

Creative Tourism for Cultural Preservation: A Bibliometric Review

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a bibliometric analysis of research on creative tourism and cultural preservation to map its intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and collaborative patterns. Using a comprehensive dataset retrieved from an academic database and analyzed through VOSviewer, the study applies co-occurrence, citation, density, and network visualization techniques to identify dominant research themes and their interrelationships. The findings reveal that the intellectual core of the field is primarily structured around tourism, historic preservation, sustainable development, and cultural heritage, indicating a strong sustainability-oriented foundation. Cluster analysis further demonstrates the integration of cultural preservation with rural development, heritage management, and cultural industries, while emerging themes such as digital heritage technologies—including augmented reality, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence—reflect a gradual transformation toward technology-enhanced tourism experiences. The citation analysis identifies highly influential works spanning cultural theory, rural heritage systems, and digital preservation strategies, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of the field. Meanwhile, co-authorship and country-level network analyses indicate strong but uneven collaboration patterns, with a small number of central actors and countries serving as key bridges in global research dissemination.

Keywords: Creative Tourism, Cultural Preservation, Bibliometric Analysis, VOSviewer, Sustainable Development

1. INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, the tourism industry has undergone major changes due to the change in its direction from mass tourism towards participative, experience-based, and culture-based tourism [1], [2]. Modern tourists have come to value the significance of the experience that will give them an opportunity to take part in cultural activities and interact with locals actively instead of just watching the destinations and being a consumer only. That is why such kind of change led to the creation of the concept of creative tourism – an innovative tourism approach that is based on involvement, co-creation and experiential learning of cultures through various activities [3]. Creative tourism gives tourists an opportunity to explore their own creativity by taking part in workshops, arts, traditional crafts, cooking and other kinds of culture-related activities within local communities [4], [5].

The increasing importance of creative tourism can be explained by growing worries about the conservation of cultural heritage. The fast processes of globalization, urbanization, and technology development have resulted in the destruction of local cultures and traditions, including indigenous knowledge and local identity of many destinations around the world [6]. Cultural homogeneity, caused by the spread of consumerist culture and mass tourism, is one of the main threats to the sustainability of local culture and tradition [7]. Thus, the use of creative tourism can be seen as a tool for protecting local culture by converting cultural resources into experiences that can provide social and economic benefits. In comparison with heritage tourism that mostly provides the possibility of visiting historic places, creative tourism stimulates local communities to preserve their culture through active engagement in cultural processes [8].

Moreover, the concept of creative tourism has been gaining increased attention as an instrument for sustainable development. This is because creative tourism is similar to sustainable

tourism which is characterized by the balance between economic development, environmental conservation, and socio-cultural development. In addition to that, since creative tourism involves community participation in tourism-related activities, the approach has shown its ability to provide alternatives in terms of income generation while at the same time promoting the protection and regeneration of cultural resources. In fact, community-based creative tourism projects have proved their effectiveness in helping local artisans, preserving craftsmanship skills, educating people about culture, and improving destination competitiveness [9].

The literature relating to creative tourism has evolved considerably in the past twenty years. Since the seminal study of [10], several aspects of creative tourism have been explored by researchers, namely, destination development, cultural entrepreneurship, community involvement, creative tourist experience, creative industries, heritage conservation, and sustainable management of creative tourism [11]. Several recent pieces of research have also analyzed other issues associated with creative tourism, such as digital creative tourism, cultural innovation, co-creation experience, creative city, and the significance of creative tourism for tourism recovery after pandemic [12]–[14].

Even though the pace of developments in this scientific area has been quite fast, there have been no efforts yet made to define its intellectual structure or development dynamics. Current academic works concentrate on particular destinations, case studies or topics, and thus it becomes quite challenging to gain information on the development process of this area as a whole. Furthermore, there are no attempts to synthesize information about the current state of the body of knowledge concerning major topics under investigation, most impactful papers, collaborative networks, emerging trends, and further research perspectives. Bibliometric analysis is currently recognized as an efficient tool that enables systematic mapping of scientific knowledge, identification of trends and visualization of scientific fields' development [15]. Through the use of bibliometrics, one is able to identify patterns of knowledge generation and provide an overview of the field under discussion.

