

# Visual Analysis of Domestic Tourism Destination Image Research Based on VOSviewer

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## Abstract

The article uses VOSviewer analysis software to analyze 365 key literature on "tourism destination image" included in China National Knowledge Infrastructure from 2012 to August 2022 as a sample. The results show that: (1) In recent years, there have been abundant research achievements related to the image of domestic tourism destinations, and the Journal of Tourism is the most important journal in this field of research; (2) The core authors and research institutions have not yet formed a close collaborative network and team; (3) The main research content in this field in China includes four aspects: measurement of tourism destination image, relationship between tourism destination image and tourist behavior, shaping and dissemination of tourism destination image, and marketing of tourism destination image. In the future, it is recommended to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to study the image of tourism destinations, strengthen cooperation between core authors and research institutions, and enhance the research on the basic theoretical framework of tourism destination image. And comprehensively apply multiple disciplines and methods to visualize and analyze the segmented fields of tourism destination image research.

**Keywords:** Tourism Destination Image, VOSviewer, Visual Analysis

## Introduction

Tourism, as a comprehensive industry that covers elements such as food, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment, has become one of the most representative and rapidly developing industries in the experience economy era with its significant "experience" characteristics. The tourism industry, as a happiness oriented, health oriented, and civilization-oriented industry (Pan, 2019) has achieved significant results in promoting social and economic development, enhancing China's international status, stimulating employment, and improving people's well-being. Destination image is often considered an important factor in the development and marketing of tourist destinations (Tasci-A 2007). Baloglu and McCleary (1999) defined tourism destination image as the individual attitude of tourists, which refers to the psychological representation of individuals'

cognition (beliefs), emotions, and overall impression of objects or tourism destinations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). The destination image is a key factor in the success or failure of a destination in global competition (King et al., 2015; Mano et al., 2015). The intangibility of the tourism industry and the inseparability of production and consumption make tourism image more important than tangible resources (Kutlu & Ayyıldız, 2021). The importance of destination image lies in its ability to influence tourist behavior in various ways (Azeez, 2021). Therefore, a deep understanding of the destination image and its determining factors can help the destination to establish a clear market positioning (Iordanova & Styliadis, 2019) and effectively predict tourists' behavioral intentions (Kim et al., 2019; Rodríguez-Molina et al., 2015). The image of a tourist destination not only affects the revenue of the local tourism service industry, but also determines the quality and image of tourism products. The quality of tourist destination image will directly affect the choice and consumption of tourists, and play a vital role in the development and economic growth of tourist destination.

The article uses China National Knowledge Infrastructure as a research database and through literature search, it is found that there are numerous research papers on the theme of "tourism destination image". This study uses VOSviewer software to further analyze the literature on tourism destination image, which can more intuitively and objectively reflect the research characteristics and development laws of China's tourism destination image, in order to enrich relevant research results. The purpose of studying tourist destination image is to improve the popularity and image recognition of tourist destination, form a good brand image, attract more tourists, and promote the development of tourism industry and the improvement of local tourism economy. Therefore, using VOSviewer software to study the image of tourist destination has important theoretical and practical significance.

## **Research Methods and Data Sources**

### **Research Methods**

VOSviewer is a literature analysis and knowledge visualization software developed by the Technology Research Center of Leiden University in the Netherlands. This software enables researchers to present node connections by constructing clustering views, label views, density views, etc., and has unique advantages in analyzing author, topic, keyword clustering, and other aspects. Meanwhile, VOSviewer software can display research hotspots and topics more clearly through data processing and image rendering (Xu & Zhang, 2021). Based on the above reasons, this study selected VOSviewer software version 1.6.18 as the main analysis tool to construct a visual bibliometric network, in order to accurately explore the essence of the research topic.

### **Data Sources**

The sample literature for this study was selected from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, and its main research methods are as follows:

In order to evaluate the importance of tourism destination image as a research topic, keywords such as "tourism destination image" or "destination image" or "tourism image" or "tourism destination image" were first entered into the data of China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) from January 1, 2012 to August 31, 2022. Search results showed that during this period, CNKI published a total of 6138 academic papers and dissertations, including 4595 academic papers (including featured journals) and 1543 dissertations. Figure 1 shows the number of articles divided by year.

