

TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN MOSQUE TOUR RESEARCH: A BIBLIOMETRIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

This study presents a bibliometric analysis of research trends related to mosque tours, aiming to identify key developments and landscape evolving around this niche within religious and tourism studies. The investigation was driven by a systematic literature search utilizing two primary keywords: “mosque” and “tour,” within the Scopus database, resulting in an initial pool of articles. After applying rigorous screening and data cleaning processes with OpenRefine, a total of 83 relevant publications from 2004 to 2025 were selected for detailed analysis. The methodology employed involved the use of Scopus’s analytical tools, OpenRefine for data refinement, and VOSviewer software to perform network visualization, clustering, and density mapping of bibliometric data. Results indicate a growing body of scholarly work focusing on mosque tourism, with prominent clusters around visitor experiences, cultural interactions, and heritage preservation. The analysis reveals a steady increase in publications over the years, with notable peaks in recent periods,

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highlighting the increasing importance of religious tourism in global travel behaviour. Keyword co-occurrence and co-authorship networks underline the key contributors and thematic focuses within this field. The study underscores the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in understanding the dynamics of mosque tourism and provides a comprehensive overview of research trajectories and gaps. In conclusion, the findings contribute valuable insights for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers interested in religious tourism development, cultural exchange, and heritage management, emphasizing the need for further investigation into visitor motivations, cultural implications, and sustainable tourism practices related to mosque visits.

Keywords:

Bibliometric Analysis, Mosque Tour, Mosque Tourism, Religious Tourism, Tourism

Introduction

The Mosque Tour Program aims to enhance religious tourism by offering guided tours of mosques, which serve as significant cultural and historical landmarks. This initiative not only promotes understanding and appreciation of Islamic culture but also contributes to the socio-economic sustainability of the mosques and their surrounding communities. By providing structured tours, the program seeks to educate tourists about the architectural, historical, and religious significance of mosques, thereby fostering a deeper connection between visitors and the local Muslim community.

The literature on Muslim travel and tourism has expanded significantly, reflecting the growing interest in tourism from Islamic majority countries. This includes various forms of tourism such as 'Islamic', 'halal', 'sharia', and 'Muslim-friendly' tourism, which cater to the diverse needs and preferences of Muslim travelers (Hall et al., 2022). The diversity of the Muslim travel experience is highlighted by the varying travel habits, patterns, and purposes influenced by factors such as culture, gender, age, ethnicity, and nationality (Hall et al., 2022). This diversity necessitates a nuanced understanding of Muslim tourism that goes beyond religious perspectives to include leisure and visiting friends and relatives (VFR) tourism (Hall et al., 2022).

The primary objective of mosque tour programs is to educate visitors about Islam and the cultural heritage associated with mosques. These tours aim to bridge the gap between different cultures and promote mutual understanding. For instance, the Jumeirah Mosque in Dubai offers tours that provide insights into UAE nationals' religion, customs, and way of life, helping to build bridges between cultures (I-Ling, 2007). Mosque tourism, a subset of religious and cultural tourism, has been studied in various contexts, including the loyalty of Islamic tourists visiting the Cathedral Mosque of Cordoba (Navajas-Romero et al., 2020). This research emphasizes the importance of cultural factors in understanding tourist loyalty, which is crucial for the management of tourist sites (Navajas-Romero et al., 2020). In Cardiff, mosque open days and community activities have been shown to support community cohesion and intercultural relations (Booth & Mohammed, 2024).

Additionally, studies on historical mosques, such as the Ibn Ṭūlūn Mosque in Cairo, reveal that tourist satisfaction significantly influences their loyalty and likelihood to recommend the site to others (Elassal et al., 2023). These findings underscore the potential of mosque tourism to enhance visitor experiences and promote repeat visits. Educationally, these tours provide valuable learning experiences about Islamic history, architecture, and practices, as seen in the Grand Mosque of Manonjaya in Indonesia, which serves as a tourist attraction for its unique architectural blend of local and European styles (Mulyana, 2016).

Despite their benefits, mosque tour programs face several challenges. One significant challenge is the management and maintenance of mosque facilities to ensure they are suitable for tourism. In Ghana, the lack of professional facilities managers has led to the rapid deterioration of newly built mosques, highlighting the need for formal training and technical expertise in mosque management (Mohammed et al., 2025). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed challenges to mosque operations, including reduced visitor numbers and financial constraints, as seen in Malaysia (Abdullah Salim et al., 2025).