Though it is well acknowledged that the use of creative tourism has been a means to foster cultural conservation as well as sustainable tourism development, there has been no study which has conducted a bibliometric analysis of this area to identify its history, intellectual structure, themes, and emerging trends. Most of the previous studies have used concepts and qualitative case studies or destination-based empirical research on creative tourism for cultural conservation. This has led to fragmented understanding of the body of knowledge in this area and little is known about the major themes, prominent scholars, institutions, networks, and emerging areas of research in this domain. This study aims to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric review of the scientific literature on creative tourism for cultural preservation.

2. METHODS

Bibliometric analysis methodology was used in this study to analyze the development of research in creative tourism for cultural preservation. Bibliometric analysis is a quantifiable technique that involves evaluation and mapping of scientific literature through the analysis of publication metadata, citation relations, and keywords [15]. For collecting data, the Scopus database was chosen because of its broad representation of high-quality peer-reviewed journals in different subject fields and its frequent use in bibliometric analysis studies. Search terms such as “creative tourism” and “cultural preservation” were used to retrieve relevant articles by looking up these terms in the title, abstract, or keywords. The search was confined only to journal articles, conference papers, and review articles written in English.

The bibliometric data were analyzed using VOSviewer software, a widely adopted tool for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks [16]. VOSviewer was utilized to perform co-occurrence analysis of keywords, co-authorship analysis, citation analysis, and bibliographic coupling to identify the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of the research field. Network visualization was used to reveal relationships among authors, institutions, countries, and research themes, while overlay visualization identified emerging topics based on publication periods. In addition, density visualization was employed to determine the concentration of research activities within specific thematic areas.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

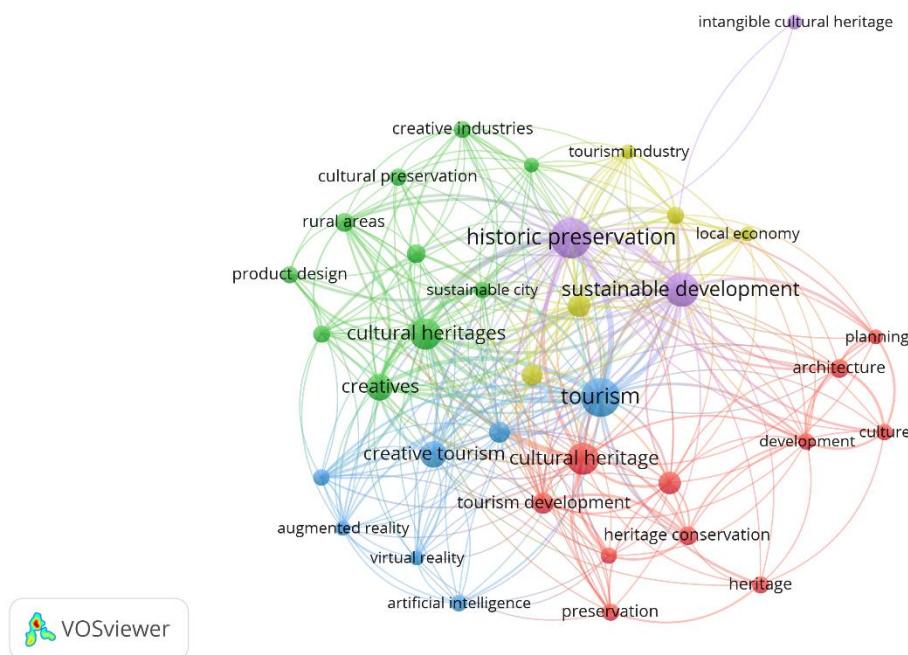


Figure 1. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 1 presents a keyword co-occurrence network on creative tourism, cultural heritage, and cultural preservation. The central positioning of nodes such as “tourism,” “sustainable development,” and “historic preservation” indicates that the literature in this domain is structurally anchored in sustainability-oriented tourism discourse. These high-centrality nodes function as intellectual bridges connecting multiple thematic clusters, suggesting that creative tourism research is not an isolated field, but rather an interdisciplinary intersection between tourism studies, heritage conservation, urban planning, and cultural economics. The first most visible cluster (green) consists of the key terms like “cultural preservation,” “cultural heritages,” “creative industries,” and “rural areas.” Such a cluster shows the socio-cultural community-based approach to the studies of creative tourism. The association between the concepts “rural areas” and “creative industries” indicates that quite a large body of the literature considers the issue from the angle of using creative tourism in the process of local socio-economic and cultural revitalization in the periphery or non-urban regions.

