

## Mapping the Research Trends on Dark Tourism: A Bibliometric Analysis and Visualization

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### Abstract

Bibliometrics is a tool that enables the analysis of historical development, present conditions, and prospective trends in a specific field of study. The purpose of this research is to examine dark tourism research that was published between 2007 and 2021. A total of 234 important publications were systematically retrieved and bibliometrically analyzed from the Scopus database. To examine and illustrate the dark tourism research trend, the current study used the Bibliometrix tool. To represent the general pattern and structure of dark tourism research, the final analysis incorporates bibliometric indicators such as annual scientific production, most prolific journal, most prolific author, country and institutions, most impactful articles, co-citation and author's keywords. The finding of this analysis shows that publications on dark

tourism have expanded dramatically and are dominated by a small number of writers and nations. The study provides theoretical and practical insight into dark tourism research.

**Keywords:** Dark Tourism, Bibliometric analysis, Thanatology, Bibliometric, Co-citations

**JEL Codes:** L83, Z32

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Tourism activities are a complex phenomenon that involves a broad range of individuals who are constantly looking for innovative and diverse experiences to meet a wide range of objectives, which is why the global tourism landscape has changed in recent decades, tourists' objectives, as well as the places they seek, are no longer tied to the usual sun, beach, and scenic views. Dark tourism became a topic of scholarly discussion in the later periods of 1980s and early years of 1990s. Early in the 1990s, numerous researchers emphasized on the connection among locations of death and tourism (Dann, 1995; Prentice, 1993). In order to refer to the touristification of places of tragedy and death, Foley & Lennon (1996) coined the phrase "dark tourism" in modern academic and media parlance, they described dark tourism as the display and consumption (by visitors) of genuine and commoditized death and catastrophe places. A. V. Seaton (1996) proposed the term "thanatourism" that same year, which is defined as the act of visiting places of death. Dark tourism is later defined by J. J. Lennon & Foley (1999) as tourism connected with places of death, destruction, and depravity. Similarly, Dark tourism is also referred to as paying visit to sites which have had catastrophes or historically significant deaths have happened and continue to have an influence on our lives (P. R. Stone, 2006). Furthermore, the phenomena of dark tourism are defined as the exhibition and consumption by tourists of genuine and co-modified dead and catastrophe locations (Schneider et al., 2021).

Even though there exists a potential market and there has been a considerable increase in the interest in this field among the practitioners and the researchers, there is no exact set of rules for how dark sites are being examined, analyzed and interpreted in tourism's context, as per latest available literature. There is currently no study that assesses dark tourism research across time to offer a complete assessment of the present status of the field. In light of this, there is a clear opportunity to expand knowledge about dark tourism, as well as the ways to understand, develop, and analyze in the context of tourism literature, by taking into consideration past researches. The present work contributes to the field by presenting a bibliometric technique for synthesis of previously published material on dark tourism. Previous tourism research (Khanra et al., 2021; Ruhanen et al., 2015; Singh, Sibi, & Sharma, 2021; Singh, Sibi, et al., 2022) support using bibliometric approach to study and describe the growth and structure of various tourism types.

This research illustrates the scientific progress of dark tourism research, knowledge area, and structure by reviewing and monitoring published papers. The findings will assist researchers and practitioners in comprehending the current status of the field, the issues investigated, and the direction for future research lines. The theoretical and historical growth, as well as the conceptual underpinning of dark tourism research, will be considerably strengthened and clarified by this study. The tool employed in this study is what makes it unique. The study was carried out with the help of bibliometrix, a recently developed tool designed in the R programming language and software environment (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Singh, Sibi, & Sharma, 2021; Singh, et al., 2022).

The main aim of the study is bibliometrically evaluation of research papers published on tourism and thanatology that were retrieved from the Scopus database, between 2007 and 2021 so as to understand the current knowledge base, grounded theory, intellectual, and conceptual structure of dark tourism research. The study was conducted with the help of varied bibliometric analysis indicators including yearly scientific production, most prolific scholar, country and institutions, most impact full articles, co-citation analysis and author keywords analysis. The outcomes of the above analyses are described in detail in the results and discussion section.

