Tracing the Evolution of Digital Storytelling in Cultural Studies: A 19-Year Bibliometric Analysis

Siti Rina Latifah[1], Ninis Agustini Damayani[2], & Yunus Winoto[3]

[1,2,3]Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia
Correspondence email: sitirinalatifah@gmail.com

Notes	ABSTRACT
  	This study aims to analyze the production and scholarly trends of Scopus-indexed scientific research on digital storytelling in the context of cultural studies using a bibliometric approach. Data were analyzed using Bibliometrix-R through the Biblioshiny interface and visualized with VOSviewer (version 1.6.20). The findings indicate that scholarly attention to digital storytelling peaked in 2019, with the highest average citations per article at 3.83. However, average citation rates declined in subsequent years, reaching 1.92 in 2023 and 0.79 in 2024. Among contributing scholars, Benmayor received the highest citation count for the article titled "Digital storytelling as a signature pedagogy for the new humanities" published in Arts and Humanities in Higher Education in 2008. Keyword analysis reveals that "digital storytelling," "storytelling," and "human" are the most frequently occurring terms, reflecting core thematic concerns in this field. These results suggest a sustained yet evolving interest in digital storytelling within cultural studies, and they underscore the need for further research on its pedagogical and cultural implications in contemporary discourse. **Keywords:** Bibliometric; Digital Storytelling; Knowledge Mapping; Cultural Studies

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital age has brought about a revolutionary shift in how humans interact, communicate, and share information. Digital transformation, driven by rapid advancements in information and communication technology, has permeated nearly every aspect of human life. One of the most significant impacts of this transformation is the shift from traditional communication media, such as print newspapers, radio, and television, to digital platforms that are more interactive and globally connected (Farkaš, 2024; Maulidiya et al., 2024). These digital platforms include social media, blogs, websites, instant messaging applications, and various other forms of online media. This shift not only changes how information is accessed and consumed but also transforms how culture is produced, disseminated, and negotiated.

In the context of a rapidly evolving digital environment, digital storytelling has gained significant prominence as a contemporary narrative form. It refers to the integration of traditional storytelling techniques with digital multimedia tools, resulting in a dynamic and immersive mode of communication. It involves using digital tools such as text, images, audio, video, animation, and other interactive elements to create and share stories, both fictional and based on real-life events (Affrida et al., 2024; Anwar et al., 2023; Najla et al., 2022). Digital storytelling leverages the potential of digital technology to create storytelling experiences that are more immersive, engaging, and accessible to a wider audience.

Digital storytelling is more than a novel form of entertainment. It serves a wide range of functions that transcend recreational purposes. In educational contexts, it has demonstrated considerable effectiveness in enhancing student engagement, promoting the comprehension of complex concepts, and fostering the development of digital literacy skills (Febrina, 2021; Harahap et al., 2024). In the field of cultural preservation, digital storytelling plays a crucial role in documenting and safeguarding cultural heritage, oral traditions, and local narratives that face the threat of extinction. Beyond preservation, it serves as a compelling medium for social commentary, advocacy, and the promotion of social change. In business and marketing contexts, digital storytelling is leveraged to build brand identity, foster emotional connections with consumers, and communicate messages in a more relatable and impactful manner.

Storytelling, a fundamental human activity since civilization's dawn, transmits knowledge, values, history, and identity across generations. As shown by Kalenge (2022), oral traditions, like those of the Sangu in Africa, embed ecological practices within narratives, offering solutions to environmental challenges. Similarly, (Avery & Hains, 2017) highlights how oral traditions offer alternative ways of learning, enriching science education with local knowledge. These traditions are not mere entertainment; VijayaKumari (2018) notes they preserve collective experiences, supporting social structures and cultural continuity. Oral traditions function as crucial repositories of ecological knowledge, historical understanding, and customary law, vital for ecological conservation, cultural preservation, and shaping environmental policy as demonstrated by Ojedele-Adejumo (2023) in the context of Nigerian folklore traditions. This underscores storytelling's role in constructing meaning, maintaining memory, and strengthening social bonds.

