

Research Paper

Assessing the Values of Living Heritage through Publications and Keywords Analysis

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Abstract: Over the last two decades, there has been extensive research on cultural heritage. The world of academia places a higher value on intangible or tangible heritage than on living heritage. Living heritage is community centric which is significant to explore for community development. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the scholarly efforts towards living heritage. At the same time, the overall production number of journals and citation measures has become essential elements in evaluating and ranking scholars' success. This study intends to analyse the keywords associated with living heritage by examining its evolution from 2003 to 2023. The Web of Science database was searched to find publications, organisations, prominent writers, publication years, countries, and most-cited papers in order to do bibliometric analysis. Using VOSviewer, a keyword occurrence analysis was carried out. The study's findings show global patterns and heightened production leading to diverse modifications. The present study enhances the existing literature by introducing a conceptual framework that could direct future research efforts. The framework provides academics with the opportunity to explore many research areas in future studies. The current study fills this research gap by conducting a bibliometric analysis for the keywords and publication analysis. The paper presents information concerning ways destination marketers, and local communities can manage their living heritage for promotional purposes, and also suggests a comprehensive method for overseeing tourism sustainability.

Keywords: Living heritage, intangible cultural heritage, sustainability, VOSviewer

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Introduction

Cultural heritage is reminiscent of the term “sustainability” in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Locally entrenched knowledge and customs found in living heritage serve as a source of resilience against evolving climatic circumstances and promote the preservation of biodiversity (UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003). Heritage is a reflection of how we perceive the past today (Lin, 2024). Living heritage contributes towards the well-being and resilience of subsequent generations, which is strongly associated with sustainable development.

In the context of historic settlement, “living heritage” is interpreted in this research as traditional surroundings, community, or a particular region where the physical attributes and indigenous inhabitants, preserve living traditions, skills, and other cultural practices, and demonstrate “outstanding universal values.” By offering communities a sense of identity and continuity, living heritage enables them to envision their world and gives their shared way of life purpose (Mekonnen, 2022).

Living heritage is not the same as solitary memorials, groups of historically significant structures, or untouched biodiversity locations, where there are less societal occurrences. It is a legacy comprising customs, skills, and patterns that unite us all to our communities (Wulf, 2025). Living heritage, such as historical towns or regions, preserved districts or villages, and the like, are seen in this study as dynamic and historical locations that retain rich intangible “values” while supporting diverse forms of social interactions and traditional life (Wijesuriya, 2018). These resources must remain as a part of peoples’ everyday lives in order to sustain the living heritage.

The wide range of passed-down practices, beliefs, practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills in a society constitutes its living heritage, which is also called intangible cultural heritage (ICH). The difference between tangible heritage, which includes actual artefact and sites, and living heritage is that the latter includes the ever-evolving cultural elements transmitted through performances, examples, and oral history. The cultural heritage of various communities around the world is reflected in their traditions, customs, languages, songs, dances, and arts and crafts, which in turn reflect their identity, beliefs, and social cohesiveness. An essential component of a living legacy is the connection it has to the lived experiences of individuals and groups. From one generation to the next, it serves as a repository for cherished memories, shaping identities and fostering a sense of community. The intricacies involved in managing and preserving living cultural sites offers a fresh perspective based on the idea of continuity and how it has changed over time (Poulios, 2014). Nonetheless, communities find a way to stand firm in an ever-changing world while simultaneously strengthening their cultural distinctiveness by preserving and reviving endeavours associated with living heritage.

A living legacy is one that evolves over time. In contrast to immobile monuments or relics, living heritage is adaptable and changes with the times. Because of its

flexibility, it will remain relevant and powerful, even as it faces challenges from modernity, globalisation, and other outside forces. When people in a community combine old wisdom with modern practices, they are able to keep their living legacy alive and well for future generations. A living heritage can take many shapes and forms, each of which reflects a unique set of cultural norms and values. Art forms such as music, dance, theatre, and storytelling have long served as vehicles for cultural expression and social cohesion via the shared experiences and narratives they convey.

Living heritage cannot be defined or comprehended without the understanding of its cultural landscape. The phrase “cultural landscape” describes the intricate connections which exist among people, place, and identity (Cocks et al., 2018). In the business world, the phrase designates a group of acknowledged conserved sites with specific characteristics associated with cultural heritage. From the perspective of an entire community, it might refer to a situation that is associated with the offering of a uniquely cultural feeling of recognition and relationship. Because of its central role in cultural inheritance, language stands as a symbol of a people’s collective wisdom, experience, and worldview. The unique cultural perspectives and knowledge systems that endangered languages possess make them indispensable in the fight to preserve cultural heritage. To help communities rediscover and celebrate their linguistic heritage, initiatives to revive languages aim to promote the usage and transmission of languages from one generation to the next.

