

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Bibliometric Analysis of Trends in Museum and Identity StudiesÖzlem Elvan[✉] 

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ARTICLE INFO**Article History**

Received: 13.11.2024

Accepted: 11.12.2024

First Published: 31.12.2024

Keywords

Education

Identity

Museum

Web of Science

**ABSTRACT**

Individuals have various identities that they use in their interaction with society. Museums support visitors' identities and enable them to discover new ones. The museum experience plays an important role as a tool that reflects the identity of societies and contributes to the formation of active citizenship by enhancing visitors' self-confidence. By exploring the past, museums help visitors re-evaluate the present from a different perspective, allowing them to rethink their identities. The role of museums in identity construction is controversial and has been analyzed from various perspectives. Studies on museums and identity are, therefore, diverse. Debates about museums and identity have also changed at important turning points in the historical process. After the Second World War, the so-called postcolonial period, the efforts of the colonized nations of the past to protect their cultural values in the colonizing countries to preserve their identities are reflected in both action and academic studies. This study tries to map the studies on museums and identity based on quantitative data. The study aims to provide researchers with a systematic summary of studies on museums and identity and identify trends and gaps concerning museum and identity using bibliometric analysis. The unit of analysis is the bibliometric data of the studies scanned in the Web of Science database and published between 1975 and 2024. The distribution of the 3,267 studies on museums and identity according to the years of publication shows that museums and identity studies have an increasing trend since 2006.

Please cite this paper as follows:

Elvan, Ö. (2024). Bibliometric analysis of trends in museum and identity studies. *Bulletin of Educational Studies*, 3(2), 106-112.
<https://doi.org/10.61326/bes.v3i2.310>

1. Introduction

Identity is defined in different ways by different disciplines. Although it is the subject of many disciplines, identity is mostly addressed by various disciplines of the social sciences (Dalbay, 2018). It appears differently in different fields, such as social identity in sociology, political identity in politics, identity development in psychology, and cultural identity in anthropology. Therefore, the definition is not simple and unique and evolves over time (Rounds, 2006). Identity is related to the answers to how the person sees him/herself and to how society sees the person. How the person sees him/herself is found in the answer to the question "Who am I?" (Dalbay, 2018). Identity is a tool for the individual to adapt to society (Aşkin, 2007). Museums play an important role in the construction of national identity. In the 19th century, the expansion of museums to form

and consolidate nation-states was an example of this role (Macdonald, 2003).

Every person has many identities that they use to continue their interactions with the events or settings around them. The identity used in museum visits is one of them. Just as people's identities are effective in museum visits, museum visits are also effective in identity construction. In other words, there is a reciprocal interaction (Falk, 2016). The reasons why visitors visit museums and the museum's objectives for visitors may differ. However, museums are environments where visitors can both confirm their identity and discover other identities (Rounds, 2006). Museums can influence their visitors' identities through the experiences they offer them (Falk, 2006). Society shapes museum activities, and museum activities are tools for revealing social identity (Crooke, 2008). Museums are unique

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institutions that reflect the identity of the society to which they belong. There is no better institution than museums to reflect the society's identity to which it belongs (Özçelik Tezel, 2007). In addition, museums enhance the self-confidence of their citizens by building a sense of identity, enabling the development of active citizenship (Newman & McLean, 2006; Newman et al., 2005). Museums allow visitors to make a connection between the museum and their identity. Visitors/participants can rediscover the past in the museum and reinterpret the present from a different perspective. This process also allows visitors to rethink their identity (Karadeniz, 2018). Museums play a driving role in memory by connecting visitors with objects, places, and people, and they contribute to emerging a sense of belonging among them (Eckersley, 2017).