A comprehensive understanding of digital storytelling necessitates an analytical framework that accounts for its intertwined cultural, social, and technological dimensions. In this regard, the field of cultural studies offers a valuable lens through which to examine the complex dynamics and broader implications of digital storytelling practices. Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary field of study that explores how cultural meanings are produced, disseminated, and negotiated in various social contexts (Guo, 2022). Cultural studies critically analyze how meanings are produced, disseminated, and negotiated in various social contexts, including popular culture, media, lifestyles, and identity formation. Digital media plays an important role in the dissemination of culture (Putri et al., 2024), and digital storytelling offers a unique lens for understanding how cultural narratives are shaped and experienced in the digital age.

Research on digital storytelling continues to grow, especially in the field of education, as shown by the bibliometric study of Avci & Kasimi (2023) in the Web of Science (WoS) database, which revealed significant growth in publications on this topic, particularly in the subfields of education and English. Wu & Chen's (2020) systematic study of 57 studies in the Scopus database also confirmed the continued interest in digital storytelling in the United States, particularly in elementary, secondary, and higher education, with a focus on the

humanities and social sciences, and a variety of research methods. Although these studies provide valuable insights into the application of digital storytelling in educational contexts, with implementation reports and conceptual discussions, a comprehensive understanding of its evolution and impact, specifically within the field of cultural studies, remains very limited, as existing research tends to pay less attention to the broader cultural and social dimensions of digital storytelling.

Current research has yet to comprehensively examine how digital storytelling influences cultural understanding, shapes individual and collective identities, and facilitates the negotiation of cultural values in an increasingly digital world. Moreover, existing bibliometric studies are often confined to specific domains such as education or communication and frequently rely solely on databases like the Web of Science (WoS). This creates a significant gap in the systematic mapping of digital storytelling research within the broader field of cultural studies, particularly in relation to the Scopus database, which offers more extensive coverage of the social sciences and humanities.

To address this gap, this study conducts a bibliometric analysis of Scopus-indexed publications on digital storytelling in cultural studies from 2006-2024. This approach will: 1) identify publication trends over time; 2) determine influential authors, publications, and sources; 3) map the thematic evolution, identifying key concepts and emerging areas; and 4) provide a comprehensive review of the global research landscape, offering insights into the impact and potential of digital storytelling in cultural studies. This research aims to contribute to the development of both cultural studies and the practice of digital storytelling by systematically mapping this evolving research area.

Through a systematic examination of the research landscape surrounding digital storytelling within cultural studies, this study seeks to make a meaningful contribution to both the theoretical development of the field and the practical application of digital storytelling. The findings will offer critical insights into how digital storytelling has been explored, how scholarly discourse has evolved over time, and which core themes have attracted sustained academic attention. Additionally, the study will highlight areas that remain underexplored, thereby guiding future research directions.
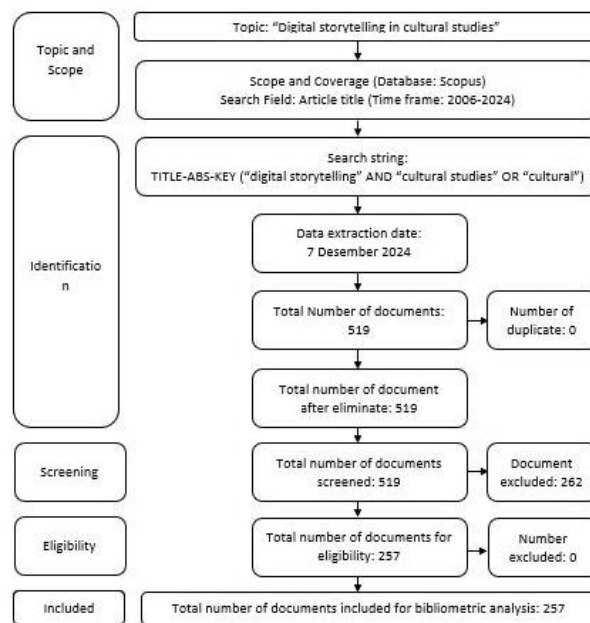
2. METHODS

This research adopted bibliometrics as a quantitative research methodology. It was grounded in mathematical analysis that necessitates numerical data and statistical computations (Gupta & Dhawan, 2024). In this study, bibliometric analysis is applied to systematically review and synthesize the literature on digital storytelling within cultural studies, identifying trends in publications, citation patterns, author collaborations, and evolving research foci. The bibliometric framework advances a conservative, stable system for measuring the impact of scientific inquiry (Lazarides et al., 2023).