The second cluster (red) is highly correlated with the following terms: “heritage conservation,” “culture,” “architecture,” “planning,” and “development.” This shows a more structural approach, which ties up creative tourism with heritage management and spatial planning institutions. The appearance of “architecture” and “planning” reveals the importance of physical space and urban design in heritage tourism practices. It seems that cultural preservation is not just a cultural and economic matter, but it has a lot to do with regulations, urban policies, and spatial

designs. This blue cluster brings a technology-based experiential perspective in which the terminology used includes concepts like “augmented reality,” “virtual reality,” and “artificial intelligence.” It is evident that there is an increase in the digitization of creative tourism experience whereby technologies can be employed for interpretation and mediation of cultural heritage. The association between “creative tourism” and these technologies shows the transformation from mere preservation of heritage into its digitization. This is a new research domain in heritage tourism.

The yellow and purple bridging nodes, such as “sustainable development,” “historic preservation,” “local economy,” and “tourism industry,” act as integrative connectors across clusters. Their central positioning demonstrates that the dominant theoretical framing of the field is sustainability-oriented, where creative tourism is conceptualized as a balancing mechanism between economic growth, cultural continuity, and heritage protection. The density of interconnections among clusters confirms a high level of interdisciplinarity, but also suggests that the field is still converging around a relatively small set of conceptual anchors, particularly sustainability and heritage preservation.

3.1 Overlay Visualization

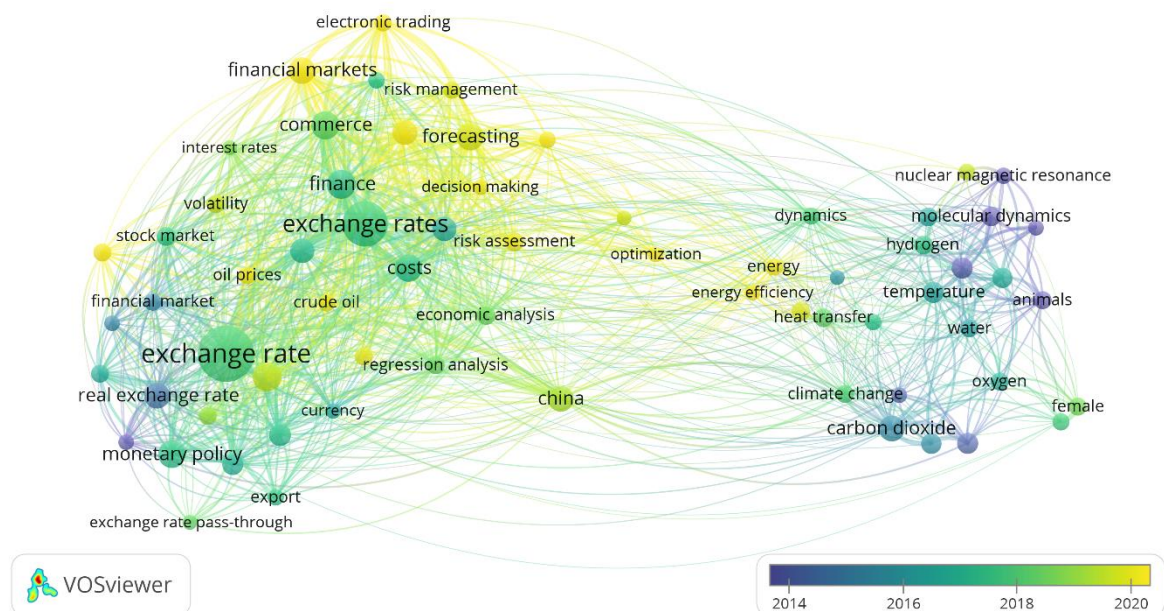


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 2 maps a multidisciplinary citation/keyword structure centered on “exchange rate” and broader financial-econometric themes. The most dominant and densely connected node is “exchange rate,” which functions as the primary intellectual hub linking financial markets, commerce, monetary policy, and macroeconomic indicators such as interest rates, oil prices, and stock markets. This indicates that the core literature is anchored in international finance, particularly exchange rate dynamics as a dependent and explanatory variable within global economic systems. The high density of interconnections suggests that exchange rate research is not isolated but structurally embedded within macro-financial volatility and trade-flow analysis.

