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Screen and knowledge structures: Mapping film induced tourism through a synthesis of literature

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Abstract

As part of its 2030 vision of the UN Sustainability Initiative, Cinema has the potential to be a soft power for sustainable development. Cinema has been acting as a tool for soft power using cultural values to bring about change. This study explores cinema's role in shaping global perceptions by synthesising literature related to the field of film tourism. It employs a Bibliometric Analysis to unravel such recurring narratives that contribute towards the literature of Cinema in promoting cultural diplomacy. With the rise of parameters for ranking a researcher's work, bibliometric analysis helps uncover criterions like the citation metrics and journal outputs. Therefore, the authors have used the Web of Science (WoS) tool and the VOSviewer software to help visualise and draw hidden patterns. The findings of the study reveal emerging themes like 'user generated content' and 'social media' playing an indispensable role in the topic of film tourism. However, the findings of the study suggest emerging phenomena like the rise of interdisciplinary collaborations. The study concludes with a suggestion to broaden research to foster collaborations globally so that a topic like Film Tourism shows diversity in voices in terms of research outcomes.

Keywords: *Bibliometric Analysis, Film Tourism, Sustainability, Cinema Studies, South Asian Cinema*

Introduction

Contemporary Indian cinema has long been a site of cultural fusion and soft power globally. It has gained prominence with the increasing recognition of Indian films on global award platforms like the Cannes, Academy, BAFTA to name a few. These films provide much more than mere entertainment to the spectators. Rather, they act as a tool for transmitting philosophies and social values. They provide cultural resonance to diasporic and the non-diasporic spectators alike. By doing so, they are intentionally or unintentionally contributing to the wider phenomenon of 'Circular Knowledge'. In simpler terms, Circular Knowledge refers to reframing wisdom, ethics, traditions etc. and providing them fresh and modern perspectives. This ancient wisdom gets recycled into a modern take with the point of view of transnational perspectives. It is this creative reuse that makes Indian films stand out as repositories of ancient culture, philosophy and wisdom.

The worldwide recognition bestowed upon RRR(2022) is a contemporary example that justifies the stance of this academic work. The film won various national and international awards with the highest being the Academy

Awards. This piece of work acted as a transfusion between a mythical world created in the film and the modern world of the spectator. The film exemplified historical traditions and mythological imagination. It acted as a tool for diplomacy and more so of cultural diplomacy which can be attributed to the immense potential of the cinematic medium to act as a source of soft power for nations.

To imbibe such observations into an academic discourse, this paper conducts a bibliometric analysis by sifting through literature that studies the phenomena of 'Screen Tourism'. Popularly known as 'Film Tourism', this self explanatory term simply refers to travelling to places that have featured in the films that people watch.

With the topic of Film Tourism gaining traction as more peer reviewed journals are opening up avenues for interdisciplinary research, studies in social sciences have been increasing. (Fire and Guestrin, 2019) , (Wong and Lin, 2025) indicate that academia is increasing its publication output gradually. For the purpose of this study, Web of Science(WOS) has been considered as an appropriate database. It is one of the biggest databases globally and acts as an extensive repository for articles which span across more than 250 WoS Categories and is widely trusted as a data source for facilitating various kinds of bibliometric studies (Donthu et al. 2021).

However, such an academic scholarship still lacks a well researched comprehensive analysis. These bibliometric findings pertain to the decade of 2015-2025. Emergence of newer technologies like Artificial Intelligence and the increasing Social Media penetration have been pertinent in shaping these researches and continue to do so in the coming future. (Zenker and Kock, 2020) highlight how wider medical crises like the Covid 19 pandemic have influenced academic research extensively.

Although the concept of Film Tourism is dominated by the west, it is gaining traction in Asian countries as well (Connell, 2012). The boom in creative sectors has intensified this concept in the Indian Film Industry. Extensive work in this field by (Beeton, 2001) suggests how such behaviours are being shaped and impacting the economy of the countries in particular. (Beeton, 2011) works around themes of marketing, visibility, and tourism. Additionally, her seminal works including authored books on film induced tourism talk about the change in tourist behaviour at lengths incorporating subjectivity of emotions experienced while travelling (Beeton, 2022) .