Data analysis was conducted using the Bibliometrix-R package (Maliha, 2024), accessed through its Biblioshiny web interface. Bibliometrix is a comprehensive open-source tool specifically designed for bibliometric and scientometric analyses, offering functionalities for data import, cleaning, analysis, and visualization. The process of data reduction, visualization, and network mapping was further enhanced using VOSviewer software (version 1.6.20) (Dagiene & Xie, 2021). VOSviewer is specifically designed for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks, and is particularly useful for analyzing co-occurrence data (e.g.,

keyword occurrences) to create visually appealing publication maps [VOSviewer website: https://www.vosviewer.com/].

Prior to analysis, documents extracted from the Scopus database were selected using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines (Sohrabi et al., 2021). The PRISMA statement provides a transparent and rigorous framework for conducting systematic reviews, ensuring the completeness and clarity of the reporting process [PRISMA website: https://www.prisma-statement.org/]. The PRISMA method ensures that the selection of documents for analysis is systematic, transparent, and reproducible.

Figure 1. PRISMA method for document selection
Source: Data processed by researchers, 2024 (Adapted from Sohrabi et al. (2021)

Table 1. Description of data sources and search results in the database

Categories	Information
Database	Scopus
Time span	2006-2024
Language	English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Chinese, Slovenian, French
Search keywords	"digital storytelling" AND "cultural studies" OR "cultural"
Document type	Article
Data extraction	Exported with complete records (citation, bibliography, abstract & keywords, and other information) in CSV format
Sample size	257

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2024

This data is derived from bibliographic mapping of literature available in the Scopus database. Visualization of research data is performed using the Bibliometrix-R Biblioshiny software to obtain comprehensive and diverse visual representations of digital storytelling in

cultural studies topics spanning 2006-2024. VOSviewer is used to visualize the data through co-occurrence analysis (network, density, and overlay visualizations).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the bibliometric analysis, focusing on four key areas that directly address the research objectives: (1) the distribution of publication trends over time, revealing the growth of the field; (2) the identification of the most cited articles, highlighting influential works; (3) the analysis of influential authors, showcasing key contributors; and (4) the mapping of the thematic evolution of digital storytelling research in cultural studies, uncovering key concepts and emerging research areas.

Distribution of Publication Trends by Year, Most Cited Articles, and Influential Authors)

Based on the data obtained from the Scopus database extraction, which was then exported to Bibliometrix-R Biblioshiny software, the initial display shows the main information of all articles, which are then ready to be analyzed. More detailed information can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Key information about the data

Description	Information
Time Span	2006-2024
Source (Journal, Book, etc.)	212
Document	257
Annual Growth Rate %	21,44
Average Age of Documents	4,74
Average Citations per Document	12,89
References	10673
Keyword (ID)	579
Author Keyword (DE)	964
Author	682
Author Documents with Single Author	68
Documents with One Author	72
Multi-Author Document Authors	3,01
International Co-Authoring	9,728
Document Type (Article)	257

Source: Bibliometrix-R Biblioshiny Data processed by researchers, 2024

The search keywords used were "Digital storytelling," "Cultural studies," and "Cultural," with the criteria of a time range from 2006 to 2024 and the document type being articles. A total of 257 documents met the criteria as a sample to be processed using a bibliometric approach with the help of Bibliometrix-R Biblioshiny Software and VOSviewer software. These 257 articles were generated from data extracts from the Scopus database, with detailed information contained in Table 2.

Publication and Citation Trends
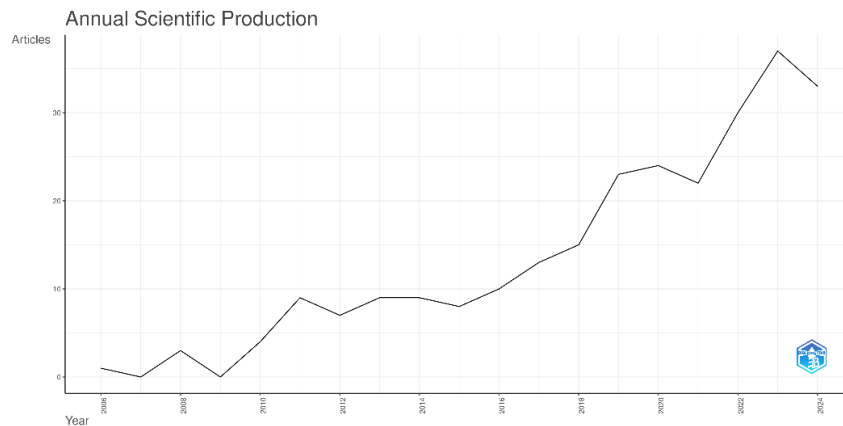
Figure 2. Scientific article publications