A second major cluster extends the financial domain into analytical and decision-oriented modeling. Terms such as “forecasting,” “risk management,” “decision making,” “regression analysis,” and “optimization” indicate a strong methodological orientation toward quantitative modeling and predictive analytics. This cluster reflects the dominance of econometric and

computational approaches in the field, where exchange rate behavior is frequently examined using statistical inference and forecasting frameworks. The presence of “electronic trading” and “financial markets” further indicates increasing integration with algorithmic trading systems and market microstructure studies, suggesting a shift toward data-driven financial engineering.

The right-side cluster introduces a distinct but connected physical-science and environmental dimension, including “temperature,” “climate change,” “carbon dioxide,” “heat transfer,” and “molecular dynamics.” This indicates an interdisciplinary expansion where financial and economic models intersect with environmental and energy systems research. The temporal overlay coloring (2014–2020 gradient) suggests an evolution from earlier finance-heavy topics (blue/green tones) toward more recent integration with sustainability, energy efficiency, and climate-related variables (yellow tones).

3.2 Citation Analysis

Table 1. The Most Impactful Literatures

Citations	Authors and year	Title
82	[8]	Neoliberalism, linguistic commodification, and ethnolinguistic identity in multilingual Nepal
48	[17]	Creativity and digital strategies to support food cultural heritage in Mediterranean rural areas
43	[18]	Socio-ecological adaptation of agricultural heritage systems in modern China: Three cases in Qingtian County, Zhejiang Province
37	[19]	The possibilities of preservation, regeneration and presentation of industrial heritage: The case of Old Mint "A.D." on Belgrade Riverfront
36	[20]	Towards participatory activities with augmented reality for cultural heritage: A literature review
36	[21]	Economy, ecology, and music: An introduction
34	[22]	Strategies of landscape planning in peri-urban rural tourism: A comparison between two villages in China
32	[14]	Digital preservation and reconstruction of old cultural elements in augmented reality (AR)
32	[23]	The good souvenir: Representations of Okinawa and Kinmen Islands in Asia
32	[24]	QUESTIONING A NEOLIBERAL URBAN REGENERATION POLICY: The rhetoric of “cities of culture” and the city of Gwangju, Korea

Source: Scopus, 2026

The citation pattern clearly shows that the most influential writings in this discipline are highly interdisciplinary in nature and cover issues relating to sociolinguistics, cultural preservation, rural development, digital humanities, and sustainable development. The paper by [8], which is the most cited writing in the literature, explains the concept of neoliberalism and linguistic commodification, thereby indicating that the cultural and identity aspects play an important role in transformation of heritage under the influence of globalization. Secondly, another significant body of influential literature examines practical applications of cultural heritage preservation in rural development and its relevance to Asia and Mediterranean regions. Examples include works by [17] about digital strategies for food heritage preservation, Jiao et al. (2016) about socio-ecological adaptation of agricultural heritage systems, and [25] about tourism landscape planning in rural areas. All these publications highlight the significance of cultural heritage integration into economic sustainability and spatial planning. Cultural heritage becomes viewed as an active resource in the context of rural development and tourism-based local economy. Thirdly, the pillar of this theme can

be defined through technological mediations and heritage management techniques that prevail in modern times. [20] and [14] highlight the use of augmented reality, digital preservation, and reconstruction of the components of culture. However, there have been some significant works done in the past which have critically evaluated cultural policy, urban regeneration, and representation of heritage in a political economy.

