

# Knowledge Mapping and Visual Analysis of Night Tourism Research in China Based on CiteSpace



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**Abstract:** In recent years, the acceleration of urbanization and the transformation of people's lifestyles have expanded the temporal and spatial scope of tourism activities, making the traditional daytime sightseeing mode difficult to meet the increasingly diverse tourism demands of tourists. Furthermore, traditional reading and induction methods tend to have limitations, subjectivity and one-sidedness when dealing with complex literature. The scientific knowledge map is an emerging means in scientometrics. As a visual image, it can reveal the development process and internal structure of the research field intuitively and comprehensively with the help of CiteSpace software. Therefore, this paper uses the CiteSpace software to sort out the relevant literature on domestic night tourism from 2015 to 2025, and presents the current research status and internal connections in this field through a visual knowledge map, providing references for theoretical research and practical implementation. The results show that: (1) Night tourism research has undergone a significant change from initial exploration to rapid growth between 2015 and 2025. (2) The cooperation map for published papers shows that the author group for night tourism research has been initially established, but the cooperation model is still relatively loose. The frequency of cooperation and exchanges among the issuing institutions is relatively low, and the depth of cooperation is also rather limited. (3) The knowledge map indicates that domestic night tourism research presents a multi-dimensional and interwoven system, with its core hotspots focusing on the integration of night economy and culture and tourism. Specifically, nine closely related research topics have been formed, mainly distributed in three dimensions: economic impact, integration of culture and tourism, and countermeasures. The temporal context shows the characteristics of phased evolution. The current research frontiers are centered on directions such as tourist experience and night tour resources.

**Keywords:** Night Tourism; CiteSpace; Knowledge Mapping; Visual Analysis

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## 1 Introduction

With the acceleration of global urbanization and the transformation of lifestyles, tourism activities have shown an increasingly significant expansion trend in the temporal dimension. Against this backdrop, the traditional "daytime

sightseeing" model has become inadequate to meet tourists' increasingly diverse and in-depth experience demands as well as their pursuit of efficient time utilization at destinations. Night tourism, regarded as a new form of tourism and

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an important part of urban development, is becoming a new highlight and trend in the tourism development of various cities with its unlimited potential and unique charm, demonstrating vigorous vitality and broad prospects. It not only integrates the unique culture and economic activities of the city, but also serves as an important driving force for the tourism industry to move towards higher quality.

In January 2025, The General Office of the State Council issued the "Several Measures on Further Cultivating New Growth Points and Flourishing Cultural and Tourism Consumption", clearly stating that it is necessary to cultivate consumption scenarios, develop the night-time cultural and tourism economy, and support night-time cultural and tourism consumption clusters. It can be seen from this that promoting the development of night tourism has become a powerful tool and an important trend to stimulate urban economic vitality and drive consumption growth.

With the development of the night tourism industry practice in our country, academic research on night tourism has also achieved fruitful results. Some scholars have conducted literature reviews on domestic night tourism-related research, sorting out the basic concepts and research status of night tourism [1-3], the classification and development models of night tourism products [4-6], the current development status and strategy research of night tourism [7-9], and other contents. When confronted with such a vast and complex amount of literature and materials, relying solely on traditional reading methods and inductive methods for analysis is often affected by limitations, subjectivity and one-sidedness.

As an emerging means of scientometrics, the scientific knowledge map is a visual image with the knowledge domain as its object, which can reveal the development process and internal structural relationship of scientific knowledge [10]. At present, Citespace software is commonly used in academic research to draw knowledge maps [11]. This software has been widely applied in disciplines such as library, information and archival management, management science and engineering, and public administration, and is often used for literature review and related analysis work [12].

Based on this, this study utilized the CiteSpace software to systematically sort out and visually analyze the relevant literature in the domestic night tourism field, and generated a visual knowledge map for this field. Through this scientific and intuitive approach, this article will comprehensively and deeply explore the current research status and development context of night tourism, with the aim of

providing reference and inspiration for theoretical research and market practice of night tourism in China.

