

"Uncovering the Knowledge Base of Heritage Brands in Branding Literature: A Bibliometric Approach"

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Abstract

Brand management is a strategic process which builds a strong brand perception in consumer's mind. Research on heritage brands is important in brand management as it preserves legacy, enhances authenticity, and builds trust and customer loyalty. This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis using visualization of similarities viewer (VOSviewer) Version 1.6.20 to thoroughly investigating this field. The PRISMA technique was used to properly screen and select the scholarly resources, which have led 142 articles for proper analysis. This analysis identifies key research trends, influential authors, prominent institutions and geographic distribution of research contributions, which provide a map of intellectual and development trajectory of the field. The data indicated the publications in this field has increased over time and entered a period of rapid growth after 2015, reflecting the recognition of heritage brands. This review offers a foundational understanding to the researcher, which encouraging further exploration within the heritage branding paradigm.

Keywords: Heritage Brands, Corporate Heritage Brands, Heritage Branding, Brand Management

Introduction

Heritage brands are long-established brands that possess a rich history, cultural significance, and strong associations with tradition, quality, and authenticity. These brands frequently use their history, founding tales, and core principles to evoke strong feelings in their target audience. [1] Heritage brands use their historical origins to stand out in crowded markets, inspire loyalty and trust, and stay relevant over time while holding fast to their essential identity and brand story. [2]

Heritage brands are essential to brand management because they provide a strong feeling of continuity, authenticity which leads to trust. Heritage brands distinguish themselves from new and transient companies in a crowded market by highlighting their history, customs, and enduring values. [3] They build emotional bonds with customers who are looking for cultural nuance and dependability. By drawing on their lengthy history, these companies uphold a strong sense of identity, improve consumer loyalty, and strengthen brand equity. [4] In a market that is dynamic and changing, heritage brands that are managed well stay relevant while maintaining their distinctive legacy. [5]

It plays a strategic role in brand management likewise portray themselves in the market as genuine, reliable, and high-end by leveraging their heritage and historical values which frame brand position effectively [6] as well as marketers frequently use the brand's origins and history to craft storytelling that emotionally connect with customers. [7]

It also builds customer loyalty, strong emotional ties created by heritage branding, promote consumer loyalty, trust, and the likelihood of enduring partnerships. [8] Additionally, heritage elements are used in brand revitalization strategies, where traditional aspects are modernized to appealing to newer generations while retaining older customers. Heritage brands are not only appealing for local markets but also distinctive and appealing in international markets because they frequently represent particular cultural or regional characteristics. [9] Currently as we all talk about sustainability Heritage brands' are also enduring sustainability through traditions and ideals complement contemporary consumers' rising interest in ethical and sustainable consumption. [10] Now day's companies are utilizing heritage brand as their corporate heritage brand design. In this fast-changing world, its visual consistency provides reassurance and strengthens the brand's identity and credibility, making its management a strategic necessity. [11] In today's digital era, brands are challenged to preserve their timeless heritage while embracing innovations. A recent study highlights that strategically aligning influencer type i.e. human vs. virtual with the temporal focus of brand storytelling i.e. past vs. present can significantly influence consumer perceptions. [12] This underscores the growing importance of heritage branding in digital marketing strategies and reinforces the need for thoughtful integration of tradition and technology in brand management.

Hence, heritage brands strategically preserve identity, foster loyalty, and remain relevant through authenticity and tradition along with this it also represents a critical intersection of innovation which offering valuable insights into sustainable brand positioning and brand management in dynamic global markets. It highlights the growing academic relevance of heritage brands in strategic brand management research.

Literature Review

A rising number of studies examining heritage brands' historical significance, customer perception, and strategic function in brand development have resulted from the expanding scholarly interest in these brands within the discipline of branding management.

The foundational work by Urde, Greyser and Balmer (2007) introduced the notion of corporate heritage brands and emphasized on heritage elements, such as track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols for communication and importance of history which play a pivotal role in building brand identity and sustaining brand legitimacy. In 2009, John M. T. Balmer did a historical case study of British Monarchy as a corporate heritage brand too. The study highlights the value of marketing strategies in managing heritage brands. Wuestefeld et al., (2011) emphasizes that heritage brands strengthen consumer perceptions by connecting strategic brand goals with emotional and cultural element from the past, present and future. In their study, Altaf and Gregory (2012) confirmed that fantasies and emotions triggered by nostalgic ads positively influence consumer perception of heritage brands. Napoli et al. (2016) while focusing on key authenticity cues like quality,