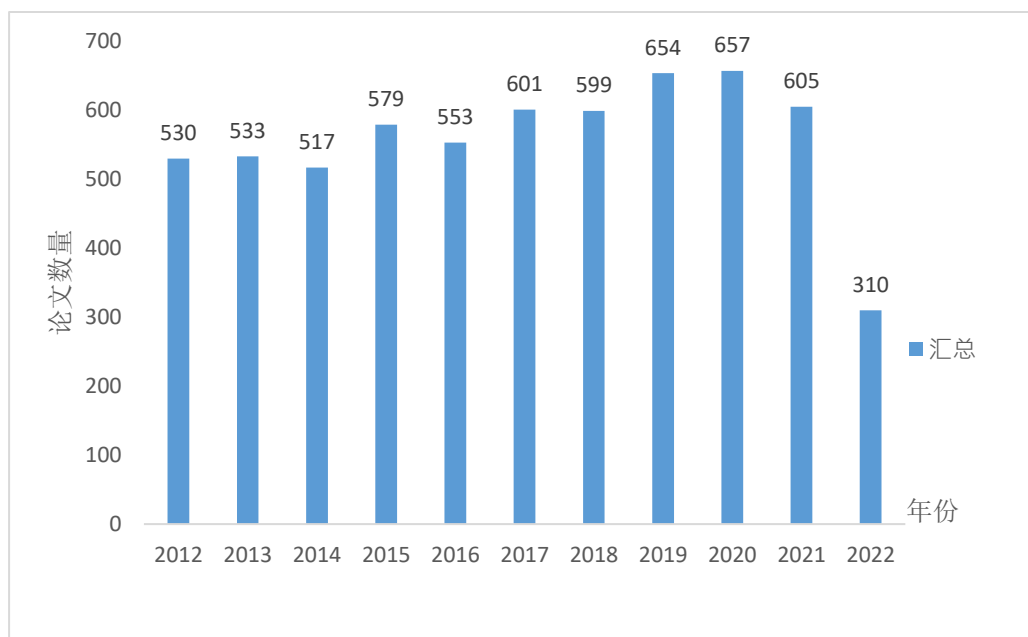


Figure 1: Number of Tourism Destination Image Papers from 2012 to 2022

From Figure 1, it can be seen that the literature on tourist destinations has shown a stable and slightly upward trend since 2012, indicating that the academic community has maintained a high level of attention to this topic. In order to ensure the simplicity and cutting-edge nature of the research, 684 key articles (SCI, Peking University Core, EI, CSSCI, and CSCD) from 6138 journals were selected for analysis. Firstly, the 684 selected literature will be exported in Refworks format through the "Export and Analysis" function of China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI). Subsequently, it will be imported into Endnote software for filtering article titles, keywords, and abstract content one by one, and articles unrelated to this study will be deleted. After screening, a total of 365 articles remained. Then use Endnote software to convert the data format into RIS format recognizable by VOSviewer software and export it. Finally, further research on author co-occurrence and keyword co-occurrence will be conducted using VOSviewer software to elucidate the actual development and achievements in this field.

## Research Results

### Analysis of Published Journals

According to the CNKI search results, 365 articles were selected and published in 123 journals. Table 1 lists the top 10 journals in terms of publication volume. According to Table 1, the journal with the highest number of published articles on the image of tourist destinations is Tourism Journal (n=58), accounting for 15.89% of the total sample. Next is "Tourism Science" (n=21), accounting for 5.75% of the total sample. In addition, "Resource Development and Market" (n=20), "Resources and Environment in Arid Regions" (n=17), and "Regional Research and Development" (n=16) ranked third to fifth in terms of the number of publications, respectively. The top 10 journals have published a total of 181 articles, accounting for 49.59% of the total sample size. A total of 184 articles (50.41%) were published in 113 other journals. These 365 articles have a total of 9505 citations from 2012 to August 31, 2022, with the top 10 journals having 5366 citations, accounting for 56.45% of the total citations. This analysis helps researchers who have just entered this field to understand the importance of relevant journals in this research area.

