Faculty of Management and Accounting, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.

Sarasadat Makian Masaryk Institute of Advanced Studies, Czech Technical University in Prague, Prague, Czech Republic. Social Sciences Research Center (PACTE), Grenoble Alpes University, France.

Farhad Nazir Masaryk Institute of Advanced Studies, Czech Technical University in Prague, Prague, Czech Republic.

Abstract

Art tourism, an interdisciplinary field linking art, tourism, cultural heritage, and sustainable development, has gained significant prominence and considerable attention in the scientific literature in recent years. Through a bibliometric approach, this study examines knowledge production trends, identifies influential actors and works, analyzes the co-occurrence network of keywords, and clarifies the conceptual framework governing art tourism studies. Data were collected from the Scopus database, and following the PRISMA protocol, 146 articles were selected for final analysis from the 255 initially retrieved documents. Data analysis used VOSviewer and indicators such as publication trends, country co-authorship networks, prolific authors, highly cited articles, and word co-occurrence analysis. The findings showed that the literature on art tourism has increased, especially since 2012, with over 53 percent of total scientific output published between 2021 and 2026. Poland emerged as the central country in scientific networking, with the highest overall link strength (TLS = 14). Highly cited articles revealed five prominent knowledge streams: 1) endogenous revitalization and community resilience, 2) rock art conservation and heritage management, 3) theoretical formalization of art tourism, 4) performing art tourism and niche markets, and 5) martial arts and intangible heritage tourism. Keyword co-occurrence analysis revealed four primary thematic clusters: 1) Art, destination

∗ Corresponding Author: p.purkarimi@atu.ac.ir
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development, and management, 2) Heritage, ecotourism, and sustainability, 3) Intangible heritage, somatic arts, and niche tourism, and 4) Tourist perception, creative experiences, and placemaking. Temporal overlay mapping illustrated an evolutionary trajectory from museum-centric conservation toward participatory creative tourism, public art, and data-driven spatiotemporal methods. These findings show that art tourism has evolved from a purely visual attraction into a strategic platform for place-based dynamics, sustainable development, and co-creating cultural experiences.

Keywords: Art tourism, Bibliometric analysis, Scopus, VOSviewer, Word co-occurrence, Creative tourism, Cultural heritage, Sustainable development.

آماده انتشار

Introduction

Although traditionally seen as a branch of cultural tourism and part of the creative tourism market (Garrido Castellano & Raposo, 2024), art tourism has recently emerged as a distinct and dynamic research domain within broader tourism studies (Slak Valek & Mura, 2023). The concept centers on "lived experience," sensory engagement, and the active interaction of tourists with artworks, spaces, and events, emphasizing the unique characteristics of art markets in their analysis (Zagorskaya & Nazarkina, 2021). Art tourism encompasses a range of activities involving visiting, perceiving, and interacting with artworks and art events (Franklin, 2018). This broad spectrum includes visits to museums, galleries, exhibitions, and art creation workshops, as well as participation in festivals, performing arts, indigenous arts, and handicrafts. In this context, art tourism not only promotes and preserves destination culture but also stimulates the cultural economy, supports creative industries, and contributes to economic and social sustainability. In addition, cultural, economic, institutional, and urban factors have shaped the literature in this field. Tensions and interrelationships among global actors, metropolitan art organizations, and economic interests have also significantly shaped this market and art's role within tourist destinations (Funck & Qu, 2024). As a result, art tourism studies have emerged as a multidisciplinary field situated at the intersection of art, tourism, the creative economy, urban studies, and destination management.

Prior research has examined tourists' experiences, the role of art in destination revitalization, events, the creative industries, and the functions of museums and galleries. However, this research density, thematic dispersion and growing conceptual diversity have prevented the availability of an integrated, structured picture of the historical evolution of knowledge, core concepts, and semantic networks within the orbit of art tourism. Furthermore, narrative and traditional reviews, due to their qualitative nature and limited scope, cannot visualize macro-level intellectual structures or map inter-conceptual relationships across large-scale datasets. Given the addressal of this structural gap, bibliometric and scientometric (scientific mapping) approaches have been successfully applied in other tourism fields to uncover intellectual structures, social networks, and conceptual trends (Knani et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023). However, this approach has been overlooked and under-theorized in art tourism, and no comprehensive

study has yet simultaneously analyzed trends in scientific publications, keyword co-occurrence networks, and dominant conceptual clusters using standardized data. Therefore, using the Scopus database and VOSviewer software, this study quantitatively and structurally analyzes the global literature on art tourism to identify dominant themes and thematic links and map the field's future horizons.

Accordingly, our study raises following research questions:

1. How have scholarly publications in art tourism evolved within global studies?
2. What is the structure and defining characteristics of the co-occurrence network of terms in art tourism research?
3. In what ways can art tourism studies be classified and interpreted through conceptual clusters?

Answering these questions, our study, as a first step, contributes to establishing conceptual coherence within the fragmented art tourism literature. In addition to such conceptual defragmentation, our study curates an analytical framework for identifying research gaps and offers practical guidance for destination managers developing art tourism.

Literature Review

Theoretical foundations and conceptualization: Art tourism as a distinct research domain

Most tourism classification models typically classify art tourism as a subcategory of either "Cultural Tourism" or "Creative Tourism" (Richards, 2011, 2026). Recent developments in tourism theory, however, argue that this broad, homogenizing approach obscures the unique aesthetic qualities, historical roots, and phenomenological intricacies of the art experience, reducing it to mere tourist consumption (Franklin, 2018; Slak Valek & Mura, 2023). In a pioneering theoretical framework, Franklin (2018) conceptualizes art tourism as a domain with its own distinct epistemological legitimacy. According to this perspective, art tourism includes any geographical movement motivated by the perception, experience, or consumption of art, encompassing both intentional art tourists and those who encounter art incidentally. Drawing on Becker's (1982) "art world" theory, Franklin (2018) asserts that the primary impetus for "evoking the desire to observe and experience art" originates from the structures, discourses, and internal institutions of the art world—such as artists, curators, critics, biennials, and auctions—rather than from the supply chain

strategies of the tourism industry (Benhaida et al., 2026; Franklin, 2018).