Museums contribute to social inclusion and national, cultural and social identity construction to a great extent. Social inclusion is a process that enables people at risk of exclusion to achieve the average living standards of society (European Commission, 2024). Studies on how museums can prevent social exclusion (Newman et al., 2005; Sandell, 1998, 2003) have led research on social inclusion in museums (Coleman, 2015; Danaci Polat & Buyurgan, 2021). These studies contribute to the museums' social inclusion process. Museums are becoming increasingly inclusive in terms of participation, access and representation. By representing the historical and cultural characteristics of different communities, museums ensure that different groups in society are represented in the museum. This situation enhances the self-confidence and self-esteem of the represented community and the development of social tolerance (Sandell, 1998).

Museums, which play an important role in constructing the societal identity and the affiliation of different social groups, are the subject of studies in various disciplines. Changes and developments in world and national history increasingly enrich the content of these studies, and the research trends also change. This study aims to analyze the change and development of trends of the studies on the museum and identity.

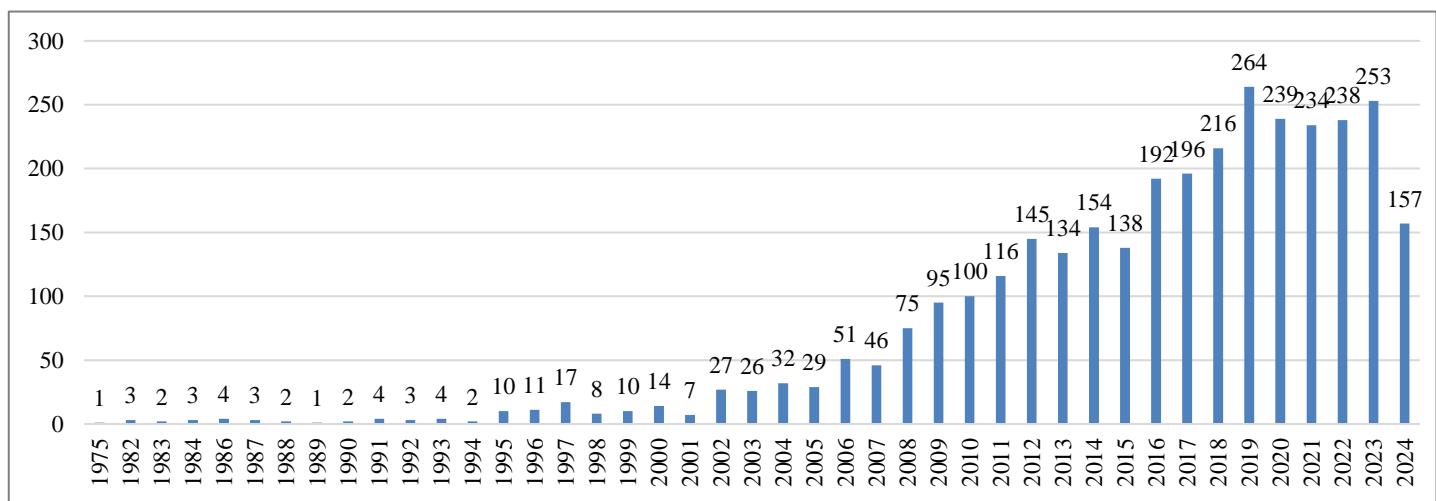


Figure 1. Distribution of studies by year.

2. Method

Scientific studies are influenced by the accumulation of knowledge, while they also influence the accumulation of knowledge. This knowledge accumulation constitutes the intellectual structure (Shafique, 2013). The analysis of the intellectual structure provides a holistic view of the development and changes in a scientific field (Liu et al., 2015). This study uses bibliometric analysis to examine the intellectual structure of studies on museums and identity from a holistic perspective. The mapping of scientific data's quantitative analyses is called bibliometric methods (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015).

2.1. Measures

To access museum and identity studies in the Web of Science database, "(museums OR museum education) AND identity" words were searched. The search was performed on the 'keyword', 'title' and 'abstract' fields. This search yielded 3,267 documents; they were transferred to VOSviewer and analyzed. The search was limited to the Web of Science database.

3. Findings

This part of the study presents bibliometric analyses of data obtained from the Web of Science database using the VOSviewer programme.