Table 1  
*Top 10 Academic Papers Published in Relevant Journals*

Ranking	JOURNAL	Number of papers	Number of citations	Ranking	JOURNAL	Number of papers	Number of citations
1	Tourism Tribune	58	2288	6	human geography	15	529
2	Tourism Science	21	912	7	Journalistic front	13	76
3	Resource Development and Market	20	323	8	Social scientists	8	84
4	Resources and Environment in Arid Regions	17	494	9	Enterprise Economy	7	102
5	Regional Research and Development	16	337	10	economic geography	6	221
Total		Number of citations 5366 times					

**Analysis of Authors and Research Institutions**

Author co-occurrence knowledge graph analysis

Through the author co-occurrence knowledge graph, high-yield authors and their collaborative relationships in the field can be visually displayed. The 365 samples obtained in this study involved a total of 706 authors. Among them, the top 10 authors who have published articles are shown in Table 2. Wu Jinfeng has published the most articles in this field, with a total of 14 articles published in this field. Zhang Jianguo published 11 articles, ranking second. The third to fifth places are Lv Xingyang, Zheng Peng, and Zhou Yongbo, who have published 8, 6, and 6 papers respectively.

Table 2  
*Top 10 Core Articles on Tourism Destination Image Research*

Number	Author	Number of publications	Serial number	Author	Number of publications
1	Wu JinFeng	14	6	Lu Lin	5
2	Zhang JianGuo	11	7	Zhang HongMei	5
3	Lv XingYang	8	8	Cui HuiPing	4
4	Zheng Peng	6	9	Wang JunYi	4
5	Zhou YongBo	6	10	Wang AMin	4

Figure 2 shows the relationship between high-yield authors and their collaborating groups. The larger the area of the dot, the more publications and collaborators the author has,

indicating that they are a key author in the field; The thicker the lines connecting the dots, the closer the collaboration between authors.

Based on a threshold of 2 articles published by each author, 88 out of 706 authors reached the threshold. Among the 88 authors, only 11 formed a collaborative network relationship (see Figure 2). There are few connections between other nodes and they do not appear in the author's co-occurrence knowledge graph.

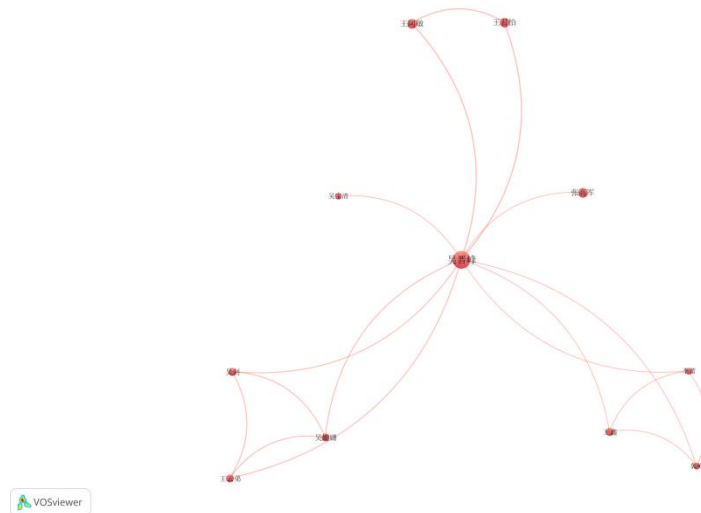


Figure 2: Collaborative Knowledge Graph of Core Authors in the Study of Tourism Destination Image

#### Research Institution Analysis

Statistical analysis of research institutions can reveal the core institutions and frontiers of the research field. Input the exported data into an Excel spreadsheet and organize the research institutions into separate columns to produce a pivot table. According to the results, a total of 365 papers selected for this study involved 405 research institutions. The top 10 institutions with the highest number of research results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4