The relationship between art and travel has deep historical roots. From the journeys of philosophers and travelers in classical Greece and ancient Rome to the tradition of the Grand Tour in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, travel undertaken to directly encounter masterpieces of classical architecture, sculpture, and painting was regarded as essential for cultivating the identity of the elite and the culturally refined individual (Franklin, 2018; Towner, 1985). This relationship is mutually constitutive: while artistic achievements stimulated tourist mobility, travel and exploration in unfamiliar environments expanded artists' perceptual and aesthetic horizons, helping new artistic forms emerge. This reciprocal dynamic contributed to the development of "Art-led Place-making" and the formation of historic art colonies such as St. Ives in England, Skagen in Denmark, and later Woodstock in America. These locations, shaped by artists' presence and creative activity, evolved into centers of inspiration and major tourist destinations (Franklin, 2018; Qu & Zollet, 2023). Building on these historical developments, recent scholarship highlights a "relational and experiential turn" in art tourism. In this context, art is no longer viewed solely as a static object in museum displays, but rather as an interactive, participatory, and spatial event that reconfigures the boundary between the observer (the tourist) and the artwork (Janičić, 2020; Slak Valek & Mura, 2023).

The literature review indicates that the term "art tourism" initially emerged within applied and developmental contexts. Awangku Hassanal and Liu (2011) conceptualized art not as a neutral backdrop to travel, but as a primary factor in enhancing the tourism value chain and distinguishing destinations. Subsequent research in this field has focused on four primary thematic axes:

1- Public art, street art, and the revitalization of urban spaces

Art is no longer restricted to formal venues and institutional collections, such as traditional galleries and museums. Contemporary scholarship increasingly examines how street art, murals, and public art installations democratize access to art. Downey and Sherry (2023) found that public art enhances a sense of place when it reflects community identity and incorporates both local and mythic narratives, thereby transforming peripheral or disadvantaged urban areas into vibrant cultural tourist destinations. Similarly, Garrido Castellano and

Raposo (2024) through their analysis of urban art in Lisbon, demonstrated that the visual representation and dissemination of graffiti and murals via social media alter the symbolic valuation of these works, turning urban spaces into dynamic stages for tourists' aesthetic engagement. Furthermore, studies on interactive visual techniques, such as trompe-l'œil 3D paintings, indicate that interactive street art can increase visual appeal, extend tourist dwell time, and promote participation in art walks (Nikoo et al., 2022).

2- Placemaking, resilience, and neo-endogenous development

The role of art in revitalizing dysfunctional urban areas and empowering local communities represents a significant area of research within this field. Qu and Zollet (2023) introduced the concept of "Neo-endogenous Revitalisation," showing that environmental art festivals can counter rural abandonment, strengthen community resilience, and build a sustainable foundation for development through balanced interactions among residents, migrant artists, and tourists. At the regional level, Zagorskaya and Nazarkina (2021) identified the potential of galleries, event spaces, and exhibitions in Novosibirsk, Russia, positioning art as a catalyst for economic diversification in cold and peripheral regions. Furthermore, research from Central Asia highlights the role of artistic heritage infrastructure in enhancing destination competitiveness (Nargiza & Hadicha, 2024).

3- Iconic institutions, destination branding, and consumer behavior

At both the institutional and global destination levels, integrating megaproject museums and major art events acts as a marketing catalyst. Studies of global museum developments, such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi, show how these brands shape transnational tourists' preferences and redefine the cultural tourism portfolios of Middle Eastern destinations. However, these studies caution that an exclusive emphasis on global branding may marginalize authentic local art markets. From a marketing standpoint, Janičić (2020) found that synchronizing and integrating art events, including concerts, galleries, and festivals, into a destination's strategic identity significantly enhances tourists' affective satisfaction and strengthens the destination's brand equity. Despite these benefits, art tourism development often faces obstacles. In their research on the capital of Chinese ceramics, Wang and Chen (2024) identified limited sharing of local benefits, a shortage of specialized human resources, weaknesses in digital marketing, and institutional and

transportation discoordination as significant structural barriers to fully realizing the potential of art tourism.

4- Technological Frontiers: Smart Technologies, Digital Art, and Artificial Intelligence

The convergence of art, interactive media, and cognitive technologies has recently expanded the possibilities for art tourism (Benhaida et al., 2026). Technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and immersive digital exhibitions have significantly altered tourists' aesthetic experiences. Scientometric research in related domains, including artificial intelligence in hospitality and tourism, demonstrates that smart technologies and cognitive algorithms are reshaping the customization of tourist experiences and the management of audience feedback (Knani et al., 2022). Collectively, these advancements suggest that art tourism has entered a new era characterized by digital art and technology mediation.

Research gap

Although numerous empirical cases exist, the art tourism literature remains conceptually fragmented across disparate disciplines, including the sociology of art, human geography, cultural economics, and tourism management. While Slak Valek and Mura's (2023) systematic review provided critical qualitative insights into tourist agency and consumption behavior over four decades, traditional systematic reviews cannot delineate macro-level intellectual topologies, co-authorship networks, or dynamic keyword co-occurrences across expansive bibliometric corpora. Specifically, qualitative syntheses cannot:

• map the structural and quantitative landscape of knowledge production,

• identify the architecture of international co-authorship networks and collaboration hubs,

• evaluate the multi-tier citation impact of landmark studies, and

• reveal latent thematic transitions through large-scale co-word science mapping.

To date, no comprehensive study has mapped the bibliometric architecture, visualized co-authorship networks, or modeled the longitudinal conceptual clusters of art tourism. To bridge this epistemological and structural gap, this study uses Scopus data and VOSviewer software to provide a structural complement to previous

qualitative reviews, mapping the historical evolution, centers of scientific influence, and emerging thematic clusters in this research domain.

Methodology

This study employed a bibliometric approach. Bibliometrics provides a systematic method for evaluating and monitoring progress across scientific disciplines, enabling examination of scientific output and analysis of structural relationships among concepts, authors, and countries at a macro scale (Chen et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023). This approach elucidates the intellectual, social, and conceptual structures of academic fields, the networks of researchers, and the principal topics shaping scientific discourse. It is increasingly adopted to achieve a comprehensive understanding of research landscapes across disciplines. To strengthen the methodological framework and apply scientific mapping techniques, we used those developed in previous studies (e.g., Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et al., 2021; Van Eck & Waltman, 2014; Zupic & Čater, 2015). We analyzed temporal trends in scientific publications, keyword co-occurrence, and conceptual clustering to identify the dynamics and emerging trends in art tourism. We extracted bibliographic data for this study from the Scopus citation database, selected for its comprehensive coverage of reputable scientific journals, standardized metadata, and frequent use in bibliometric research and science mapping (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016; Pranckutė, 2021). Data collection involved searching for the terms “Art tourism,” “Tourism and art,” or “Art and tourism” within the title, abstract, and keywords fields (TITLE-ABS-KEY) of Scopus-indexed documents to capture studies explicitly addressing art tourism as a primary subject of inquiry. The search period ran from the database's inception to July 20, 2026, yielding 255 scholarly documents. To improve analytical accuracy and maintain data consistency, we applied inclusion and exclusion criteria in line with PRISMA guidelines, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Documents