3.1. Distribution of Studies by Year

The Web of Science database contains studies carried out since 1975. Although there are some fluctuations in studies addressing museums and identity, there is a steady increase. Since 2006, there has been an increase in the number of studies resulting from the increase in postcolonial studies, memory and identity studies conducted after the 2000s.

3.2. Distribution of Studies by Country/Region

Studies on museums and identity are mostly performed in the USA and the UK. The trend of museum and identity studies is also high in Italy, Spain, Australia, Canada, and France. This is due to the countries' sociological, cultural, political structure

and historical characteristics. One of the countries that stands out on the list is South Africa. In the studies conducted in South Africa, the decolonization of museums, memory, and heritage were the most frequently used key concepts. This situation shows the impact of postcolonial studies in South Africa.

Table 1. Distribution of studies by country/region.

Country/Region	Document	Country/Region	Document	Country/Region	Document
USA	758	Belgium	39	Chile	22
England	389	Japan	38	India	22
Italy	180	Romania	38	Ireland	19
Spain	176	Portugal	37	Mexico	19
Australia	172	Czechia	34	Ukraine	18
Canada	137	Denmark	33	Estonia	17
France	128	Israel	32	Hungary	16
Russia	117	Croatia	31	Iran	16
Brazil	110	Argentina	30	Qatar	16
Germany	109	Finland	30	Cyprus	15
Peoples Rep. of China	99	Greece	29	Wales	15
Türkiye	59	South Korea	27	Bulgaria	14
Netherlands	56	Taiwan	27	Indonesia	14
Poland	56	Colombia	26	Malaysia	13
South Africa	53	Norway	25	Slovenia	13
Scotland	52	Switzerland	25	Serbia	10
New Zealand	46	Singapore	24	Thailand	10
Sweden	45	Austria	23	Other Country/Region	171

3.3. Data Analysis by Document Type

Most studies on museums and identity are papers (2,793); however, the documents on museums and identity are diverse (books, book chapters, papers, etc.).



Figure 2. Data analysis by document type.

3.4. Co-Authorship Analysis by Country

An analysis unit was formed as countries with at least one document and no citation requirement, resulting in 15 clusters and 115 items. The country with the highest trend for studies on

museums and identity is the USA (734). It is followed by the United Kingdom (377), Italy (178), Spain (174) and Australia (167). The review of multinational studies shows that the highest number of collaborative studies occurred between the

USA and the UK, with 34 studies. Australia also shows a high level of co-authorship. Australian researchers have published 18 studies with the USA and 17 with the UK co-authors.