An integral part of every living heritage is the skills and knowledge systems that have been handed down through the generations, such as traditional knowledge systems and the art of craftsmanship. The skills, imagination, and resourcefulness of a people are on display in their traditional handicrafts, which include ceramics, weaving, culinary traditions, and folk medicine. Members of the community, cultural practitioners, academics, politicians, and civil society organisations are all important parties that must work together to preserve and pass on living legacies. A foundation for global collaboration in the conservation and enhancement of living legacy is made possible by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Legacy, which came into effect in 2003.

Through the expression of communities’ collective memory, knowledge, and values, living heritage acts as a representation of human creativity and diversity of culture on a global scale. Maintaining and resurrecting living legacies strengthens communities, promotes understanding across cultures, and ensures long-term success, all of which add to the rich cultural fabric of humanity. The basis of both personal and societal identity is the past, and the value of artefacts from that era comes from their use as cultural symbols. The ability to maintain a consistent system of ordered meanings helps us deal with both innovation and deterioration because continuity between the past and present brings order out of aleatory chaos.

A valuable source of information for the lawmakers and professionals seeking to make informed decisions regarding value creation and resource allocation is bibliometric research on living heritage. When new perspectives and research issues in the field of cultural heritage arise, updated bibliometric evaluations provide a comprehensive picture of the present status of the field. However, the current study sets itself apart from the others by aiming to gain a thorough understanding of the living heritage research. Its primary goal is to ascertain how living heritage articles are distributed, taking into account factors like the publication date, the nation in which they were published, keyword research, and the number of citations they earned. In short, this bibliometric analysis will help contribute to a deeper comprehension of the current state of heritage research. It also identifies issues, gaps in the literature, patterns, and prospective paths for heritage conservation policy choices.

Literature Review

The global focus on living heritage originated in the 1980s. Historic gardens are commonly referred to as “living monuments” (Wang et al., 2023). The concept of “living heritage” originated with UNESCO, and is now used by heritage organisations throughout numerous nations. The concept speaks about the principles, convictions, and lifestyle choices that mould our sense of self, community, and position in the universe. It brings the past into the present and connects the present to the future. It influences our behaviour and the decisions we make throughout the day and throughout our lives. The knowledge of how our living heritage has moulded us and how we are influencing the legacy for the generations to come is critical. With this knowledge, we can improve our current standard of living without sacrificing that of coming generations. Our decisions today will have a lasting impact on social participation and cohesiveness, job opportunities and schooling, as well as health and welfare.

The “continuity” of customs and practices as well as “communities” has been associated with the expression “living heritage.” Furthermore, many countries use this theme to honour legacy that encompasses living elements or prevailing skills, rituals, and even artisans. The underlying community has the additional responsibility of maintaining the legacy through customary or recognised methods (continuity of care). In this perspective, transformation is not something to be reduced or minimised, but rather accepted as a necessary component of the historic place’s continuity, or living nature (Medina-Gonzalez, 2018). It is believed that the past is a component of the “living present.” All of these point to the conclusion that history is continuous from the past to the present, and that heritage must be seen from this angle as well.

Every location that we recognise as part of our heritage, even those that have been abandoned by cultures and turned into ruins, are subject to the notion of continuity (Poulios, 2014). More significantly, they affect their preservation in several ways. The ongoing activity of transmitting intangible cultural heritage is a fundamental precondition for its sustainable growth. The survival of traditional skills lies in their inheritance and transfer, particularly in the case of intangible cultural heritage objects. Thus, the only way to ensure the survival and advancement of ICH objects is to actively carry out inheritance labour (Yang & Zeng, 2023). It is imperative to acknowledge heritage sites as dynamic environments, and to enhance their comprehension and preservation efforts, it is necessary that they are aligned with the values, interests, and capabilities of the local communities, who bear the ultimate responsibility for these sites over time (Huong, 2016). Living historic assets should be regarded as valued resources that provide a dynamic contribution to sustainable development (Kong, 2008).