(Nanjangud and Reijnders, 2020) articulate how films create a notion of home and motivate the viewers to travel to their homeland. Their study further explores how the Indian diaspora engage with the Hindi film industry popularly called Bollywood. Since the inception of Film Tourism as a topic of research in academic scholarship, much has been written about Films creating emotions of homecoming (Beeton, 2022). There have been extensive researches conducted around destination marketing and imagery as will be evident through the research findings in this study. What is underexplored however is the potential for diplomacy surrounding this medium of entertainment. Understating the importance of films to portray their home country as a soft power is failing to let nations maximise the potential of this medium. However countries like India are gradually shining at the world stage with films winning wider international acclaim appealing to a lot of non-diasporic audiences as well!

What can also be observed through this analysis is the exponential rise in interdisciplinary research. Overlapping subjects like economics and psychology by incorporating topics like consumerism and risk perception are an example of this increasing phenomenon. An interesting study by

(Oshriyeh and Capriello, 2022) reveals how storytelling in films affects the intentions of a viewer to visit a place. Such studies can form a strong foundational base for positioning the countries as a force of soft power.

Methodology

To fulfill the objectives of this study, Bibliometric Analysis (Donthu et al., 2021) as a methodology has been employed. This analysis is employed to detect trends and gaps in publications and research (respectively) on a particular topic. As a result, researchers can observe emerging scholarly works surrounding the topic as well as reveal patterns that would have been otherwise unseen or difficult to trace. A methodology like Bibliometric Analysis helps researchers to make sense of large sets of unstructured data that shows trends in publications helping them identify research gaps and generate meaningful research questions. The most popular variants of Bibliometric Analysis namely performance analysis and science mapping have been used to analyse this study (Noyons et al. 1999). While Performance Analysis helps in measuring quantitative indicators like number of citations, frequency of publications, category classification, authors, journals etc., a variant like Science Mapping is more qualitative in nature and helps one to reveal the patterns which can be drawn with the aid of Performance Analysis. Certain quantitative indicators like co-authorship, keyword co-occurrence etc. have been visualised through the VOSviewer software.

For the purpose of this study an appropriate database in the form of Web of Science (WoS) has been selected. A query for the following study was generated through the database with certain Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. For the purpose of this research, the boolean query on the database generated 1990 results. Table 1 shows the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria in Research Query on WoS

Query Result	

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria in Research Query on WoS

Document Types	Inclusion: Articles Exclusion: Retracted Publications	n=1883 n=1880
Web of Science Index	Inclusion:Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) or Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)	n=1764
Language	Inclusion: English	n=1753
Final result		n=1753

Source: Authors

Findings

Fig. 1 shows the gradual evolution of articles related to Film Tourism in the past decade. This growth increased from 2015 till 2021 with the latter year being the peak point of publication of articles on this topic. After 2021 however, one can observe a minor decrease in the number of publications. Despite that, the years 2021 and 2022 have been peak years for this research topic with 260 and 235 publications respectively.

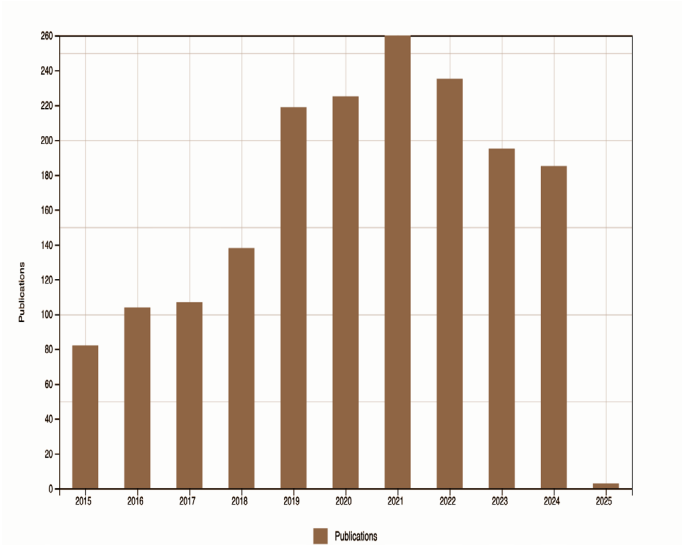


Fig.1 Evolution in the number of articles published from 2015 to 2025

Source: Authors (Based on the WoS Query) as of May 2025, n=1753

Fig. 2 shows the citation trends for Film Tourism with the highest citations peaking in the year 2024 with more than 11,000 citations. The decrease in citation trends