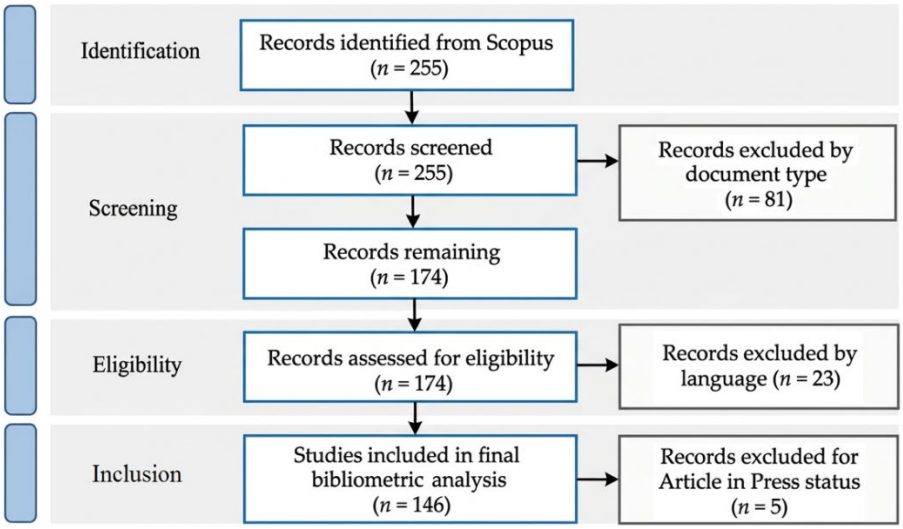
Screening Stage	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Rationale

Database	Documents indexed in the Scopus database	Documents indexed in other bibliographic databases	Scopus was chosen for its broad coverage of reputable journals, standardized metadata, and common use in bibliometrics and science mapping.
Search Strategy	Documents retrieved using search strings related to art tourism in the title, abstract, and keyword fields	Documents not retrieved within the defined search strategy	Deliberately focused on explicit art tourism descriptors to delineate its specific thematic discourse and prevent conceptual dilution from generalized cultural tourism publications.
Time Period	Documents indexed from the beginning of Scopus coverage through 20 July 2026	Documents published outside the specified period	Specifying a timeframe allows research evolution to be assessed within a defined period.
Document Type	Research articles	Other document types include books, book chapters, conference papers, review articles, conference reviews, editorials, letters, and notes.	The dataset was limited to research articles for analytical accuracy and structural consistency.
Language	Documents published in English	Documents published in languages other than English	This restriction standardized keyword analysis and enhanced international conceptual comparability.
Publication Status	Documents with Final publication status	Documents classified as Article in Press	Articles in press were excluded for complete bibliographic data and dataset stability.

Source: Developed by authors

We screened data in three successive stages by the criteria outlined in Table 1: document type, language, and publication status. In the first stage, we selected only research articles as the unit of analysis to ensure structural homogeneity. Other document types, including 12 books, 33 book chapters, 21 conference papers, 9 review articles, 3 conference review articles, 1 editorial, 1 letter, and 1 note, were excluded from the analysis (a total of 81 documents). After applying the document type filter, 174 research articles remained for the next stage. In the second stage, we applied a language filter, restricting the dataset to English-language articles. This step excluded 23 articles published in other languages (5 in Polish, 5 in Spanish, 4 in Chinese, 3 in French, 2 in Croatian, 2 in Portuguese, and 2 in Turkish), leaving 151 English-language articles for the next stage. In the third stage, we examined publication status and removed 5 articles still in press to ensure that only documents with final publication status were included. Ultimately, 146 final articles were entered into VOSviewer software as the base dataset for bibliometric analyses (Figure 1).

Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of the literature selection process



Source: Developed by authors

After finalizing the datasets, we conducted bibliometric analyses to address the research questions. For the first research question, we analyzed the temporal trend of scholarly activity by examining the

annual distribution of published articles, showing the field's evolution in global studies. To address the second question, we constructed a keyword co-occurrence network via VOSviewer to examine the domain's relational structure. For the third question, we categorized thematic clusters identified through the co-occurrence analysis based on word linkage, frequency, and conceptual proximity, and then analyzed them using an analytical-interpretive approach. This methodology enabled a systematic exploration of publication trends, lexical structure, and the conceptual organization of art tourism studies globally.

To guarantee reproducibility, bibliometric mapping was executed using VOSviewer (version 1.6.20). The country collaboration network and keyword co-occurrence maps were generated via the full counting method. For the lexical analysis, both author keywords and index keywords were incorporated. A minimum threshold of 5 occurrences was set; after cleaning synonyms and eliminating generic descriptors, the leading terms were visualized in the co-occurrence network (Table 4). The network was constructed using association strength normalization, with the clustering resolution parameter set to 1.0 and the minimum cluster size defined as 3.

Results

The data analysis process began with an examination of the global distribution of scholarly documents and the temporal trends of publications related to art tourism. This approach provided a comprehensive overview of the field's evolution, temporal fluctuations, and developmental stages in the academic literature. Next, the analysis examined patterns of country participation in knowledge production, international co-authorship networks, pioneering authors, and highly cited articles to identify the field's socio-intellectual structure, scientific interactions, and key actors. In the third phase, VOSviewer was used to map a keyword co-occurrence network, revealing structural relationships among concepts and the dominant thematic axes in art tourism literature. Based on network topology and lexical links, the study extracted and analyzed dominant thematic clusters to clarify the primary thematic orientations and conceptual dimensions of art tourism. Finally, analysis of the temporal distribution of concepts within the network identified emerging themes and future research directions. Together, these findings provide a coherent framework for

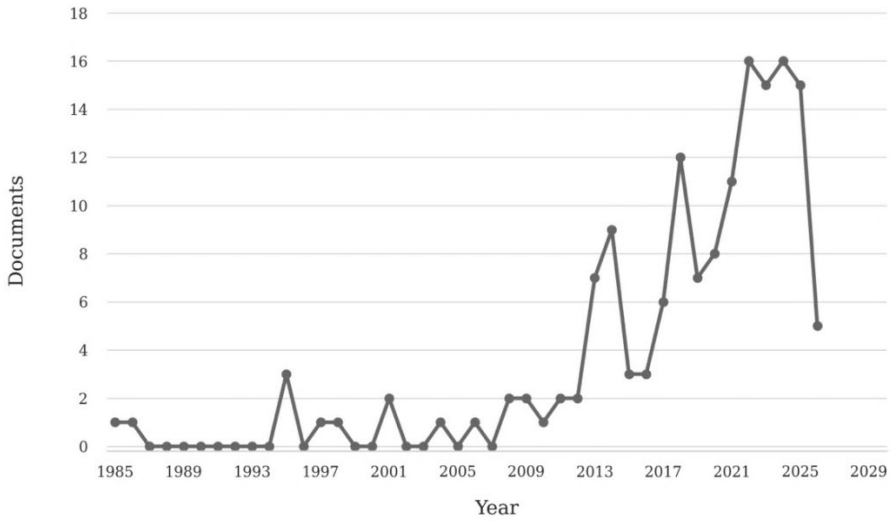
understanding the field's current state, identifying knowledge gaps, and guiding future research in art tourism.