Prominent classifications and effective governance are just two examples of how values drive the process of historical conservation (Kong, 2008). The foundation of conservation is an understanding of the value of heritage sites, which guides decisions about what should be preserved and what should be prioritised in the conservation policy. Value identification is a multifaceted process based on a combination of subjective and objective assessments of values and has a direct bearing on growth and preservation initiatives. Further, various interests from various stakeholders, such as visitors, immigrants with ties to the tourism industry, and indigenous people, are expressed in the physical and social environment when it comes to conservation operations and management.

Research Methodology

Initial Step

The first step entailed a thorough data scan and bibliometric analysis of research articles on living heritage. The authors established particular standards for document selection, which include using pre-set data management criteria and Web of Science as the database. The filtering was done using quick filters of Web of Science categories, document type, year of publication, and languages.

Detecting

Identifying the relationships, patterns, and trends in the filtered data was the main goal of the detecting step. This phase made use of the bibliometric methodology, which analyses bibliographic data using quantitative methods. The researchers then narrowed their search down to the specific term “living heritage” for the years 2010

to 2023. A four-step procedure that follows Donthu et al.'s (2021) methodology directed the data extraction. This approach entails stating the objectives and parameters precisely, gathering pertinent data, and carrying out a methodical analysis.

Assessing

During the assessment step, evidence was provided and the results of bibliometric analysis were verified. The study explored co-authorship, country-co-authorship, keyword correlation, and bibliographic linkages of authors through a network map analysis using VOSviewer. This step gave researchers a visual representation of the dynamic structure of the research study they were addressing, which helped them to validate their observations. The decision to use VOSviewer was made because of its ability to generate comprehensive, graphical representations of bibliometric data, which facilitates a more straightforward study.

Analysis and Discussion

Pritchard (1969) used the word “bibliometrics” to refer to “the use of statistical and mathematical techniques to publications and other ways of transmission.” The methodology is based on the idea that patterns and trends in the literature can offer important details about the state of a particular field, including its development, research trends, and important figures (Donthu et al., 2021; Kulshrestha et al., 2023). Based on the study's progression, a methodical approach was employed by integrating the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) declaration into its main outlines (Kulshrestha & Pandey, 2021). The PRISMA statement is meant to help systematic reviewers communicate the goal, methods, and conclusions of the review in an understandable way (Page et al., 2021).

Over the last decade, improvements in language and systematic review methods have necessitated an update to the guideline. Bibliometric analysis can be used in a wide range of fields outside of science such as medical care, technology, and the social sciences when combined with PRISMA. Furthermore, by utilising software for the visualisation of similarities, a graphical representation of the bibliographic data can be produced by mapping keywords, nations, and authors (Kulshrestha & Srivastava, 2023; Moher et al., 2015). A typical step in bibliometric analysis is compiling a collection of data from publications such as books, articles, or patents, followed by analysing and assessing the information using a variety of quantitative metrics. This methodical approach to bibliometric analysis is demonstrated by the way the items of the PRISMA flow chart are structured and presented in Figure 1 (McBurney & Novak, 2002).