post 2024 can however be attributed to the selection criteria of authors in the form of publication years being limited till 1 January 2025. Thus a gradual increase in citations of the 1753 articles can be concluded from Fig. 2.

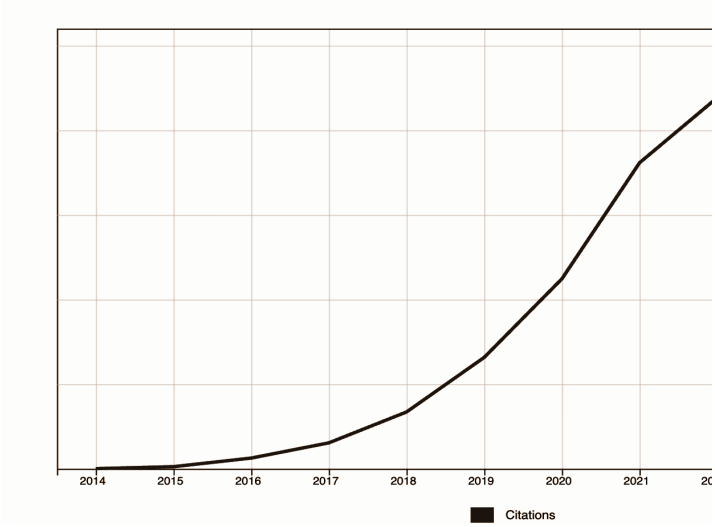


Fig 2. Citation Trend of articles from 2015 to 2025

Source: Authors (Based on the WoS Query) as of May 2025, n=1753

The top categories of this WoS dataset depicts that 65 percent of publications (the highest number in this dataset) are categorised under the head of 'Hospitality Leisure Sports Tourism'. Also to be noted is the significant difference between the highest publication category and the second highest. 'Management' is the second highest category with 26.64 percent of the 1753 papers published. This is a sharp decrease from the former category of 1152 publications. (See Table 2)

Table 2: Largest Web of Science Categories by number of papers

WoS Categories	Record Count	% of 1753
Hospitality Leisure Sports Tourism	1152	65.71
Management	467	26.64
Environmental Studies	348	19.85
Green Sustainable Science Technology	234	13.34
Environmental Science	232	13.23

Source: Authors (Based on the WoS Query) as of May 2025, n=1753

Table 3 indicates the highest research areas performing in the field of Film Tourism with Social Sciences accounting for 67 percent of papers. This can be attributed to the involvement of the Film Aspect in this kind of research. However it's interesting to see that the research area of 'business economics' is showing an interest in social science research and gaining traction in the field with 37 percent of the papers in the dataset, which also makes it the second highest research area contributing to the topic of Film Tourism.

Table 3: Top Research Areas covered by such articles

Research Areas	Record Count	% of 1753
Social Sciences Other Topics	1188	67.77
Business Economics	651	37.13
Environmental Sciences Ecology	373	21.27
Science Technology Other Topics	237	13.52
Psychology	62	3.53

Source: Authors (Based on the WoS Query) as of May 2025, n=1753

Table 4 shows the top countries which have been publishing on this topic since the past decade. Almost 50% of the articles have been contributed by authors who have been affiliated by institutions belonging to the People's Republic of China and USA alone.

Table 4: Top Countries publishing on film tourism topic

Countries	Record Count	% of 1753
Peoples R China	570	32.51
USA	281	16.03
Spain	207	11.8
England	188	10.72
South Korea	169	9.64

Source: Authors (Based on the WoS Query) as of May 2025, n=1753

Apart from the most productive countries, the authors also calculated the most productive institutes publishing on this topic (Table 5). The Hong Kong Polytechnic University accounted for as much as 75 papers making it the most productive affiliated institute. This was followed by a close second from the State University System of Florida.