Figure 2 illustrates the overall trend of scientific research publications from 2006 to 2024 on the theme of digital storytelling in cultural studies, showing a continuous increase. Although there were no publications in 2007 and 2009, an increase in the number of scientific publications on the topic began in 2010. Based on the data, 2006 and 2008 marked the beginning of scientific publication production on digital storytelling indexed in the Scopus database. Figure 2 interprets the annual scientific publications as seen from the number of scientific articles on the topic of digital storytelling that have been published per year and are Scopus-indexed publications.
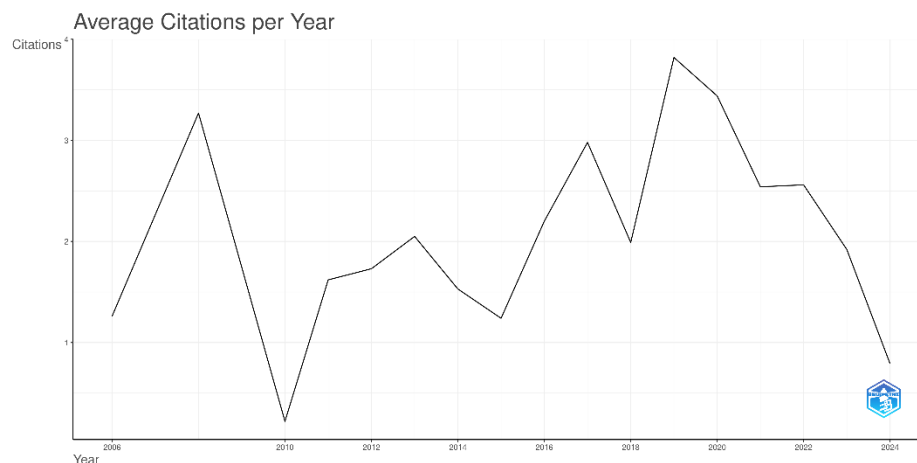
Figure 3: Average citation per year

Figure 3 shows the average number of times scientific articles were cited each year. There are variations in the average citation in each year, with some years having a high number of citations and others having only a few. The number of cited article publications increased in 2019, with an average citation of 3.82, and then decreased in 2023 and 2024, with average citations of 1.92 and 0.79 per year, respectively. This is illustrated in Figure 3, which shows a graph of the development of the average article cited per year.

Most Cited Articles in Publications and Influential Authors

To identify the most cited articles and influential authors in this field, an analysis was conducted using VOSviewer with document selection citation type. The selection criteria did not include a minimum number of citations per document. Of the 257 documents, 25 were found to be interconnected. The details are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Six articles with the most citations

Year of Publication	Author	Title	Source	Total Citations
2008	Benmayor, Rina	Digital storytelling as a signature pedagogy for the new humanities	Arts and Humanities in Higher Education	153
2018	Botfield, Jessica I; Newman, Christy E; Lenette, Caroline; Albury, Kath; Zwi, Anthony B	Using digital storytelling to promote the sexual health and well-being of migrant and refugee young people: A scoping review	Health Education Journal	33
2017	Vecchio, Lindsay; Dhillon, Karamjeet K; Ulmeer, Jasine B	Visual methodologies for research with refugee youth	Intercultural Education	27
2012	Benmayor, Rina	Digital testimonio as a signature pedagogy for latin studies	Equity and Excellence in Education	27
2019	Gubrium, A; Fiddian-Green, A; Lowe, S; Difulvio, G; Peterson, J	Digital storytelling as Critical Narrative Intervention with Adolescent Women of Puerto Rican Descent	Critical Public Health	26
2018	Oakley, Grace; Pegrum, Mark; Xiong, Xi Bei; Lim, Cher Ping; Yan, Hanbing	An online Chinese-Australian language and culltural exchange through digital storytelling	Language, Culture, and Curriculum	25