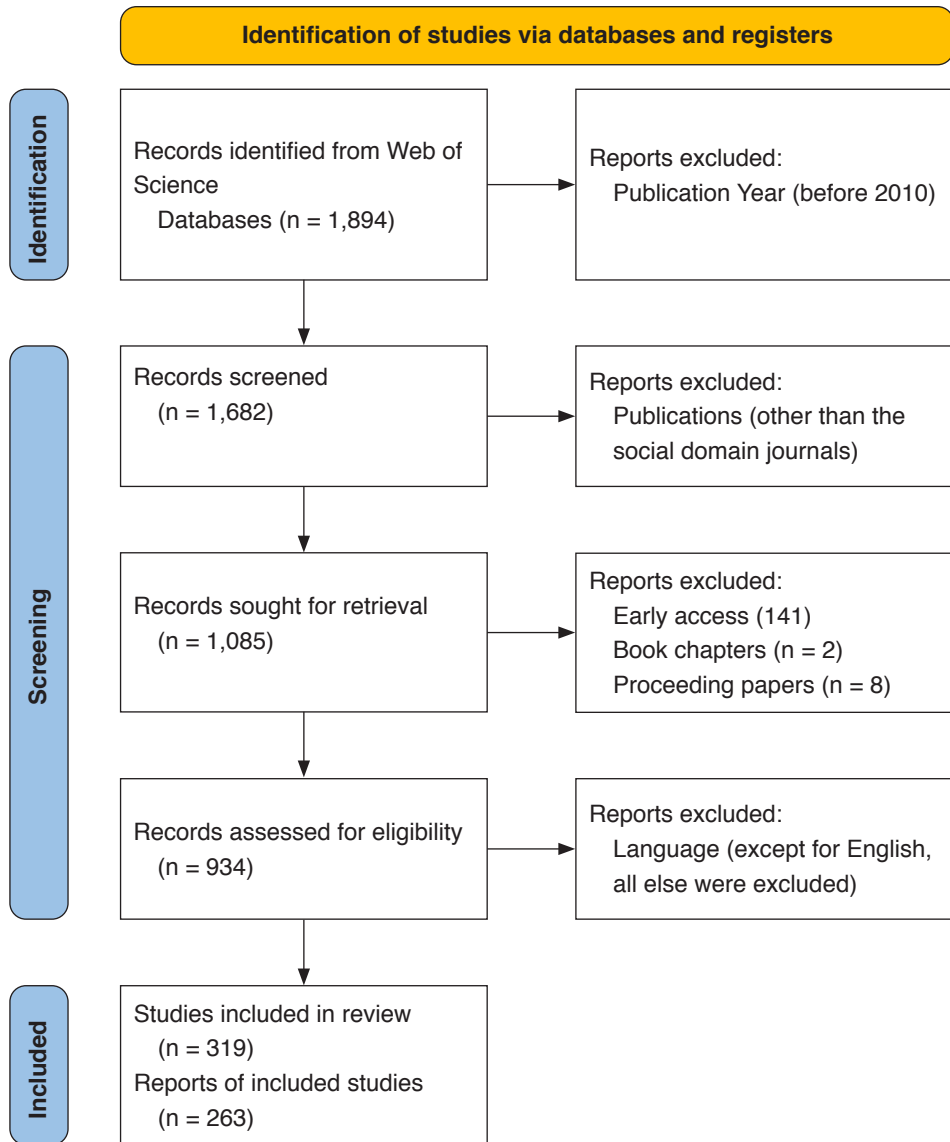


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram showcasing database for living heritage

The present study evaluated research publication abstracts and subject titles that were related to living heritage. Research publications on living heritage were analysed using the Web of Science index journals since they give the most comprehensive coverage, thanks to their rigid indexing, multidisciplinary sample, and enormous

number of citations (Bergman, 2012). We employed the keyword “Living Heritage” in the Web of Science database analytics. Keywords, abstracts, and article titles were employed as research domains in this study. There were 263 publications on living heritage found for the period of 2003 to 2023.

Next, a network map analysis was developed comprising keyword occurrence and authors’ bibliographic affiliations using VOSviewer (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). The ordered network of a study can be examined and analysed using network analysis, which makes it possible to see the dynamics and structure of information, by looking at relationships between authors, nations, and co-occurrences of keywords. VOSviewer was used to produce a more detailed and graphical representation of the data. With this software, one can see the most varied bibliometric results on a map. This makes it possible to study the subject matter more easily (Wang et al., 2018).

Bibliometric Analysis

Number of Publications in Various Years

The highest number of papers on living heritage was published in 2022 (about 19.392% of total papers or 60 papers). In 2023, 39 papers were published (14.829%), followed by 2021 (13.688%).

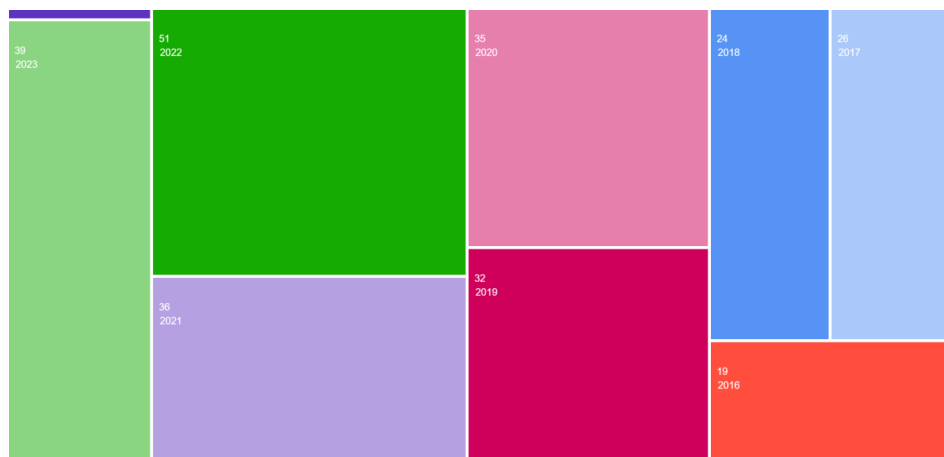


Figure 2. Number of publications on living heritage in various years

Affiliations

The highest number of papers were from Griffith University and University of London (3.0642%), followed by University of College London and University of Cambridge (both about 2.281%).