Annual publication trends

Analyzing annual publication trends is a key indicator in scientometric studies, enabling examination of how scholarly literature on art tourism has developed over time. Tracking yearly changes in publication volume helps identify the field's formative stages, periods of growth or decline, and major research milestones. Additionally, assessing temporal trends in article publication reveals increasing academic interest in the relationship between art and tourism, the evolution of research topics, and the progressive expansion of the field's conceptual boundaries. Consequently, publication trend analysis offers a comprehensive overview of the development of art tourism studies and establishes a foundation for interpreting research directions, recognizing transformative periods, and setting future research priorities.

Analysis of the temporal distribution of articles (Figure 2) shows that research on art tourism in the global scientific literature shifted from a gradual, fluctuating pattern in the early stages to a relatively stable, growing trend in recent years. Initially, the number of articles was limited, and publications were sporadic. This pattern indicates that art tourism had not yet consolidated into a distinct, coherent research domain and was primarily discussed in relation to cultural tourism, heritage, art, events, and destination studies. From the midpoint of the review period onward, the number of articles increases gradually. Although annual fluctuations persist, the overall trend shows a growing scholarly focus on art tourism. This growth likely reflects the field's expanding conceptual scope and stronger interdisciplinary approaches to examining the relationship between art, tourism experience, place identity, creative industries, and destination development. Nevertheless, fluctuations in certain years indicate that the field's growth has not been entirely linear, and its scholarly output continues to be influenced by thematic dynamics, research capacity, and publication patterns in related disciplines.

Figure 2. Annual Publication Trends of Articles Related to Art Tourism



Source: Developed by authors

Publication density is highest in the final years of the period, with over 53 percent of all articles published between 2021 and 2026. Publication peaks occurred in 2022 and 2024 (16 articles each) and in 2023 and 2025 (15 articles each). This quantitative concentration in recent years suggests that art tourism has moved beyond scattered case studies and become a distinct and influential discourse in tourism literature—a development aligned with the growing focus on art's role in creating distinctive experiences, urban regeneration, the creative economy, and destination branding. The decrease in registered articles in 2026 (5 articles) also warrants interpretive caution; this figure reflects only articles indexed up to the data extraction date, reflecting the typical time lag in Scopus indexing, and should not be taken as an indication of the field's decline. Overall, the temporal pattern of article publication shows gradual growth with fluctuations, followed by relative stabilization in recent years. This trend suggests that art tourism has evolved from an emerging, scattered topic into a research domain capable of shaping distinct lexical networks and thematic clusters, a development that warrants analysis of its conceptual structure and research orientations.

Leading countries and international collaboration

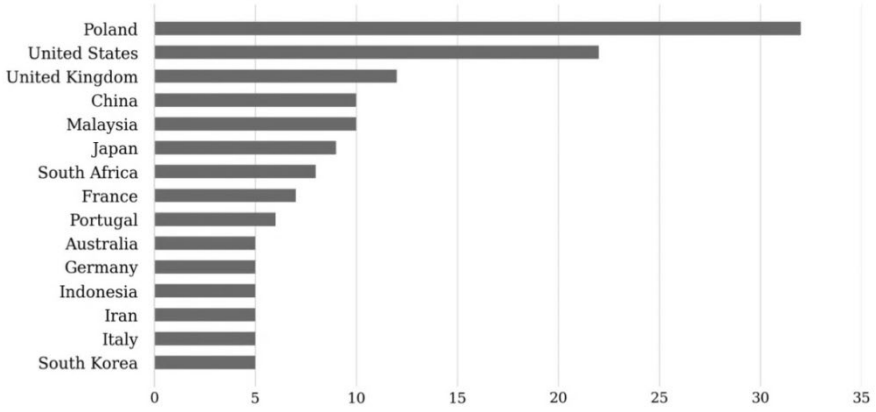
Analyzing the geographical distribution of scientific publications is a key component of bibliometrics, as it reveals which countries produce knowledge in a research field and which nations play a more prominent role in shaping its scientific literature. In the field of art tourism, examining the leading countries in terms of publication count can help identify the main centers of knowledge production, patterns of geographical concentration of research, and the extent of this field's dispersion or centralization within the global scientific system. Furthermore, this analysis allows examination of the differing roles of countries in developing concepts related to art, cultural tourism, heritage, creative industries, and the tourism experience. Next, a co-authorship network analysis of countries identifies patterns of international scientific collaboration. This network illustrates relationships between countries that have engaged in scientific communication through joint article publications. This approach determines the extent of countries' participation in the global knowledge production network, the intensity and scope of their cross-border collaborations, and their relative positions within the structure of scientific communication. Therefore, examining countries' co-authorship in art tourism studies, in addition to revealing the main hubs of research collaboration, can also indicate the field's international cohesion and its potential to form broader scientific networks.

The distribution of scientific documents by country or territory (Figure 3) demonstrates that knowledge production in art tourism is highly geographically concentrated. Poland, with 32 documents, ranks first and, with a significant lead over other countries, serves as the primary center of scientific production in this field. The United States follows with 22 documents, while the United Kingdom ranks third with 12 documents. Poland's numerical advantage over traditional leaders in tourism research, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, suggests the emergence of a specialized regional hub in Central Europe focused on events, heritage, and art tourism. At the subsequent level, China and Malaysia each contribute 10 documents, Japan contributes 9, and South Africa contributes 8. The presence of Asian, European, North American, and African countries among the most productive nations underscores the field's international scope.

The geographical distribution of research demonstrates that the study of art in tourism extends beyond countries with established traditions in art and heritage studies to include nations with varied cultural, social,

and tourism contexts. The inclusion of China, Malaysia, Japan, and South Africa highlights the increasing significance of artistic, cultural, and creative capacities in destination development, the representation of place identity, and the creation of distinctive tourism experiences in emerging and developing economies. France follows with seven documents, and Portugal with six. Australia, Germany, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, and South Korea, each with five documents, represent countries with more limited yet still meaningful contributions. Italy and France are particularly noteworthy because of their prominence in art, cultural heritage, and cultural tourism. Additionally, the involvement of Asian and African countries, such as Indonesia, Iran, and South Korea, reflects the broadening geographical scope of art tourism research and an emphasis on diverse cultural contexts.