## 2 Research Methods and Data Sources

### 2.1 Research Methods

As an emerging means of scientometrics, the scientific knowledge map is a visual image with the knowledge domain as its object, which can reveal the development process and internal structural relationship of scientific knowledge [10]. At present, Citespace software is commonly used in academic research to draw knowledge maps [11].

The CiteSpace software system was developed by Dr. Chaomei Chen, a Chinese scholar from the School of Information Science and Technology at Drexel University in the United States. It is an information visualization tool for the measurement and analysis of scientific literature data. It can be used to draw a knowledge map of the development in the fields of science and technology, to visually present the information structure of the research field, and to help identify important literature, research hotspots and cutting-edge directions in the research field [13].

This study selected the CiteSpace software developed by Dr. Chen Chaomei's team as the analytical tool, and conducted a visual analysis of relevant literature with keywords, authors of the papers, and publishing institutions as node types. Through this method, a series of charts including co-occurrence maps and clustering maps are generated, thereby revealing the quantitative laws and characteristics of this research field, with the aim of providing a visual reference basis for the research of night tourism in China.

### 2.2 Data Sources

This study takes China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) as the data source and sets the search condition as "Subject = Night Tourism". At the same time, to ensure the completeness of the literature, the supplementary search condition is "Subject = Night Leisure or Night Outing or Night tour or Night tour", and the search time is limited to January 1, 2015 to December 24, 2025. After further screening, excluding those irrelevant to the subject terms, repeatedly published or with incomplete information, a total of 421 documents were obtained in this paper (see Table 1).

Table 1 Analysis Data Sources of the knowledge map for Night Tourism research

| Search condition                     | Search contents and results                                             |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Database                             | CNKI (China knowledge Network)                                          |
| Search the subject words             | Night travel or night leisure or night trip or night tour or night tour |
| Screening criteria                   | Academic journals                                                       |
| Time span (year, month and day)      | January 1, 2015-December 24, 2025                                       |
| Retrieval time (year, month and day) | December 24, 2025                                                       |
| Search results (articles)            | four hundred and twenty one                                             |

### 3 Results and Analysis

#### 3.1 Trend Analysis of the Number of Published Articles

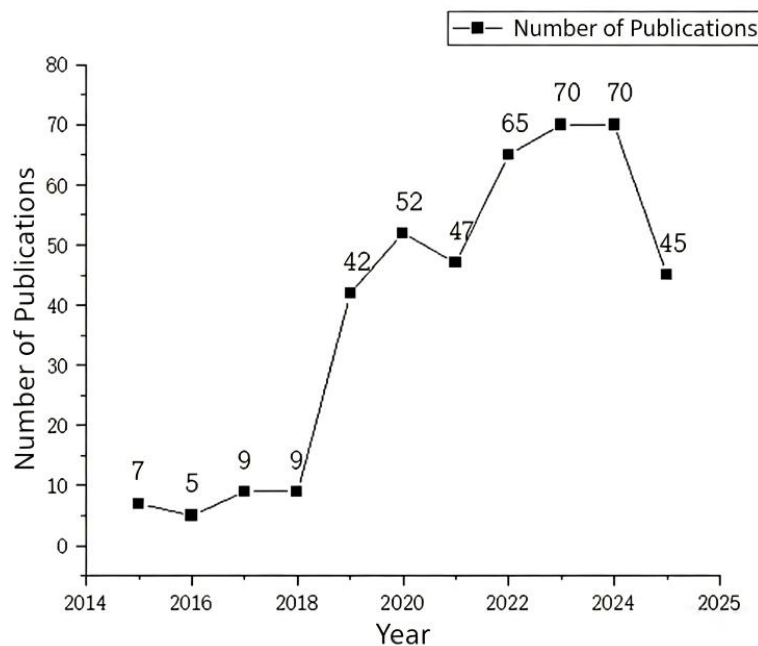


Figure 1 Statistics of the annual number of papers published on night tourism research in China from 2015 to 2025 in the CNKI database

