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Evolving Themes in Dark Tourism Research: A Review Study

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to identify the evolving themes in dark tourism research. The increase in death-related incidents in the last few years has increased the consumption of dark tourism, igniting a resurgence of dark tourism literature. This study retrieves 363 articles published in Scopus-indexed journals from 1996 to 2021, using the SPAR-4 SLR technique to identify the themes using Sci2 and Gephi software. Keyword co-occurrence network, Bibliographic coupling network, and Collaboration networks were used to identify the knowledge clusters in dark tourism literature. The study reveals that existing studies have largely focused on the scope of dark tourism, destination identification and management, marketing aspects, motives, experiences, and engagement, and mitigating moral and ethical dilemmas. As the themes have remained consistent since the past studies, the study concludes that the research on DT has become stagnated, and there is a need for a novel approach. For that, it recommends that the scope of dark tourism should be enhanced beyond heritage tourism and promoted as a tool for global peace. Further, several gaps in marketing and visit and emotional engagement aspects are identified that could become the research agendas in future studies.

Keywords: dark tourism, bibliometric, network analysis, bibliographic coupling, sci2, Gephi

1. Introduction and literature review

Dark Tourism (DT) is defined as the "consumption of real and commodified death and disaster sites" (Foley & Lennon, 2007; Johnston, 2020; Seaton, 2007; Stone, 2006). It is gaining prominence across the world (Martini & Buda, 2018). The desire to experience the media-created reality or association with inhuman activities has been the primary cause of motivation for dark tourists (Sarkar et al., 2021). A tourist attraction for tourists who intend to travel to experience the "darker side of movement" is present all around the world (Sarkar et al., 2021). These attractions are characterized as places associated with tragic events such as death, war, and natural calamities (Lewis et al., 2021; Sharma, 2020; Skoko et al., 2018). The motives of the tourists visiting such a destination vary from a leisure traveler as the visit is more about experiencing and rejuvenating the emotional connection to the place or people lost at the destination (Suneel Kumar et al., 2018; Mionel, 2020; Santos, Ramos, et al., 2022; Santos, Sousa, et al., 2021; Urbonavicius, 2021). Mionel (2019), based on the works of Stone (2006) and Light (2017), proposed several motivations and degrees for dark tourists. So, on one side, there are tourists that visit dark exhibitions and fun factories, which are categorized as the lightest form of dark tourists. On the other side are the tourists that visit camps of genocide that consume the darkest form. The study also suggested that 'real death' may not be the only criteria for determining a dark destination. Extending the scope to 'symbolic death' helps in broadening the tourist base. While education, curiosity, family legacy, recreation, and pilgrimage remain the top motives for dark tourists, studies suggest that emotional and cognitive experiences also drive tourists to visit dark tourist sites (Zhang, 2021).

While death is still considered a taboo topic in most societies, dark tourism offers a unique combination of associating death with tourism, a term associated with leisure and fun. This uniqueness of dark tourism has

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increased its consumption in the past decade. This increase in tourist consumption of DT has attracted the attention of academia to look into the domain. The research on DT has not been limited to a certain subject. It means that researchers have covered aspects ranging from business management, psychology, and earth sciences to computer engineering and energy in DT research. However, most of the literature is concerned with defining the typology, identifying the tourists' motives, and exploring the potential for its development in their study region (Biran et al., 2011; Dunkley et al., 2011; Kang et al., 2012; Lemelin et al., 2010; Selmi et al., 2012; Strange & Kempa, 2003; Valeri, 2022a; Valeri & Katsoni, 2021; Yan et al., 2016). Several studies have systematically and comprehensively reviewed the literature on DT. In his comprehensive review of DT research over the past two decades, Stone (2011) suggested that the researchers need to consider dark tourism research as a multidisciplinary approach, i.e., they need to blend philosophies and theories from various disciplines while studying dark tourism. The review suggested that future studies could study ethical dilemmas and marketing challenges while developing dark tourism. Continuing with the work, Roberts and Stone (2014) reviewed the scholarly work on DT and argued that cultural heritage and DT destinations converge on several themes. Thus, it is inevitable for scholars to work and understand the theme so that dark tourism can contribute to the tourism economy. Hartmann (2014), in his review paper, studied the history of DT research, identified major themes, and suggested future research agendas. The review identified preserving heritage sites and the complexities of multicultural societies as the focal topics of DT research. He further identified various layers (shades) in dark tourism travel and observed that scholarly work had relied heavily on war-related heritage sites as DT destinations. In the last comprehensive review, Light (2017) reviewed the literature on DT for 1996-2016 and observed that major themes include understanding the motives of dark tourists, visitor's experience and behavior, relationships between identities and destinations, theorizing thanatourism consumption, ethical debates, political issues, and management (marketing) of destinations. However, a lot of time has elapsed since these reviews, and we believe the research must have moved ahead with time. Though there exist some new reviews, they suffer from certain limitations or have limited scope. Fonseca et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review of the literature to explore the history, evolution, and characteristics of DT. The study developed a demand-supply framework for conceptualizing DT. Punitha and Rajashekar (2018) conducted a literature review on DT to identify similar terminologies related to DT and the visitor motivation to consume them. These reviews focused more on defining the concepts and identifying destinations than suggesting new theories, concepts, characteristics, or methodologies for DT research. To the best of our knowledge, no comprehensive review of literature on Dark Tourism has been carried out in the last five years, necessitating the need for an up-to-date review and collection of knowledge. Despite the resurgence of academic interest in the field, not much is known about the future directions of DT research. Further, the tragic events in the last few years have increased the possibility of consumption of dark tourism. The increased possibility will be a chance for the tourism supply side to match up the expectations and serve better to increase tourist satisfaction. The researched based development of dark tourism will open new horizons for the tourists and the stakeholders (Valeri, 2021).