Effective mosque management is crucial for the success of mosque tour programs. This includes maintaining the physical environment, ensuring the cleanliness and accessibility of facilities, and providing knowledgeable guides. The Sarawak State Mosque in Malaysia, for example, has been successful in maintaining high visitor satisfaction through effective facility management (Zaidi et al., 2023).

A proposed model for a mosque tour guides certification program aims to improve religious tourism and waqf management by providing comprehensive training to tour guides [10]. This program includes practical training and assessments conducted in participating mosques, involving various stakeholders such as the State Islamic Religious Council and the World Federation of Tourist Guide Association (Mansor et al., 2015). Effective facility management (FM) strategies are also highlighted as essential for sustaining mosque tourism by ensuring a pleasant environment for visitors and promoting loyalty (Muin et al., 2024). These initiatives contribute to the financial sustainability of mosques and enhance the educational value of mosque tours.

The Mosque Tour Program leverages the rich cultural and historical significance of mosques to promote religious tourism. By addressing the diverse needs of Muslim travellers, enhancing tourist loyalty through satisfaction, and implementing certification and management strategies, the program aims to create a sustainable model that benefits both tourists and local communities. The integration of these elements ensures that mosque tours are not only educational but also contribute to the socio-economic development of the regions they serve.

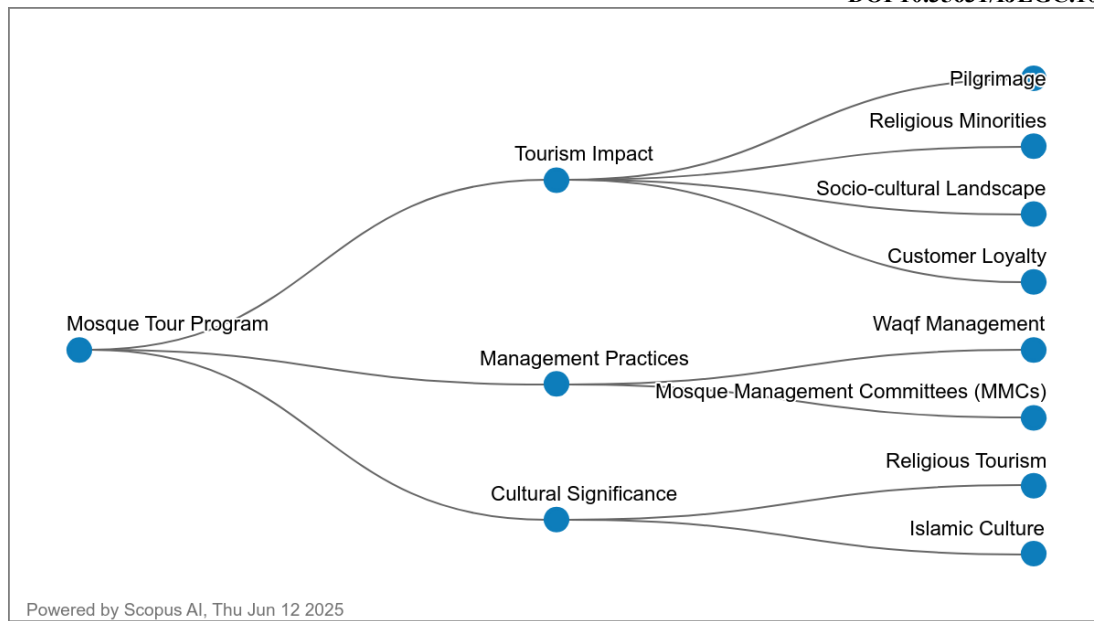


Figure 1: Overview of Literature

Research Question

1. What is the overall influence and research productivity in the field of mosque tourism, and which subject areas contribute most significantly to this topic?
2. Which articles within the domain of mosque tourism have received the highest citation counts, indicating their impact and significance?
3. How are the contributions distributed geographically, and which countries lead in publications related to mosque tourism?
4. What are the most prominent keywords and thematic trends that characterize current research on mosque tourism?
5. What are the patterns and networks of international collaboration among countries in mosque tourism research, as evidenced by co-authorship links?

Methodology

Bibliometrics involves the collection, organization, and analysis of bibliographic data derived from scientific publications (Alves et al., 2021; Assyakur & Rosa, 2022; Verbeek et al., 2002). In addition to basic metrics such as determining the publishing journals, publication years, and prominent authors (Wu & Wu, 2017), bibliometric analysis encompasses more advanced methods like document co-citation analysis. Conducting an effective literature review entails a careful, iterative process of selecting appropriate keywords, searching the literature, and performing thorough analysis.