The number of published papers is a core indicator for evaluating the development level of a certain field. The trend chart of the number of published papers is a common and important visual image that can visually display the changes in the number of published papers in a research field within a specific time period [14]. By systematically conducting statistical analysis on academic literature in this field and drawing the quantity distribution curve map accordingly, it plays a crucial role in assessing the current development stage of this research field, scientifically predicting its future development trends and dynamic changes [15]. In view of this, this paper, relying on the CNKI database, takes the year as the axis and, based on the changing trend of the number of documents, conducts a detailed sta-

tistics and analysis of the annual number of published papers in the field of night tourism over the past decade (see Figure 1).

As can be seen from Figure 1, the number of published papers in the field of night tourism research is generally on the rise. Before 2019, the number of journal papers published in the field of night tourism in China was relatively small, with an average of no more than 10 per year. This indicates that the research in this field is still in the early stage of exploration and has not yet formed a systematic theoretical framework. At this stage, although the relevant issues have already drawn initial attention from the academic community, academic attention has not yet been concentrated, and a stable research community has not yet

been formed. This also indicates that there is still considerable room for flexibility in this field for scholars to continue their research.

Since 2019, the number of papers published in the field of night tourism has shown a rapid growth trend. Especially during the period from 2020 to 2024, the number of published papers has increased significantly, indicating that research in this field is heating up rapidly, with more diverse research perspectives and increasingly rich research content. It also reflects that more and more scholars are beginning to pay attention to and participate in related research in this field. Although the number of papers published in 2025 slightly declined, possibly due to market saturation, research cycles or other external factors, it still demonstrated the stability and depth of research overall.

Therefore, in view of the rapid growth trend in the previous years, this paper reasonably predicts that the related research in the field of night tourism will continue to maintain a growth trend in the future, and more research results and academic innovations may emerge.

## 3.2 Analysis of the Cooperation Map for Document Issuance

The cooperation map can reveal the social connections

among scholars or institutions within the research field, which provides a new perspective for evaluating the academic influence of researchers and research institutions, and at the same time helps to identify researchers and research institutions worthy of attention [10]. Therefore, this article will conduct an analysis from both the author and the publishing institution to present the current development status of the cooperation network in this field.

### 3.2.1 Analysis of the Cooperative Network Map of the Publishing Authors

The authors of the published papers are the main body of academic research activities. Through the analysis of the structural characteristics of the authors of the published papers and their cooperative networks, the core author groups in the research field and their cooperative relationships can be reflected [11]. The core author usually refers to a scholar with high academic standards and abundant research achievements in a specific research field. Analyzing the core author is conducive to understanding the current research status and progress in that field [16]. Therefore, for the field of night tourism, this paper constructs a cooperative network map of the authors who have published papers (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 Network Map of Authors' cooperation for night tourism Articles

In the author's cooperative network map, N represents the number of nodes in the map, E represents the number of connections between nodes, and Density (network density) reflects the tightness of the connections between nodes. The number and size of nodes represent the frequency of co-occurrence of the author group, while the number and thickness of lines can reflect the relationship and intensity of authorship cooperation.

As shown in Figure 2, this visualization map includes a total of 214 nodes and 61 connections, but its density value is only 0.0027. After a thorough analysis of the map, this paper finds that although the number of nodes is considerable, the connections appear relatively sparse, resulting in a relatively low overall density value. This phenomenon directly reveals that the cooperation among authors in this field is still not extensive or deep enough at present, and the cooperation network still needs to be further expanded and deepened.

Among the core author group, scholars such as Yu Gouxiong and Bao Zengting have particularly outstanding publication volumes. Figure 2 shows that the team composed of Bao Zengting and others has demonstrated particularly close cooperation. Their academic exchanges and collaborative research are quite frequent, jointly promoting the development of the night tourism field. However, on

the whole, the number of authors engaged in domestic night tourism research remains relatively small, and there is a lack of scholars with wide influence and appeal. In terms of the distribution of regions and academic circles, it shows the characteristics of "great dispersion and small concentration". This means that although the core author group has initially taken shape, the cooperation among them is still not close enough, and a large-scale academic community and cooperation network have not yet been formed.