## Literature review

The term "dark tourism" was coined by Foley and Lennon (1996) to characterize the attractiveness of travelers to tourist destinations linked with death, disaster, and depravity. Furthermore, Various definition of dark tourism include visiting locations connected with fatality, causality, distress, and the grotesque (P. R. Stone, 2006) and visits the destinations where catastrophes have occurred or where historically significant tragedies have occurred and continue to have an influence on our lives (Tarlow, 2007). Consuming dark tourism has been suggested as a way for individuals within a social framework to confront questions of personal meaning—a key to reality, therefore to life and social order, and, finally, to the preservation and continuity of ontological security and holistic well-being. With all that in mind, dark tourism may have less to do with the dead and dying and more to do with life and living (P. Stone & Sharpley, 2008). Dark tourism provides an educational as well as an emotional tourist experience, imparting significant lessons about obtaining understanding of historical events(Lennon, 2000),while also potentially providing an emotional or therapeutic benefit(Braithwaite & Lee, 2006). However, the term "dark tourism" is often frequently used in academic literature, and it is defined as conduct which entails travelling to places associated with sorrow, death, or catastrophe for the purposes of remembrance, learning, or leisure (J. J. Lennon & Foley, 1999; Yan et al., 2016). It's also been described as visits to areas where catastrophes or historically significant deaths have occurred and continue to have an influence on our lives (Tarlow, 2007). Dark tourism, according to some scholars, is a new institution that mediates the establishment of contemporary ontological meanings of mortality and the contemplation of consuming significant other dead (P. R. Stone, 2011). Furthermore, since death conjures significant social and cultural value, dark tourism should be associated with consumer behaviour process in tourism, culture, politics, and the financial system that enables people to increase their historical consciousness (Henderson, 2000; J. J. Lennon & Foley, 1999; Yan et al., 2016). Roberts (2018) dark tourism has been noted as a growing phenomenon in the twenty-first century, in terms of guests' reasons for visiting these places, as well as the availability of on-site interpretation and guest amenities. According to (T. Seaton, 2018) Dark tourism is a growing market which is intimately correlated to the concept of death and provokes interactions with remembrances of mortalities and fatality. Visitors today are willing to travel to such dark locations, revealing that dark tourism has the potential to attract a larger number of visitors in the future.

## Methodology

This study employed bibliometric analysis, which is a rigorous methodology that permits systematization of scientific production on a specific field by systematic utilization and evaluation of vast amounts of raw data in meticulous ways, it is used in many disciplines because of its degree of objectivity (Della Corte et al., 2021; Donthu et al., 2021; Hallinger & Kovačević, 2021). It is a quantitative approach that employs statistics and econometrics to create the evolutionary structure of a study area using publication and citation data(Singh et al., 2021).

Bibliometrix, an R-package that allows for bibliometric analysis using the R language was employed to analyze this research. (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Warin, 2020). Scopus database, which is the world's largest database, was used to retrieve the bibliographic data to be utilized in the present study. It has long been utilized by scholars in tourism and hospitality study to extract pertinent peer-reviewed material for bibliometric and scientific analyses (Mulet-Forteza et al., 2019; Singh, et al., 2022). Following the standard search protocol (dark OR "dark place" OR thanatology OR holocaust AND tourism OR tourist) keywords were used to search in Scopus database.

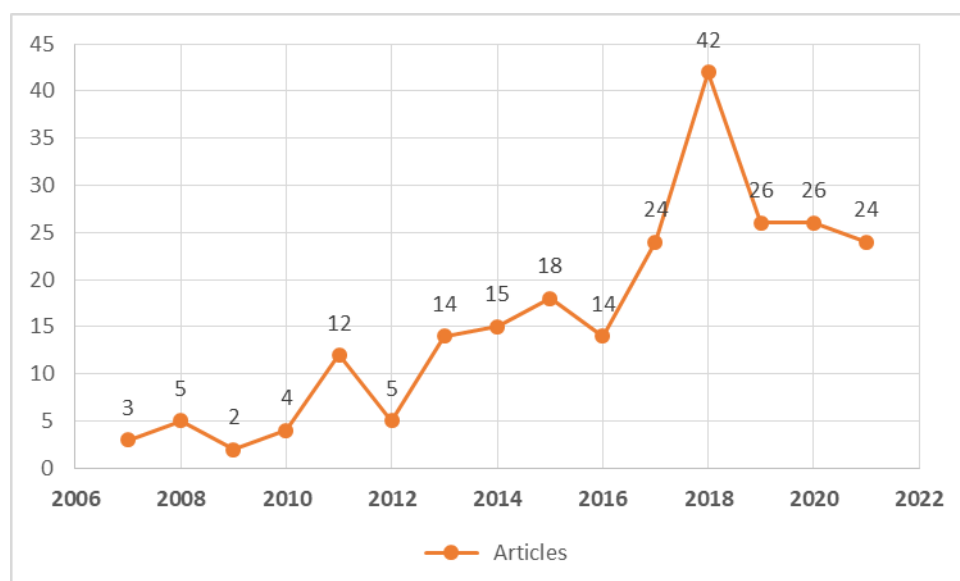
As a result 962 documents were identified. Later, only article published between 2007 and 2021 and only English language were used to restrict the research investigation in tourism and hospitality domain (Jiang et al., 2019; Singh, Sibi, Yost, et al., 2021). This refining process reduced the total number of articles to 384. Next, the researchers examined the titles, abstracts, and keywords to find the relevant papers. The paper should meet two requirements for final recommendations: (a) the study should be conceived and arranged with dark tourism and (b) research should be carried out in tourism and hospitality context. Based on these criteria, 234 significant papers were selected for analysis.