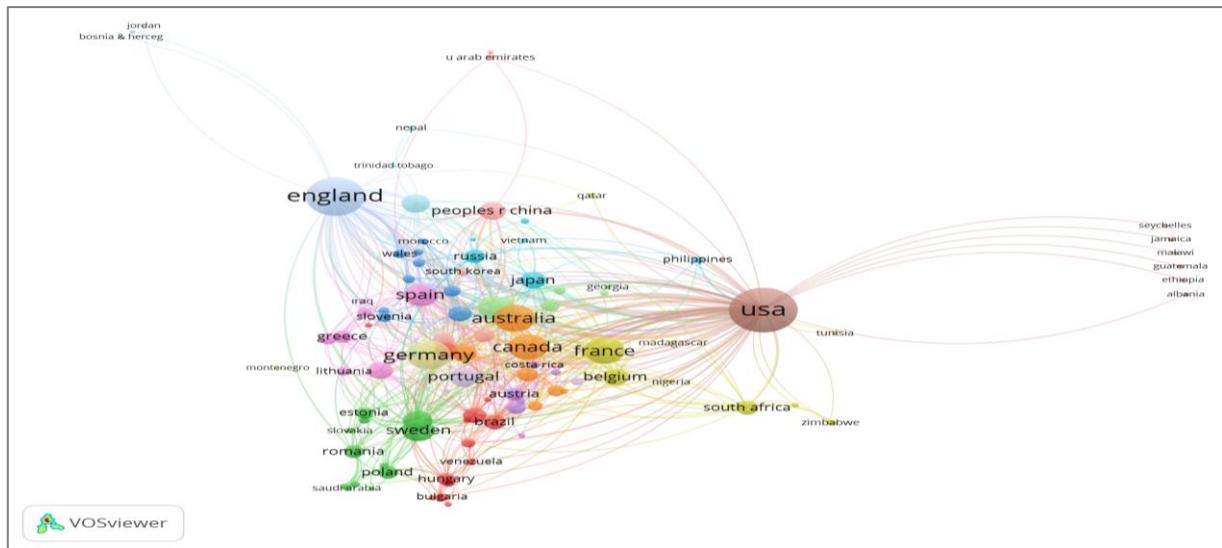


Figure 3. Co-authorship analysis by country.

3.5. Data Analysis by the Frequency of Using Keywords

In the Web of Science database, 3,267 different keywords were used in the studies on museums and identity. The keywords that were repeated ten times or more were listed to determine the most preferred concepts among these words. Then, the relationship between the 94 most repeated words was analyzed. The 94 keywords formed 5 clusters. The most frequent keywords used in the studies are museum (427), identity (236), heritage (132), cultural heritage (99), national

identity (98) and memory (93). The word "museum" is related to the 427 most frequently used words in the studies. Regarding the analysis of the keywords' association frequency, the most frequently associated keywords with the concept of museum, following its close relationship with the concept of identity, are 'heritage' and 'memory'. There is also a close relationship between the concepts of heritage and identity. An analysis of the studies on museums and identity by year shows an increased trend in the last decade with studies about colonialism, immigrants, heritage education, diversity, identity politics, and cultural heritage.

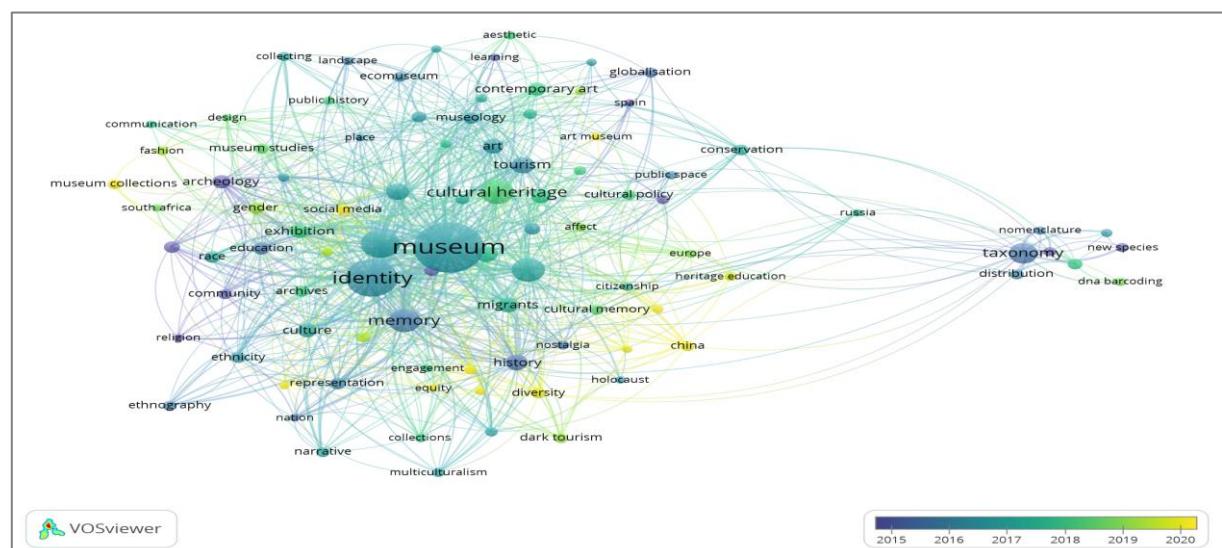


Figure 4. Data analysis by the frequency of using keywords.