*Top 10 Core Institutions for Tourism Destination Image Research*

Number	Research institutions	Number of publications
1	College of Tourism and Environment, Shaanxi Normal University	24
2	School of Business Administration, Southwest University of Finance and Economics	10
3	School of Tourism and Health, Zhejiang Agriculture and Forestry University	8
4	College of Landscape Architecture and Architecture, Zhejiang Agriculture and Forestry University	8
5	School of Geographic Science and Tourism, Shaanxi Normal University	7
6	School of Tourism and Service, Nankai University	7
7	School of Tourism Management, Zhengzhou University	6
8	College of Tourism, Sichuan University	6
9	College of Land Resources and Tourism, Anhui Normal University	6
10	School of Business Administration, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law	5

From Table 4, it can be seen that the top three research institutions in the field of tourism destination topography are: the School of Tourism and Environment at Shaanxi Normal University (24 articles), the School of Business Administration at Southwest University of Finance and Economics (10 articles), and the School of Tourism and Health at Zhejiang A&F University (8 articles). Overall, Shaanxi Normal University and Zhejiang A & F University have achieved the most significant results in this research field.

The analysis results of the authors and research institutions indicate that although there are collaborations between high producers and related research institutions in this field, a network of influential core authors and research teams has not yet been formed. In today's increasingly concerned landscape of tourist destinations, core authors should take a leading role in strengthening cooperation and communication among researchers from different universities and disciplines, in order to promote further development of research on the image of tourist destinations.

### **Analysis of Citation Quantity**

By analyzing high-frequency cited literature, we can better understand the current academic focus and research hotspots in this field. From the top 10 cited literature on tourism destination image (as shown in Table 3), high-frequency cited literature mainly involves tourism image perception and tourist behavior intention. According to the results, the article with the highest number of citations comes from Liu (2013), which has been cited 283 times. This article constructs a model of the impact of film and television dramas on the perception of destination image and tourism intention of potential tourists, and uses structural equation modeling to deeply analyze the formation process of destination image of potential tourists and the impact mechanism of film and television dramas on their tourism intention (Liu, 2013). Following closely behind is the article by (Zhang & Li, 2014), which has been cited 208 times. This article takes Xi'an as an example to obtain tourists' perception data of Xi'an's tourism image through questionnaire surveys and online comments, and reveals the mutual

relationship between the two types of data and their reliability in research (Liu, 2013; Zhang & Li, 2014). Wang and Qu (2013) constructed a conceptual model of the relationship between tourism motivation, destination image, and tourist expectations, and verified the relationship between the three using structural equation modeling (SEM) (Zhang & Li, 2014). The total number of citations for these 10 articles is 1514, accounting for 15.93% of the total citations. In addition, the top 10 most cited papers were mainly published in four journals, including *Tourism Journal* (n=6) and *Tourism Science* (n=2). Overall, the highly cited literature on tourism destination image has laid an important foundation for the study of tourism destination image. At the same time, it also provides important research ideas and directions for subsequent research in this field.

Table 3

*Top 10 Highly Cited Literature on Tourism Destination Image Research*

No.	Author	Subject	Periodical	Particular Year	Number of citations
1	Liu Li	Perception of Tourist Destination Images and Tourist Intentions: A Comprehensive Study from the Perspective of Film and Television Tourism	Tourism Tribune	2013	283
2	ZhanZhenZhen Li JunYi	Comparison of Questionnaire Survey and Online Text Data in Tourism Image Research: A Case Study of Xi'an Tourism Image Perception	Tourism Science	2014	208
3	Wang ChunYang Qu HaiLin	Tourism motivation, destination image, and tourist expectations	Tourism Tribune	2013	189
4	Gou FengHua, Wang Kun, Zhang JianLi, Li RenJie	Image recognition of Chengdu's "Five Golden Flowers" rural tourism destination: an analysis based on blog travelogue texts	Tourism Tribune	2015	149
5	Wang Yuan, Xu Xin, Feng XueGang, Wu WenZhi	Research on Perception of Ancient Town Tourism Image Based on Text Mining: A Case Study of Zhujiajiao	Tourism Science	2013	147
6	Shen PengYi	Research on the Impact of Tourism Corporate Social Responsibility on Destination Image and Tourist Loyalty	Tourism Tribune	2012	133
7	Tu HongWei, Xiong LinYing,	The influence of destination image on tourists' behavioral	Tourism Tribune	2017	114