Thus, based on the above-mentioned gaps, this review study aims to map the knowledge structure of DT research from its inception and observe if new themes have evolved in the last five years. Further, for the scholars, we suggest future research agendas for the burgeoning research field. Similar to the previous comprehensive reviews in the current and other fields (Kumar et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2021; Pattnaik et al., 2020; Shekhar et al., 2021), we put forward similar research questions that we address through the present review study.

RQ1: What are the publication trends in DT research?

RQ2: What are the leading articles, authors, institutes, and countries for DT research?

RQ3: What are the knowledge and intellectual structure in DT research?

RQ4: What are the future research agendas in DT research?

2. Methodology

In this study, we have used SPAR-4-SLR, given by Paul et al. (2021), which is a new and improved method for conducting a systematic review. The method, unlike other methods, lays down several parameters for the inclusion and exclusion of literature during a multi-stage process (Kumar et al., 2022). We selected bibliometric review over other types of systematic reviews as in bibliometric reviews, we are much more capable of handling large data using fit-for-purpose software (Bornmann & Leydesdorff, 2014; Donthu et al., 2021). The bibliometric reviews also enable effectively carrying out the summarization and reporting of data by mitigating the author biases in analyzing and mapping the knowledge clusters. The use of software in conducting the reviews aligns with the findings of Sarkar et al. (2021), which encouraged the use of novel methodologies in dark tourism research. The following sub-sections detail the steps taken in the current study.

2.1. Assembling

The assembling stage has two sub-stages, identification, and acquisition. In the identification stage, we rationally determine the plausible sources for collecting the data. In the present study, we aim to identify the top publication in DT (RQ1) and to know about the trends and status (RQ1 and RQ2) and knowledge structure (RQ3) of DT publications. We have considered the journal articles published in Scopus-indexed journals. Other article types, such as book chapters, conference proceedings, and editorials, are omitted from the review due to quality uncertainty.

The Scopus database is used to acquire bibliographical information about the published articles. It is preferred over its counterparts such as WoS, ProQuest, or Google Scholar because of its wide coverage and research quality standards. We conducted the data search on 1st December 2021 and retrieved the available records from the beginning (1996). We used the following search strings: ("*dark* tourism*" OR "*thanatourism*" OR "*grief tourism*" OR "*morbid* tourism*"). The keywords selected were based on the definitions and theories listed by eminent scholars on dark tourism. * is the wildcard used while searching to include all the variations for the mentioned terms. In total, 589 articles were retrieved in the assembling state.

2.2. Arranging

Like the assembling stage, the arranging stage has two sub-stages, organizing, and purification. We have used predefined filters in the Scopus database to organize the search results. So, first, we selected the Source type "Journal" and excluded others. Then, only the documents in the "English" language were selected for the analysis. As a final filter, we selected the document type "Article". After the arranging stage, 363 articles were selected, and 226 articles were rejected for not meeting the criteria. The final search string: (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("dark tourism") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("thanatourism") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("grief tourism") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("morbid tourism")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")). As per the need for a few objectives, we further filtered out the articles based on Publication Years and included publications from the year 2016. It was further narrowed down to include publications only from the years 2020 and 2021. Filtering publications from 2015 resulted in 253 publications, whereas 95 articles were returned when a final filter of 2020 and 2021 was applied.

2.3. Assessing

The assessing stage again consists of two sub-stages, evaluation, and reporting. In this study, we evaluate 363 articles to understand the trends and map the knowledge structure they represent in DT research. To determine the evolutionary themes in DT research, we evaluated 253 and then 95 documents separately. The trends in the literature or descriptive analysis were carried out using Microsoft Excel and Sci2 to identify the publication trend, top journals, leading authors in terms of publications, top institutions, and top countries

(RQ1 and RQ2). Network analysis has been used extensively in tourism literature (Baggio & Valeri, 2020; Gajdošík & Valeri, 2022; Valeri, 2016; Valeri & Baggio, 2020, 2021a, 2021b). Network collaborations between countries and authors (RQ2) are studied using Sci2, Open Refine, and Gephi, whereas knowledge clusters (RQ3) are mapped using the keyword co-occurrence, and Bibliographic coupling networks are drawn using the Open Refine, Sci2, and Gephi. The clusters are identified using the PageRank and modularity class statistics in Gephi. Following the descriptive and knowledge clustering, research gaps are identified as future research agendas (RQ4). We have used Sci2 (Sci2 Team, 2009), OpenRefine, and Gephi (Bastian et al., 2009) for conducting the desired analysis. OpenRefine is used to refine the data, clustering similar terms, and extracting and removing the undesired data. Network extracting is done using Sci2, and visualization is carried out using Gephi. The networks are then refined using Inkscape.

