Garakhanova, N. (2023). Bibliometric Analysis on Digital Diplomacy Studies. Korkut Ata Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi, Özel Sayı 1, 1325-1338.



# KORKUT ATA TÜRKİYAT ARAŞTIRMALARI DERGİSİ

**Uluslararası Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi** The Journal of International Turkish Language & Literature Research

> Sayı/Issue Özel Sayı 1 (Ekim/October 2023), s. 1325-1338. Geliş Tarihi-Received: 06.09.2023 Kabul Tarihi-Accepted: 05.10.2023 Araştırma Makalesi-Research Article ISSN: 2687-5675 DOI: 10.51531/korkutataturkiyat.1356201

# **Bibliometric Analysis on Digital Diplomacy Studies**

Dijital Diplomasi Çalışmalarında Bibliyometrik Analiz

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#### Abstract

As a result of the spread of digitalisation, job descriptions have reached a different dimension in our lives. A radical change has taken place in all sectors such as education, entertainment, tourism, shopping and health. In addition, national and international relations and politics have also started to use digital tools with the advent of the Internet. Therefore, the use of digital as a tool has clearly become widespread. In this context, a bibliometric analysis of digital diplomacy studies in the literature was conducted and a systematic perspective on the subject was obtained in this study. Studies on digital diplomacy were accessed through the Scopus database and analysed in terms of keywords, authors, countries and sources with the VOS viewer. Among the most repeated keywords are digital diplomacy, public diplomacy and social media. Manor, I. and Bjola C. are the most published authors. "Place Branding and Public Diplomacy" and "The Hague Journal of Diplomacy" ranked first in terms of the number of citations and studies. The USA, the United Kingdom and Australia are the leading countries with the highest number of studies. The current situation has been analysed and suggestions have been made for new researches to be conducted as a result of the study.

Keywords: Diplomacy, digitization, digital diplomacy.

#### Öz

Dijitalleşmenin yayılmasının bir sonucu iş tanımları, hayatımızda farklı bir boyuta ulaşmıştır. Eğitim, eğlence, turizm, alışveriş ve sağlık gibi tüm sektörlerde köklü bir değişim gerçekleşmiştir. Bunlara ek olarak, ulusal ve uluslararası ilişkiler ile siyaset de internetin gelişiyle dijital araçları kullanmaya başlamıştır. Bu nedenle, dijitali bir araç olarak kullanma açıkça yaygın hale gelmiştir. Bu kapsamda, literatürde dijital diplomasi çalışmalarının bibliyometrik analizi yapılmış ve bu çalışmada konuya sistematik bir bakış açısı elde edilmiştir. Scopus veri tabanı üzerinden dijital diplomasi ile ilgili çalışmalara ulaşılmış, VOS viewer ile gerçekleşen çalışmayla anahtar kelimeler, yazarlar, ülkeler ve kaynaklar açısından analiz edilmiştir. En çok tekrarlanan anahtar kelimeler arasında dijital diplomasi, kamu diplomasisi ve sosyal medya yer almaktadır. Manor, I. ve Bjola C. en çok yayınlanmış yazarlar olarak yer almaktadır. Atıf ve çalışma sayısı açısından ilk sırada "Place Branding and Public Diplomacy" ve "The Hague Journal of Diplomacy" dergileri ilk sıralarda yer almaktadır. ABD, Birleşik Krallık ve Avustralya en çok çalışma yapan ülkelerin başında gelmektedir. Yapılan çalışmayla mevcut durum analizi yapılmış olup, çalışma sonucunda yeni yapılacak olan araştırmalar için önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Diplomasi, dijitalleşme, dijital diplomasi.

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#### Introduction

Digital diplomacy refers to the practice of using digital technologies and communication tools by states to establish, sustain, and enhance diplomatic relations. This involves the utilization of various technologies such as social media, websites, digital communication tools, and data analytics. Digital diplomacy offers the capability to reach wider and faster audiences beyond traditional diplomatic methods. With the rapid advancement of the digital age, a new dimension has been added to traditional diplomacy. Digital diplomacy plays a fundamental role in shaping international relations and managing inter-state communication. As the spread of digitalization has transformed various aspects of our lives, it has also led to profound changes in sectors such as education, entertainment, tourism, commerce, and healthcare. Simultaneously, the use of the internet has extended to national and international relations and politics, incorporating digital tools.

In this context, the use of digital as a tool has become significantly widespread. The transformation initially began with digitization in government structures and evolved into digitization with the development of information and communication technologies, often prefixed with the term 'digital.' Digital diplomacy is among these concepts. In this study, a bibliometric analysis of digital diplomacy studies in the Scopus database was conducted. The bibliometric analysis examined which keywords were commonly associated with digital diplomacy, which authors have contributed most to these studies, in which countries these studies were conducted, and where they were published. Before delving into the methodology and findings of the study, it is appropriate to provide information about diplomacy and digital diplomacy.