Source: Bibliometrics, data processed by researchers, 2024

Table 3 presents information on the authors and their publications that have received the most citations over the past two decades. The article by Benmayor (2008) received the highest number of citations (153) among all Scopus-indexed articles on digital storytelling within this selection. Benmayor's research became a starting point for the development of digital storytelling research in the Scopus database, followed by several other researchers from various countries. The research by Botfield et al. (2018) was the second most cited article (33 citations), followed by Vecchio et al. (2017) and Benmayor (2012), both with 27 citations. Gubrium et al. (2019) and Oakley et al. (2018) had 26 and 25 citations, respectively.

Mapping the Development of Digital Storytelling Research in Cultural Studies

Analysis using VOSviewer was conducted to identify the research focus and novelty based on keyword analysis. This analysis also aimed to examine the development of research on the topic of digital storytelling. The development of research can be seen by analyzing relevant keywords through bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer software with a co-occurrence analysis type. This analysis was performed by inputting previously extracted data with all keywords. The criteria for keywords that could represent each document were set to 3, resulting in 83 keywords that best met the 1393 keywords from 257 documents. This analysis resulted in 7 clusters with 5 different node color groups.
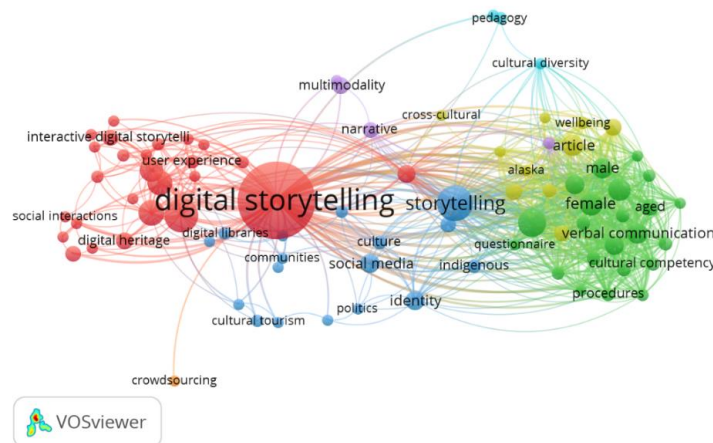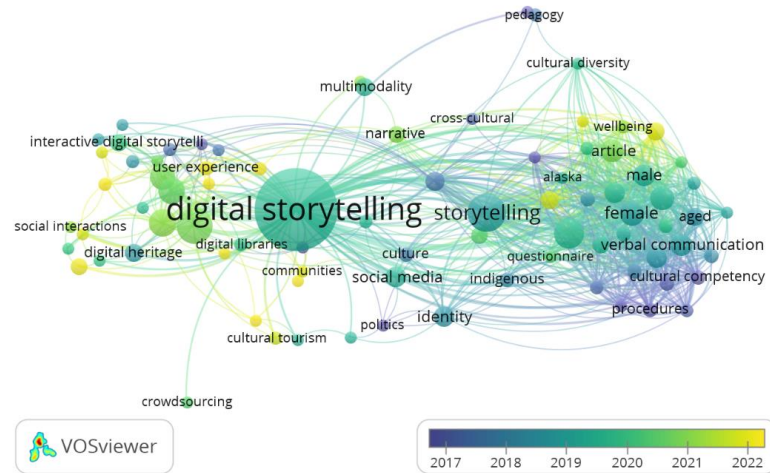
Figure 4. Network visualization of VOSviewer

Figure 4 shows the network visualization, marked with 5 groups of nodes or spheres with different colors representing each keyword that appears. The size of the nodes represents the frequency of occurrence of each keyword. Larger nodes indicate more frequently discussed keywords. In Figure 4, each cluster has the largest nodes, indicating frequently appearing keywords within that cluster. Cluster 1 (red) has "digital storytelling" as the most frequent keyword. Cluster 2 (green) has "human," Cluster 3 (blue) has "storytelling," Cluster 4 (yellow) has "article," Cluster 5 (purple) has "multimodality" and "narrative," Cluster 6 (light blue) has "pedagogy," and finally, cluster 7 (orange) has "crowdsourcing." All of these keywords represent their respective clusters.