Figure 3. Most Prolific Countries in Art Tourism Research



Source: Developed by authors

The analysis of the co-authorship network of countries in bibliometric studies shows to what extent knowledge production in a scientific field has been shaped by international collaborations. In addition to the number of documents and citations, this analysis reveals the degree of connectivity between countries and their roles in the knowledge exchange network. In this study, we mapped the co-authorship network of countries in art tourism using VOSviewer and examined countries based on the number of documents, the number of citations, and total link strength. The table 2 shows that scientific collaboration in this field

centers on a few main hubs, and that knowledge production is relatively concentrated in certain countries.

Table 2. Co-authorship Indicators of Leading Countries Based on Total Link Strength

Country	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
Poland	32	296	14
France	7	137	7
Germany	5	45	7
United States	22	187	6
Portugal	6	40	6
South Africa	8	135	5
Malaysia	10	27	4
Australia	5	145	3
China	10	91	3
Spain	5	53	3
United Kingdom	12	397	2
South Korea	5	92	2
Italy	5	25	2
Japan	9	225	1
Indonesia	5	16	1
Iran	5	85	0

Source: Developed by authors

Analysis of the co-authorship network reveals that Poland, with 32 documents, 296 citations, and a total link strength of 14, is the most prominent node among the countries studied. Poland not only produces the highest volume of scientific output but also shows the greatest connectivity within the collaboration network, making it the primary linking hub in art tourism research literature. The United States follows with 22 documents, 187 citations, and a total link strength of 6. Despite having fewer publications than Poland, the United States remains a major contributor to knowledge production and exchange in this domain. The United Kingdom, with 12 documents and 397 citations, ranks lower in publication count but leads in citation impact, reflecting the significant influence of its scientific output in art tourism. France and Germany, each with a total link strength of 7, are also key countries with active scientific collaborations. France, with 7 documents and 137 citations, and Germany, with 5 documents and 45 citations, illustrate that a country's prominence in the co-authorship network depends not only on publication volume but also on the intensity and breadth of its

research collaborations. Portugal, with 6 documents and a total link strength of 6, maintains a notable position among European countries and constitutes a core component of international collaborations in this field.

The inclusion of countries such as South Africa, Malaysia, China, Australia, Spain, Italy, South Korea, Indonesia, Japan, and Iran demonstrates that the global research network in art tourism, while concentrated in a few leading nations, is geographically distributed across Europe, Asia, Oceania, and Africa. South Africa, with eight documents, 135 citations, and a total link strength of five, exemplifies the significant contribution of a non-European country to this field. Although Malaysia and China have produced a relatively high number of documents, their level of international collaboration remains intermediate. These patterns suggest that, in some countries, knowledge production depends more on individual publications or limited collaborations than on extensive co-authorship networks.

The number of published documents does not necessarily correspond to the extent of co-authorship or scientific impact. For instance, the United Kingdom, despite producing fewer documents than Poland and the United States, achieves the highest citation count among the countries listed, reflecting the substantial quality and influence of its research output. Conversely, Poland, which ranks first in both the number of documents and link strength, occupies a central position in scientific production and collaborative networks. In contrast, Iran, with five documents, eighty-five citations, and zero total link strength, shows a notable citation record but lacks active participation in the international co-authorship network. These findings suggest that, based on the reviewed data, Iran's contribution to the art tourism literature has been predominantly individual or isolated, without significant international collaboration.

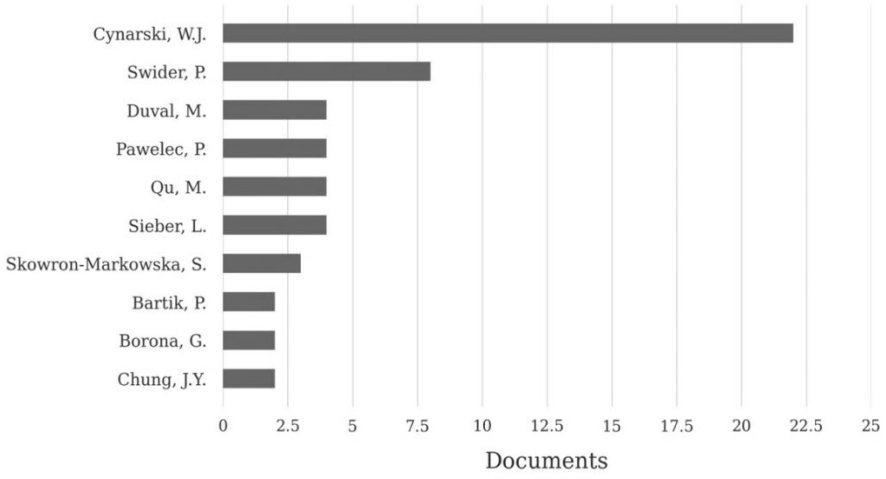
The results indicate that the research network in art tourism is international but remains concentrated in a limited number of countries. Poland, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Portugal form the core of this network and, together with select Asian and African countries, shape knowledge exchange in the field. This pattern suggests that advancing art tourism studies globally requires stronger transnational collaboration, more inter-country connections, and greater involvement from countries that have so far played a less prominent role in the network.

Most productive authors

Identifying prolific authors in bibliometric studies is one way to examine the concentration of scientific production and identify researchers who have a greater share of publications in a field. In the present study, we analyzed prolific authors based on the number of documents indexed in the Scopus database, aiming to identify the authors who have contributed most to scientific literature production in the field of art tourism. This analysis can provide an overview of the concentration of knowledge production among active researchers, the main research areas, and, to some extent, the influential academic centers in this field. However, authors' productivity is measured solely by the number of publications and does not necessarily reflect scientific impact, as evaluating impact requires examining indicators such as citation counts, bibliometric indices, and scientific collaboration networks.

The prolific authors chart in art tourism (Figure 4) demonstrates that a substantial portion of scientific output in this field is concentrated among a small group of researchers. Notably, Cynarski, W.J. holds the highest number of publications, reflecting sustained research activity and a significant influence on the development of art tourism literature. Other leading authors have also contributed to the ongoing expansion of research discussions, resulting in a considerable share of the literature being produced by a select group of active scholars. Analysis of these prolific authors reveals that scholarly production in art tourism spans multiple disciplines and approaches, encompassing topics such as cultural tourism, artistic heritage, creativity, visitor experience, place identity, art events, and the development of cultural destinations. The prominence of these authors aligns with major trends identified in other sections of the bibliometric analysis, including subject area distribution and keyword analysis. To assign each author to a specific thematic cluster, further analysis is needed, such as reviewing the titles, abstracts, and keywords of their publications.