No.	Author	Subject	Periodical	Particular Year	Number of citations
8	HuangYiMin, GuoGongXing  ChengLi, ZhangTongHao, FuYang	intentions: based on emotional evaluation theory Urban residents' awareness of haze weather and its impact on their tendency to choose urban tourism destinations	Tourism Tribune	2015	101
9	ZhangWenTing, LuoPeiCong	Comparative Study on Tourist Perception and Official Communication of Destination Tourism Image Based on Online Text: A Case Study of Yongding Tulou in Fujian Province	Journal of Fujian Normal University (Natural Science Edition)	2017	97
10	Liu ZhiXing, Ma YaoFeng, GaoNan; ZhangYanJun; WangDingDing	Research on the perception of terrain image of mountain tourism destination: a case study of Mount Wutai Scenic Area	Journal of Mountain Science	2013	93

### Keyword Analysis

Based on the frequency and correlation of keywords, researchers can comprehensively grasp the hot topics in the research field. This study extracted a total of 931 keywords from 365 sample literature using VOSviewer software to analyze the co-occurrence knowledge graph of tourism destination image keywords. The top 10 keywords with the highest frequency of occurrence were tourism destination image (63), tourism image (60), tourism destination image (36), image perception (26), tourism destination (22), tourism destination image (16), perceived image (15), cognitive image (14), content analysis (13), and online text (13).

Before generating the keyword network view, it is necessary to merge synonyms and remove some useless keywords. For example, replacing "destination image" and "tourist destination image" with "tourist destination image", replacing "satisfaction" with "tourist satisfaction", and replacing "text analysis" with "text analysis method". This feature can be implemented through the "thesis file" in VOSviewer. Set the minimum occurrence frequency of keywords to 5 times, use binary counting method, and set the minimum number of clusters to 5 to generate a keyword clustering graph (Figure 3).



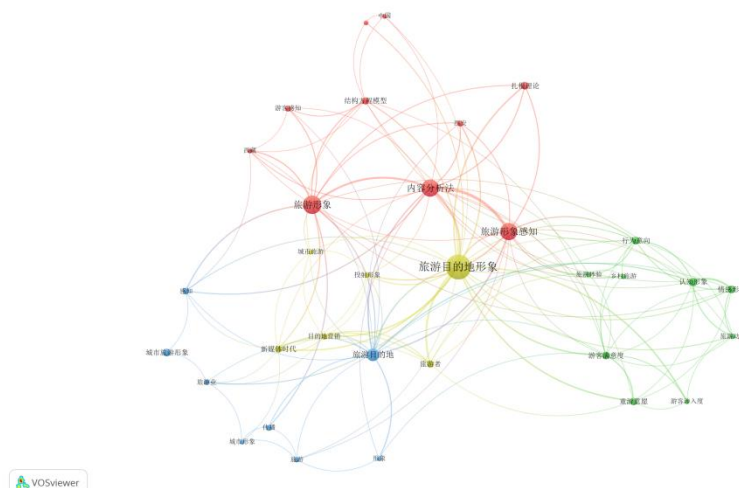


Figure 3 Visual network of core keywords for tourism destination image

As shown in Figure 3, a total of 33 keywords reached the threshold, generating 4 different colored keyword clusters. In this network diagram, the larger the area of the circle where the keyword is located, the higher the word frequency, and the more centered the position of the keyword, the stronger its importance. The lines represent the co-occurrence relationship between keywords, and the circle colors represent the clustering of research topics. The analysis results show that research on "tourism destination image" in China in the past 10 years can be clustered into four hot topics.