Figure 3. Number of publications from various universities on living heritage

Sustainable Development Goals

In regard to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), 62 papers (23.574%) were found related to SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 22 papers (8.365%) focused on SDG 13 (climate action) while the least number of papers published was on SDG 2 (zero hunger) (2 papers or 0.380%).

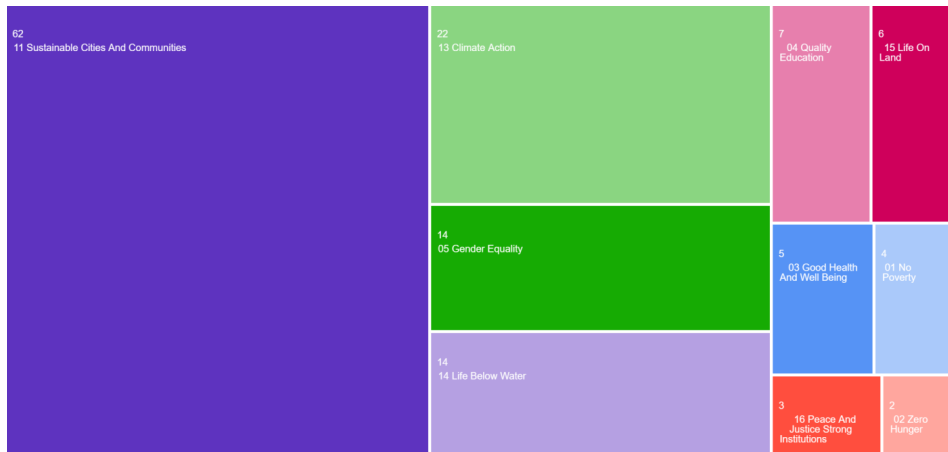


Figure 4. Papers published on living heritage, pertaining to Sustainable Development Goals

Topmost Cited Articles

Table 1 shows the five most cited articles on living heritage.

Table 1. Top five cited articles on living heritage

Author(s)	Year	Title	Document Type	No of Citations	Keywords
Liu, Y., Wang, Y., Dupre, K., & McIlwaine, C.	2022	The Impacts of World Cultural Heritage Site Designation and Heritage Tourism on Community Livelihoods: A Chinese Case Study	Article	108	Heritage tourism; sustainable livelihoods; transforming structures and processes; world cultural heritage sites; living cultural heritage sites; China
Montgomery Ramírez, P. E.	2020	What Can We Weave? Authority, Reconstructing, and Negotiating Heritages through Archaeological Open-Air Museums	Article	97	Cultural heritage; tourism; authenticity; reconstruction; living history
Khodadadi, M., & O'Donnell, H.	2018	Relocating Persia/Iran in the Contemporary British Tourist Imaginary	Article	69	Cultural heritage; cultural tourism; destination image; Iran tourism; Persia; visual analysis
Bui, H. T., Jones, T. E., Weaver, D. B., Le, A.	2020	The Adaptive Resilience of Living Cultural Heritage in a Tourism Destination	Article, early access	58	Adaptive cycles; community resilience; living heritage; social-ecological systems; inclusive leadership; community engagement

Table 1. (con't)

Author(s)	Year	Title	Document Type	No of Citations	Keywords
Yudice, G.	2018	Innovations in Cultural Policy and Development in Latin America	Article	57	Cultural development; creative industries; intersectoral collaboration; living community culture; sustainability

Keyword Analysis

Keyword analysis in bibliometric analysis involves the meticulous examination of keywords utilised across academic publications within a defined domain or topic. Initially, data was collected from reputable academic databases, encompassing a range of scholarly articles relevant to the research scope. Keywords were then systematically extracted from titles, abstracts, and author-assigned lists, with subsequent steps focusing on cleaning and standardisation to ensure consistency and to remove redundancies. By calculating the frequency of each keyword and analysing their co-occurrence patterns, researchers gained insights into prevalent themes, emerging trends, and the overall intellectual structure of the field.