Figure 4. Most Productive Authors in Art Tourism Research



Source: Developed by authors

Authors in art tourism research are frequently affiliated with countries and institutions previously identified as major centers of scientific production and international collaboration. This alignment suggests that the concentration of scholarly output at the author level corresponds with the geographic concentration of knowledge production in countries including Poland, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. Consequently, the distribution of prolific authors mirrors the institutional and geographic concentration of art tourism research worldwide. The analysis shows that scientific production in art tourism is concentrated among a relatively small group of active researchers, who have contributed significantly to the field's literature through sustained publications on cultural tourism, art, heritage, place experience, and the development of creative destinations. However, a more comprehensive assessment of their scientific influence requires further research into metrics such as citation counts, average citations per publication, author co-authorship networks, and thematic co-occurrence within their body of work.

Highly cited publications

Bibliometric analysis of highly cited articles is a key method for identifying influential works and reconstructing knowledge-formation pathways within a scientific field. Articles with higher citation counts often play a significant role in developing concepts, formulating theoretical frameworks, guiding methods, and expanding practical

applications. Nevertheless, citation count is only one measure of scientific impact and should be interpreted alongside factors such as publication year, thematic context, article type, and accessibility. This study identifies and analyzes highly cited articles in art tourism using data extracted from the Scopus database.

Analysis of citation patterns (Table 3) indicates that the intellectual and citation foundation of art tourism is structured around five principal thematic streams. The first stream connects art tourism with local revitalization, rural entrepreneurship, and social resilience. Notably, the study by Qu and Zollet (2023), which has received 102 citations, is the most frequently cited, showing that art tourism is regarded not only as a cultural or recreational activity but also as a mechanism for territorial renewal, strengthening local community resilience, and promoting rural entrepreneurship. This trend in the literature reflects a shift in the conceptualization of art tourism from a peripheral notion to a recognized development strategy associated with place-making and the local economy. The second major research area addresses rock art tourism and the challenges of World Heritage conservation. Studies by Duval and Smith (2013) and Duval and Smith (2014) show the importance of examining how tourism uses artistic heritage, particularly within World Heritage sites. These works underscore the need for conservation, effective visitor management, and a balance between tourism development and the preservation of cultural heritage. Consequently, much of the literature links art tourism closely to protecting artistic heritage from the pressures of tourism exploitation. Third, research by Franklin (2018) and Slak Valek (2022) shows that the literature has primarily focused on defining art tourism, exploring its opportunities, and clarifying its boundaries within tourism studies. This scholarship has contributed substantially to the conceptual articulation of art tourism, evolving it from a fragmented topic into a distinct research domain. Notably, much of the highly cited literature in this domain moves beyond case study descriptions to establish art tourism as an analytical concept and an evolving area of inquiry.

The fourth major trend concerns performing art tourism and specialized cultural markets. The study by Lim and Bendle (2012) demonstrate that art tourism can develop as specific, culturally based experiential markets. In such studies, performing arts, cultural events, and tourists' experiential consumption are identified as formative factors for specialized tourism markets. This suggests that art tourism extends

beyond static heritage or historical artifacts and encompasses performance, events, cultural consumption, and the creative economy. The fifth citation stream addresses intangible cultural heritage, martial arts, and experiential tourism. Studies by Cynarski and Swider (2017), Sieber et al. (2015), and Skowron-Markowska and Nowakowska (2021) demonstrate that a segment of the literature examines tourism grounded in martial traditions, cultural identity, and intangible heritage. These works expand the scope of art tourism beyond the visual and performing arts by analyzing its connections to ritual, bodily practices, and cultural heritage. Consequently, the cited literature reveals significant diversity in the subjects and forms of artistic representation within art tourism.

Table 3. Top-cited articles in art tourism

No.	Article Title	Authors and year of publication	Publisher	Citations in Scopus
1	Neo-endogenous revitalisation: Enhancing community resilience through art tourism and rural entrepreneurship	Qu and Zollet (2023)	Journal of Rural Studies	102
2	Rock art tourism in the uKhahlamba/Drakensberg World Heritage Site: Obstacles to the development of sustainable tourism	Duval and Smith (2013)	Journal of Sustainable Tourism,	67
3	Art tourism: A new field for tourist studies	Franklin (2018)	Tourist Studies	62
4	The arts/tourism partnership	Tighe (1986)	Journal of Travel Research	41
5	Arts tourism in Seoul: Tourist-orientated performing arts as a sustainable niche market	Lim and Bendle (2012)	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	34
6	Seeking sustainable rock art tourism: The example of the Maloti-Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site	Duval and Smith (2014)	South African Archaeological Bulletin	30
7	The journey to the cradle of martial arts: A case study of martial arts tourism	Cynarski and Swider (2017)	Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology	27

8	Study trip to Munich: Casus of scientific and martial arts tourism	Sieber et al. (2015)	Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology	21
9	Chinese destinations related to martial arts tourism from the UNESCO perspective	Skowron-Markowska and Nowakowska (2021)	Sustainability	20
10	Art tourism: Definitions, opportunities, and discussions based on a case study from Abu Dhabi	Slak Valek (2022)	Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change	17

Source: Developed by authors

A historical and temporal analysis of highly cited articles shows that scholarly discourse on art tourism began with Tighe (1986) paper, which established the foundational link between arts institutions and the tourism industry. Since 2012, citation velocity has increased exponentially, suggesting the domain has progressed from fragmented descriptive studies to a phase marked by conceptual consolidation and practical application, particularly around sustainable development and economic resilience. The analysis of highly cited articles indicates that the citation framework of art tourism is constructed from several principal streams:

1. Art tourism as a mechanism for local revitalization, resilience, and entrepreneurship,
2. The relationship between art tourism, World Heritage, rock art, and conservation,
3. The conceptual articulation of art tourism within contemporary tourism scholarship,
4. Performance art tourism and the emergence of niche cultural markets, and
5. Tourism centered on intangible heritage and martial arts.

This pattern aligns with previous research findings on keyword analysis, publication trends, and conceptual clusters, and shows that art tourism is an interdisciplinary field connecting tourism studies, cultural heritage, art studies, local development, the creative economy, and sustainability. Consequently, the most highly cited articles in this field not only identify influential works but also delineate the primary pathways for the conceptual development and structured evolution of art tourism research.