commitment, heritage, and sincerity found that consumers derive value from authentic brands which also align with one of the most prominent element of heritage brands i.e. authenticity. When we talk about heritage brands there comes an obvious problem which is adoption of change along with maintaining legacy. This problem is discussed in the Pecot's 2019 study. Pecot et al. (2019) presents a brand heritage perception scale which is based on three dimensions stability, longevity and adaptability which help to access how well brand balances change and continuity. This isn't ended here Butcher and Pecot (2022) explored how heritage brands is visually expressed on social media which underscores its digital presence. The latest study by Xu et al. (2025) revealed that heritage enhances purchase intentions through brand authenticity and also presents the effect of brand heritage and brand innovation on purchase intentions for brand extensions. These studies reflect the growing significance and academic interest in this field over time. We can observe that the majority of research on heritage brands that is currently available is conceptual or case-based, with mainly the emphasis on consumer perception, brand identity, and storytelling. However, there haven't been any attempts of using bibliometric techniques to systematically review and synthesize the academic literature. Relatively few of the bibliometric studies that are now available in the field of branding are concentrating more on general topics like brand loyalty, brand equity and luxury branding in spite of heritage brands. This disparity emphasizes the necessity of a targeted bibliometric analysis to detect new trends, networks of collaboration, and possible future orientations in addition to visualizing the existing state of research. After identifying the research gap, the key objectives of this study are determined.

- (1) To identify and analyse trends of heritage brands publications
- (2) To identify the collaboration networks among researchers, institutions and countries
- (3) To analyse the geographic distribution of research contributions within the field
- (4) To find out the key publications, influential authors, and leading journals in the field
- (5) To find out the top productive authors, institutions and countries

The rest of the paper is organized as below. Section 2 presents the methodology along with data sources and analysis methods. In Section 3, we conduct analysis which presents results and its interpretation. Lastly, Section 4 highlights the main research findings and discusses the conclusion along with their limitations.

Data Sources and Analysis Methods

In a particular discipline, bibliometric analysis is a quantitative research technique used to examine and assess scholarly publications, literature, and citation trends. This approach visually maps the intellectual structure of the given field using software like VOSviewer. [13] The structural insights that bibliometric analysis provides on the growth and evolution of scholarly knowledge make it significant. It is an important technique in academic and scientific investigations since it assists researchers in determining the extent of previous work, identifying research gaps, and formulating well-informed plans for future study. [14]

Data Sources

Bibliometric analysis retrieves and evaluates scholarly publications and citation data using organized and reliable academic resources. In this study, we retrieved articles on 12th June, 2025 using the dimensions database. The search concentrated on the “topic” search criterion, which includes titles and abstracts, in order to guarantee thorough coverage and accuracy in the search by utilizing search terms such as “Heritage Brands” AND “Brand Management”. Up until June 2025, a total of 409 literatures published from 1995 to 2025 were collected; based on the type of literature as shown in Table 1 including contribution from as early as 1995.

Table 1 Classification of publications

Ranking	Classification	Count
1	Articles	286
2	Chapter	90
3	Monograph	12
4	Edited Book	9
5	Preprint	9
6	Proceeding	3

Source: Author’s Computation

The PRISMA flow diagram, as outlined below, was employed to screen and organize these retrieved literatures.