Moreover, tracking keyword evolution over time provides valuable information on shifting research interests and terminology dynamics. Visualising keyword networks through techniques like co-word analysis or semantic mapping aids in comprehending the intricate relationships between concepts and identifying clusters of related topics. Ultimately, the insights gleaned from keyword analysis in bibliometric research contribute to a deeper understanding of scholarly communication, guiding future research endeavours and advancing knowledge within the discipline.

All Keywords

Analysing keyword occurrence helps us determine how frequently keywords are used in published studies about living heritage. These results aid in the identification of recurrent research themes and interesting topics that have been thoroughly investigated by scholars. All of the living heritage related terms that have surfaced six or more times in a database search within the selected period between 2010 and 2023 are shown in Figure 5. For more details, a number of keyword occurrence networks were examined. The strength of the association between keywords was evaluated by measuring the gap between phrases on a text mining map created by the VOS-viewer programme. A stronger relationship is suggested by a smaller space between two or more terms.

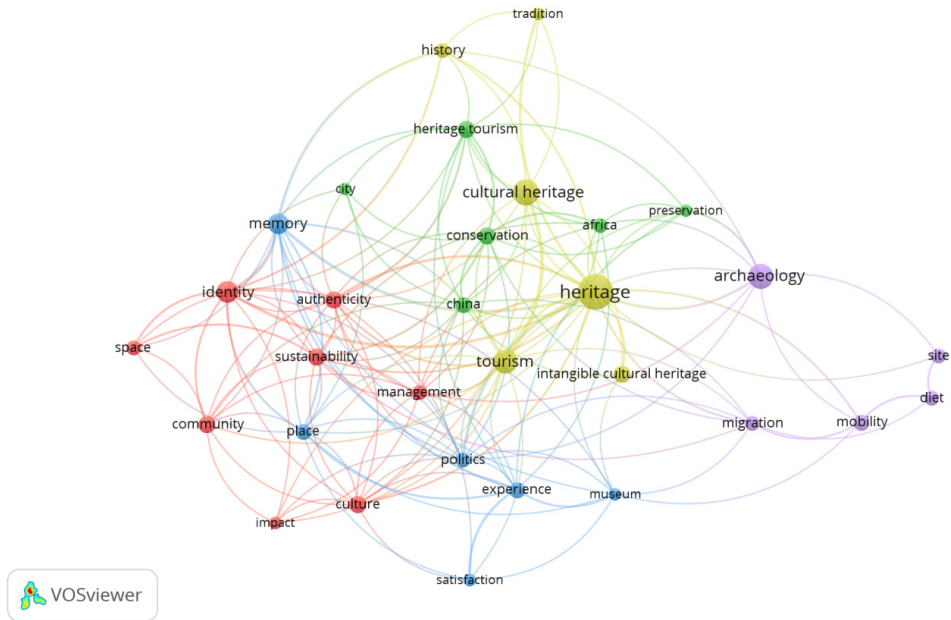


Figure 5. All keywords analysis

Table 2. Keywords having occurrences of more than 6

Keyword	Occurrence	Total Link Strength
Heritage	25	46
Tourism	17	26
Identity	14	25
Memory	12	25
Authenticity	9	20
Politics	6	18
Place	7	17
Sustainability	8	17
Conservation	8	16
Experience	7	16

Table 2. (con't)

Keyword	Occurrence	Total Link Strength
Cultural Heritage	20	15
Culture	9	15
Heritage Tourism	8	15
Management	6	13
Archaeology	18	12
Intangible Cultural Heritage	9	5
Site	6	4

Author Keywords

The keywords heritage, archaeology, memory, identity, mobility, heritage tourism, culture heritage, tourism, and authenticity were examined to be sufficiently relevant based on the intensity of their interconnectedness with other terms. Finding keywords with strong connections to other phrases, suggesting their significance in the academic discourse network, was the primary goal of this methodical approach. The mentioned keywords have strong intensity to be connected with the promotion of living heritage.

The term “intangible cultural heritage” popped up as a major keyword, suggesting a faint but noticeable presence in the network. With just three cluster appearances and 17 additional keyword connections, its total link strength reached 26. This statistic demonstrates the importance and connectivity of intangible cultural heritage in academic discourse, even if it has a narrower focus. This section illustrates the extensive network of links and thematic interrelationships that shape scholarly debates around intangible cultural heritage. The term may not have the most connections or be the most common, but its strong linkages and overall significance highlight its major role in academia and its enduring value.