This methodology aims to compile a comprehensive list of references and produce reliable outcomes (Fahimnia et al., 2015). The study specifically focused on high-impact publications, as these offer valuable insights into the theoretical frameworks guiding the research domain. To ensure the accuracy of the data, SCOPUS was used as the primary source for data collection (Al-Khoury et al., 2022; di Stefano et al., 2010; Khiste & Paithankar, 2017). Moreover, to maintain quality standards, only articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals were included, with books and lecture notes intentionally excluded (Gu et al., 2019). Utilizing Elsevier's Scopus, renowned for its extensive coverage, the publications analyzed spanned from 2020 through December 2023.

Data Search Strategy

The study utilized a screening process to establish the search terms for retrieving articles. It began with a query of the Scopus database using the search string TITLE ((mosque* OR masjid* OR "islamic cent*") AND (guide* OR tour* OR visit* OR experience* OR activit* OR trip* OR program*)), which resulted in the collection of 83 articles for bibliometric analysis. As of June 2025, all articles from the Scopus database pertaining to mosque tour were included in the study.

Table 1: The Search String

Scopus	Title ((Mosque* Or Masjid* Or "Islamic Cent*") And (Guide* Or Tour* Or Visit* Or Experience* Or Activit* Or Trip* Or Program*))
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Data Analysis

VOSviewer is a user-friendly bibliometric software developed by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman at Leiden University in the Netherlands (van Eck & Waltman, 2010, 2017). It is widely used for visualizing and analyzing scientific literature, with strengths in creating intuitive network visualizations, clustering related items, and generating density maps. This versatile tool allows researchers to explore co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence networks, offering a comprehensive view of research landscapes. Its interactive interface and regular updates support efficient and dynamic exploration of large datasets. VOSviewer's capabilities in metric computation, visualization customization, and compatibility with various bibliometric data sources make it invaluable for scholars seeking insights into complex research fields.

A notable feature of VOSviewer is its ability to convert complex bibliometric datasets into visually comprehensible maps and charts. Focusing on network visualization, the software excels in clustering similar items, analyzing keyword co-occurrence patterns, and creating density maps. Its user-friendly interface enables both new and experienced users to efficiently explore research landscapes. VOSviewer's ongoing development ensures it remains at the cutting edge of bibliometric analysis, providing valuable insights through metrics computation and customizable visualizations. Its adaptability to different types of bibliometric data, such as co-authorship and citation networks, makes VOSviewer a versatile tool, essential for scholars seeking deeper understanding and meaningful insights in their research domains.

Datasets containing information on publication year, titles, authors, journals, citations, and keywords in PlainText format were obtained from the Scopus database, covering the period from 2004 to June 2025. These datasets were analyzed using VOSviewer software version 1.6.20. By applying VOS clustering and mapping techniques, the software facilitated the examination and creation of visual maps. While offering an alternative to the Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) approach, VOSviewer focuses on positioning items in low-dimensional spaces to accurately reflect their relatedness and similarity (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Although similar to MDS (Appio et al., 2014), VOSviewer differs by using more suitable methods for normalizing co-occurrence frequencies, such as calculating the association strength (AS_{ij}) (Van Eck & Waltman, 2007):

$$AS_{ij} = \frac{C_{ij}}{w_i w_j}$$

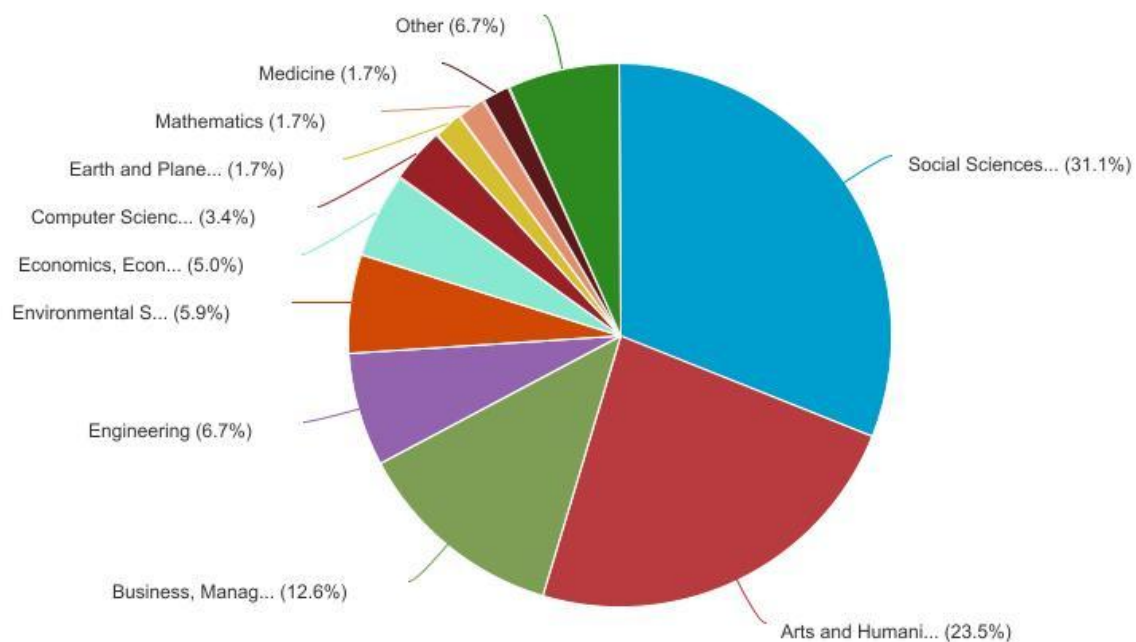
which is “proportional to the ratio of the observed number of co-occurrences of i and j to the expected number of co-occurrences of i and j , assuming that co-occurrences of i and j are statistically independent” (Van Eck & Waltman, 2007).