The current study has used annual scientific production, most prolific journals, the most prolific scholars, countries, and institutions, most impactful articles, co-citation and author's keywords to comprehend the trend of publication of research in dark tourism domain. These indicators are the most commonly used to measure the performance by authors in specific research field ( Mulet-Forteza et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2020; Singh, Sibi, & Sharma, 2021).

## Results

### Annual scientific production on dark tourism

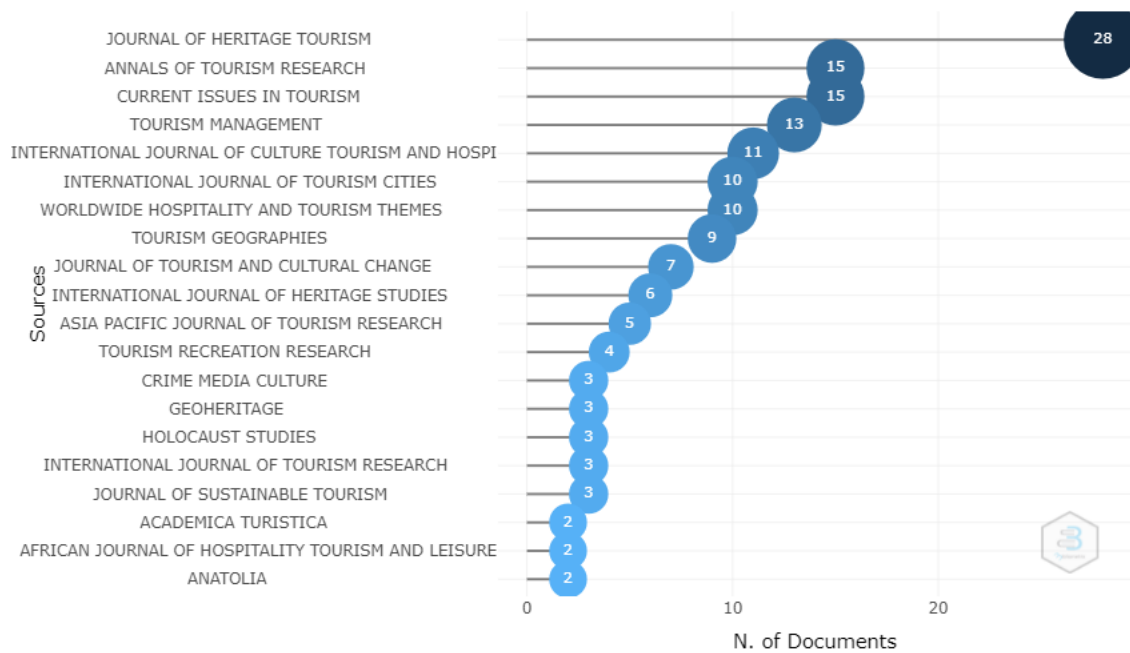
A year-by-year distribution of 234 Scopus-indexed papers, which were in the final set of publications, is reflected in Figure 1. In spite of the fact that linkage among death and tourism, also known as thanatourism, became prominent in the nineteenth century, but it recently has gained considerable focus of scholarly research as 'dark tourism' (Wright & Sharpley, 2018). However, it is clear that the rate of publications was low between 2007 and 2012; however, the number of publications began to increase in 2013. Furthermore, the year between 2013 and 2021, a total of 203 documents were published which contributes 86.75% of total production.