3.6. Analysis of Citation of Sources

Studies on museums and identity were published in 1,793 sources (books, journals, conferences, etc.). Sources with at least 50 citations were included in the analysis to reveal the citation status of the journals. 38 interrelated journals with a minimum of 50 citations were analyzed. The analysis unit formed in this way consisted of 7 clusters and 38 items. The

most cited journal is Science Education (243), with 8 studies. Science Education is related to the 10 most cited journals on museums and identity. The strength of the connection between the Science Education Journal and the International Journal of Science Education, Cultural Studies of Science Education, and Journal of Museum Education journals is high, showing a high intellectual connection between the journals. The clusters also show homogeneity in terms of scientific disciplines.

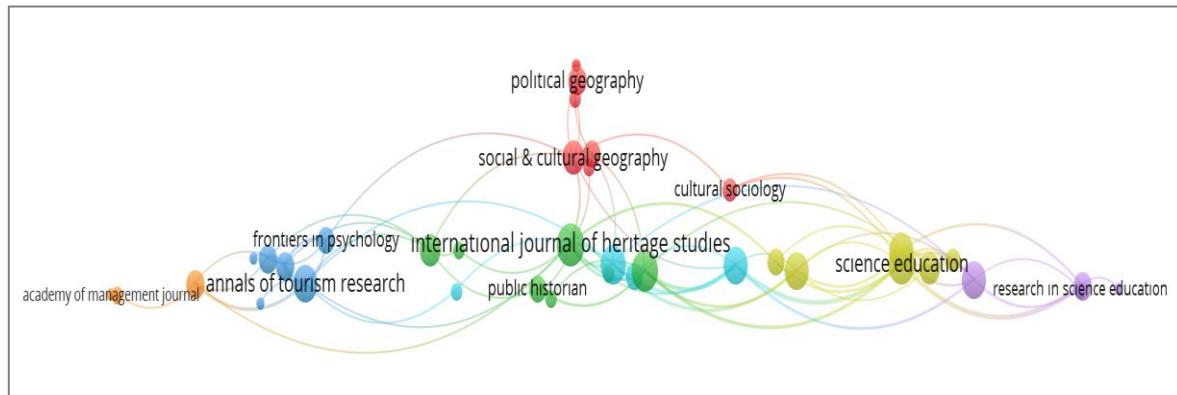


Figure 5. Analysis of citation of sources.

3.7. Bibliometric Coupling of Documents

A bibliometric analysis unit was formed with documents that received at least 50 citations. Due to this limitation, 45 documents were analyzed. In the bibliometric coupling of the documents, 8 clusters and 45 items were formed. The most bibliometric coupling is between the same author's two studies. Dawson; 'Not Designed for Us: How Science Museums and Science Centers Socially Exclude Low-Income, Minority

Ethnic Groups (2014)' and "Equity in informal science education: developing an access and equity framework for science museums and science centers (2014)". Another study with high bibliometric coupling is Dawson's 2011 study. The study with the highest bibliometric coupling with Dawson's is the study of Golding, V. (2009). The high bibliometric coupling between these studies can be attributed to the similarity of the knowledge bases of the subjects.