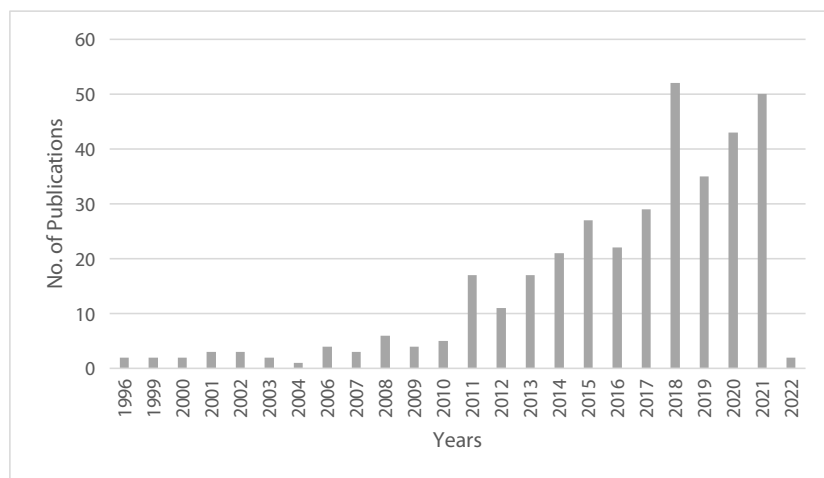
The present study uses tables, figures (network visualization), and words to report the findings of the analysis. We rely on the bibliographic data obtained from the Scopus database, which may be requested from the authors. The analysis is based on the collected data and relies on it for authenticity and completeness.

3. Findings

3.1. Publication trends of DT research (RQ1)

The data suggests that there has been an increasing trend of publications on DT since the last decade (Figure 1). We find that the earliest publication on DT, entitled *Guided by the dark: From thanatopsis to thanatourism* by A.V Seaton (1996), focused on death as an important sub-niche available in heritage tourism, attracting tourists. It also serves as the base for the behavioral definition of dark tourism as travel motivated by tourist motives rather than destination characteristics. The data suggest that before 2010, the publication count for research on DT was five or fewer. There were years when no publication on DT was published, such as 1997-98 and 2005. The theme gained prominence in 2010, and we witnessed an increasing publication trend. Around 81% of the literature has been published since 2014, indicating that DT is gained the attraction of academia in recent times. The trends also suggest that around 33% of the literature is published during the pandemic. It means the pandemic may have triggered the consumption and research on DT. 2018 and 2021 were the most prolific year that accounted for 52 and 50 publications each, respectively, on DT. The research on DT will witness growth in 2022 as there are studies published even before the year has commenced.

Figure 1
Publication trends for dark tourism research



Note: 1 Source of data = Scopus. Period of coverage = 1996 to 1st December 2021. Total publications = 363.

3.2. Top journals for DT research (RQ2)

The most prolific journal for DT research is the *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, with 32 publications (Table 1). It is followed by *Annals of Tourism Research* (24 articles), *Current Issues in Tourism* (20 articles), *Tourism Management* (15 articles), and *Tourism Geographies* (14 articles). The list suggests that the journals welcome high-quality research on DT and publish research on various allied topics on the theme. All these journals are well-established and have been there for a long time.

Table 1
Top journals publishing dark tourism research

Journals	Articles	SNIP	SJR	CS	ABDC rank
Journal of Heritage Tourism	32	1.415	0.639	3.4	B
Annals of Tourism Research	24	2.645	2.159	7	A*
Current Issues in Tourism	20	2.756	1.725	8.6	A
Tourism Management	15	4.163	3.328	16.5	A*
Tourist Studies	14	1.016	0.538	2.5	B
Tourism Geographies	13	2.199	1.082	6.4	A
International Journal of Tourism Cities	12	0.818	0.515	2.4	C
International Journal of Culture Tourism and Hospitality Research	11	0.922	0.567	2.7	B
Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes	10	0.657	0.392	2.7	C
Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change	9	1.241	0.611	2.5	B

3.3. Top articles for DT research (RQ2)

Measuring Global Citations received by an article is one of the ways to determine the influential articles in a theme. The articles with the highest global citation count are measured and presented in the table. Table 2 indicates that "Consuming dark tourism: A Thanatological Perspective" by Stone and Sharpley (2008) is the most cited article with 446 citations, followed by "Guided by the dark: From thanatopsis to thanatourism" by AV Seaton with 431 citations and articles "Shades of dark tourism: Alcatraz and Robben Island" by Strange and Kempa, and "JFK and dark tourism: A fascination with assassination" by Foley and Lennon each receiving more than 200 citations. Noteworthily, most of the articles place a strong emphasis on post-war sites/ battlefields/ prisons as dark tourism destinations. Most of these articles are relatively a decade old. It is common for older articles to get more citations, but simultaneously it indicates that no such groundbreaking study has been conducted in recent years on the theme.

Table 2
Most influential articles on dark tourism

Rank	Year	Article	Authors	Citations
1	2008	Consuming dark tourism: A thanatological perspective	Stone P., & Sharpley R.	446
2	1996	Guided by the dark: From thanatopsis to thanatourism	Seaton A.V.	431
3	2003	Shades of dark tourism: Alcatraz and Robben Island	Strange C., & Kempa M.	272
4	1996	JFK and dark tourism: A fascination with assassination	Foley M., & Lennon J.J.	260
5	2011	Sought experiences at (dark) heritage sites	Biran A., Poria Y., & Oren G.	242
6	1999	War and thanatourism: Waterloo 1815-1914	Seaton A.V.	228
7	2002	Auschwitz: Museum interpretation and darker tourism	Miles W.F.S.	212
8	2012	Dark tourism and significant other death. Towards a model of mortality mediation	Stone P.R.	177
9	2011	Visiting the trenches: Exploring meanings and motivations in battlefield tourism	Dunkley R., Morgan N., & Westwood S.	153
10	2011	Educational dark tourism at an in populo site The Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem	Cohen E.H.	150