**Fig. 1 Annual scientific production**

### Most prolific journals

Figure 2 depicts the distribution of papers from the journal's point of view, indicating that the JHT (Journal of Heritage Tourism), ATR (Annals of Tourism Research), and CIT (Current Issues in Tourism) occupied the top position with 28, 15 and 15 numbers of publications respectively. These three journals were the most productive and significant in terms of publishing articles relating to dark tourism research, accounting for 24.78% of overall publications.



**Fig. 2 Most Prolific Journals**

### The most prolific scholars, countries, and institutions

In a bibliographic study, as depicted in Table: 1, the prolific contributors are characterized through productivity being the major indicator of major contribution done the respective researcher, nation of the higher education institutions. It assists practitioners and researchers in recognizing and establishing a collaborative and supportive environment for academic exchange in a particular domain. After analyzing the data, 373 researchers were identified. Out of these 373 authors Podoshen, JS has occupied the top rank with the highest number of citations and author Jhang J has occupied the second position with a citation count of 203. Both authors have published an equal number of articles and have an equal number of h-index and g-index scores. However, when it comes to the most productive countries, United Kingdom ranks first with the most publications, followed by the United States. Regarding the Institutions University of Central Lancashire has occupied the top rank.

**Table 1: The most prolific authors, nations, and higher education institutions**

<b>Author</b>	<b>h-index</b>	<b>g-index</b>	<b>m-index</b>	<b>TC</b>	<b>NP</b>
PODOSHEN JS	6	6	0.5	245	6
ZHANG J	6	6	0.857	203	6
ISAAC RK	5	5	0.455	200	5
ZHANG H	5	5	0.714	123	5
ZHENG C	5	5	0.714	123	5
BUDA DM	4	4	0.4	140	4
STONE PR	4	4	0.333	247	4
AKAR K	3	3	0.429	24	3
ANDRZEJEWSKI SA	3	3	0.375	72	3
CHEN S	3	4	0.5	37	4

<b>Most productive countries</b>	
<b>Country</b>	<b>Article</b>
UK	85
USA	60
CHINA	37
AUSTRALIA	31
CANADA	20
NETHERLANDS	18
ISRAEL	15
SOUTH AFRICA	8
SLOVENIA	6
FRANCE	5

<b>Most prolific institutions</b>	
<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Article</b>
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL LANCASHIRE	9
GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY	8
UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN	7
BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV	6
NHTV BREDA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES	6
NANJING UNIVERSITY	6
FRANKLIN AND MARSHALL COLLEGE	6
UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH	5
SUN YAT-SEN UNIVERSITY	5
UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA	5