Keyword co-occurrence analysis

Keyword co-occurrence analysis serves as a fundamental scientometric method for representing the cognitive structure and conceptual networks within a scientific field. This approach assumes that the simultaneous appearance of keywords in scientific documents signals semantic connections and thematic proximity that collectively shape research discourse. We use indicators such as frequency of occurrence (Occurrences) and total link strength (Total Link Strength, TLS) to determine each concept's centrality and network weight. In this study, we conducted co-occurrence analysis on the final Scopus dataset using VOSviewer, with a minimum occurrence threshold of five. The most significant extracted terms are summarized in Table 4.

The analysis shows that the conceptual network of art tourism centers on several key terms. The term “art” appears 21 times and has an overall link strength of 51, indicating that the field remains primarily focused on art. Other prominent terms include tourism development (15 occurrences; link strength 50), heritage tourism (14 occurrences; link strength 48), cultural tourism (17 occurrences; link strength 40), and ecotourism (9 occurrences; link strength 38). This distribution suggests that the global literature conceptualizes art tourism in relation to tourism development, heritage, culture, and environmental sustainability, rather than as an isolated concept. Additionally, terms such as sustainable development, tourism management, and tourism market indicate that the field has expanded to include managerial, economic, and developmental dimensions beyond descriptions of artistic experiences.

Table 4. Most Frequently Occurring Keywords and Their Total Link Strengths Based on Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

No.	Keyword	Occurrences	Total link strength
1	art	21	51
2	tourism development	15	50
3	heritage tourism	14	48
4	cultural tourism	17	40
5	ecotourism	9	38
6	sustainable development	8	35
7	tourism management	9	31
8	tourism market	7	30
9	cultural heritage	7	23
10	martial arts	13	22

11	tourist destination	6	21
12	fighting arts	12	19
13	art tourism	18	17
14	tourist attraction	5	16
15	rock art	7	13
16	martial arts tourism	15	11

Source: Developed by authors

The word overlay map of keyword co-occurrence network of global research trends in art tourism (see Figure 5) identifies four principal clusters within the conceptual structure and temporal evolution of art tourism:

- Art, Destination Development, and Management Cluster:

This cluster centers on the core nodes of tourism development, tourism management, art, and the tourism market, and occupies a central position on the map. Network analysis indicates that the literature predominantly treats art as a catalyst for economic diversification, destination branding, and the creation of new tourism markets. Research in this area emphasizes marketing mechanisms, economic justification, and art's structural role in supporting destination sustainability.

- Heritage, Ecotourism, and Sustainability Cluster:

This thematic stream encompasses concepts such as heritage tourism, cultural tourism, sustainable development, ecotourism, and rock art. The intersection of these terms underscores the dual challenge of conserving and using historical sites and archaeological rock art landscapes. The connection between art tourism and ecotourism demonstrates hybrid tourism forms, in which natural ecology and the artistic contributions of host communities jointly support local development.

- Intangible Heritage, Somatic Arts, and Niche Tourism Culture:

The distinct grouping of keywords such as martial arts, fighting arts, combat sports, and martial art tourism warrants explicit contextual clarification. In traditional East Asian and European scholarly perspectives, martial disciplines are conceptualized as somatic arts and living intangible heritage rather than merely competitive athletics. This cluster predominantly reflects scholarly contributions from Central Europe—notably spearheaded by Polish researchers affiliated with specialized outlets such as the Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology. It represents a specialized niche of art tourism where travelers journey for

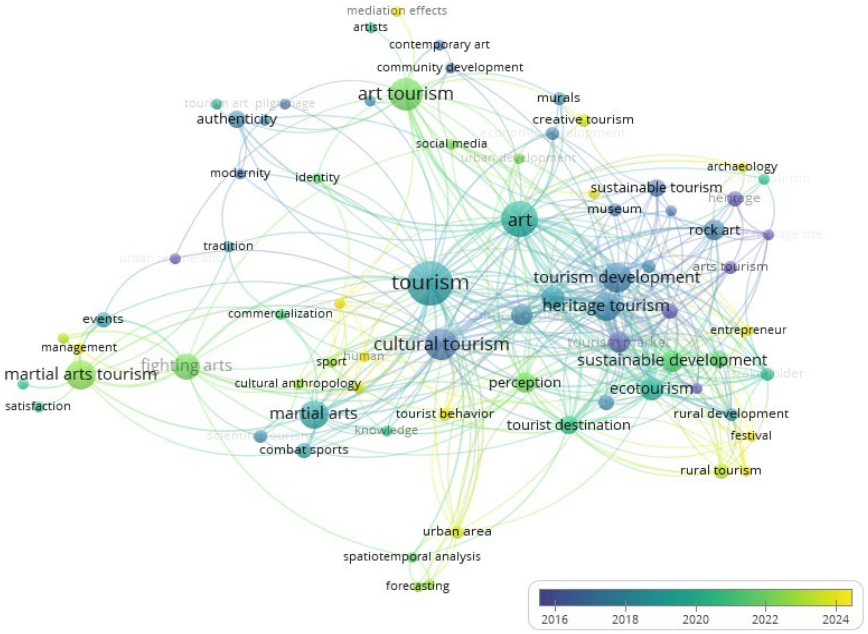
embodied skill acquisition, philosophical immersion, and master-apprentice cultural experiences, demonstrating that the operational boundaries of art tourism in indexed literature encompass embodied and performative heritage alongside visual arts.

- Tourist Perception, Creative Experiences, and Placemaking Cluster:

This cluster centers on nodes such as tourist destination, perception, authenticity, murals, and community development. In this context, art tourism is conceptualized as an experiential and interactive process in which the tourist's perception of authenticity and the quality of engagement with the local community shape the overall travel experience.

Additionally, a review of the map's temporal stratification, based on the 2016–2024 color spectrum in Figure 5, reveals a noticeable structural transition across the research landscape. During the initial period (2016 to 2018, represented by navy and blue), studies focused primarily on foundational and institutional concepts such as museums, authenticity, modernity, archaeology, and rock art. The intermediate and diversification period (2019 to 2021, shown in turquoise and green) focused on concepts such as art tourism, martial art tourism, and sustainable development. In the emerging horizons and contemporary period (2022 to 2024, shown in lime and yellow), research frontiers are characterized by creative tourism, murals and street art, rural tourism and rural development, festivals, social media, and advanced methodologies for spatiotemporal analysis, forecasting, and urban area analysis. This temporal trajectory indicates a progressive transition in global art tourism scholarship from a classic "museum-centric and conservation-oriented" perspective toward "participation-oriented, creative tourism, endogenous rural development, and data-driven urban regeneration" approaches. This thematic reorientation is further supported by the prominent citation impact of articles such as Qu and Zollet (2023).