3.4. Top authors for DT research (RQ2)

The top authors for research on DT are presented in Table 3. The table indicates that J.J. Lennon from the Department of Travel and Tourism, United Kingdom, is the most prolific author on DT, with nine articles published in Scopus-indexed journals. One of his co-authored articles, "JFK and dark tourism: A fascination with assassination" is one of the first Scopus-indexed articles published on DT and is amongst the top-cited articles in the domain. J. Zhang of Nanjing University in China and RK Isaac from the Center for Cross-cultural Understanding, Netherlands, have seven articles each. The rest of the authors have contributed up to six articles on DT. The fewer number of articles associated with the top authors suggests that there is a potentially large room for novel research by adopting a rigorous methodological approach in DT.

Besides finding the top authors in the field, we also examined the research collaborations between the top authors using the co-authorship network analysis. When researchers engage in collaboration, it facilitates the exchange of ideas resulting in shared knowledge, concepts, and methodologies. Such collaboration also increases the chances of paper publication in reputed journals. Using the Sci2 software to generate the co-authorship network, we find seven small networks in the DT research (Figure 2). The top collaboration network comprises J. Zhang (China), C. Zheng (China), H. Zhang (China), and L. Qian (China), who have published four articles. Within this collaboration, J. Zhang has published additional articles with C. Zheng and H. Zhang. Their articles focused on identifying the visitors' motives and constraints for dark tourism travel and the emotional experience of visiting such a destination. The second network comprises JS Podoshen (United States), V Venkatesh (Canada), J Wallin (Canada), and SA Andrzejewski (United States), who have published three articles together. In their articles, they have studied several emerging and new dimensions of dark tourism. The third network of J Piché (Canada) and K Walby (Canada) has two papers together in which they have studied how prisons and jail museums act as a destination for dark tourism. The fourth network of E Çakmak (Netherlands) and RK Isaac (Netherlands) has two papers together and focuses on understanding visitor motivation to undertake prison travel. RK Isaac has collaborated with Ashworth GJ (Netherlands) for two papers where they focus on if dark tourism has indeed become a known tourism product and how pilgrimage tourism can be extended to dark tourism. The fifth network, in which S Chen (China) has two papers with H Xu (China) and one paper with S Wang (United States) and H Xu, focuses on how traumatic heritage sites can be converted into dark tourism sites. They also raise apprehensions about commercializing dark tourism. In the sixth network, JJ Lennon (United Kingdom) has two papers, each with M Foley (United Kingdom) and G Tiberghien (United Kingdom). Their article "JFK and dark tourism: A fascination with assassination" is one of the earliest and top-cited articles on DT. The seventh network of D Bakota (Poland), L Zastavetska (Ukraine), and A Płomiński (Poland) focuses on how dark tourism can be developed at Chernobyl post-nuclear power plant leakage. The presence of small and fragmented networks suggests a potential gap. The absence of such a network in Asian countries is alarming and raises concerns about the lack of research on the topic. The small number of papers in identified networks also suggests that there is a lack of exploring a topic in depth. Noteworthy, most of the collaborations are with the authors of the same country or, at times, within the same institute. The exchange of knowledge is essential for rigorous methodological advancement in DT research.

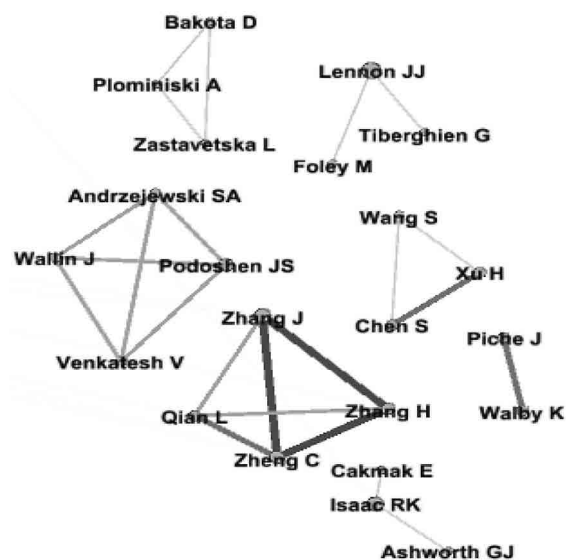
Table 3
Most productive authors and institutes on dark tourism

Author	Affiliation	Articles	Institute	Country	Articles
Lennon, J.J.	Department of Travel and Tourism, Glasgow, United Kingdom	9	Glasgow Caledonian University	Scotland	11
Zhang, J.	Department of Land Resources and Tourism Sciences, Nanjing University, China	7	University of Central Lancashire	United Kingdom	10
Isaac, R.K.	Center for Cross-cultural Understanding, Mgr. Hopmansstraat, Netherlands	7	Breda University of Applied Sciences	Netherlands	9
Zheng, C.	School of Tourism, China	6	Rijksuniversiteit Groningen	Netherlands	8

Table 3 (continued)