### **Most impactful articles**

A good indicator to evaluate the impact of study on knowledge advancement is the number of citations received by an article (Kumar et al., 2020; Singh, Sibi, Yost, et al., 2021) **Table: 2** represents highly impactful articles which, as per Scopus data, have been cited by more than 55 researchers. The paper which has received highest citation in the list is “Consuming dark tourism: A Thanatological Perspective” by P. Stone & Sharpley (2008) with over 400 citations that discuss the lack of proper attention towards dark tourism consumption research because mostly supply side of dark tourism has been researched. The second most influential paper is “Sought Experiences at Dark Heritage Sites” by Biran et al., (2011) deliberated most of the literature focused on supply side perspective of dark tourism research and always ignoring the tourist experience perspectives and the finding of the study reveal that the tourists’ perceptions of the dark tourism destination should be considered in the conceptualization of the tourist experience. However, eight themes were identified related to researches in dark tourism domain which included: dark tourism experience (Ashworth & Isaac, 2015; Biran et al., 2011; Dunkley et al., 2011; Kang et al., 2012; Miles, 2014; P. R. Stone, 2012; Yan et al., 2016), tourist motivation (Bigley et al., 2010; Hartmann, 2014; Isaac & Çakmak, 2014; Kidron, 2013; Podoshen, 2013), dark tourism promotion (Lemelin et al., 2010; Wight & Lennon, 2007), conflict (Causevic & Lynch, 2011; Podoshen & Hunt, 2011), authenticity (Cohen, 2011), tourist behavior (Biran et al., 2014), dark tourism consumption (P. Stone & Sharpley, 2008) and destination management (Mowatt & Chancellor, 2011). The dark tourism experience and motivation are significant and resonant themes in the discourse on dark tourism, drawing interest from academics around the world. By addressing the fundamental concepts, theories, and principles related to dark tourism, future researchers now have a platform courtesy to these findings. Out of these 21 articles, 12 of them are based on these themes. Furthermore, most of the highly regarded articles were written through collaborative research.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Paper</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>TC</b>	<b>C/Y</b>
Consuming dark tourism: A Thanatological Perspective	Stone & Sharpley, (2008)	Consumption	450	30
Sought experiences at (dark) heritage sites	Biran et al., (2011)	Experience	246	20.5
Dark tourism and significant other death: Towards a Model of Mortality Mediation	P. R. Stone, (2012)	Experience	181	16.455
Visiting the trenches: Exploring meanings and motivations in battlefield tourism	Dunkley et al., (2011)	Experience	155	12.917
Educational dark tourism at an in populo site: The Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem	Cohen(2011)	Authenticity	152	12.667
Dark tourism, thanatourism, and dissonance in heritage tourism management: new directions in contemporary tourism research	Hartmann, (2014)	Motivation	130	14.444
Last-chance tourism: the boom, doom, and gloom of visiting vanishing destinations	Lemelin et al., (2010)	Promotion	130	10
Benefits of visiting a 'dark tourism' site: The case of the Jeju April 3rd Peace Park, Korea	Kang et al., (2012)	Experiences	127	11.545
Dark tourism motivations: Simulation, emotional contagion and topographic comparison	Podoshen, (2013)	Motivation	104	10.4
Being there Together: Dark Family Tourism and the Emotive Experience of Co-Presence in the Holocaust Past	Kidron, (2013)	Motivation	100	10
Consuming post-disaster destinations: The case of Sichuan, China	Biran et al., (2014)	Tourist behavior	94	10.444
Phoenix Tourism: Post-Conflict Tourism Role	Causevic & Lynch, (2011)	Conflict	90	7.5
Visiting death and life: Dark Tourism and Slave Castles	Mowatt & Chancellor, (2011)	Destination management	88	7.333
Investigating the motivation–experience relationship in a dark tourism space: A case study of the Beichuan earthquake relics, China	Yan et al., (2016)	Experience	80	11.429
Selective interpretation and eclectic human heritage in Lithuania	Wight & Lennon, (2007)	Promotion	74	4.625
Have we illuminated the dark? Shifting perspectives on 'dark' tourism	Ashworth & Isaac, (2015)	Experiences	71	8.875
Understanding visitor's motivation at sites of death and disaster: the case of former transit camp Westerbork, the Netherlands	Isaac & Çakmak, (2014)	Motivation	68	7.556
Too dark to revisit? The role of past experiences and intrapersonal constraints	Zhang et al., (2016)	Experiences	59	8.429
Equity restoration, the Holocaust and tourism of sacred sites	Podoshen & Hunt, (2011)	Conflict	59	4.917
Battlefield sites as dark tourism attractions: an analysis of experience	Miles, (2014)	Experiences	55	6.111
Motivations for War-related Tourism: A Case of DMZ Visitors in Korea	Bigley et al., (2010)	Motivation	55	4.231