3.3 Density Visualization

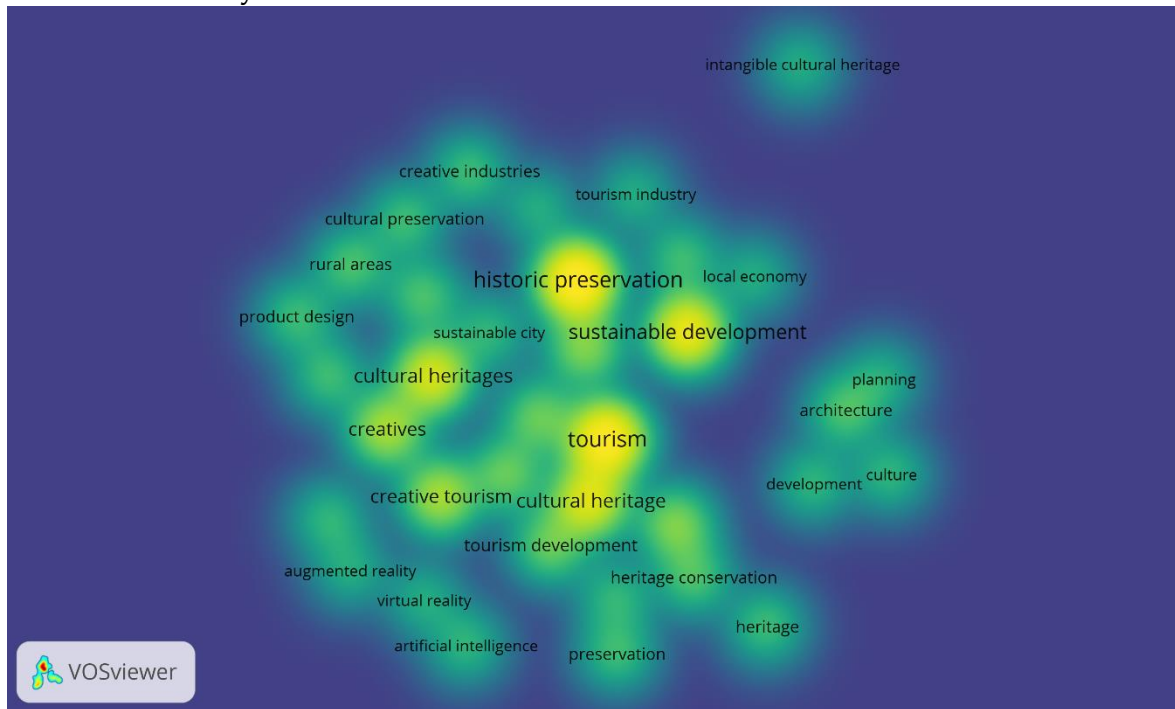


Figure 3. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

From Figure 3, it can be seen that the intellectual kernel of the literature lies in a dense cluster of themes such as “tourism,” “historic preservation,” “sustainable development,” and “cultural heritage.” This dense cluster (in yellow and light green colors) implies those keywords that co-occur most often and are thus most important for defining the structure of the field; therefore, the field can be said to revolve around the nexus of tourism research and heritage preservation. The term “creative tourism” is part of this intellectual kernel rather than a separate entity. In contrast, lower-density peripheral areas (blue-green zones) such as “augmented reality,” “virtual reality,” “artificial intelligence,” and “intangible cultural heritage” represent emerging or less consolidated research directions. Their weaker intensity suggests that these topics are either newer to the field or still developing in terms of academic integration with the dominant tourism–heritage–sustainability nexus.