Cluster 1 (red) mainly focuses on research on terrain measurement of tourist destinations. Cluster keywords include China, content analysis, national image, grounded theory, tourism image, tourism image perception, tourist perception, structural equation model, Xi'an and Xizang. From the perspective of research methods, the measurement methods of tourism destination image originate from multiple disciplines and include various types of methods. Among them, content analysis (Guo et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2013), structural equation modeling (Guo et al., 2015; Liu, 2013) and grounded theory (Zhao & Dou, 2021) are still the main methods for measuring the topography of tourist destinations in China at present.

Including 9 keywords: rural tourism, emotional image, tourism experience, tourism motivation, tourist involvement, tourist satisfaction, behavioral intention, cognitive image, and willingness to revisit. Prayag et al. (2017) argue that different types of destination images are formed at different stages of the tourism experience (Prayag et al., 2017): before, during, and after the visit (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). In the pre travel stage, different travel motivations can affect tourists' cognitive image of the tourist destination (Wang & Qu, 2013), During travel, tourists' perception of the destination's image can have a significant impact on their on-site experience (Liu et al., 2018). After the trip, the destination image strongly influences tourists' behavioral intentions (Liu, 2013), including intention to revisit (Guo et al., 2015), tourist satisfaction (Qiao, 2015), and so on. However, most of the current research both domestically and internationally focuses on the relationship between tourists' perception and evaluation of their post tourism image (Prayag et al., 2017).

Cluster three (blue) mainly focuses on the research of shaping and disseminating the image of tourist destinations. Including 8 keywords: communication, urban image, urban tourism image, image, perception, tourism, tourism industry, and tourism destination. For example, research on the dissemination and strategy of tourism image

use unstructured methods (interview method, content analysis method, etc.) in the first stage to identify destination attributes related to the destination or research sample. Then, the empirical dimensions determined in qualitative research will serve as the basis for developing measurement scales for quantitative research (Shi et al., 2019). To compensate for the difficulty of structured methods in capturing information in a person's mind, while unstructured methods are limited by the quality of responses from respondents (Bui et al., 2022). The combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, or the cross fusion of multiple quantitative research methods, is of great significance for the scientific validity of research results (Han & Liu, 2019).

**In Terms of Research Content.** Due to the interdisciplinary nature of tourism destination Henan Province (Zhang, 2015), and the strategic framework of tourism image dissemination in Guilin (Chen, 2014).

Cluster 4 (yellow) mainly focuses on the research of tourism destination image marketing, including six keywords: urban tourism, projected image, new media era, tourism destination image, tourists, and destination marketing. For example, Lu (2018) called for the effective use of new media channels in tourism destination promotion and marketing (Lu, 2018); Lv (2018) proposed that destination marketers need to use multiple sensory channels to convey information and shape a competitive destination image in the minds of potential tourists (Lv, 2018).

Figure 4 shows the co-occurrence overlay network graph of keywords. Based on the average year of appearance of keywords in literature corresponding to different colors, we can glimpse the evolution trend of hot issues in the field of domestic tourism destination research. Among them, from blue to red represents the evolution of research popularity. From Figure 4, it can be seen that rural tourism is a relatively popular tourism format in the study of destination image. This is due to the implementation of a series of poverty alleviation and rural revitalization policies in China, which have promoted the continuous development of rural tourism and aroused the research interest of scholars. In terms of research methods, hot topics have evolved from structural equation modeling to content analysis, and then to the application of grounded theory. In terms of research content, on the one hand, researchers pay more attention to the projection and dissemination of destination images. On the other hand, topics related to tourists, such as tourists' perception, travel experience, and tourist involvement, have become hot topics in current research.