This analysis offers a deep insight into the complicated nature of intangible cultural heritage and its ties to various themes and conceptions in scholarly discussions. These insights strengthen our grasp of intangible cultural legacy and provide major perspectives for future study, policy creation, and cultural practices to safeguard and promote this essential aspect of human heritage.

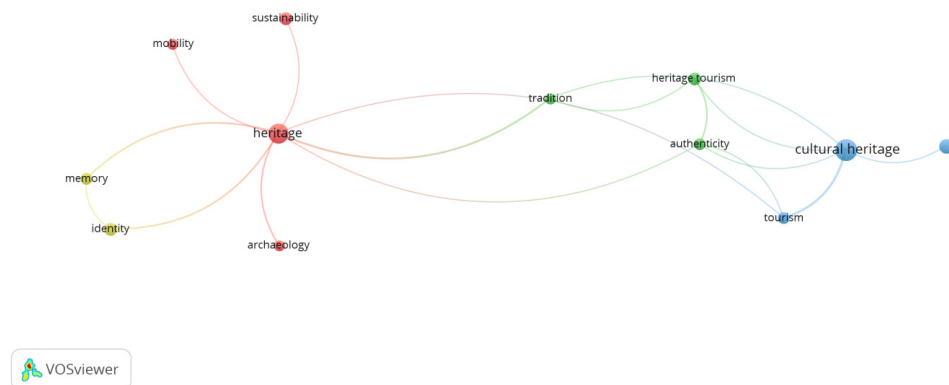


Figure 6. Author keywords analysis

Keyword Plus

Only 15 out of 573 keywords were determined to have statistical significance. The term “Heritage” was the most frequently used keyword, occurring 19 times. “Archaeology” and “Tourism” ranked second and third, with 15 and 13 instances, respectively.

The section presents the extensive work on cultural heritage, emphasising its significance in the sphere of heritage conservation, interpretation, and administration. The prominence of the phrases “Archaeology” and “Tourism” suggests a link between cultural heritage and surrounding regions. This demonstrates the utilisation of multidisciplinary methodologies and the interconnectedness of heritage studies with disciplines like archaeology and tourism studies. This discovery may provide insights into several contemporary trends and topics within heritage studies. The frequent appearance of the phrase “Heritage” indicates an ongoing curiosity among individuals regarding the intricacies of how various societies recall and safeguard their history. The inclusion of “Archaeology” suggests a purposeful effort to explore the historical elements of heritage, including archaeological techniques, site analysis, and the impact of material culture on historical accounts.

Using “Tourism” as a keyword indicates the connection between heritage conservation and tourism development, highlighting the importance of sustainable heritage tourism, visitor management, as well as the social and economic impacts of tourism on local communities and heritage sites. Keyword analysis might help in the understanding of the thematic priorities and research paths of legacy studies. In order to understand current trends, emerging fields of study, and potential future research paths in the dynamic and interdisciplinary field of legacy studies, it is beneficial to initially pinpoint key concepts and thematic groupings.