Result and Discussion

What Is the Overall Influence and Research Productivity in the Field of Mosque Tourism, And Which Subject Areas Contribute Most Significantly to This Topic?

Documents by subject area

Scopus



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Figure 2: Trend Of Research in Mosque Tour by Subject Area

Table 2: Trend of Research in Mosque Tour by Subject Area

Subject Area	Number Of Document	Percentage %
Social Sciences	37	31.09
Arts and Humanities	28	23.53
Business, Management and Accounting	15	12.61
Engineering	8	6.72
Environmental Science	7	5.88
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	6	5.04
Computer Science	4	3.36
Earth and Planetary Sciences	2	1.68
Mathematics	2	1.68
Medicine	2	1.68
Multidisciplinary	2	1.68
Agricultural and Biological Sciences	1	0.84
Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	1	0.84
Decision Sciences	1	0.84
Energy	1	0.84
Nursing	1	0.84
Psychology	1	0.84

The distribution of documents across various subject areas reveals that the topic of "The Trend of Mosque Tour Program" is predominantly explored within the realm of Social Sciences, which accounts for 31.09% of the total documents. This emphasizes the focus on the societal implications and cultural significance of mosque tours, highlighting their role in cross-cultural understanding and social interaction. The relevance to Arts and Humanities, comprising 23.53% of the documents, signifies an interest in the architectural, historical, and cultural dimensions of mosques, underscoring their influence on art, history, and cultural heritage. The combined focus on these areas suggests that mosque tours are primarily studied for their impact on social behavior and cultural appreciation.

Business, Management and Accounting represent a notable 12.61% of the documents, indicating an interest in the economic aspects and organizational strategies within mosque tour programs. The lower percentages in fields like Engineering, Environmental Science, and Computer Science reflect a less direct, yet possible interest in the structural design, sustainability, and technological integration in facilitating these tours. The sparse representation across subjects such as Medicine, Nursing, and Energy might highlight niche investigations or interdisciplinary studies. Overall, the data suggests that while mosque tours are mainly studied for their social and cultural implications, there are also emerging interests in their economic and technological aspects, pointing towards a multidisciplinary approach in future research.

Which Articles Within the Domain of Mosque Tourism Have Received the Highest Citation Counts, Indicating Their Impact and Significance?

Table 3: Most Cited Author

Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Cited by
Banerjee et al. (Banerjee et al., 2017)	A Pilot Examination of a Mosque-Based Physical Activity Intervention for South Asian Muslim Women in Ontario, Canada	2017	Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health	38
Kersten et al. (Kersten et al., 2017)	The Selimiye Mosque of Edirne, Turkey -An Immersive and Interactive Virtual Reality Experience using HTC Vive	2017	International Archives of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences - ISPRS Archives	37
Bader et al. (Bader et al., 2006)	The Mosque Campaign: A Cardiovascular Prevention Program for Female Turkish Immigrants	2006	Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift	28
Egresi and Kara (Egresi & Kara, 2018)	Residents' Attitudes to Tourists Visiting Their Mosques: A Case Study from Istanbul, Turkey	2018	Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change	26
Emmi and Barroso (Emmi & Barroso, 2008)	Evaluation of Oral Health Actions in the Family Health Program in the Mosqueiro District, Pará State, Brazil; [Avaliação das ações de saúde bucal no Programa Saúde da Família no distrito de Mosqueiro, Pará]	2008	Ciencia e Saude Coletiva	21
Becker E. (Becker, 2018)	Tour-guiding as a Pious Place-making Practice: The Case of the Sehlik Mosque, Berlin	2018	Annals of Tourism Research	20
King et al. (King et al., 2017)	Involving Mosques in Health Promotion Programmes: A Qualitative Exploration of the MCLASS Intervention on Smoking in the Home	2017	Health Education Research	19
Shannahan D.S. (Shannahan, 2014)	Gender, Inclusivity and Mosque Experiences	2014	Contemporary Islam	18
Abdulwasi et al. (Abdulwasi et al., 2018)	An Ecological Exploration of Facilitators to Participation in a Mosque-based Physical Activity Program for South Asian Muslim Women	2018	Journal of Physical Activity and Health	18