Stone, P.R.	Faculty of Management, School of Sport, Preston, United Kingdom	6	Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster	United States	6
Podoshen, J.S.	Department of Business, Lancaster, United States	6	Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Hong Kong	6
Seaton, AV	University of Luton, Luton, United Kingdom	5	Indiana University Bloomington	United States	6
Zhang, H.	Department of Land Resources and Tourism Sciences, Nanjing University, China	5	Sun Yat-Sen University	China	6
Walby, K.	Department of Criminal Justice, Canada	4	University of Greenwich	United Kingdom	6
Buda, D.M.	Hospitality Business School, Deventer, Netherlands	4	The University of Sydney	Australia	6
Maccarthy, M.	School of Business, Joondalup, Australia	4	Ben-Gurion University of the Negev	Israel	6
Powell, R.	Department of Marketing, United Kingdom	4	Bournemouth University	United Kingdom	6
Qian, L.	Department of Land Resources and Tourism Sciences, Nanjing University, China	4	Griffith University	Australia	6
Piché, J.	Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada	4	Nanjing University	China	6
Oren, G.	The College of Management - The Academic studies, Israel	4			
Poria, Y.	Department of Hotel and Tourism Management, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel	4			
Kennell, J.	Department of Marketing, United Kingdom	4			
Korstanje, M.E.	University of Moron, Argentina	4			
Xu, H.	School of Tourism Management, China	4			
Chen, S.	School of Tourism Management, China	4			

Figure 2
Author collaboration network in dark tourism literature



3.5. Top institutes for DT research (RQ2)

Table 3 presents the list of the top 14 institutes publishing at least six articles on DT. The table indicates that Glasgow Caledonian University in Scotland has published 11 articles. It is closely followed by the University of Central Lancashire with 11 articles and Breda University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands with nine articles. It is evident that most of the universities are either in Europe or the United States. Thus, more institutes from developing nations in Asia and Africa can pursue research on the topic

3.6. Top countries for DT research (RQ2)

Based on the country statistics of the 363 articles published in Scopus-indexed journals on DT, it is found that the top five countries are the United Kingdom (104 articles), United States (66 articles), Australia (45 articles), China (26 articles), and Netherlands (19 articles). However, this analysis suffers from the drawback of counting authors from the same country twice due to multiple authors in a publication. To remove the limitation, we extracted the country of the corresponding author and generated a heat map (Figure 3) using the MS Excel plugin to determine the publication count. As per the Figure, the United Kingdom is the only country with a high density, with 86 articles. The United States, placed second on the list, has a moderate density with 50 articles. It is followed by Australia with 35 articles and China with 23 articles. However, several countries, including Italy, the Philippines, Austria, Sweden, Guyana, Iran, and Lithuania, fall into a low-density country with one or two publications.

We also wanted to determine if there exists any collaboration network between the authors of different countries. So, we refined the affiliation addresses of authors and generated a directed network of countries, and deleted self-loops and repeated nodes. The network shows the presence of a few country collaborations. The United Kingdom and the United States share the most author collaborations. Authors from the United Kingdom also collaborated with New Zealand and Canada. Whereas authors from the United States frequently collaborated with authors from China, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. A separate network suggested that authors from Ukraine collaborate with authors from Poland. The collaboration network shows that the existing networks could add more research partners and may also engage in more research activities with each other. The network of researchers from developing nations was not found to be strong.

Figure 3
Heat-map showing publication count of countries



4. Mapping of DT research

4.1. Co-occurrence of keywords in DT research (RQ3)

We conducted a keyword co-occurrence network analysis to map the interrelationship of the words in the analyzed literature to gain information on knowledge clusters in DT research. We used Sci2 to generate the network and Gephi to visualize it. Table 5 provides additional information on the frequency of the words and their linkage strength. All those words that appeared more than four times were selected for the analysis. The co-occurrence network (Figure 4) shows that there are six knowledge clusters in DT research. These clusters have been discussed in-depth in the following sections.

Table 4
Top keywords in dark tourism research

Keywords	OC	TLS
Cluster 1 (Keywords = 23) Genesis, theories and DT motivation		
Tourism	320	93
Experience	46	26
War	37	2
Analysis	36	2
Manage	36	22
Motive	34	21
Emotion	29	13
Disaster	25	8
Site	21	9
Perception	17	5
Battlefield	15	3
Theories	15	7
Post	15	2
Visitor	15	2
Earthquake	15	2

Keywords	OC	TLS
Cluster 4 (Keywords = 30) Man made destinations and DT		
Dark	280	76
Memorial	38	3
Museum	26	9
Death	24	5
Social	20	4
Holocaust	18	4
Identity	17	8
Interpretation	14	2
Education	13	3
Chernobyl	10	1
Psychology	10	7
Narrate	9	1
Auschwitz	9	6
Prison	8	4
Authentic	8	6
Stakeholder	8	2
Pilgrimage	8	2

Keywords	OC	TLS
Cluster 2 (Keywords = 19) DT behaviour and economics		
Tourist	87	19
Destination	46	6
Behavior	41	14
Develop	39	26
Attract	33	13
State	17	3
Travel	16	2
Unit	13	2
Economy	12	4
South	9	7
Region	7	2
United Kingdom	6	3