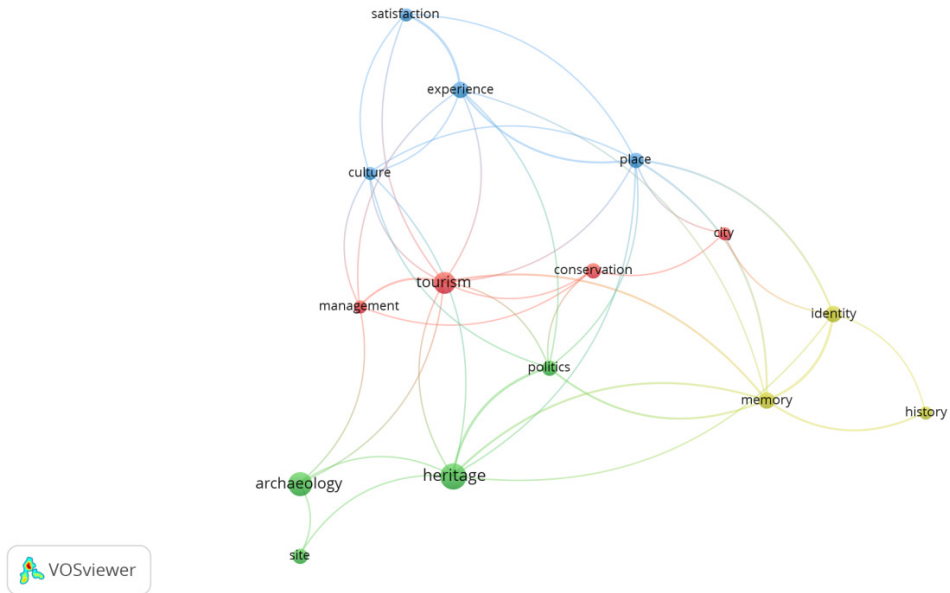


Figure 7. Keyword Plus analysis

Textual Analysis

Visualising terms gathered from the Web of Science database using a word cloud provides an easy and creative way to highlight common patterns in the data. The word cloud shown in Figure 8 highlights the importance of “cultural,” “heritage,” “intangible,” and “living.” These terms probably represent the study corpus’ primary emphasis, which is the significance of cultural heritage—especially its intangible and living parts—in academic writing.



Figure 8. Textual analysis using word cloud

Because there is such a wide variety of interests among scholars in the discipline, this might cover anything from cultural behaviours, to traditions or identities. Similarly, the word “heritage” being so prominent implies that there is a heavy focus on studying cultural legacy, both physical and intangible, and how to preserve, interpret, and manage it. Studies of cultural landscapes, oral traditions, rituals, and heritage locations are probably all included under this umbrella term.

To further emphasise the acknowledgement of intangible cultural heritage as an independent and significant facet of cultural expression, the word “intangible” was included. Among the many intangible cultural forms that may fall under this umbrella are studies of traditional handicraft, social practices, rituals, performances, and oral traditions.

The word “living” is also prominent, which may indicate that the emphasis is on how cultural legacy is ever-changing, both in relation to modern culture and to the transmission and adaptation that takes place within living communities. Identity, sustainability, social cohesiveness, and community development are some of the topics that could fall under this umbrella of cultural heritage research. In sum, the word cloud presents a good dataset with the primary themes and common links, offering a visual representation of the most popular ideas and topics in the academic literature pulled from the Web of Science database. Researchers, educators, and practitioners can benefit greatly from this visual depiction since it helps them understand the study corpus’ core emphasis and find possible paths for more analysis and investigation.

Conclusion

Research on living heritage has shown substantial growth in recent years. This study provides valuable insights by examining the evolution of scholarly investigation into living heritage over a decade. The research emphasises the most notable sources, scholarly papers, countries, and scholars, as well as significant contributions on this subject. This study offers prospective scholars and researchers a comprehensive comprehension of many themes and concepts, together with the prospects for investigation given by new fields. The study also emphasises the necessity for more investigation into living heritage, indicating that there are still unexplored domains.

There are certain constraints in the present investigation. Initially, the bibliometric analysis solely relied on the Web of Science database. Subsequent investigations could employ the Web of Science and other databases to conduct a more exhaustive examination. Furthermore, the process of accessing documents has been restricted to the utilisation of only two keywords “Living Heritage” and “Intangible Cultural Heritage”. Subsequent investigations in this domain can attempt alternate terminology and supplementary associated keywords. Additional investigation could be undertaken regarding the nationwide and local contributions.

There are several aspects of living heritage that require improvement, including redefining and expanding its definition and scope, prioritising the participation of local residents in its development through the adoption of a community-based model, as well as recognising the role of tourists in promoting and implementing effective governance. These new tendencies can provide a helpful foundation for scholars to examine hitherto uninvestigated facets of living heritage. Practitioners also have the opportunity to gain information about the latest theoretical concerns that are applicable to the living heritage sector.

Academic Implications and Future Research

This research serves as a pragmatic manual for obtaining a comprehensive understanding of living heritage. The analysis conducted can aid researchers in identifying the many research areas or domains that form the intellectual framework of the subject, enabling new researchers to develop a comprehensive understanding of the topics and foundational knowledge (García-Lillo et al., 2017). In addition, conducting an analysis of a particular topic can provide valuable insights into any existing gaps in the literature and guide future research directions.

In summary, heritage academicians, professionals, instructors, and students can acquire contemporary knowledge regarding living heritage, which they can subsequently utilise in their future endeavours. Research findings might also provide a foundation for future investigations aimed at elucidating the correlation between theory and practice. The limitation of the study is that it was only done for keywords and publications, thus, can be expanded using bibliographic coupling or on the basis of citations. The findings of this study suggest that practitioners should consider, understand, and incorporate the various elements of living heritage. In addition, professionals may grasp better contemporary theoretical obstacles in the historic tourism sector, especially when it comes to living heritage.

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