To sum up, although the author cooperation network in the field of night tourism has taken shape to a certain extent, there are still problems such as insufficient cooperation scope and depth. In the future, this field urgently needs to further enhance communication and cooperation among authors, promote the sharing and integration of academic resources, and thereby drive the in-depth development of night tourism research and the wide dissemination of academic achievements.

### 3.2.2 Analysis of the Cooperative Network Map of Issuing Institutions

After an in-depth analysis of the issuing institutions, this paper obtains the core institutional groups in the field of night tourism research (see Figure 3).



Figure 3 Map of Core Institutions for night tourism Research



It can be clearly observed from this map that a total of 241 nodes and 279 connection lines have been formed, with a density value of 0.096. This data reveals the following key points:

Firstly, the number of nodes in the knowledge map indicates that the research on domestic night tourism presents multi-dimensional and multi-level characteristics. Secondly, the distribution of the connection lines in the map shows that the research scope of this field is extensive, and the hot topics are closely related, forming an interwoven

research network. Furthermore, the size of the nodes further reveals that key nodes such as "nighttime economy" and "integration of culture and tourism" are prominent, which reflects the core focus areas and key directions of current research. Finally, emerging hotspots such as "night tour products" and "night scene lighting" are presented in relatively small nodes, which not only enrich the research topics but also indicate possible future research directions, providing new perspectives for the continuous expansion of this field.

Table 2 High-frequency Keywords in the Field of Night Tourism

| Hot words                              | Frequency | central coefficient |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Night travel                           | 143       | 0.77                |
| Night economy                          | 78        | 0.32                |
| Integration of culture and tourism     | 45        | 0.28                |
| Night travel economy                   | 25        | 0.32                |
| Night economy                          | 22        | 0.67                |
| Literature and tourism night excursion | 12        | 0.08                |
| Strategy of development                | 9         | 0.16                |
| Night outing                           | 9         | 0.15                |
| Influencing factors                    | 8         | 0.04                |
| Night lighting                         | 7         | 0.11                |

Mediating centrality plays a bridging and mediating role in CiteSpace analysis. Nodes whose mediating centrality is greater than or equal to 0.1 are called critical nodes [19, 20]. Through in-depth mining and analysis of a large amount of data, this article has screened out the top 10 keywords in terms of frequency (see Table 2). Among these key words, there are 8 with a centrality value reaching or exceeding 0.10, namely night tourism (0.77), night economy (0.32), integration of culture and tourism (0.28), night tour economy (0.32), night economy (0.67), development strategy (0.16), night tour (0.15), and night lighting (0.11). This data distribution clearly indicates that the research focus of domestic night tourism is highly concentrated on the definition of the connotation of the night economy and night tourism activities. Meanwhile, centering on this core theme, related keywords such as "development strategy" and "night scene lighting" have also been extended as hot topics, receiving extensive attention and in-depth discussions from the academic community.

### 3.3.2 Cluster Analysis

Based on an in-depth exploration of the co-occurrence phenomenon of keywords, this paper further implements the cluster analysis of keywords. Keyword cluster analysis

is a method that groups closely related keywords into one category, aiming to reveal the formation and division of different research directions within a certain research field. When LLR (Log-Likelihood Ratio) is adopted as the clustering algorithm, the CiteSpace software accurately identifies and distinguishes various different clustering labels, forming a clustering view. The cluster view (cluster) is mainly used to present the structural relationships among different clusters and highlight their key nodes and important connections [10]. Therefore, the cluster view is conducive to more precisely defining and revealing the core hotspots in the field of night tourism research (see Figure 5).