3.4 Co-Authorship Analysis

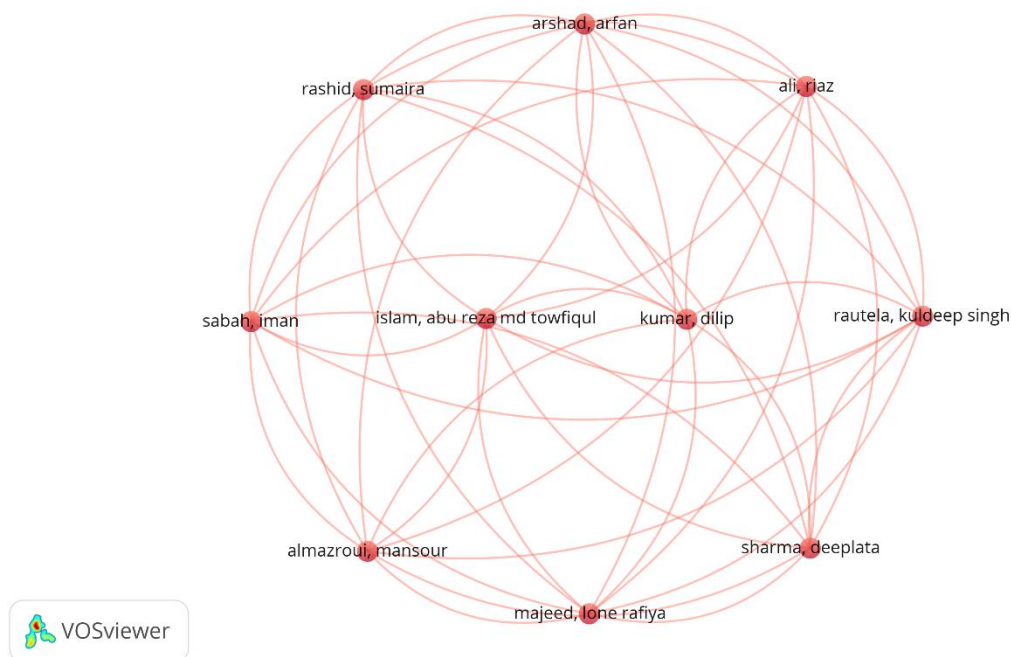


Figure 4. Author Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 4 represents a co-authorship structure among researchers, where nodes indicate individual authors and links reflect collaboration relationships. The relatively dense interconnection among authors such as Arshad Arfan, Ali Riaz, Rashid Sumaira, Kumar Dilip, and Rauteala Kuldeep Singh suggests a closely linked research community with frequent co-authorship patterns. The circular structure and high network density indicate that collaboration is not highly fragmented; instead, most researchers are part of a single integrated scholarly network rather than isolated clusters. From a structural perspective, a few authors appear more centrally positioned, particularly Islam Abu Reza Md Towfiqul and Kumar Dilip, implying that they may function as key bridging actors within the collaboration network. These nodes likely play a role in connecting different subgroups and facilitating knowledge flow across the network. The absence of clearly separated clusters suggests that the field is still consolidating, with collaborative relationships distributed relatively evenly rather than organized into distinct thematic or institutional sub-networks.