#### **Conceptual Framework**

There are many definitions in the literature of diplomacy. Nicolson defines diplomacy as negotiations that high commissioners and ambassadors manage by arranging international relations (Nicolson, 1950). It is expressed as all of the specific activities and methods for the foreign policy of a state in another definition of diplomacy (Reçber, 2011). Diplomacy is the main axis of global relations; it can be identified as the basic method that countries use to express their international strategies and goals (Alethawy, 2022). Henry Kissinger defines diplomacy as a kind of new world order in which modern powers maintain the balance between war and peace (Abdurahmanli, 2021). Digital diplomacy is the use of social media for diplomatic purposes, it covers areas such as the adoption of digital diplomacy, knowledge management of diplomats, public diplomacy, strategy planning, international negotiations, and even how they participate in crisis management (Bjola & Holmes, 2015).

Once we take a look at the definitions of digital diplomacy, we can observe that there is no definition that researchers or politicians agree on in it yet (Baştan & Karagül, 2021). Concepts such as 'cyber diplomacy', 'diplomacy 2.0' and 'net diplomacy' are generally preferred while explaining the interaction of digitalization and diplomacy (Manor, 2017). Bjola considers digital diplomacy as the use of digital technologies to support diplomatic goals (Bjola, 2018). It is regarded as the use of information and communication technologies such as the internet and social media for foreign policy and diplomacy in another definition (Gilboa, 2016).

Although digital diplomacy has been accepted as the use of social media tools, it is also possible to reach large masses by using digital media tools (blog sites, news sites, youtubers, influencers, etc.). Therefore, it becomes contingent to create and direct perception towards large masses, to perform reputation management, and to manage social processes by using these tools.

#### Method

First of all, it was decided which database to work on within the scope of work. There are many databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, PubMed and Web of Science (WoS) (Chen, 2017). Scopus, which has access since 2014, provides services to many researchers in different fields. It was chosen within the scope of the study in terms of having nearly 69 million records (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020). Digital diplomacy studies, which are included in the Scopus database published until 2022 (October), were scanned and a total of 359 document records were accessed. The data collection phase of the study was completed with 334 documents only in English by performing language filter among these studies. Title, abstract and keywords were regarded as basis and the data set obtained was considered in '.csv' format in survey on the Scopus database.

### TITLE-ABS-KEY (digital AND diplomacy) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English"))

Bibliometric analysis was carried out in order to reveal the current situation regarding digital diplomacy, to highlight the gap on the subject and to light the way on future studies in the researches in the literature based on this inquiry. Therefore, the following research questions are answered for these purposes.

- Which keywords were used in studies on digital diplomacy?
- How has the use of keywords changed over the years in digital diplomacy studies?
- Which country, journal and author managed digital diplomacy studies the most?
- How has digital diplomacy studies developed over time?

Bibliometric analysis methods provide the opportunity to examine and evaluate the research area regarding a wide perspective. Some sectors such as health, tourism, education, trade, law, bureaucracy, and others have utilized the bibliometric analysis in many fields. For example, a bibliometric study on the use of information systems in tourism studies was discussed and various findings were obtained on related keywords, countries and organizations (Özmen, 2022). The subject of the coup was researched in another study in which bibliometric analysis was performed, and many findings such as the change of thesis studies on this subject by years, their distribution according to universities, the frequencies of the keywords were revealed on this topic (Akıncı, 2020). Bibliometric methods manages the bibliographic analysis of studies found in databases (Zupic & Čater, 2014). Various patterns of information such as author, document, source, country and keywords are revealed and inferences are performed as a result of the analyzes (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020). There are many software available such as Cytoscape, Bibexcel, VOSviewer and CiteSpace to perform bibliometric analysis (Cobo et al., 2012). However, VOSviewer analysis software developed by Leiden University was used in this study (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Interaction levels between data can be revealed thanks to the VOSviewer analysis software, visualizations can be created according to the number and repetition of the data (Donthu et al., 2021).

### Findings

First of all, the findings obtained from the descriptive statistics of the data will be given within the scope of work. Keywords, authors, countries, and journal sources will be presented as a result of bibliometric analysis. The change of data from the Scopus database over years is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Change of Digital Diplomacy Studies over Years

As can be seen in Figure 1, the first study on digital diplomacy was performed in 2000. It is observed that it increases between 2017 and 2020. It is clear that the most studies were conducted was in 2020. The publication type distribution of digital diplomacy studies is given in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Publication Types of Distribution of Digital Diplomacy Studies

As can be seen in Figure 2, most of the digital diplomacy studies were published as journal articles. The book section is one of the publication types in which digital diplomacy studies are least included.

# **Keywords Analysis Findings**

When the publications on digital diplomacy studies are researched, we can observe that 'Co-occurance-Author Keywords' was selected to access author keywords in VOSviewer analysis software. Words that differ in uppercase and lowercase letters but have the same meaning were excluded in the analysis in terms of the writing format. The minimum number of repetitions for keywords is determined as five. In general, 22 words out of 814 keywords were considered as related to each other. It is figured out that there were 95 links between the keywords and the total link strength was 329 as a result of the analysis. Information on keywords is given in Table 1.