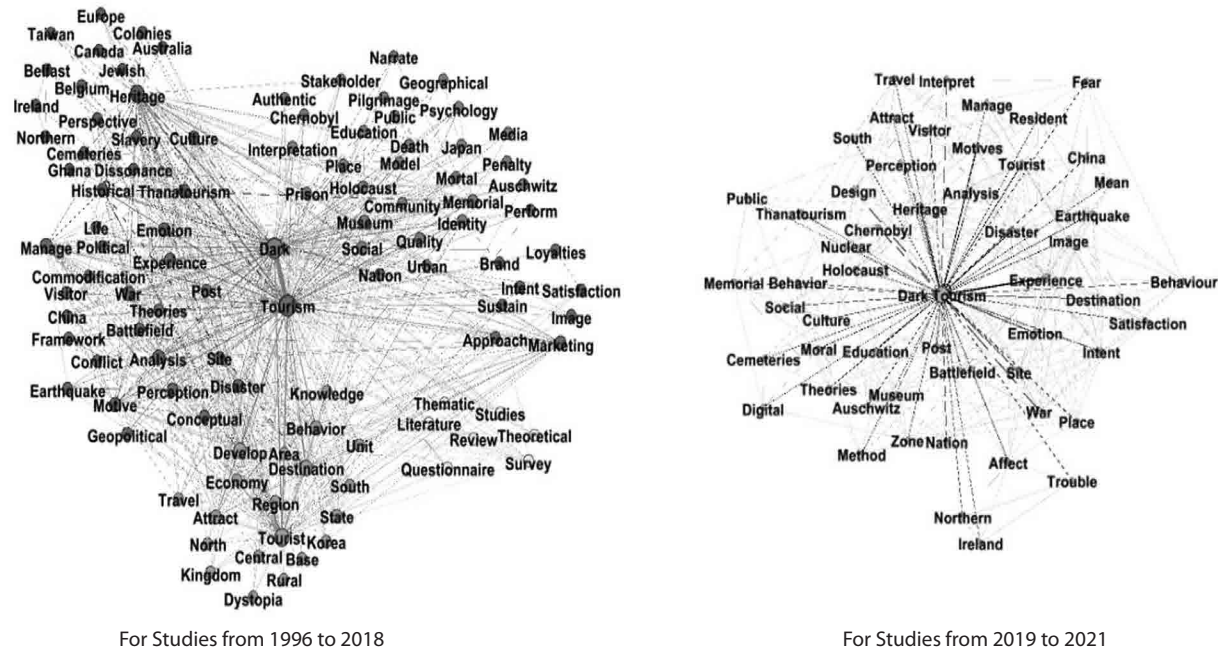
Keywords	OC	TLS
Cluster 5 (Keywords = 19) Colonization and DT		
Heritage	76	62
Thanatourism	36	16
Culture	31	19
Historical	31	5
Slavery	11	5
Dissonance	9	4
Cemeteries	9	3
Europe	7	2
Australia	6	2
Jewish	5	2
Canada	5	2
Colonies	5	2

Table 4 (continued)

Keywords	OC	TLS
Cluster 3 (Keywords = 08) Marketing of DT		
Marketing	30	17
Intent	11	4
Sustainable	6	5
Approach	6	2
Satisfaction	6	4
Brand	5	3
Image	5	2
Loyalties	3	3

Keywords	OC	TLS
Cluster 6 (Keywords = 06) Methodology		
Studies	15	3
Literature	9	3
Survey	9	11
Theoretical	8	2
Review	8	4
Questionnaire	6	2
Thematic	3	4

Figure 4
Keyword co-occurrence network



4.1.1. Cluster 1: Genesis, theories, and DT motivation

The first cluster comprises 23 words and focuses on the genesis of dark tourism, laying down its "theories", and highlighting the "motive" of "dark tourism". The co-occurrence network shows that the studies have highlighted the visitor "perception" of what motivated them to visit "sites" of "battlefields", "disaster", and "earthquakes" and how they "manage" their "emotional" "experience" post-site visit.

4.1.2. Cluster 2: Dark tourists behavior and economics

The second cluster has 19 keywords and focuses on moving the definition of DT from destination characteristics to the behavioral aspect of tourists. The keyword co-occurrence analysis shows that studies focused on how gaining the "knowledge" of the "behavior" of the dark tourists will help attract tourists to promote "economic" "development" in "dystopian" "rural" "northern" "regions" of "Korea".

4.1.3. Cluster 3: Marketing of DT

The third cluster has eight keywords and focuses on "marketing" and allied aspects of DT. The co-occurrence network suggests that studies have focused on creating "brand" "image" and "loyalty" for the tourists to enhance their "satisfaction" with the "intent" to adopt a "sustainable" approach.

4.1.4. Cluster 4: Man-made destinations and DT

The fourth cluster has 30 keywords and focuses on man-made destinations across the world and the possibility of DT at such places. The co-occurrence network suggests that "narrative" by the victims, such as "Auschwitz" or "Chernobyl" provides an "authentic" experience. Further, "museums" and "memorials" can be effective tools in the "education" of the students about the incidents and "psychologically" interpret the "social" or "community" behavior.

4.1.5. Cluster 5: Colonization and DT

The fifth cluster has 19 keywords and focuses on colonization and its impact on DT. The co-occurrence network suggests that the studies have emphasized the colonies such as "Ghana" as a potential destination for experiencing dark tourists. As these colonies were used for "slavery", the atrocities committed on the natives provide a different "perspective" on "thanatourism". The studies have established "thanatourism" as part of "heritage" tourism and how dissonance towards the colonizers is expressed in the "historical" and "cultural" outlook of these colonies.