**Table: 2 most impactful articles**



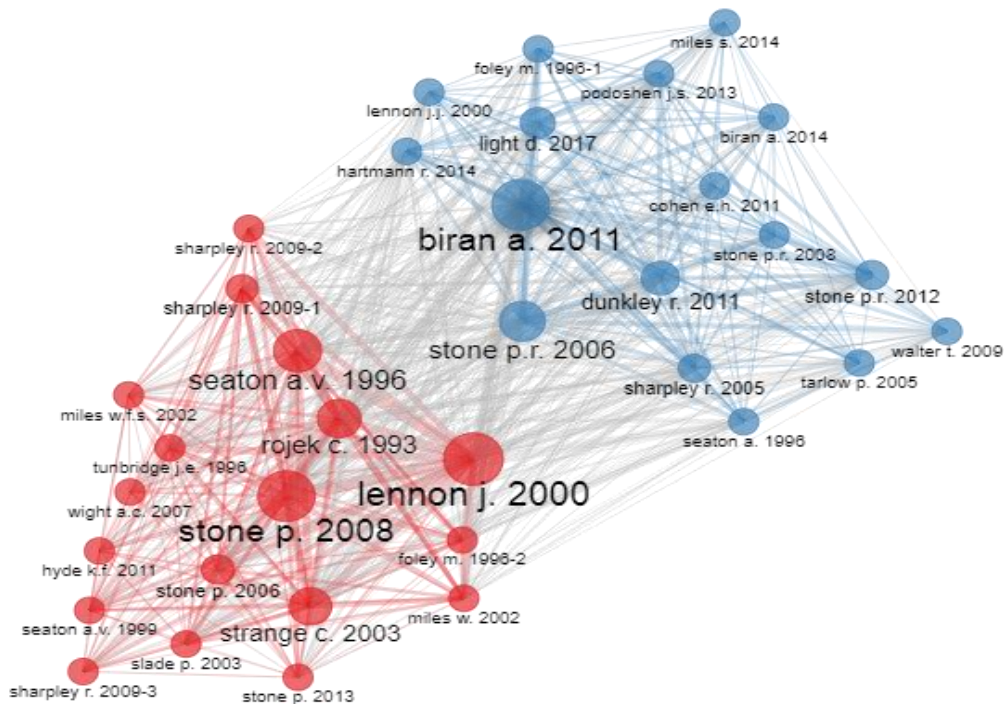
### Co-citation analysis

**Figure: 3** reflects author co-citation network consist of two cluster solution.

The first cluster (Red) consist of eighteen documents, which includes the highest cited work of Stone & Sharpley (2008), which addressed the issues related to dark tourism consumption research and developed a conceptual Thanatological model which will assist dark tourism consumption research in future. Furthermore, this cluster also consists of documents linked with concept and growth of dark tourism (Foley & Lennon, 1996; Miles, 2014; A. V. Seaton, 1996; Sharpley & Stone, 2009; P. R. Stone, 2006).

The second cluster (Blue) consist of seventeen documents, which includes phenomenal work of Biran et al., (2011) claimed so as to most of dark tourism literature focused on the research related to the perspective of supply side of dark tourism and usually ignored the tourist experience perspectives and the finding of the study reveal that in order to conceptualize the tourists' experiences of a destination, the study should also take into consideration the tourists' perceptions of the dark tourism destination. Furthermore this cluster also contain documents related to concept and historical perspective of dark tourism research (Cohen, 2011; Dunkley et al., 2011; Hartmann, 2014; Light, 2017; P. R. Stone, 2006).