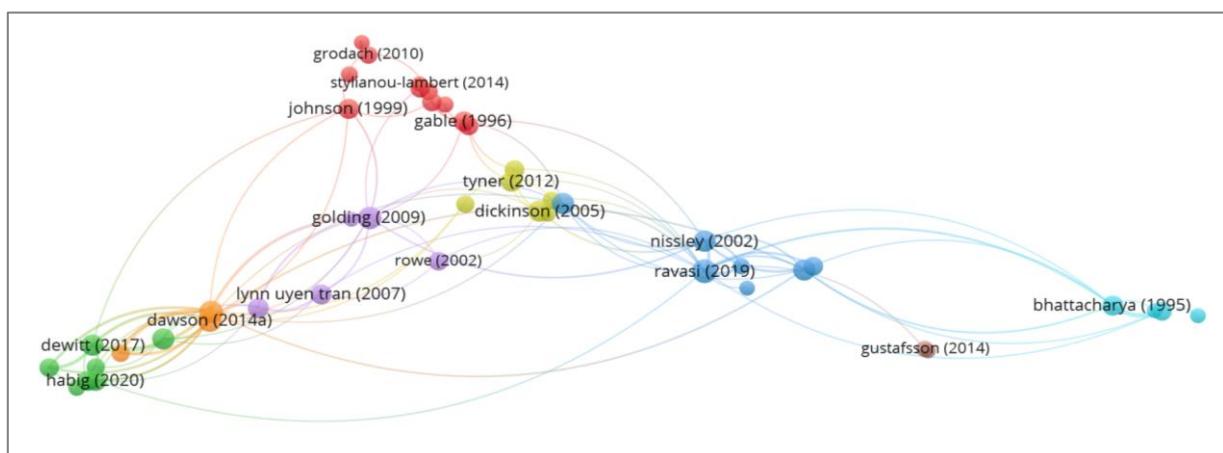


Figure 6. Bibliometric coupling of documents.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

According to the study results, the trend of museum and identity studies has increased since 2006. Many political and cultural changes in the world have affected this increase. In recent years, colonialism has been included in museum and

identity studies, which is one of the effects of this change. Studies on the decolonization of museums are examples of such reflections. An issue that has been raised more and more recently is that during the colonial period, works of art were taken from the colonized countries to the museums of the

colonizing countries; the work of communities setting an agenda on this issue is also reflected in academic studies. Throughout history, colonialism has significantly impacted societies, not only politically and economically but also culturally; its reflections can be seen in museums. Colonialist states brought the cultural elements of the countries they occupied back home. Cultural artefacts that were transported are now exhibited in museums, showing that cultural ties and value judgements are also colonized, and attempts are being made to weaken them (Taşkın, 2023). The fact that the colonized countries of the past wanted to transfer the artefacts from the colonial countries to their museums to protect their identities is important in identity reconstruction. These demands are reflected in both community work and academic studies. Museum and identity studies reflect the decolonization of museums as an ethical responsibility towards colonized nations (Kreps, 2011).

The results of the bibliometric analysis by country show that most studies on museums and identity are performed in the USA and the UK. This result is in line with the sociological structure, identity and immigration policies of these countries. According to the study results, the bibliographies of studies with a similar knowledge base and intellectual accumulation are also similar. These studies are also coupled bibliometrically.

Museums appear to be an important tool for constructing cultural identity (Crooke, 2008). Public spaces such as museums can make the ignored memories and cultural characteristics of migrants visible (Delaplace, 2017). Giving space to migrants' issues and cultural values through museums and museum exhibitions is important for their sense of belonging and their adaptation to the society in which they live. The increase in migration in recent years has led to discussions about including migrants in museum activities and how to include their stories and experiences in museum collections (Swensen & Guttormsen, 2020).

The fact that museums have become an important tool for intercultural dialogue and for becoming an intercultural society by going beyond being a multicultural society (Bodo et al., 2009) affects the trends of studies on this topic (Bodo et al., 2009; Delaplace, 2017; Erdemir-Tanyeri & Çerçioğlu-Yücel, 2015; Smith, 2017; Swensen & Guttormsen, 2020; Whitehead & Bozoğlu, 2015; Whitehead et al., 2015). This study shows that studies on national identity are conducted intensively. The nations that declared their independence by eliminating the effects of colonization aim to show their national identities in their museums, which is also effective on this fact. For example, after declaring independence, Singapore attached importance to exhibiting its cultural values that reflect its identity in museums to make its citizens feel a sense of belonging to their country (Özçelik Tezel, 2007). Regarding museum and identity studies in Singapore, national identity studies are prominent and confirm this situation.

It can be seen that researchers from different disciplines (Dawson et al., 2020; Dimache et al., 2017; Mukherjee et al., 2015) are working on museums and identity. Museums are seen as social sciences laboratories, but other disciplines also conduct research on museums and identity, showing that this laboratory is open to different disciplines and can be addressed with interdisciplinary approaches.

Conflict of Interest

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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