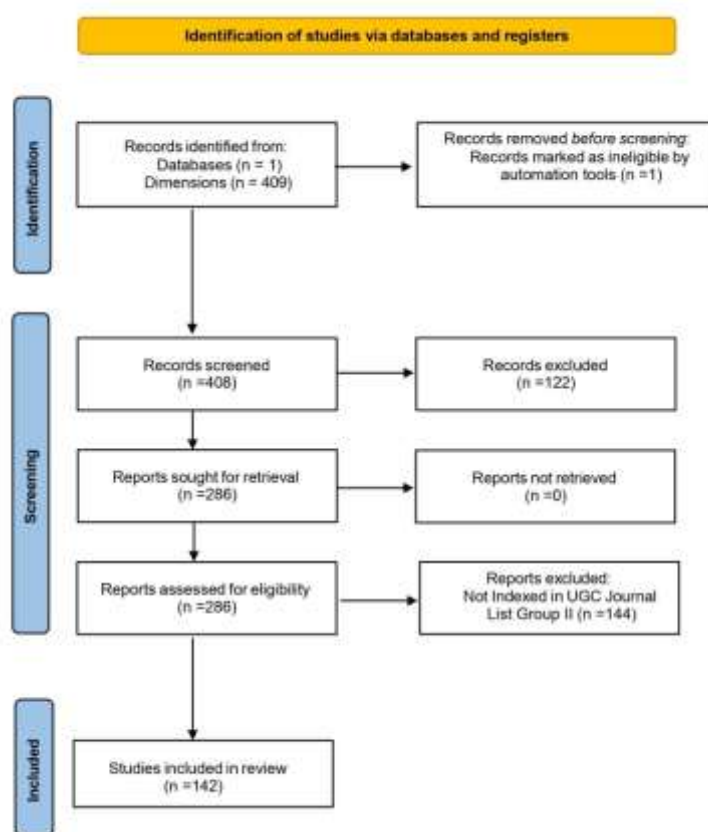


Figure 1 PRISMA flowchart

Source: Author’s Computation

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews) flow chart was used to properly screen and select the scholarly literatures, which also ensure transparency and accuracy of the literature selection process. In PRISMA, the retrieved literatures passed through three phases which were identification, screening and inclusion. The end result of these phases, 142 research articles, which will be considered for further study. The study took into account those works that were published between 1995 to 2025 which covered three decades of academic research on peer-reviewed journals of UGC-CARE List Group II which not indexed in Web of Science or Scopus were excluded. On the basis of title, abstract, and keyword screening, studies that did not specifically discuss heritage brands or their significance in branding and brand management were disqualified.

Analysis Method

This study based on bibliometric analysis method. Bibliometric analysis encompasses various analyses to understand scholarly research dynamics. These analyses provide a multifaceted view of how the field has evolved, who the important contributors are, which institutions and journals dominate the conversation, whose studies have shaped the field, and where the research is headed in the future.

For the data analysis we used the Visualization of Similarities Viewer (VOSviewer) Version 1.6.20, and it was developed by the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS) at Leiden University by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman. The developers also created the CitNetExplorer tool for visualizing citation patterns. In VOSviewer, there are four types of analysis and each analysis consist different units. Co-authorship analysis consists three units i.e. authors, organisations and countries. In Citation section there are five units i.e. documents, sources, authors, organizations and countries. Bibliographic coupling consist same units as citation analysis. Co-citation analysis consist three units i.e. cited references, cited sources and cited authors. All analysis can be visualized using three techniques i.e. network visualization, density maps and cluster maps. This study has performed three major analysis using network visualization technique in the following manner:

Methodology

After selecting an appropriate methodology for the analysis the present study has utilized suitable selection criteria which screened and narrow down selected publications. These selected documents were processed through the previously mentioned phases. Several criteria were used for identification, screening, and inclusion, as seen in the PRISMA Diagram. Following these three phases, the data was thoroughly reviewed and analysed using the VOSViewer Application.

Analysis of Findings

Development Trend Analysis

A review of publishing trends from 2002 to 2025 (from 1995 to 2001, there was only 01 article recorded in database which was also removed before screening as it was ineligible by the automation tools as mentioned in the PRISMA flow chart) suggests a growing academic interest in the topic of heritage brands in branding

literature. The early 2000s were a period of low research effort, with annual publications ranging from one to five articles. It reflects the concept of heritage branding was in its infancy. A substantial increase begins around 2011.