**Fig. 3 Co-citation Network**



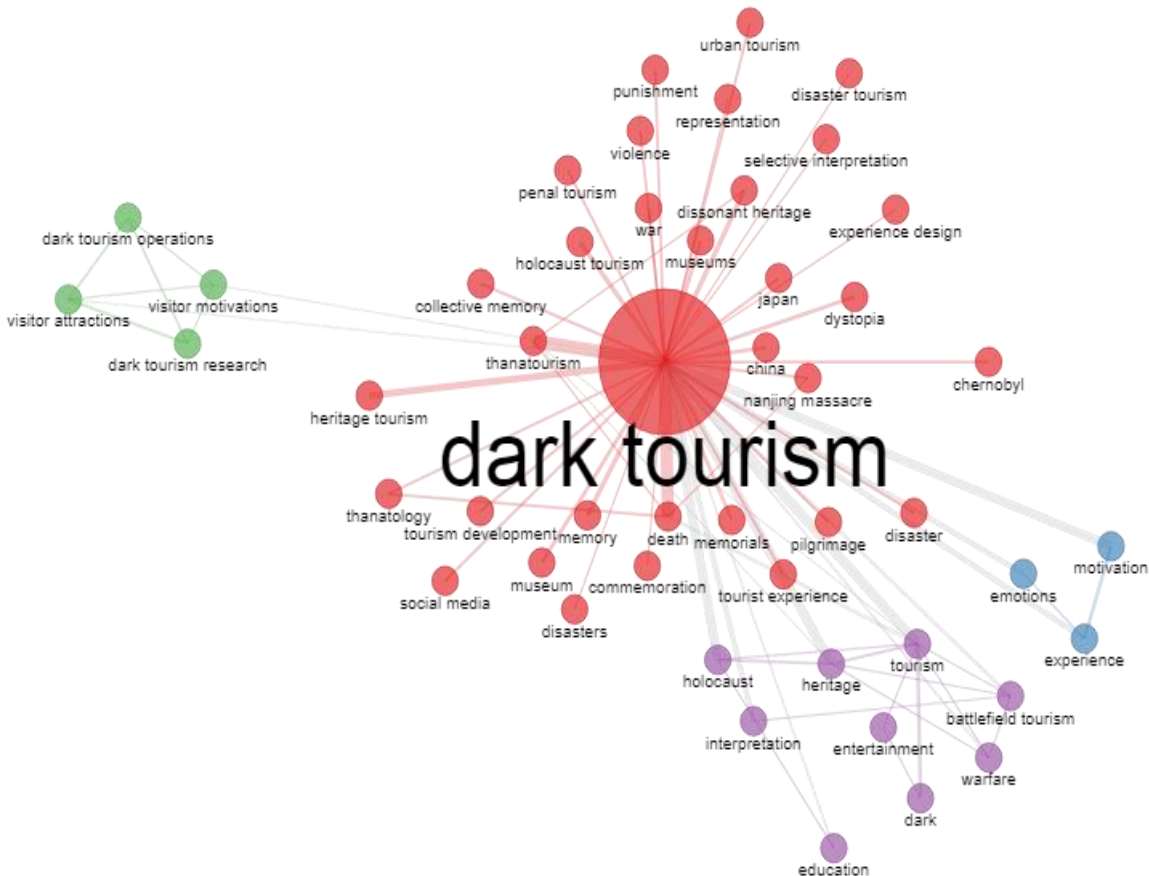
### Author's keywords analysis

The keywords used by authors often symbolizes the substance and theme of research of the article (Kumar et al., 2020; Singh, Singh, et al., 2022). Figure 5 depicts the keywords of top 20 authors. Among these 756 keywords, Dark tourism, tourism and death are the most frequently used keywords which have been appeared 196, 21, and 15 times respectively. To present a more detailed overview of the keywords and their interconnections, a co-occurrence network based on keyword was developed Figure: 4. On the basis of occurrences of keywords in different colours, four clusters have been found. Words that are the same colours represent words that are commonly used together.

Cluster 1 (Red) has 33 keywords which includes: Dark tourism, Death, Thanatourism, Heritage tourism, Memory, China, Holocaust tourism, Memorials and Dissonant heritage frequently appeared together. This reflects the interrelationship of thematic area that frequently occurred together. The cluster contains the most frequently used keyword Dark tourism.

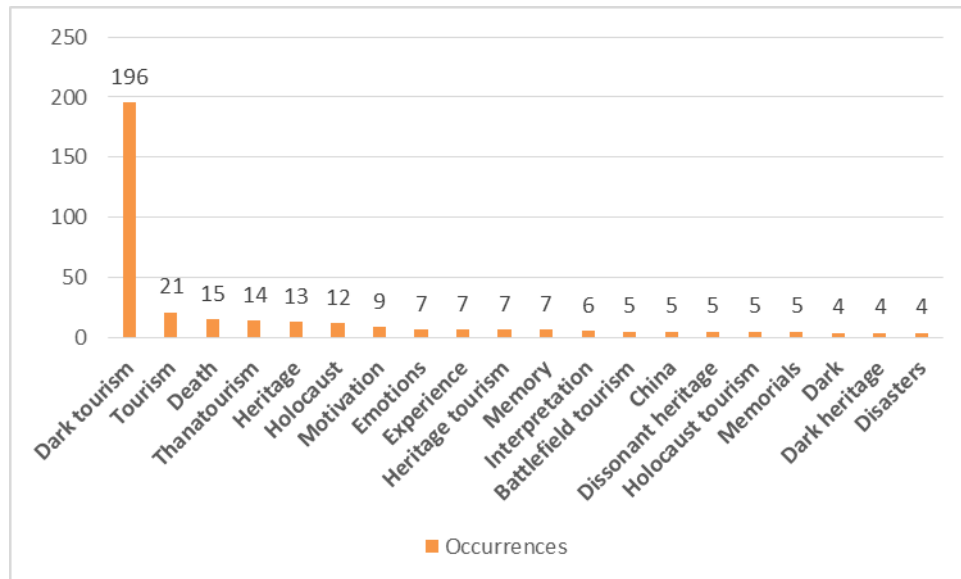
Cluster 2 (Blue) consists of three keywords. These are emotions, motivation and experience. These keywords are also reflected in top twenty most frequently used keywords list with appearance of 7,7 and 9 times respectively.

**Fig. 4 Co-occurrence Networks**



Cluster 3 (Green) consist of four keywords includes: “Dark tourism research”, “visitor motivations”, “visitor attractions” and “dark tourism operations” establishing a strong interrelationship among them in a specific thematic area.

Cluster 4 (Purple) consist of nine keywords includes: Tourism, holocaust, heritage, interpretation, entertainment, battlefield tourism, warfare, education and dark. This cluster contains second highest occurred keyword Tourism which has appeared 21 times.