4.1.6. Cluster 6: Methodology

The sixth cluster has six keywords that focus on methods and tools used in DT research. The keyword co-occurrence network suggests that the studies have focused on "reviewing" the literature on DT and understanding the themes in the underlying research. Further, most of the "studies" have collected data through a "questionnaire" using the "survey" technique to apply "moderation- mediation" analysis. "Thematic" analysis has been used to conclude the perceptions of stakeholders in the studies.

To understand the research trends in DT post-2015, the network analysis shows similar keywords frequently occurring. The only addition became the new destinations that were non-existent or underexplored during the previous years. The researchers were still focusing on the motives of travel, building brand image, and creating loyalties among dark tourists (Albattat et al., 2020; Chemli et al., 2020; Toanoglou et al., 2021; Valeri, 2022b). On comparing if these keywords differ since the pandemic began, we created a word co-occurrence network for the publications post-2019 (Figure 4). However, no noticeable difference was found in the keywords observed in these studies barring a few new themes. Most of the research on DT is still carried out to understand the motives of the tourist's pre-visit and their emotional experience post-visit such sites. Studies have started including more natural disaster sites across the globe while identifying dark tourist sites. Noteworthy, social media (Netflix) and the use of digital means have started being practiced in the marketing of dark tourism. These keywords were not prominent when we considered publication since the beginning, as this is the new trend. There is no new word related to any theory or methodology that might suggest a new methodological approach adopted in conducting the DT research. All this indicates that the research in DT has stagnated.

4.2. Knowledge clusters using bibliographic coupling (RQ3)

Bibliographic coupling is a citation-based clustering approach where articles that cite a common article are coupled together. The reason given is that if two articles cite a common article, then they relate to a common theme. Citation-based approaches have been commonly used in reviewing the literature (Boyack & Klavans, 2010; Janssens et al., 2020; Small, 1973). In our study, the coupling network helps in identifying six themes

that are prominent in DT research. These themes are the *scope of Dark tourism, moral and ethical dilemmas in dark tourism, visit motives and post-visit experiences, management of existing destinations (and new destinations discovery), marketing aspects (social media), and methodology in dark tourism research*. In the following sections, we will focus on the recent contributions made to the theme and suggest future research agendas.

In the largest cluster, researchers have studied the *scope of Dark tourism* and studied the concept (Foley & Lennon, 2007), definitions, sites (Bigley et al., 2010), and forms of dark tourism. The literature also focuses on how these trips may or may not be part of heritage and pilgrimage tourism (Dann & Seaton, 2008; Hartmann, 2014). In the recent literature, Dresler and Fuchs (2020) suggested that dark tourism can become a useful tool in building education tourism. Visits to such places can act as a mode to understand the historical, cultural, and political dimensions of a place. In the second-largest cluster, studies have focused on the *management of existing destinations (and new destinations discovery)*. Maintaining authenticity, management issues, and sustainability of destinations are some of the most studied themes in dark tourism research. Apart from the famous destinations already studied in the past studies, new studies have focused on developing dark tourism in Poland (Applboim & Poria, 2019; Cole, 2018), Croatia (Šuligoj, 2017), Italy (Wright & Sharpley, 2016), India (Sharma & Rickly, 2017), and Caribbean islands (Skinner, 2018). The latest edition to the destinations is the epicenters of Covid-19 (Cai et al., 2021).

In the cluster of studies covering the *moral and ethical dilemmas in dark tourism*, studies have covered the topics around the commodification of dark tourism (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2010; Powell & Iankova, 2016), ethical issues in profiteering from the death, insensitive behavior of the tourists, and misrepresentation of the destinations. In recent studies, Chen and Xu (2020) identified the various types of moral gazes that tourists perceive while visiting the destinations and how this perception will be useful in reconstructing the sites post-disaster. Further, like past studies, we also observe a lack of studies combining the multistakeholder's perspective while studying the impact of dark tourism at a destination. The cluster of studies on *visit motives and post-visit experiences* focuses on identifying the motives of the dark tourists (Biran et al., 2011; Mudzanani, 2014), their post-visit emotional experiences (Hanafiah et al., 2021; Lee, 2015), and their engagements with the destinations. However, most of the studies consider visitors as those directly or indirectly influenced by the calamity as the potential visitor for a dark tourism destination.

In the cluster of studies *targeting the marketing aspects of dark tourism*, the biggest challenge identified is the promotion of dark tourism. Recent studies have highlighted how electronic media and social media may have become useful resources in the promotion of dark tourism (Wight, 2020; Price & Kerr, 2017; Šuligoj, 2019; Tzanelli & Korstanje, 2016). A few studies also focus on the role played by cinema and web series in promoting dark tourism (Zerva, 2021). This theme is in line with the findings of Light (2017), as he observed it to be an emerging issue in his review study. Past review studies also highlighted the lack of a model that could empirically provide a way to market dark tourism without questioning morality. However, Michelson and Miller (2019) did conceptualize a model for the marketing of dark tourism. In the smallest cluster, *methodology/methods in dark tourism research* are the prominent themes. Most of the studies still use interviews and questionnaires to collect and model the motives of the tourists. However, there is enhanced use of visualization in dark tourism research that has led to more authentic research findings. Few review studies summarise the themes prevalent in dark tourism. There are bibliometric studies reviewing the top journals (Kumar et al., 2020). However, not much methodological advancement is visible in dark tourism research.