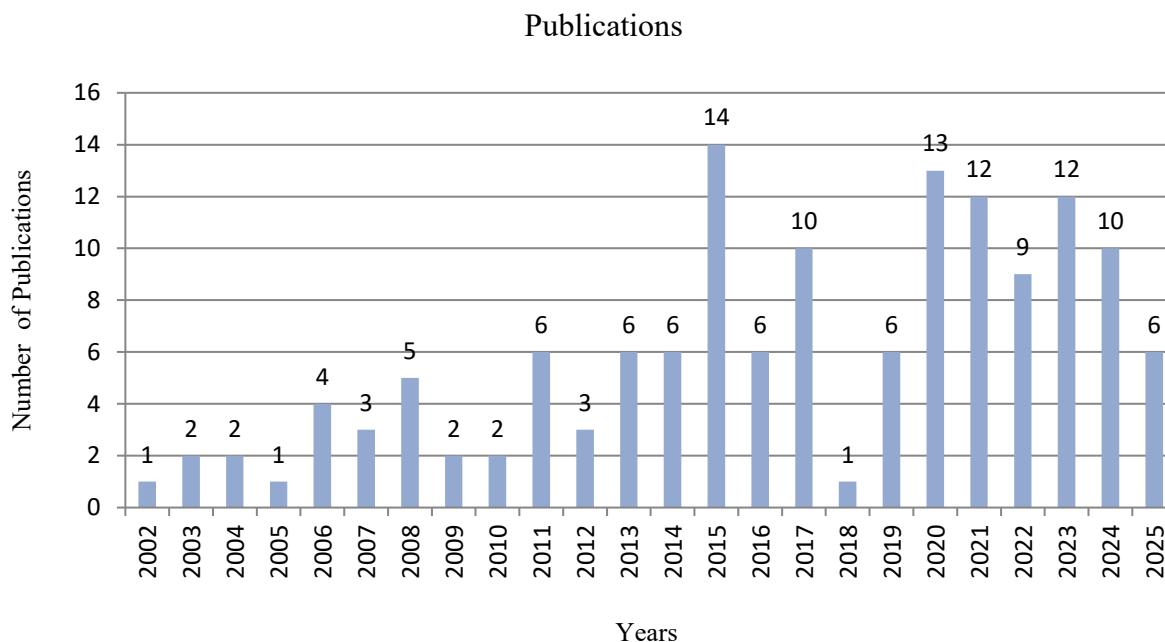


Figure 2 Publications from 2002 to 2025 based on dimensions database

Source: Author's Computation

The year 2015 was the greatest increase, with 14 papers, indicating that acceptance of heritage brands as a legitimate research topic. This spike has not incidental as this year marked as a paradigm shift in heritage brand literature from scattered studies to a more structured one. This rising trend continued in 2020, with strong productivity i.e. 13 publications and sustained double-digit publications in 2021, 2023, and 2024. However, six publications have been made in 2025 because the dataset is considered up to 12th June, 2025.

Overall, the data points to a consistent and expanding academic interest in heritage brands, which is probably being fuelled by branding research's growing fascination with authenticity, nostalgia, and cultural heritage.

Co- authorship analysis

In bibliometric research, Co-authorship analysis refers to the study of collaborative relationships based on jointly authored publications. This analysis helps visualize and interpret the structure and strength of academic collaboration networks within a particular field. [15] In VOSviewer, co-authorship analysis is typically represent different units like authors, institutions and countries and the links between them indicate co-authored documents. The closer and thicker the links shows the stronger the collaboration. [16] In the co- authorship, each unit analysis is presented here:

In the first unit i.e., the authors, the study will discuss the most influential author. This unit of co-authorship analysis identifies the collaborative patterns among individual researchers within the domain. Using VOSviewer, a network map is generated where each node represents an author, and the links indicate the number of joint publications. The size of the node reflects the number of publications by an author, while the thickness

of the connecting lines illustrates the strength of collaboration.[17] This analysis helps to recognize prolific authors, co-author clusters, and key influencers within the scholarly network. In this analysis, 290 authors are found by excluding documents that have maximum of 25 authors each. Only 20 authors meet the threshold i.e. minimum 2 publications and 15 citations. Out of 20 authors, 5 authors have the greatest set of connected items as shown in Fig 3.

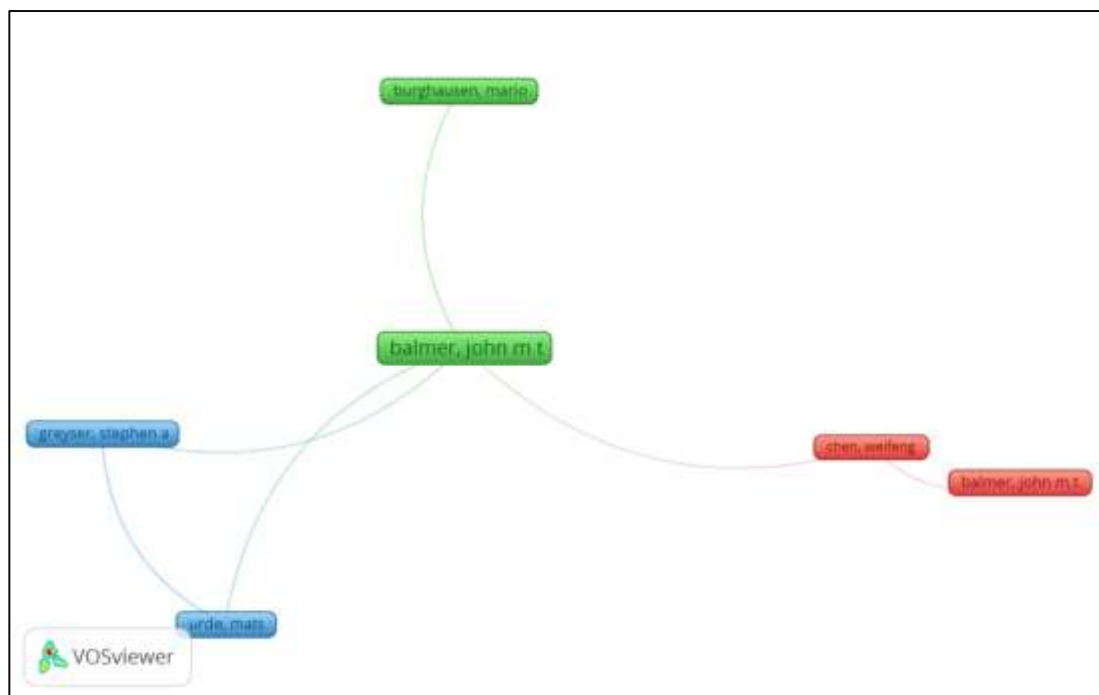


Figure 3 Bibliometric map on co-authorship based on authors

Source: Author's Computation using VOSviewer

The Authors' unit of the study will discuss the most relevant authors. As shown in the Fig 3, the size of the node is positively related to the number of publications. It was observed that John M T Balmer has made the greatest number of contributions followed by Fabien Pecot. It indicates that John M T Balmer is the most influential author and the links show he has also shared strong links with multiple researchers across distinct clusters i.e., green cluster, red cluster and blue cluster which helped us in determining the key scholarly alliances within the domain.