## Discussion

Evaluating the existing literature is an important strategy for highlighting the research work happened till date and at the same time making recommendations for researches that will take place in the future, which will help to expand the area of research. According to the literature assessment, a holistic understanding of the theoretical and scholarly reinforcement of dark tourism related researches is rare. To understand the foundations, structural features and trends of dark tourism, this present research adopts an approach which is evaluative and relational in nature (Yaja, et al., 2023; Singh, et al., 2021; Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2013). The findings of this study reflect that there has been a significant growth in dark tourism research since the year 2013. The exponential rise of study on dark tourism is mostly because most earlier studies had focused on supply side of the dark tourism, with relatively little literature available on dark tourism consumption, motivation, and experience (T. Seaton, 2018; Sharpley & Stone, 2009; P. R. Stone, 2006). Other elements that contribute to growth involve realizing a market's potential and seizing the numerous chances it presents (Pandey, et. al., 2023; Sun & Lv, 2021; Qian et al., 2021)

To comprehend the growth and in general composition of the specific domain, it is essential to do a retrospective analysis of published research documents using bibliometric analysis (Singh, Sibi, & Sharma, 2021; Strandberg et al., 2018). Since it offers a comprehensive view of the area from several perspectives, this form of study is very pertinent in a number of ways (Singh, Sibi, & Sharma, 2021). This study's goal was to use bibliometric analysis to measure the factors in the growth of research related to dark tourism, and also to understand how it had been perceived, looked at, and assessed academically, intellectually, and operationally. This research paper is one of the few that used annual scientific production, most prolific scholar, country and institutions, most impact full articles, co-citation analysis and author keywords analysis to examine the evolution of knowledge in dark tourism from several viewpoints. The result of this study has shown that UK, USA and China are the most prolific countries. However, Podoshen, J. S, Zhang J and Isaac R. K, regard as the most prolific authors and the university of Central Lancashire and Glasgow Caledonian University regard as the most prolific institutions.

The results have several implications for researches related to tourism domain. The present research employed an innovative tool for conduction bibliometric analysis, called bibliometrix (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). The results of the current study would support academicians as well as researcher professionals to better understand and deepen their understanding of the various bibliometric analysis schedules from multiple perspectives and how they may be used to categorize certain tourism research areas. Additionally, the results also contribute reliable primary information on dark tourism and its more affluent patrons to dark tourism related literature. The use of co-citation and co-occurrence visualization techniques in this work should make it easier for academicians engaged in dark tourism research to comprehend the subject from a variety of angles. Furthermore, this study also extensively covers significant developments and trends in dark tourism research. This will help scholars to find gaps in the existing literature and choose future research areas (Singh, Sibi, & Sharma, 2021; Strandberg et al., 2018).

## Conclusion

The present research utilized an evaluative and relational approach to comprehend the foundations, structural features, and trends of dark tourism. The study highlighted the growth of research related to dark tourism since 2013, with a focus on the consumption, motivation, and experience of dark tourism, which was previously not explored. The growth in research was attributed to the potential

market opportunities and realization of the subject's importance. The retrospective analysis of published research documents using bibliometric analysis provided a comprehensive view of the subject from multiple perspectives. The study identified the most prolific authors, countries, and institutions and the most impactful articles. The results of the study offer essential information to academicians and researcher professionals to better understand and deepen their knowledge of the subject and categorize certain tourism research areas. Additionally, the study contributes to reliable primary information on dark tourism and its more affluent patrons to dark tourism related literature. The use of co-citation and co-occurrence visualization techniques in this study facilitates academicians engaged in dark tourism research to comprehend the subject from various angles. The extensive coverage of significant developments and trends in dark tourism research can help scholars to identify gaps in the existing literature and choose future research areas.

### **Limitation and future scope**

Even though a thorough analysis of dark tourism research has been presented, there are certain limitations in this study. In order to offer an overall picture of dark tourism research between 2007 and 2021, this study solely took only articles into consideration. Future studies could broaden the scope of their analysis by including other types of publications and sources of information to gain a more comprehensive understanding of dark tourism research. Moreover, the use of a single database, Scopus, for collecting data on publication and citation metrics is another limitation of this study. Different databases have different coverage, and some databases may not index all of the publications relevant to the topic. Therefore, future studies could use multiple databases to obtain a more comprehensive view of dark tourism research, and this may lead to different results. Another potential area for future research is to examine the regional differences in dark tourism research. While this study found that the UK, USA, and China were the most prolific countries in dark tourism research, it is possible that there are other regions with significant contributions to the field. Future studies could investigate the patterns of research productivity and impact across different regions to gain a more nuanced understanding of the global trends in dark tourism research.

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## Mapping the Research Trends on Dark Tourism: A Bibliometric Analysis and Visualization

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