Table 4. Fifteen keywords with the most occurrences in network visualization

Cluster color	Keywords
Cluster 1 Red (26 keywords)	Augmented reality, collaboration, computer programming, cultural heritage, cultural heritages, digital heritage, digital humanities, **digital storytelling**, digital technologies, e-learning, education, gamification, human-computer interaction, intangible cultural heritage, interaction, interactive digital storytelling, migration, museums, participatory design, serious games, social interactions, tangible interfaces, user experience, users' experiences, virtual reality
Cluster 2 Green (22 keywords)	Adult, aged, clinical article, cultual competence, cultural competency, female, health behavior, health promotion, **human**, humans, interview, male, middle-aged, narration, procedures, psychology, public health, qualitative research, questionnaire, thematic analysis, verbal communication, young adult
Cluster 3 Blue (17 keywords)	Child, communities, community, cultural tourism, culture, digital, digital archives, digital libraries, identify, Indigenous, mental health, museum, politics, representation, social media, **storytelling**, youth
Cluster 4 Yellow (10 keywords)	Adolescent, Alaska, **article**, communication, cross-cultural, interpersonal communication, participatory research, rural, social capital, wellbeing
Cluster 5 Purple (4 keywords)	Human experiment, language learning, **multimodality**, narrative
Cluster 6 Light Blue (3 keywords)	Cultural diversity, new media, **pedagogy**
Cluster 7 Orange (1 keyword)	**Crowdsourcing**

The next analysis focuses on the novelty of keywords related to scientific publications on the topic of digital storytelling. The analysis was carried out with overlay visualization in the VOSviewer software, using the same keyword criteria as in the network visualization.

Figure 5. Overlay visualization of VOSviewer

The overlay visualization in Figure 5 aims to show the novelty of research related to the topic of digital storytelling in the context of cultural studies. Dark colors indicate that the keywords have been researched for a longer period. Lighter colors indicate newer keywords that can be considered for further research. Figure 5 shows that keywords from 2020 to 2024 are marked in yellow, indicating new research areas that are still rarely explored. Keywords that are relatively new in relation to digital storytelling include communication, interpersonal communication, social capital, cultural tourism, communities, digital humanities, digital cultural heritage, and others. These can be used as a research gap by researchers. However, it is possible that future research will discuss the topic of digital storytelling in relation to cultural studies and connect to existing or new keywords as technology and communication evolve.

In the early years of the emergence of the concept of digital storytelling in cultural studies or cultural studies, the articles published and indexed in Scopus were 1-3 articles, so there was a lack of literature material to fulfill knowledge about digital storytelling in the concept of cultural studies. To add to the related research literature, the author conducted research using this bibliometric analysis with the aim of knowing the evolutionary mapping of the concept of digital storytelling in cultural studies in the span of 2006 - 2024. It is known that 2006 was the first year of scientific publications in the Scopus database on the topic of digital storytelling and can be read by the public both as researchers and readers. This was the beginning of the development of digital storytelling research in cultural studies in the Scopus database until now.

When viewed from the graph in Figure 2, it shows an increasing trend of research publications, however, there are variations in the number of publications recorded from each year from 2006 to 2024. The years 2023, 2024, and 2022 are consecutively the years with the highest number of publications on the topic of digital storytelling in the context of cultural studies, namely 37 publications in 2023, 33 publications in 2024, and 30 publications in 2022. Meanwhile, from 2016 to 2021, the number of research publications on the topic of digital

storytelling in cultural studies continues to experience a fairly fluctuating increase and decrease because in these years there have been more and more studies that discuss the topic of digital storytelling with a more in-depth discussion. The first digital storytelling article indexed by Scopus was only 1 publication in 2006 but continued to increase until 2023 with 37 publications and 2024 with 33 publications.

In the early years of its development, research on digital storytelling in cultural studies was not widely examined until 2011 and experienced an increase that can be considered quite good, namely 9 publications, which increased by 5 from the previous year. The increase also occurred in the following years fluctuatively until 2024. However, the average citation obtained each year for these publications has decreased. In the early years, it was assumed that due to the small number of publications, with topics that were still very rarely researched, many articles published in Scopus from 2006 to 2015 were still cited even though they decreased every year. Whereas seen from 2016 to 2024 with an increasing number of Scopus-indexed publications, it turns out to get less cited on average each year. This is indicated by the graph line that goes up and down.