The provided data in Table 2 presents a ranking of top 10 authors based on their publications, citations and average citation per article within the given context. It reveals a core group of prolific and highly cited scholars contributing significantly to the field.

Table 2 Top 10 Authors publications, their citations and average citation per article.

Rank	Author	Publication	Citation	Average Citation per article
1	John M T Balmer	6	705	117.50
2	Fabien Pecot	4	138	34.50
3	John M T Balmer	3	172	57.33

4	Mario Burghausen	3	127	42.33
5	Holly Cooper	3	74	24.67
6	Virginie De Barnier	3	112	37.33
7	Stephen A Greyser	3	543	181.00
8	Bill Merrilees	3	74	24.67
9	Dale Miller	3	74	24.67
10	Mats Urde	3	543	181.00
11	Angela Bargenda	2	26	13.00
12	Weifeng Chen	2	37	18.50
13	Nadine Hennigs	2	160	80.00
14	Ryo Kohsaka	2	24	12.00
15	Shaun M Powell	2	15	7.50
16	Anne Rindell	2	82	41.00
17	Fernando Pinto Santos	2	82	41.00
18	Steffen Schmidt	2	160	80.00
19	Klaus-Peter Wiedmann	2	160	80.00
20	Thomas Wuestefeld	2	160	80.00

Source: Author's Computation using VOSviewer

As mentioned in the table, it was observed that John M. T. Balmer is leading the author list, with two separate entries i.e., 6 and 3 as a whole 9 publications, he has also most cited author. We found that John M T Balmer has been cited the greatest number of times, i.e., 877 times with two separate entries followed by Stephen A Greyser and Mats Urde both 543 times. This is underscoring that they are the most influential authors in the given context.

The second unit of the study is Organisations (Affiliation). In this unit VOSviewer enables the analysis of organisations from which the author belongs. This analysis helps in identifying leading research institutions contributing to the domain. In this analysis, 175 organisations are detected by excluding documents that have maximum of 25 organisations each. Only 12 organisations meet the threshold i.e. having at least 2 publications and 2 organisation citations. As shown in Fig 4, there is an absence of any connection between the organisations.

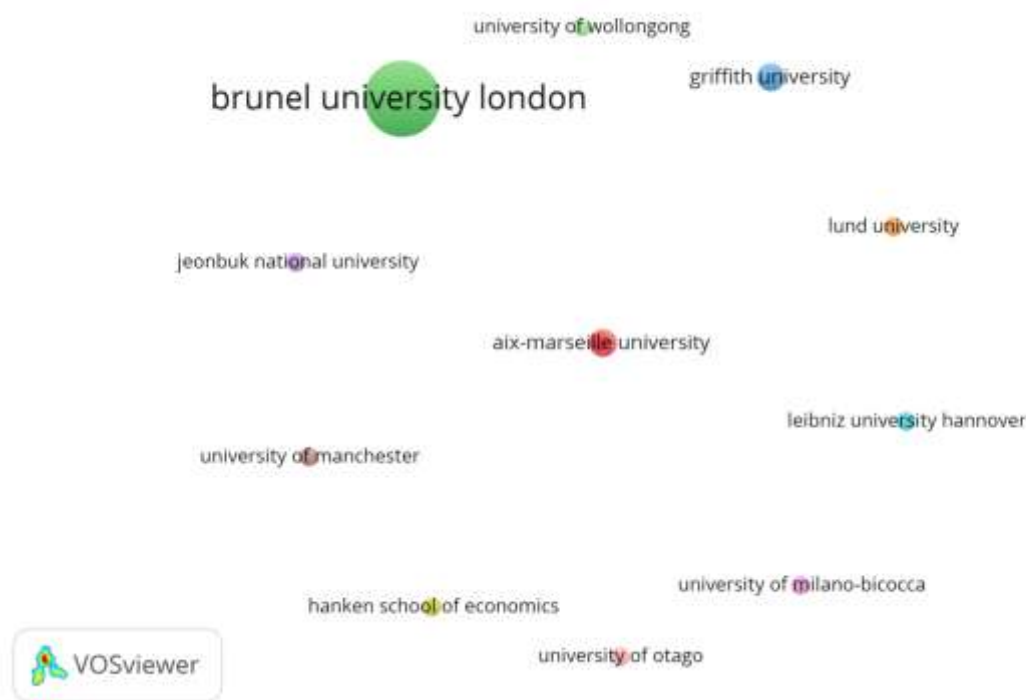


Figure 4 Bibliometric map on organizations

Source: Author's Computation using VOSviewer

According to the figure, it has been observed that Brunel University Landon leads with the greatest number of publications, i.e., 8 followed by Aix-Marseille University and Griffith University both having 3 publications. This unit of analysis helped us in identifying pronounced research institutions into this domain.