5. Implications

From the mapping of knowledge clusters based on keyword co-occurrence analysis and bibliographic coupling, the authors reflect on the suggestions for future research on the theme. First, the studies have focused on enhancing the scope of dark tourism. However, there still exists a knowledge gap in this theme. 'Technology'

can play a useful role in redefining or broadening the scope of dark tourism. Studies suggest that game-like applications, thriller movies, and artworks can help in generating interest in the typology amongst the young generation (Strielkowski, 2013). Similarly, technology can help in giving tourists an idea of the environment they are likely to experience in such places. It can also help in incorporating the concept of 'symbolic death' in dark tourism (Mionel, 2019). Nevertheless, it is an area that has not been explored much by academicians. Noteworthy, there is also limited evidence if dark tourism is an economically sustainable tourism form when compared to religious and leisure tourism. Not much of the literature has studied the feasibility of dark tourism through economic, social, and legal lenses. In the absence of concrete evidence, it is difficult to ascertain whether the scope of dark tourism should be further enhanced, particularly in countries with limited resources. As most of the destinations in dark tourism are previous battlefields or similar sites (Horodnikova, 2015), seeing such wide-scale tragedies can influence the emotional aspects of tourists. Such tragedies can further influence people to sympathize with the victims and try to avoid similar actions. Thus, dark tourism can also help in promoting global peace by giving people an experience of the hardships in the life of the victims, thus broadening the scope of dark tourism.

Second, most of the studied dark destinations fall under the categories of war-based destinations, burial grounds, memorials, or heritage destinations. Thus, strengthening the notion that dark tourism still finds its roots at heritage destinations. There is a need to explore more sites at urban destinations that could serve the tourists coming in the light shade of dark tourism. Dark tourism could be found in other typologies like wellness and spiritual tourism destinations. Places where famous personalities passed away, places for recreational purposes, dark resting places or cemeteries, and haunted houses could be developed into dark tourism sites to attract more tourists. Third, one of the unanswered questions in the theme of moral and ethical dilemmas is how long a destination can serve tourists without making the necessary changes. And what will happen once a destination becomes unfit to serve the tourists? What about the challenges in rebranding the destinations after rehabilitation? What about the financial and social interests of the stakeholders involved? As the generations progress, it will be difficult to connect to tourists without further commodification of the destinations. Maintaining a balance between the audience's expectations and their moral gaze is something that needs to be empirically tested.

Fourth, in this globalized world, it is not impossible to find a tourist who visited a place because it was famous or it was included in their tour package. Engagement of such tourists with the destination and their post-visit behavior can help build geographical and cultural relationships with those tourists. Further, their revisit intentions could be evaluated to identify the tourist satisfaction level. Death is not considered a subject people wish to associate with within some cultures (notably in Asian and Eastern nations). It will be interesting to know about people's perceptions in countries where death and related aspects are taboo. There is limited literature available for these cultures and countries. Studies should focus on how much tourists motivate themselves to consume dark tourism and whether their trip has more based on identity or spirituality. Fifth, we believe that there are a lot of marketing aspects that need to be addressed for dark tourism development. The role of websites (of both tour operators and travel agents) in influencing dark tourists' motives to travel is relatively unexplored. The marketing research remains silent on tailoring the DT to better suit the sub-niches that exist within the DT. There is a need to extend the scope while considering the potential customers for dark tourism. Understanding the expectations of tourists is one of the research areas where little attention has been paid. If we consider the dimensions of the product, little is known about the *expected*, *augmented*, and *potential* of dark tourism. While *product* and *promotional* aspects are given importance in dark tourism, not much is talked about the pricing component. Nothing is talked about the price elasticity aspects of dark tourists and their capacity to pay. And last, researchers have paid limited attention to understanding the role of *supply chain participants* in the marketing of DT.

6. Conclusion and limitations

In the end, this review study has shed light on the publication trends and popular journals, articles, and authors on DT research. On comparing the recent prominent themes in DT research with the prominent themes in the earlier stage, the study has found that not much novel research has been undertaken in terms of concepts, theories, and methodologies adopted in DT. The study found that six prominent themes, *Genesis, Theories, and DT motivation, Dark Tourists behavior and economics, Marketing of DT, Man-made destinations and DT, Colonization and DT, and methodology in DT research* have been studied in the DT research based on the keyword co-occurrence networks. On clustering the literature based on citations, the study identified several themes that were similar to the findings in the previous studies. Barring a few additions to these themes, the DT research has largely focused on developing war-based heritage sites as dark tourism destinations. The scope of dark tourism can be further enhanced by using it as a tool for global peace. Although studies have progressed in the theme of marketing and ethical and moral debates, there still exists a lot of research potential. Overall, we conclude that there is a lack of a novel approach to research in DT, and the research has become stagnated. Time and again, prominent scholars have urged new scholars to broaden their horizon of DT research and adopt a blended disciplinary approach. Based on similar grounds, this study suggests several multidisciplinary and intradisciplinary study avenues for DT scholars.

Coming to the limitations of the study, we retrieved the literature from the Scopus database due to its advantage over its counterparts. However, we cannot deny the possibility that few seminal works have not been evaluated, and therefore, few research themes were not identified in the study. Although the adopted framework lays down guidelines for the inclusion and non-inclusion of articles, future scholars can adopt some other scientifically backed criteria to include quality work in their review. In this study, we have clustered the articles based on their keywords' co-occurrence and citation similarity. Future studies could adopt other clustering mechanisms and follow other hybrid review techniques to provide cluster-specific suggestions.

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