In the generated visualization map, this paper uses multiple key indicators to evaluate the analysis effect. Among them, the module value (Q value) and the average contour value (S value) are used to measure the quality of the clustering effect. When the module value (Q value) is greater than 0.3, it indicates that the divided clustering result is significant, and the larger the Q value, the more significant the clustering effect. When the average contour value (S value) is 0.5 or above, clustering is generally considered reasonable. If it reaches 0.7, it indicates that the clustering effect is efficient and reliable [10].



Figure 5 Keyword Clustering Knowledge Map for Night Tourism

As shown in Figure 5, this paper concludes that the Modularity Q value is 0.8561 ( $> 0.3$ ), which indicates that the clustering results have a high degree of credibility. Meanwhile, the S value of the Mean Silhouette coefficient = 0.9733 ( $> 0.5$ ), while the value of Mean (Q, S) is 0.9109. These indicators jointly verify the good clustering effect. These data not only confirm the effective implementation of cluster analysis, but also further emphasize the accuracy and reliability of its results.

As shown in Figure 5, through in-depth cluster analysis of the keywords of night tourism by CiteSpace software, this paper identified and summarized 9 significant cluster labels. The distribution of these labels shows a relatively high degree of concentration, effectively revealing the close interwoven relationship among different research topics. Specifically, the clustering tags clearly presented in Figure 5 are as follows: #0 Night Tourism, #1 Night Economy, #2 Rural Revitalization, #3 Museums, #4 Cultural and Tourism Integration, #5 Night Tour Economy, #6 Development Strategy, #7 Cultural and Tourism Night Tour, #8 Tourism, and #9 Night Leisure.

Through in-depth analysis of these clustering labels, this paper finds that domestic research on night tourism has widely involved three core dimensions: economic impact, deep integration of culture and tourism, exploration of influencing factors, and formulation of corresponding countermeasures. This discovery not only highlights the diversified development of the field of night tourism research, but also further proves that the research in this field is gradually delving from a relatively superficial surface level to more complex and insightful in-depth discussions.

### 3.3.3 Time Series Analysis

CiteSpace software can conduct in-depth analysis on the clustered keywords. It can introduce the time dimension into the analysis network and focus on outlining the historical development trajectory and time span of the keywords within each cluster [21]. After selecting the Timeline view in this study, a keyword timeline clustering map for the field of night tourism research was generated (see Figure 6).