Table 3 Top 10 Organisations, publications, citations and average citation per article.

Rank	Organisations	Publications	Citations	Average Citations per Article
1	Brunel University London	8	378	47.25
2	Aix-Marseille University	3	112	37.33
3	Griffith University	3	74	24.67
4	Hanken School Of Economics	2	82	41.00
5	Jeonbuk National University	2	12	6.00
6	Leibniz University Hannover	2	160	80.00
7	Lund University	2	431	215.50
8	University Of Manchester	2	95	47.50
9	University Of Milano-Bicocca	2	18	9.00
10	University Of Otago	2	60	30.00

Source: Author's Computation using VOSviewer

The provided data in the Table 3 presents a ranking of top 10 organisations based on their publications, citations and average citation per article within the given domain. The organizational-level analysis reveals a concentrated yet globally distributed contribution to the given literature. Brunel University London leads with the highest number of publications i.e., 8 with a strong citation count i.e., 378. The data is indicating its central

role and sustained research interest in this domain. Despite having only 2 publications, Lund University is leading with the greatest average citation i.e., 215.5. It is showing a notable contribution in this domain. Finally, the data suggest that while a few universities dominate the discourse with the both volume and impact, a broader range of institutions across regions are actively contributing into this evolving landscape.

The third and final unit of the study are countries which facilitates the analysis of countries in co- authorship networks. This analysis explores international collaboration by examining how researchers from different nations co-publish their research work. In this analysis, 40 countries are detected in the study by excluding publications which contain a maximum of 25 countries each. According to Fig 5, only 19 countries meet the threshold i.e., minimum 2 publications and minimum 2 citations by countries. Out of 19 countries, 12 countries have the largest set of connected items as shown in Fig 5

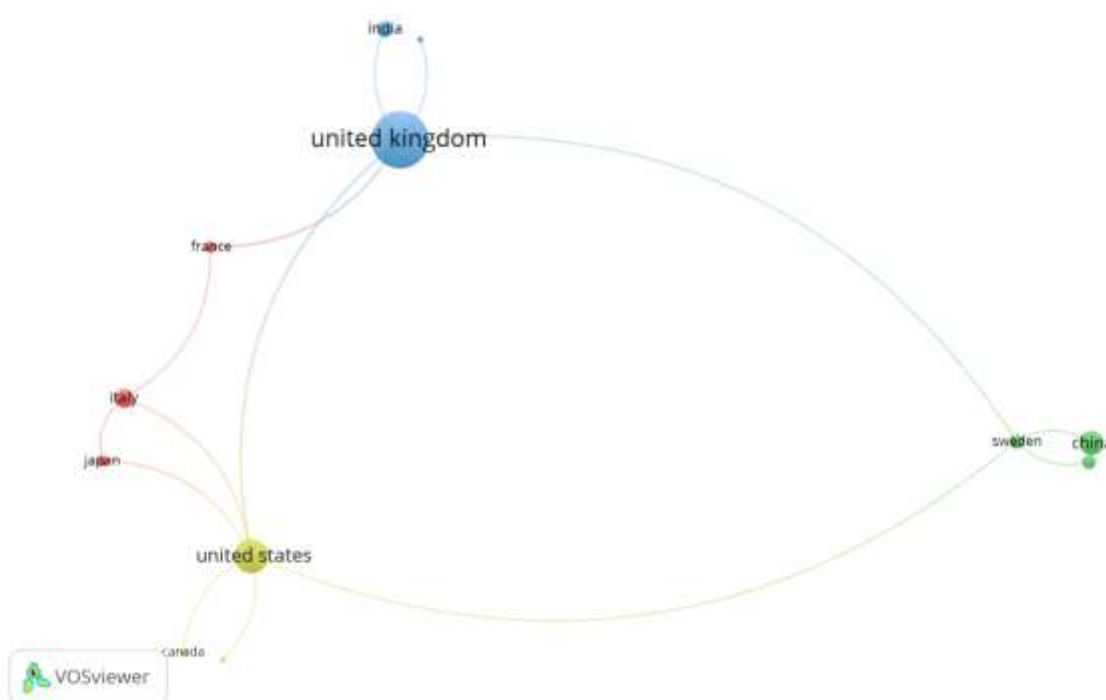


Figure 5 Bibliometric map on Country

Source: Author's Computation using VOSviewer

According to the figure, the largest node is of United Kingdom (UK). It indicates that UK is the central contributory country within this domain. UK is also showing the strong connections with countries like- India, France, Sweden and China. United State forms another key node, showing the connections with Italy, Japan and Canada. This observation helped us to know the region-specific research interests and the growing international relevance of the domain.