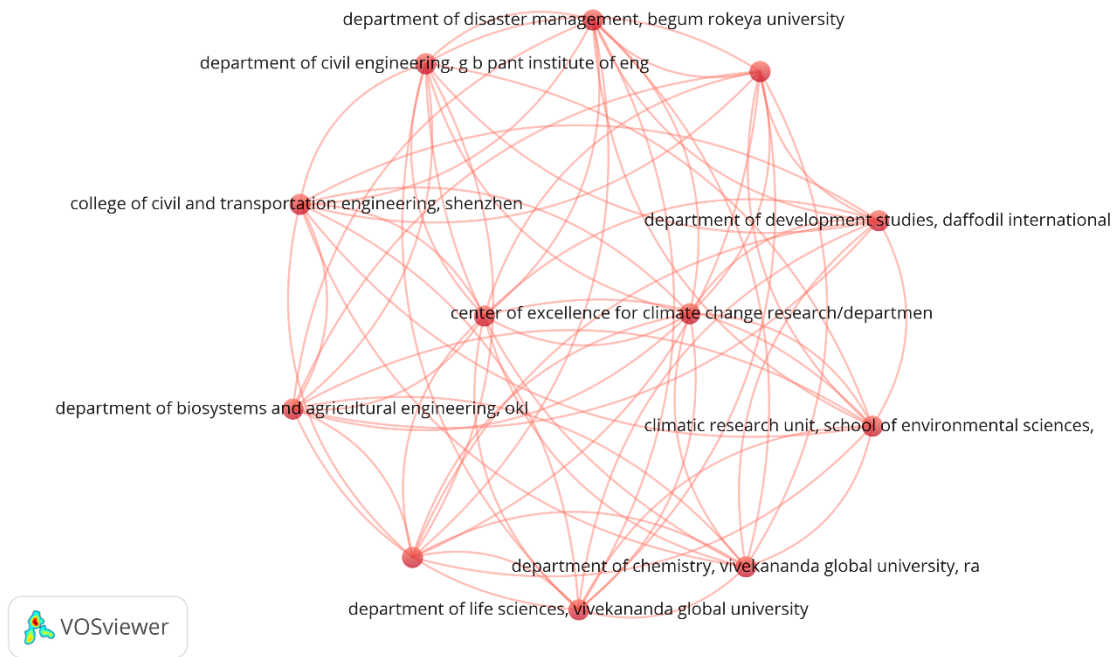


Figure 5. Institution Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 5 shows institutions involved in studies on climate change, environmental systems, and other areas related to engineering and sustainability. The network is very tightly connected since there are almost connections between institutions, signifying inter-institutional cooperation and relative integration within the research environment. The central institutions, such as “center of excellence for climate change research/department” and “climatic research unit, school of environmental sciences,” act as bridges between various collaborative efforts of different institutions. Another level of significant contributors involves departments from engineering and science including Civil Engineering, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering, Chemistry, and Life Sciences. This reveals the multidisciplinary nature of climatic and environmental studies which involve the use of both environmental science and engineering fields. The involvement of universities from different geographical and academic backgrounds (for example, Begum Rokeya University, Daffodil International, Shenzhen based engineering university, and Vivekananda Global University) also shows an international collaborative network especially within Asia.

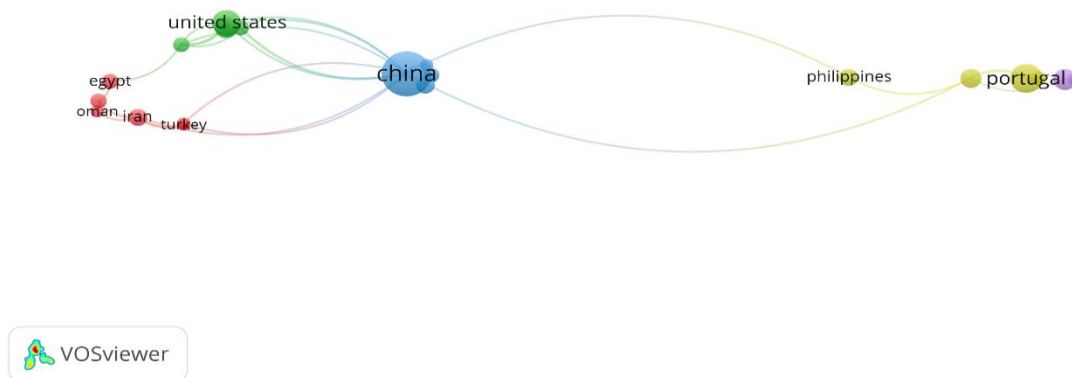


Figure 6. Country Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 6 depicts international collaboration patterns among countries, with China occupying a dominant central position as the primary hub connecting multiple regional clusters. Its centrality and node size indicate that it plays a key bridging role in global research collaboration, linking both Western partners (e.g., United States) and various Asian, Middle Eastern, and European countries. This structural prominence suggests that China is a major production and dissemination node within the research field, facilitating cross-regional knowledge exchange. On the left side, a relatively tight cluster includes Egypt, Oman, Iran, and Turkey, indicating a Middle Eastern-adjacent collaboration subgroup with stronger intra-regional connectivity but still dependent on linkage through China for broader network integration. On the right side, the Philippines and Portugal form a smaller but distinct collaboration cluster, with Portugal appearing as a relatively strong endpoint node, suggesting focused bilateral or limited multilateral collaborations.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric and network-based mapping of research on creative tourism and cultural preservation, revealing a structurally mature yet evolving interdisciplinary field. The analysis demonstrates that the intellectual core of the literature is anchored in the intersection of tourism, historic preservation, sustainable development, and cultural heritage, indicating that creative tourism is predominantly conceptualized as a sustainability-oriented mechanism for safeguarding and revitalizing cultural assets. The co-occurrence and density visualizations further confirm that while the core themes are well-established and highly interconnected, emerging dimensions such as digital heritage technologies (e.g., augmented reality, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence) are gradually reshaping the field toward more experiential and technologically mediated forms of cultural engagement. The citation and collaboration analyses further indicate that influential works and scholarly networks are distributed across diverse disciplinary and geographical contexts, with strong contributions from heritage studies, rural development, cultural policy, and environmental planning. However, collaboration networks remain relatively centralized, suggesting the presence of key bridging actors and institutions that facilitate knowledge diffusion across regions. At the country level, the dominance of a central node highlights asymmetrical global research collaboration patterns, where a limited number of countries function as major intermediaries connecting peripheral research clusters.

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