Figure 5. Keyword Co-occurrence Network of Global Research Trends in Art Tourism



Source: Developed by authors

Discussion and Conclusion

The current scientometric analysis shows that global literature on "art tourism" has substantially transformed over the past four decades, shifting from preliminary and descriptive studies to a diverse, multidisciplinary research domain. The temporal distribution of publications sourced from the Scopus database shows that more than 53 percent of all articles in this area were published between 2021 and 2026. This heightened concentration in recent years reflects the elevation of art from a peripheral aspect of cultural tourism studies to a central focus within regional development research, spatial studies, and destination policymaking. The convergence of data from country analysis, highly cited articles, and overlay visualization identifies three fundamental transitions in this field:

Thematic evolution: From museum-centered conservation to spatial dynamics and creative tourism

A temporal analysis of term evolution on the co-occurrence overlay map reflects an incremental conceptual evolution and thematic broadening within the domain. During the pre-2018 period (represented by purple and dark colors on the map), research predominantly

addressed terms such as museum, archaeology, rock art, and the assessment of "authenticity." These terms suggest that traditional approaches examined art mainly as static physical works, museum artifacts, and archaeological sites, necessitating targeted conservation efforts and passive spectatorial engagement. In contrast, in recent years (particularly from 2022 to 2024, indicated by lime and yellow on the map), research has shifted toward concepts such as creative tourism, murals, rural development, and sustainable tourism. This thematic shift coincides with the publication of influential articles in the field, notably Qu and Zollet (2023), which has rapidly become highly cited. Their research emphasizes the significance of art tourism in processes of "neo-endogenous revitalization" and the enhancement of "local community resilience." As a result, art has moved beyond institutional confines into rural and urban public spaces, and art tourism is now characterized by active host-community involvement and interactive tourist experiences, thereby leading to the emergence of creative (art) tourism that represents an experiential and participatory evolution from passive spectatorship to active co-creation between tourists and local communities (Ababneh & Masadeh, 2019; Franklin, 2018; Richards, 2011). Importantly, this thematic progression does not signify the obsolescence of foundational conservation literature, but rather demonstrates an evolutionary diversification of the research domain. From a practical standpoint, community participation and empowerment must be substantively grounded and power-redistributing, rather than serving as mere symbolic presentation for incoming visitors (Gorji & Seyfi, 2026).

Conceptual diversification: Link to intangible heritage and traditional martial arts

A notable feature in the network topology identified in this study is the emergence of a distinct thematic cluster centered on terms such as "martial arts" and "fighting arts." From an interpretive and bibliometric standpoint, this grouping primarily reflects a dense lexical co-occurrence pattern driven by geographically concentrated scholarly output—specifically associated with Poland's prominent network position (total link strength: TLS=14) and prolific contributions by W.J. Cynarski and collaborators in specialized periodicals (e.g., Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology). Crucially, the identification of this cluster within a co-occurrence map does not inherently demonstrate an

institutionalized, standalone theoretical sub-field of art tourism; rather, it highlights an emerging, niche concentration where bodily practices, somatic disciplines, and living intangible heritage intersect with experiential travel. While these findings indicate that indexed scholarship periodically subsumes performative and embodied traditions under the broader rubric of art-related tourism, they also corroborate Qiu et al. (2022) regarding the porous boundaries of the construct. Consequently, future scholarship must exercise conceptual caution, delineating specific art tourism frameworks from adjacent typologies such as heritage, sports, and creative tourism (Różycki & Korbiel, 2022).

The emergence of spatiotemporal approaches and data-driven methodologies

The emergence of terms such as spatiotemporal analysis, forecasting, and urban area management in the most recent temporal layers of the map suggests a methodological shift among researchers toward data-driven techniques and spatial analyses. Art in urban contexts, including graffiti and murals, represents a dynamic phenomenon characterized by spatial dispersion. Consequently, recent literature has focused on evaluating and modeling tourist dispersion, local capacities, and art consumption patterns through spatiotemporal analysis methods. This connects to the prior research where geotagged photographs have been used for spatiotemporal distribution of tourist activities (Encalada et al., 2018) as well as application of systematic spatial mapping to analyze the dispersion and concentration patterns in various sectoral fragments of street art (Trzepacz, 2024). Additionally, such street art has been capitalized to direct visitor flows evenly across historic centers to avoid saturation in certain hotspots (Crespi-Vallbona & Mascarilla-Miró, 2021).

Managerial implications

Based on the research findings, the following practical implications are recommended for destination policymakers and managers:

1. Creative Tourism and Mural Trails: Destination managers should leverage the high centrality of “creative tourism” and “murals” identified in the bibliometric mapping by developing interactive spaces, workshops, and decentralized public art trails. These initiatives complement traditional museum infrastructure while

mitigating hotspot overcrowding by dispersing tourists into residential and cultural quarters.

2. Rural and Peripheral Revitalization: Integrating art initiatives and environmental art into rural and peripheral destinations can revitalize underdeveloped areas by enhancing economic resilience, attracting social capital, and mitigating out-migration.
3. Intangible Heritage Diversification: Policymakers are advised to diversify art tourism products by leveraging intangible cultural heritage—such as ritual arts, indigenous performances, and traditional ceremonies—to create immersive, authentic experiences.
4. Data-Driven Spatial Governance: Employing data-driven spatial governance, including spatial analysis models, is essential to achieve a balanced tourist distribution among urban art hubs and prevent overtourism in sensitive cultural neighborhoods.

Limitations and future directions

This study has methodological limitations. Data extraction was conducted solely from the Scopus database and restricted to English-language scientific documents. Consequently, relevant research published in other databases, such as Web of Science, or in local non-English-language journals may have been excluded. Furthermore, a primary boundary condition arises from our search string. By restricting keywords to explicit variants of "art tourism" to preserve conceptual specificity, valuable literature indexed solely under umbrella terms (e.g., broad "cultural tourism") or specific artistic sub-disciplines was excluded. Additionally, while keyword co-occurrence clustering effectively visualizes the relational density and topical proximity within the extracted corpus, the presence of a thematic cluster should be interpreted as a bibliometric concentration rather than definitive empirical proof of an autonomous theoretical discipline.

Future research should examine the impact of virtual and augmented reality, as well as artificial intelligence technologies, on tourists' perceptions of artwork authenticity. It should also evaluate patterns of local community engagement and innovative funding models that promote the sustainability of art events. Additionally, comparative analysis of the role of art tourism in revitalizing historic districts within developing countries would provide valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners.

ORCID

Parviz Pourkarimi https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3611-6382
Sarasadat Makian https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9935-5877
Farhad Nazir https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1148-3007

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