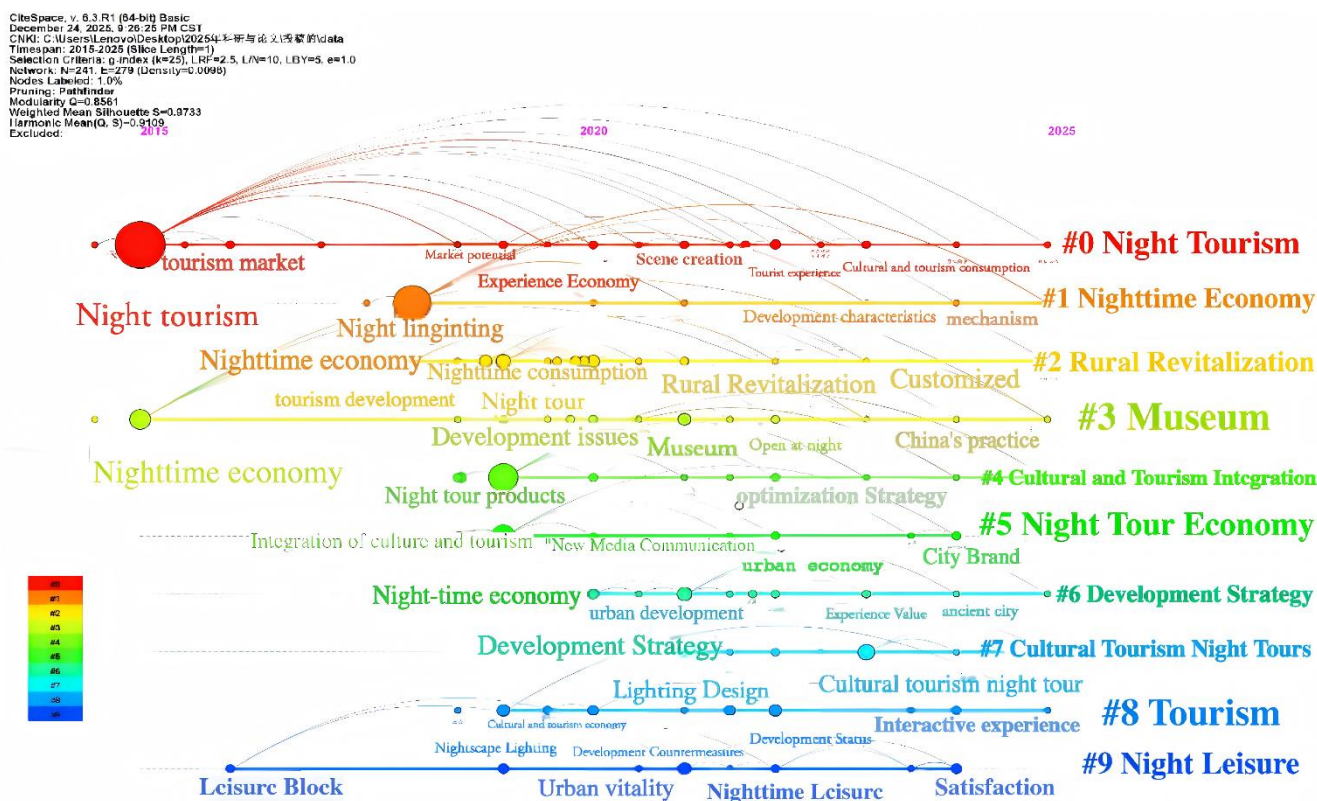


Figure 6 Timeline Clustering Map of Keywords for Night Tourism

Based on the analysis of the appearance time and frequency of keywords in Figure 6, it can be known that the research hotspots in this field show obvious phased evolution characteristics over time. In addition, it can clearly display the keywords that emerge within a specific time period. According to Figure 6, this paper finds that as early as 2015, high-frequency keywords such as "night tourism" and "night economy" had already frequently appeared. This phenomenon suggests that related research had already begun or started in 2015 or even earlier. From 2015 to 2020, researchers' focus was mainly on the impact of night tourism on the economic level and the deep integration of culture and tourism. This research approach reflects that the research at this stage emphasized the combination of its economic value and industry. Since 2020, the research focus has undergone significant changes. A large number of studies have begun to focus on the current development status and countermeasure analysis of night tourism, and this trend has continued to this day. This indicates that with the rapid development of night tourism practice, the academic community has begun to respond to the practical problems in practice to address new issues and challenges. Meanwhile, attention to directions such as "integration of culture

and tourism" and "night lighting" has never ceased, demonstrating the continuity of research in both breadth and depth.

In conclusion, the timeline clustering map of keywords for night tourism (Figure 6) not only reveals the temporal context of night tourism research but also reflects the trajectory of continuous deepening and expansion of research in this field.

### 3.3.4 Keyword Emergent Analysis

Keyword Burst Detection refers to the phenomenon where the word frequency of a certain keyword variable significantly increases within a specific time period, thus becoming the focus of academic research. This method can be used to identify whether a certain node has become the focus of research within a specific period. Keywords with strong suddenness often represent the latest frontiers or trends in current research. This analysis not only enables the tracing of research hotspots at different time periods but also allows for the prediction of future research hotspots and trends to a certain extent [18]. After an in-depth analysis of the key words in the literature related to night tourism, a total of 10 prominent words were obtained in this paper (see Figure 7).