Mahdi et al. (Mahdi et al., 2021)	Hand Hygiene Knowledge, Perception, and Practices Among Domestic Visitors to the Prophet's Mosque in al Madinah City Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Cross-sectional Study	2021	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	18
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The top ten articles focusing on mosque-related research showcase diverse themes, reflecting the broad scope of interest in mosque tour programs and related activities. First, the most cited article by Banerjee et al. explores a mosque-based physical activity intervention for South Asian Muslim women in Ontario, Canada, highlighted by 38 citations. This study's impact emphasizes the role of mosques in promoting community health and wellness. Similarly, the works of Bader et al. and King et al., which focus on the Mosque Campaign for cardiovascular prevention and involving mosques in health promotion programs, respectively, underscore the emerging trend of utilizing mosques as centers for health education and intervention. These studies reflect a significant interest in the multifunctionality of mosques beyond their traditional spiritual roles.

On the other hand, the article by Kersten et al., with 37 citations, explores the technological integration for enhancing the cultural experience of mosques through virtual reality. This points to a growing interest in digital innovations for educational and cultural engagement. Additionally, articles addressing residents' attitudes towards mosque tourism [28] and tour-guiding practices at the Sehitlik Mosque (Becker, 2018) indicate a focus on the social and cultural dynamics between mosques and the broader community. Meanwhile, the study by Shannahan on gender inclusivity within UK mosques highlights ongoing discourse around cultural practices and inclusivity within religious spaces. Overall, these articles not only reflect the diversity of research themes related to mosques but also underscore the complex interplay of health, technology, culture, and inclusivity in contemporary mosque studies.

How Are the Contributions Distributed Geographically, And Which Countries Lead in Publications Related to Mosque Tourism?