The provided data in Table 4 presents a ranking of top 10 countries based on their publications, citations and average citation per article. From the country unit analysis, we get knowledge about the geographical distribution of the research contributions in the heritage brands research.

Table 4 Top 10 Country publications, citations and average citation per article.

Rank	Country	Publications	Citations	Average Citation per article
1	United Kingdom	23	1167	50.74
2	United States	14	908	64.86
3	China	10	148	14.80
4	Spain	9	75	8.33
5	Italy	8	133	16.63
6	India	7	62	8.86
7	Australia	6	145	24.17
8	Germany	6	394	65.67
9	Sweden	6	536	89.33
10	France	5	118	23.60

Source: Author's Computation using VOSviewer

After the observation we get that United Kingdom leads in volume, i.e., 23 publications with the 1,167 citations counts. However, Sweden, with only 6 publications, exhibits the highest average citation per article i.e., 89.33, followed by United State, 14 publications and 64.86 average citations per article. This data indicates its significant influence on quality of researches. After analysing all these parts now we will proceed to the next section i.e., Citation Analysis.

Citation Analysis

Citation analysis is a core technique in bibliometric research that measures the academic influence and visibility of scholarly work by counting how often documents, authors, journals, institutions, or countries are cited by others.[18] It serves as a quantitative indicator of research impact which helps to identify influential studies, leading contributors, and high-impact journals within a specific field. This section divided into two parts which indicate as two units, first one is Documents and second is Sources (Journals). Let's move to the documents analysis:

In citation analysis, individual documents are assessed based on how frequently they are cited by other scholarly works. A document with a high citation count is considered influential, as it suggests that the paper has contributed significantly to the field and has been referenced by many researchers. [19] This method allows scholars to pinpoint landmark studies or breakthrough research within a particular topic area. After the analysis, 143 documents were found, from which only 117 documents meet the threshold i.e., minimum 3 citations each. Fig 7 illustrates that out of 117 documents, 45 documents have the largest set of connected things.

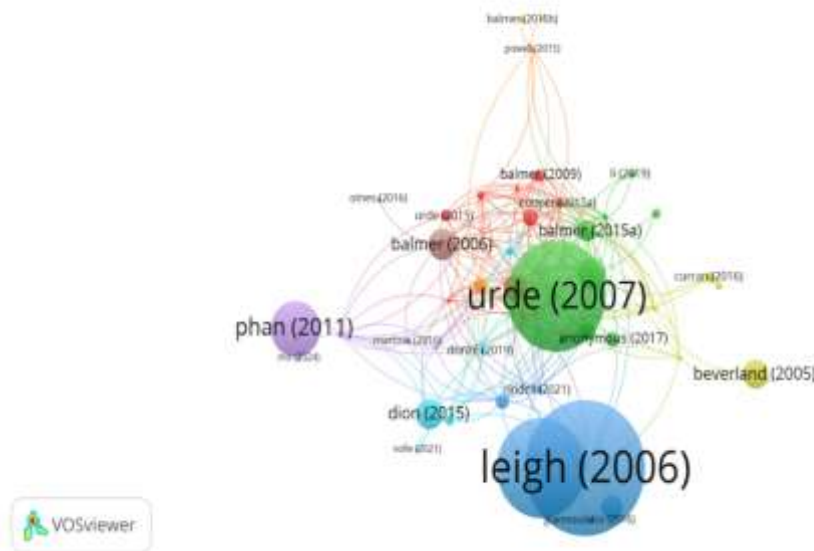


Figure 6 Bibliometric map on Co-citation based on documents

Source: Author's Computation using VOSviewer

As shown in Fig 6, if we carefully observe the snap, there is a large number of clusters like- blue, green, purple, yellow, light blue, red and orange. It will help us to understand the prominent documents of this domain. As shown in Fig 6 Leigh (2006), Urde (2007) and Balmer (2006, 2009, 2015) significant and prominent documents which influence subsequent researches. This was the document unit of the co- citation analysis, now sources unit would be analysed.

Citation analysis of sources focuses on journals as the unit of analysis. It measures the cumulative citations received by all articles published in a particular journal. It is helping to determine which journals have the most impact in a specific research domain. [20] In VOSviewer, source-level citation maps highlight leading academic journals within the chosen topic. After the analysis, 91 sources were found from which only 21 sources meet the threshold i.e., minimum 2 documents and 2 source citations. Fig 7 illustrates that out of 21 sources, 16 sources have the greatest collection of related items.