### Top 10 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

| Keywords                    | Year | Strength | Begin | End  | 2015 - 2025                                                                       |
|-----------------------------|------|----------|-------|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tourism Development         | 1.45 | 2018     | 2020  |      |  |
| Countermeasures             | 1.44 | 2020     | 2021  |      |  |
| Harbin                      | 2020 | 1.06     | 2020  | 2022 |  |
| Lighting Design             | 1    | 2021     | 2022  |      |  |
| Tourist Experience          | 1.44 | 2022     | 2023  |      |  |
| Development Status          | 1.16 | 2022     | 2025  |      |  |
| Dual Circulation            | 1.08 | 2022     | 2023  |      |  |
| Cultural Tourism Night Tour | 2.83 | 2023     | 2025  |      |  |
| Spatial Distribution        | 1.64 | 2023     | 2025  |      |  |
| Night Tour Resources        | 1.06 | 2023     | 2025  |      |  |

Figure 7 The emergence of key words for night tourism

As can be seen from Figure 7, in the early stage of night tourism research, terms such as "tourism development" and "countermeasures" were particularly prominent, becoming the focus of scholars' in-depth exploration. Subsequently, the cutting-edge research areas gradually focused on specific aspects such as "tourist experience" and "night tour resources". Scholars have begun to conduct in-depth discussions on the night tourism models in different regions, demonstrating a research trend that shifts from a macro perspective to micro details and from broad topics to specific practices. With the continuous promotion of relevant policies, tourist experience has gradually become the forefront of research, and researchers are increasingly emphasizing the exploration of tourists' own feedback and influence on night tourism.

Overall, the research perspectives on domestic night tourism show a diversified characteristic and increasingly focus on tourists' subjective perception, leisure experience and aesthetic taste. On this basis, researchers have also proposed many targeted development paths, with the aim of promoting the continuous prosperity and development of night tourism.

## 4 Conclusion

This paper uses the CiteSpace software to conduct an in-depth study and analysis of 421 domestic literature in the field of night tourism retrieved from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database from 2015 to 2025. It also systematically sorts out the trend analysis of the number of published articles, the analysis of article cooperation, and the knowledge map analysis in this field. And form visual knowledge maps such as the annual number of published articles and the cooperation map of published authors.

The following main conclusions are drawn:

- 1). The trend analysis of the annual number of published papers shows that the research on night tourism has undergone a significant change from initial exploration to rapid growth. Before 2019, domestic research on night tourism was in its infancy, with a small average annual number of published articles, and the content was mainly preliminary discussions. After 2019, related research has increased rapidly and perspectives have become increasingly diverse, marking that this field has entered a stage of in-depth development. Although the number of articles published in 2025 saw a slight decline, the overall situation remained active and stable.
- 2). The analysis of the cooperation map of the published papers shows that the core author group of night tourism research has been initially established, but the research teams still maintain a relatively independent state, and the cooperation mode is still relatively loose. The frequency of cooperation and exchanges among research institutions is relatively low, and the depth of cooperation is also rather limited. Their activity level needs to be further enhanced.
- 3). Knowledge map analysis shows that domestic night tourism research presents a multi-dimensional and interwoven system. The core hotspots focus on the night economy and the integration of culture and tourism. Emerging hotspots such as night lighting indicate future directions, highlighting the academic focus on connotation definition and related strategies. Specifically, nine closely related themes have been formed, focusing on three major dimensions: economic impact, integration of culture and tourism, and countermeasures, presenting a trend of diversified development from the surface to the depth. The timeline shows a phased evolution feature. From 2015 to 2020, the research focus was on economic impact and the integration of culture and tourism. Since 2020, the focus has shifted to analyzing the current development status and countermeasures, while continuously exploring directions such as the integration of culture and tourism and night lighting. The emergence of night tourism research has undergone an evolution from macro development strategies to micro specific practices, ultimately focusing on the core frontiers such as tourist experience and night tourism resources.

In conclusion, although scholars' attention to the detection of night activities and the innovative development of night

tourism has been increasing in recent years, current research still mainly focuses on the exploration of the development path of night tourism, and there is a lack of systematic research on key issues such as the night environment and safety guarantee. Future research should further broaden its perspective and deepen the exploration of these important fields to promote the development of night tourism research in a more in-depth and comprehensive direction.

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