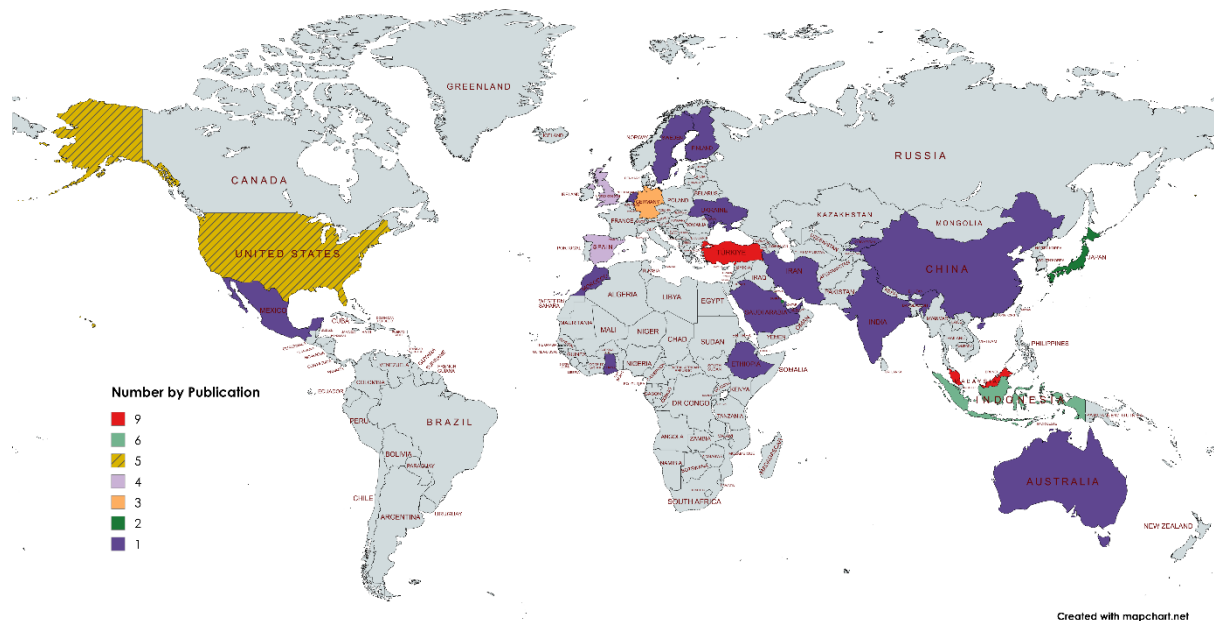


Figure 3: Countries Based on Number of Publications

Table 4: Countries Based on Number of Publications

Country/Territory	Number Of Document	Percentage (%)
Malaysia	9	14.06
Turkey	9	14.06
Indonesia	6	9.38
United States	5	7.81
Spain	4	6.25
United Kingdom	4	6.25
Germany	3	4.69
Bahrain	2	3.13
Japan	2	3.13
Australia, Brunei, China, Ethiopia, Finland, Ghana, India, Israel, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Morocco, Netherland, New Zealand, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, UAE (1 each)	20	31.25

The distribution of publications reveals a noticeable concentration among a few countries, with Malaysia and Turkey both leading at 9 publications, each representing 14.06% of the total output. This indicates that these nations are notably active or invested in this research area, possibly driven by emerging regional interest or academic focus. Indonesia follows with 6 publications (9.38%), reflecting a significant regional contribution from Southeast Asia. The presence of the United States (5 publications, 7.81%), along with Spain and the United Kingdom (each with 4 publications, 6.25%), suggests that traditional research powerhouses are also actively engaged, contributing substantially to the overall quantity of publications. This initial cluster of countries symbolizes a core group with higher research output, potentially indicative of better resources, facilities, or academic emphasis in the specific field.

Conversely, the remaining nations each have only a single publication, making up just 1.56% individually of the total, yet collectively demonstrating wide geographic diversity. Covering continents from Africa (Ghana, Ethiopia, Morocco) to Asia (Japan, Iran, India, China), Europe (Finland, Netherlands, Sweden), and Oceania (Australia, New Zealand), this pattern indicates broad international interest but limited individual contribution outside the leading nations. It suggests that while research activity is globally acknowledged, many countries may be at nascent stages or have less developed research infrastructures in this domain. This disparity highlights the importance of regional research capacities and the potential for growth in less-represented countries to diversify and expand the global research landscape.

What Are the Most Prominent Keywords and Thematic Trends That Characterize Current Research on Mosque Tourism?