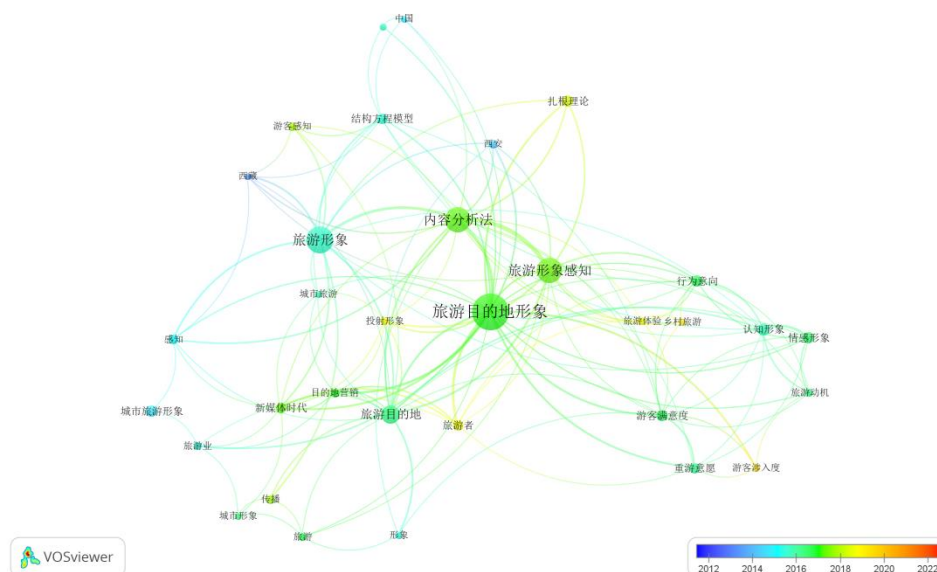


Figure 4: Visualization of keyword co-occurrence overlay

## Conclusion and Prospect

### Conclusion

This study used VOSviewer visualization software to visualize and analyze 365 key literature on "tourism destination image" research included in China National Knowledge Infrastructure from 2012 to August 2022. The main conclusions drawn from the study are as follows: (1) Research on the field of tourism destination topography has always been of interest to scholars; (2) 8.13% of the total number of articles published in journals, accounting for 49.59% of the total survey sample; (3) The Journal of Tourism holds an absolute dominant position in research in this field, followed by Tourism Science and Resource Development and Market; (4) From the perspective of citation and publishing institutions, the top 10 frequently cited articles account for 15.93% of the total citation volume; The top three research institutions in this field are: the School of Tourism and Environment at Shaanxi Normal University (24 articles), the School of Business Administration at Southwest University of Finance and Economics (10 articles), and the School of Tourism and Health at Zhejiang Agriculture and Forestry University (8 articles); (5) The top three authors in terms of the number of published articles in this field are Wu Jinfeng (14), Zhang Jianguo (11), and Lv Xinyang (8). The author co-occurrence network centered around Wu Jinfeng is the only collaborative author network in this field; (6) The relationship between destination image measurement, image perception, and behavioral intention, tourism destination image shaping and dissemination, and tourism destination image marketing are currently the main research topics in this field.

### Future Research Prospects

**In Terms of Research Methods.** Echtner and Ritchie (1991) suggested using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to study destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). In recent years, the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods has become increasingly common (San Martín & Del Bosque, 2008). The principle of this method is to study destination image research, its formation process is complex and intertwined with other factors (Tasci-A 2007). Ragab et al. (2019) proposed that research on tourism destination image abroad mainly focuses on four aspects, namely the conceptualization and operationalization of

destination image, structure and composition, measurement dimensions, and the antecedents and consequences of destination image (Ragab et al., 2019). Comparing the keyword clustering research of domestic tourism destination images, it can be found that the breadth and depth of the conceptual and operational, structural and compositional basic theoretical construction of tourism destination images in China still need to be expanded. In the future, we should strengthen the intersection and integration of multiple disciplines, and continuously deepen the basic theoretical framework of tourism destination image research from multiple perspectives such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, and management.

**Insufficient Research and Improvement.** This study only analyzed academic papers and did not cover dissertations, conference papers, reviews, books, etc. In future research, these important research findings can be included in the sample. Secondly, this study only used Excel and VOSviewer analysis tools, which may result in limitations in the analysis results. Future research should consider using different software for analysis to address this issue. In addition, this study conducted statistical analysis on 365 articles related to "tourism destination image" included in China National Knowledge Infrastructure from 2012 to August 2022. In the future, research on specific aspects of destination image can be considered. For example, the dynamic/static formation of destination image, measurement of tourism destination image, and the relationship between tourism destination image and other factors (satisfaction, behavioral intention).

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