Table 5: Most productive institutes of affiliation

Affiliations	Record Count	% of 1753
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	75	4.27
State University System of Florida	68	3.87
Kyung Hee University	45	2.56
Sejong University	41	2.33
Sun Yat Sen University	39	2.22

Source: Authors (Based on the WoS Query) as of May 2025, n=1753

The most productive journal publishing articles on the topic of Film Tourism has been the journal called 'Sustainability'. It accounts for 11 percent of the total publication generating a count of 208 papers (See Table 6). Since Sustainable Development Goals form a key component of the broader concept of Sustainability, therefore the need to determine the papers with different sustainable goals was felt. Fig. 6 shows the depiction of the same, with the highest number of papers centred around the Sustainable Development Goal no. 11 i.e Sustainable Cities and Communities with as much as 1,510 papers.

Table 6: Most productive journals publishing articles on this topic

Publication Title	Record Count	% of 1753
Sustainability	208	11.86
Journal of Destination Marketing Management	126	7.18
Tourism Management	111	6.33
Current Issues in Tourism	103	5.87
Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	78	4.45

Source: Authors (Based on the WoS Query) as of May 2025, n=1753

Table 7 shows the highest cited papers in the dataset. The most cited paper with 555 citations has been 'Progress and prospects for event tourism research' published in the journal 'Tourism Management' by Donald Getz (University of Calgary, Canada) and Stephen Page (RehabLab, USA). This Review Paper published in 2016 examines event tourism as a field of study and dives deep into its frameworks and literature [Getz, D and Page, SJ (2016)]. Incidentally, the second highest cited paper also happens to be from the same journal and is titled 'The coronavirus pandemic - A critical discussion of a tourism research agenda'. With 535 citations, this 2021 paper by Sebastian Zenkar (Erasmus University, Rotterdam) and Florian Kock (Copenhagen Business School) attempted to explain the phenomena of Covid-19 [Zenker, S and Kock, F (2020)]. 'Tourism Management' as a research journal also managed to be the journal with the seventh and eighth highest cited papers as can be seen in Table 7.

Fig 3 shows the visualisation of author keywords in the papers of the data set concerning this study. The largest node visualised as a red frame indicates the extensive usage of 'Destination Marketing' as an author keyword. The red cluster of keywords is focused on the areas surrounding marketing and representation like a country's image, destination marketing etc. The green cluster identified author keywords relating to the experience of the people. The blue cluster showed topics related to travel behaviour of people including author keywords like risk perception etc. The yellow cluster refers to author keywords surrounding the tourist outcomes and the purple cluster centred around the psychological themes surrounding Film Tourism like

revisit intentions of the people. The network visualisation of Fig.3 indicates interdisciplinary overlaps like that of marketing, social sciences, psychology, economics etc. These intersections can foster research in different subjects giving a necessary push to social science research by providing more options of networking in academia.

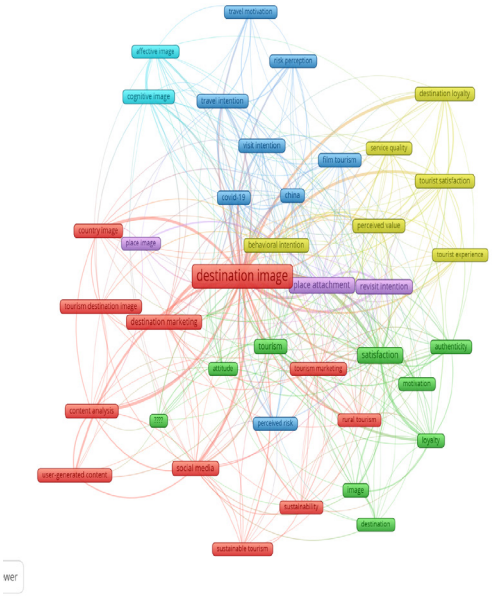


Fig 3:Clusters of author keywords meeting the criteria of minimum 20 co-occurrences

Note:Each frame represents a keyword sized according to its number of occurrences.