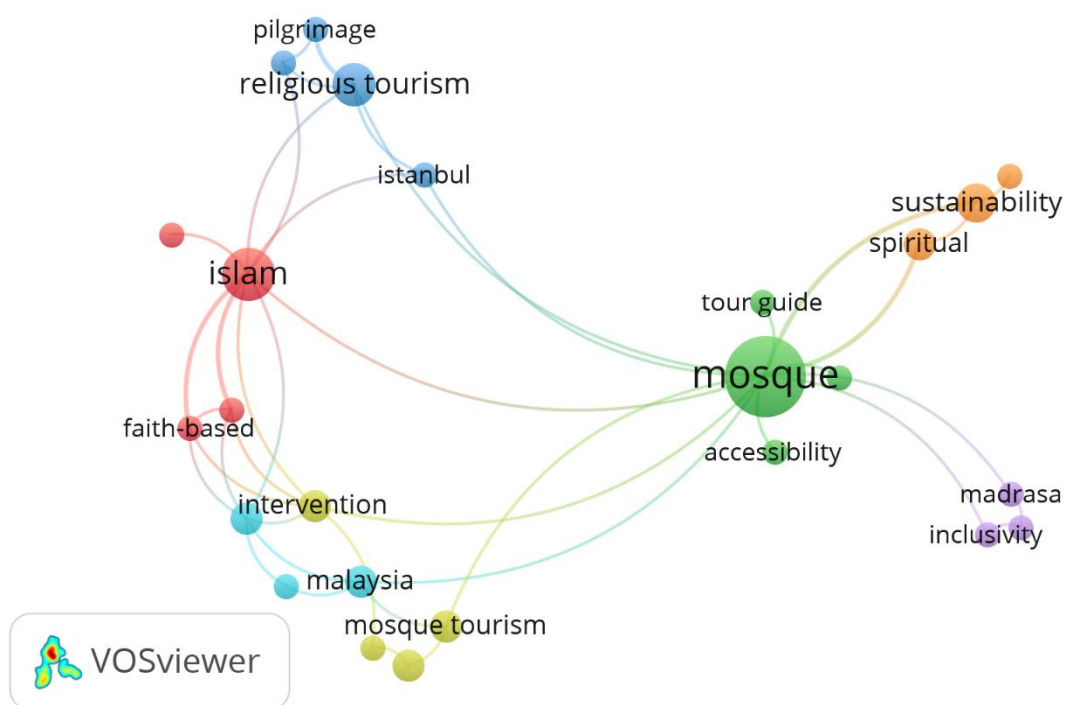


Figure 4: Most Prominent Keywords

The analysis of keywords indicates that "mosque" is the most prominent, with 14 occurrences and the highest total link strength of 15, emphasizing its central role in the research on mosque tourism. Significant attention is also given to "Islam," which has 7 occurrences and a strong linkage strength of 11, highlighting the importance of religious and spiritual themes within this field. Keywords like "faith-based" and "health promotion," both with high link strengths of 5, reflect a growing interest in exploring the health, social, and spiritual dimensions of mosque-related activities. Additionally, "religious tourism" and "mosque activities" show clusters of interconnected topics, suggesting that current research emphasizes not only the architectural and cultural aspects but also the social and experiential facets of visiting mosques.

The total link strength values reveal notable thematic connections, especially around intervention (6), which may encompass strategies to enhance mosque tourism or promote social and health interventions within religious sites. The strong linkage between "faith-based" and "health promotion" suggests an interdisciplinary approach, integrating religious practices with health initiatives. Conversely, keywords like "iran" and "visual comfort" with low or zero link strength indicate less interconnectedness or research focus in specific geographic or niche topics. Regional case studies such as "Istanbul," "Malaysia," and "Sheikh Zayed Mosque" demonstrate geographically specific interests with moderate link strengths, highlighting the importance of architectural and cultural heritage. Overall, the keywords reveal a vibrant, interconnected research landscape that spans religious, health, architectural, and technological themes, reflecting the multifaceted nature of mosque tourism studies.

From an emerging trends perspective, there is an evident shift towards innovative and inclusive concepts like "virtual reality" and "sustainability," with the latter showing a relatively high link strength of 4, indicating growing interest in environmentally and socially sustainable practices in mosque tourism. The presence of keywords such as "accessibility," "inclusivity," and "visual comfort" points to increasing awareness and scholarly focus on making mosques more accessible and comfortable for diverse visitor groups. The interconnectedness of these themes suggests that future research pathways may delve deeper into technological integration, accessibility improvements, and sustainable practices, fostering a more holistic understanding of the role of mosques as cultural, spiritual, and social infrastructure in diverse communities.

What Are the Patterns and Networks of International Collaboration Among Countries In Mosque Tourism Research, As Evidenced by Co-Authorship Links?