Figure 7 Bibliometric map on co-citation based on sources

Source: Author's Computation using VOSviewer

As the shown in Fig 7 Journal of brand management is the most prominent and central node which indicate the dominate role in the given domain. The figure also shows smaller clusters of different journals with weaker links. It highlights heritage branding research concentrated within core branding journal. Collectively, these journals represent the core, contextual, and emerging domains of heritage brand research, making them highly relevant and influential for bibliometric analysis.

Table 5 The top most productive sources with the most cited articles

Rank	Sources	Publications	Citations	Citescore 2024	Quartile	Impact Factor	Publisher	SNIP	Q	h-INDEX
1	Journal Of Brand Management	23	246	10.1	Q1	1.4	Springer Nature	1.7	4	5
2	European Journal Of Marketing	2	45	8.2	Q1	5	Emerald Publishing	1.9	19	55
3	Tourism Management	2	109	6.5	Q1	1.9	Elsevier	1.5	16	78
4	Journal Of Destination Marketing Management	3	153	8.4	Q1	9	Elsevier	6	6	10

	Journal Of Global Fashion Marketing	3	33	9	Q1	3	Taylor & Francis	33	1	7
	Journal Of Sustainable Tourism	4	98	0.4	Q1	9	Taylor & Francis	35	3	50
	Journal Of Product Innovation Management	2	87	8.6	Q1	1	John Wiley & Sons	71	8	80
	Place Branding And Public Diplomacy	3	34	4.4	Q2	9	Springer Nature	33	7	0
	sustainability	3	14	2.1	Q1	2	Springer Nature	33	2	46
	Journal Of Product & Brand Management	4	03	0.4	Q1	2	Emerald Publishing	36	6	12

Source: Author's Computation using VOSviewer

The data in Fig 5 provides valuable insights into citation analysis and highlighting the top 10 journals. Journal of Brand Management leads the landscape with the 23 publications and 1246 citations followed by European Journal of Marketing, which, while only contributing two papers, garnered significant citations i.e., 445. It evidenced the relevance and high impact of these journals in this field of study. Tourism Management and the Journal of Sustainable Tourism also have strong citation metrics which emphasis on the context of cultural experiences and destination branding.

Discussion

This bibliometric review uncovers the evolving knowledge base of heritage brands within branding literature, highlighting key trends, influential publications and collaborations. The analysis reveals that interest in heritage branding has grown steadily, particularly after 2015. The analysis revealed, influential authors, top organisations and leading countries driving research in this field. By synthesizing diverse perspectives and methodologies, we identify emerging trends and highlighted areas for future research. The co-authorship and citation patterns indicate the presence of a well-connected scholarly network, with key contributors such as John M. T. Balmer and Stephen A. Greyser significantly shaping the discourse. Top institutions like Brunel University London and Lund University, along with countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, dominate the research output. The Journal of Brand Management emerges as a leading publication platform, underlining its central role in the heritage brands research. The increasing trend in publication volume over the

years, suggests sustained interest and evolving perspectives in this area. This discussion highlights the dynamic and expanding nature of heritage branding research, setting the stage for deeper theoretical exploration and practical implications in global branding strategies

Conclusion

The present study has provided a comprehensive overview of the researches on heritage brands in branding literature over the three decades. The heritage brands have witnessed significant conceptual, empirical, and practical advancements since 2006 which leads to exponential academic interest. This bibliometric analysis revealed a growing academic interest within the given domain over time and the field now holds strong potential for interdisciplinary influence and future growth. The co-authorship analysis revealed the influential author, affiliations and key contributor in the given domain. The study concluded United Kingdom as a key contributor country whereas John M T Balmer as the most influential author. The study also revealed Journal of brand management to be the most productive journal followed by European journal of marketing. The rise in the publication output and citations, particularly in recent years, underscores the relevance of heritage branding in both academic and practical contexts. This review offers a foundational understanding for scholars and practitioners as well as encouraging further exploration into emerging markets, sustainability, and digital branding strategies within the heritage branding paradigm.

Limitation

Despite offering valuable insights, this bibliometric review has certain limitations. First, the analysis is confined on peer-reviewed journals of UGC-CARE List Group II which includes Scopus and Web of Science database, which, while comprehensive, however exclude relevant studies published in other databases. As a result, some influential works or regional contributions may be underrepresented. Second, the study relies mainly on quantitative measures such as citation counts and publication frequency but there is comparatively less qualitative depth or theoretical rigor of the research. Additionally, recent publications from 2024–2025 may not have accumulated sufficient citations, potentially affecting their visibility in the analysis. Lastly, bibliometric tools like VOSviewer, though powerful for network visualization, are limited in interpreting nuanced academic discourse. These constraints should be considered when generalizing the findings or drawing conclusions about the field.

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