Minimum number of keywords' occurrence is 20. Therefore, 40 keywords meet this criteria.

Source: Authors (Based on the WoS Query) as of May 2025, n=1753

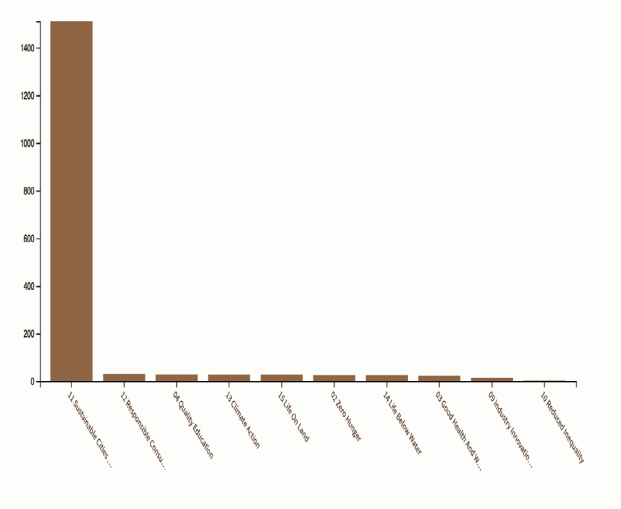


Fig.6 Highest cited Sustainable Development Goals in publications on Film Tourism

Source: Authors (Based on the WoS Query) as of May 2025, n=1753

Newer social science research topics like social media, user generated content etc. have also emerged through this visualisation thereby indicating the success of a bibliometric analysis in determining relevant research gaps.

Table 7: Most cited articles on Film Induced Tourism

Authors	Article Title	Source Title	No. of Citations
Getz, D and Page, SJ (2016)	Progress and prospects for event tourism research	Tourism Management	555
Zenker, S and Kock, F (2020)	The coronavirus pandemic - A critical discussion of a tourism research agenda	Tourism Management	535
Wen, J et al. (2021)	COVID-19: potential effects on Chinese citizens' lifestyle and travel	Tourism Review	485

Zhang, HM et al. (2018)	A model of perceived image, memorable tourism experiences and revisit intention	Journal Of Destination Marketing & Management	409
Choe, JY and Kim, S (2018)	Effects of tourists' local food consumption value on attitude, food destination image, and behavioral intention	International Journal Of Hospitality Management	387
Kim, JH 2018	The Impact of Memorable Tourism Experiences on Loyalty Behaviors: The Mediating Effects of Destination Image and Satisfaction	Journal Of Travel Research	344
Lee, TH and Jan, FH 2019	Can community-based tourism contribute to sustainable development? Evidence from residents' perceptions of the sustainability	Tourism Management	300
Lu, L et al.	Authenticity, involvement, and image: Evaluating tourist experiences at historic districts	Tourism Management	300

Source: Authors (Based on the WoS Query) as of May 2025, n=1753

Conclusion

By conducting a comprehensive analysis through Web of Science, the article helps researchers in pointing out significant gaps in the field of Film Tourism. Additionally, it also helps them in exploring newer methodologies in this area. Also, the bibliometric analysis employed in the paper highlights the theoretical contribution to this field of study. It also explores avenues for collaboration and co-authorship thereby increasing chances of visibility. The citation metrics are also highlighted through growing interest in interdisciplinary subjects to foster collaborations and reach. However, films and tourism are evolving topics and a combination of both leads to broadening research interests in academic spaces. Therefore, the need to include researchers globally is felt so that the robustness of research on film tourism can be conducted on a higher geographical scale.

In terms of the global south discourse, the findings suggest that these publications are dominated by the western and east asian countries. The absence of a substantial number of publications from India points towards the marginal representation of Indian scholarship. A need for India based researchers to conduct empirical studies in this area is felt. In this sense, the findings of the study point towards a critical geographical void in terms of research gap and highlights the pressing need for researchers in India to make significant contribution conceptually so that the Indian cinematic space can come into the spotlight in terms of both creative content as well academic research.

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