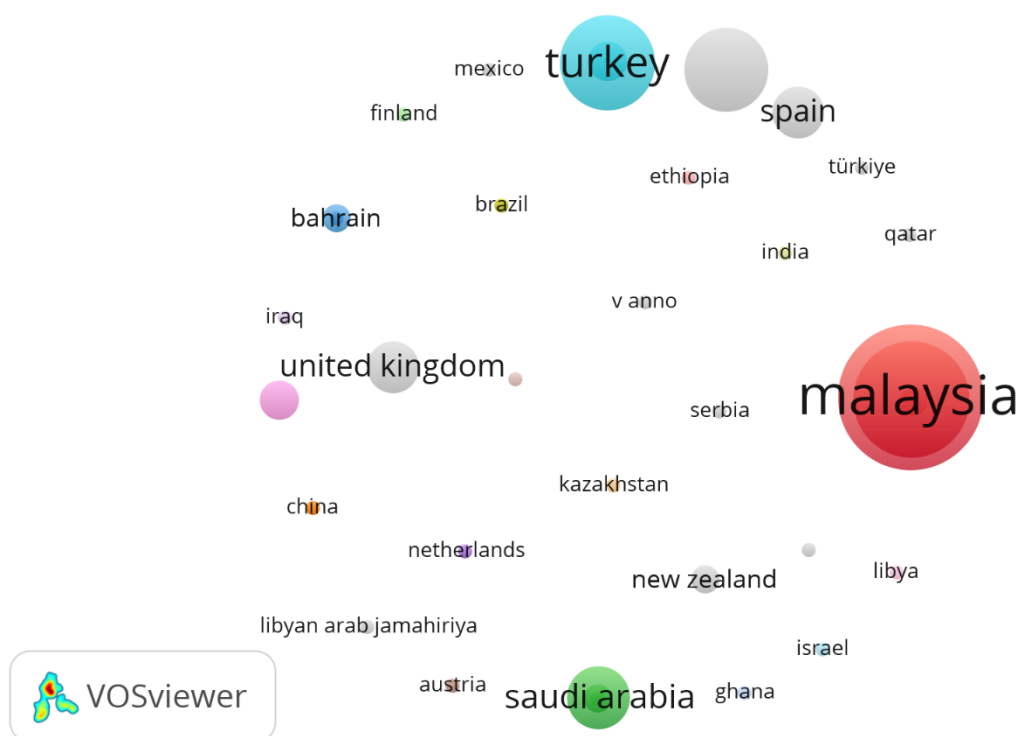


Figure 5: International Collaboration Based on Country

The data reveals a clear concentration of research output on Mosque Tourism within specific geographic regions. Malaysia (13 documents) and Indonesia (10 documents) emerge as the most prolific producers, followed by Turkey (8 documents). This dominance reflects the significance of mosque tourism within major Muslim-majority nations in Southeast Asia and West Asia, likely driven by large domestic Muslim populations, rich Islamic heritage sites, and government or institutional interest in religious tourism development. Other Islamic nations like Saudi Arabia (5 documents) and the UAE (1 document) also contribute, though less substantially. The prominence of these countries underscores the topic's strong regional anchoring in areas where mosques are central cultural and religious landmarks attracting significant visitor interest.

While Malaysia and Indonesia lead in document volume, citation impact tells a different story. Turkey (76 citations), the United States (59 citations), Canada (57 citations), and Germany (37 citations) demonstrate significantly higher citation counts relative to their document output. Brazil/Pará (21 citations each) and Australia (20 citations) also show high impact per document. This indicates that research originating from or involving authors in these Western and more globally connected academic systems (Turkey being a bridge) has greater influence and reach within the broader academic literature, despite lower production volume on this specific niche. The high citations for single-document contributors like Brazil, Canada, and Germany suggest influential individual studies or collaborations emanating from these countries.

The most striking finding is the extremely limited international co-authorship revealed by the "Total Link Strength" column. Only Australia, Indonesia, and Malaysia show a strength of 2, indicating marginally more collaborative ties than others. The vast majority of countries (including major producers like Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and high-impact players like the US, UK, and Canada) have a strength of only 1 or 0. This near-universal low link strength signifies that research on mosque tourism is predominantly conducted *within* national silos or through very limited bilateral partnerships. There is minimal evidence of extensive multinational research networks forming around this topic. This lack of collaboration represents a significant limitation, potentially hindering the diversity of perspectives, methodological exchange, and the global integration of knowledge on mosque tourism trends. The field appears fragmented nationally despite the global nature of the phenomenon.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis examined research trends concerning mosque tour programs, addressing key questions about scholarly productivity, influential contributions, geographic distribution, thematic focus, and collaboration patterns within this field. The investigation systematically mapped publications from 2004 to mid-2025, revealing several notable patterns. Social Sciences and Arts & Humanities emerged as dominant subject areas, collectively representing over half of all publications. This underscores a primary scholarly focus on cultural exchange, heritage interpretation, and societal impacts of mosque tourism. Business and Management studies also featured significantly, indicating attention to organizational and economic dimensions. Geographically, Malaysia and Turkey demonstrated the highest publication output, followed by Indonesia and Western nations including the United States and United Kingdom, reflecting both regional relevance and broader academic engagement.

Highly cited works revealed diverse research directions: health interventions in mosque settings, technological applications like virtual reality for cultural experiences, resident-tourist dynamics, and inclusivity practices. Keyword analysis identified "mosque" and "Islam" as central themes, with growing connections to "sustainability," "accessibility," and "virtual reality," signalling evolving interdisciplinary interests. However, co-authorship analysis revealed minimal international collaboration, with research largely confined within national boundaries despite the global nature of religious tourism.

This study contributes a structured overview of mosque tourism research evolution, highlighting its multidisciplinary character and shifting emphases toward experiential, technological, and social dimensions. The findings offer practical value for tourism planners and cultural heritage managers by identifying understudied areas like visitor motivation and sustainable practices, which could enhance program design and community engagement.

Limitations include reliance on a single database and exclusion of non-journal publications, potentially omitting regional perspectives. Future research should broaden data sources, investigate barriers to international collaboration, and deepen qualitative exploration of visitor experiences and cultural impacts. Additionally, comparative studies across different religious sites could yield broader theoretical insights.

In summary, this analysis confirms mosque tourism as a dynamically expanding field with significant societal relevance. The findings provide foundational insights to guide subsequent scholarship and practice, emphasizing the need for greater global cooperation and context-specific investigations to advance religious tourism development.

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