Table 3 clearly shows that Benmayor's research in 2008 contributed the highest number of citations to digital storytelling articles, which was the beginning of how scientific publications with digital storytelling research topics have grown to date. Digital storytelling in the concept of cultural studies is a research topic that is still very relevant to research, so every year, it will continue to experience development. This table shows how research that started with only 1 publication in 2008 made a good development for other researchers so that they were motivated to research the same thing.

The knowledge mapping shown in the network visualization and overlay visualization in VOSviewer shows the development of digital storytelling research in cultural studies is growing. Based on the analysis that has been done, the context of research on this topic is growing in various disciplines around the world. Bibliometric analysis can see the focus and novelty of research that can be used as a consideration for future research that is more complex, directed, and more numerous.

The results that have been obtained from the analysis using VOSviewer, as shown in Figure 3 network visualization displays several keywords that appear frequently in scientific publications on the topic of digital storytelling in cultural studies so that it can be concluded that of the many keywords that appear, after going through the filtering process before the analysis is carried out, there are 3 main keywords that are relevant and often appear in digital storytelling research topics as in table 3.

Table 4. Sixteen Keywords with the most occurrences in network visualization

Keywords	Total Occurrences
Digital storytelling	146
Storytelling	31
Cultural heritage	27
Human	20
Cultural heritages	16
Virtual reality	15
Augmented reality	14
Humans	12
Female	12
Article	11
Male	10

Verbal communication	10
Narration	9
Adult	9
Identity	9

From the results of the co-occurrence analysis as in Figure 3, it can be seen that the keyword digital storytelling has been widely discussed in various parts of the world in the last two decades, starting from 2006, since its publication in the Scopus database until now, namely 2024. In the discussion of research on the concept of digital storytelling in cultural studies, there are quite a number of research publications in the Scopus database that discuss the topic in several countries but with similar keywords, namely storytelling, cultural heritage, human, cultural heritages, virtual reality, humans, female, male, adult, identity, verbal communication, and narration. Some of these keywords are still quite relevant to research topics related to digital storytelling and cultural studies. In addition, there are other keywords, such as augmented reality, female, male, and article, which can be taken into consideration for research and a clearer discussion if it is related to the conceptualization of digital storytelling in cultural studies.

The overlay visualization in Figure 4 shows the growth of research with the keywords "digital storytelling," "cultural studies," and "cultural" from 2016 to 2024. Digital storytelling in the concept of cultural studies has a real influence on society, as research by Adams-Santos (2020) in this study discusses how a person, especially in this case a group of women who have a preference to tell their personal experiences, choose to be open and frank with others they consider trustworthy.

Other research by Nosrati et al. (2018) tells that in the context of using technology, where a community that feels the use of a library application has a concern and concern for cultural storytelling. In this case, the concept of digital storytelling utilized by the library in its inter-library cooperation utilizes technology and the concept of storytelling by presenting an application called iBeacon as a medium to continue telling the city's cultural heritage. In this study, it was found that differences between individuals are important and can influence not only the acceptance and use of the application but can help increase interest in a city and its cultural heritage.

The discussion on mapping the evolution of digital storytelling research with a bibliometric approach is a discussion that aims to determine the development of digital storytelling research in cultural studies. This research with bibliometric analysis is carried out by analyzing trends in research publications, author analysis, information sources, and countries. In its stages, this analysis includes mapping of various elements, such as research trends over the past nineteen years, research publication patterns, main contributors who contribute to the topic of digital storytelling and cultural studies, and the development of the concept of digital storytelling in cultural studies around the world.

4. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric study mapped the research landscape of digital storytelling in cultural studies based on Scopus-indexed publications from 2006 to 2024. It examined publication trends, influential authors and articles, and the evolution of research themes. Findings show a steady growth in scholarly interest since 2010, reflecting the rising significance of digital storytelling in cultural inquiry. Seminal works, notably Benmayor's (2008) contribution, have shaped pedagogical discourse, while other influential studies addressed themes like health

promotion and intercultural communication. Keyword analysis revealed a thematic expansion, with emerging areas such as communication, social capital, cultural tourism, and digital heritage indicating new directions for research. This study offers a comprehensive overview of the field's development and highlights underexplored topics, providing a foundation for future interdisciplinary investigations.

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