 Table 1. Keywords Used in Digital Diplomacy Studies

Keywords	Turkish Equivalents of Keywords	Repetition Number	Total Link Strength
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Digital Diplomacy	Dijital Diplomasi	97	142
Public Diplomacy	Kamu Diplomasisi	62	95
Social Media	Sosyal Medya	41	73
Diplomacy	Diplomasi	36	40
Soft Power	Yumuşak Güç	26	46
Twitter	Twitter	25	52
Foreign Policy	Dış Politika	16	28
China	Çin	14	25
Covid-19	Kovid-19	12	22
Facebook	Facebook	9	24
Africa	Afrika	8	16
Technology	Teknoloji	8	9
International Relations	Uluslararası İlişkiler	8	15
Cultural Diplomacy	Kültürel Diplomasi	7	11
Cyber Diplomacy	Siber Diplomasi	6	4
Nation Branding	Ulus Markalaşması	6	15
Internet Governance	İnternet Yönetimi	6	4
Content Analysis	İçerik Analizi	5	11
Digitalization	Dijitalleşme	5	10
E-Diplomacy	E-Diplomasi	5	6
Economic Diplomacy	Ekonomik Diplomasi	5	2
Gender	Cinsiyet	5	8

When Table 1 is examined, it is observed that the first five most repeated words are 'digital diplomacy' (97), 'public diplomacy' (62), 'social media' (41), 'diplomacy' (36) and 'soft power' (26). On the other hand, when we look at the link strengths of the words, we can figure out that the keyword 'twitter' (52) has the fourth highest link strength. The network visualization of the links of the mentioned keywords is performed in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Formation Visualization of Keywords Used in Digital Diplomacy Studies

When we take a look at Figure 3, it is clear that the keywords are in strong connection with each other. The large link strength is proportional to the size of the circles. A total of 22 words are classified into six clusters. The words in the clusters are included in Table 2. Cluster visualizations are presented in Figure 4.

Table 2. Clusters of Keywords

Clusters (6)	Keywords (22)
Cluster1 (6)	Africa, covid-19, digital diplomacy, e-diplomacy, economic diplomacy, gender
Cluster2 (6)	Cultural diplomacy, digitalization, foreign policy, international relations, public diplomacy, soft power
Cluster3 (4)	Content analysis, facebook, social media, twitter
Cluster4 (3)	China, cyber diplomacy, internet governance
Cluster5 (2)	Diplomacy, technology
Cluster6 (1)	Nation branding



Figure 4. Visualization of Keyword Clusters

Figure 5 should be researched to indicate the connections of the digital diplomacy keyword more clearly.



Figure 5. Digital Diplomacy Keyword Links

When we take a look at the keyword digital diplomacy links, it is inferred that its strongest links are seen as 'public diplomacy', 'diplomacy', 'social media' and 'soft power'. 'Cyber diplomacy', 'digitalization' and 'e-diplomacy' are words that have relatively less connection power. The change in usage of these words over the years is demonstrated in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Change of Keywords in Digital Diplomacy Studies over the Years

When we look at the keywords used in the studies in the last five years, it is observed that words such as 'social media', 'cyber diplomacy', 'twitter' and 'Facebook' have been used more intensively until 2020 while words such as 'international relations', 'e-diplomacy', 'technology' and 'foreign policy' were used in 2017. The keywords 'cultural diplomacy', 'digitalization' and 'covid-19' have been used more frequently since 2020. It can be mentioned that the reason of using the word 'covid-19' in these words stems from the effects of the pandemic process that started at the end of 2019 and still continues.

#### **Author Analysis Findings**

A 'Bibliographic Coupling-Authors' analysis was conducted for the author's findings on the subject of digital diplomacy. It has been figured out that there are four authors who have conducted at least five studies among 569 authors in total. The heatmap related to the authors is presented in Figure 7.



Figure 7. Top Publishing Authors in Digital Diplomacy Studies

When we take a look at the heat maps of the authors of the studies, it is seen that the concentrations are Manor I., Bjola C., Sevin E. and Holmes M. respectively. Descriptive information about the authors is demonstarted in Table 3.

Author	Number of Studies	Number of Citations	<b>Total Link Strength</b>
Manor I.	15	129	476
Bjola C.	10	209	727
Sevin E.	6	37	196
Holmes M.	5	139	483

Table 3. Most Referred and Worked Authors in Digital Diplomacy

It is understood that Manor I. is the author who has the most work on the field. However, it is clear that Bjola C. has the highest number of citations and total link strength. Holmes M. is in second place although the number of citations and link strength is relatively low compared to other authors.

#### **Country Analysis Findings**

Countries in bibliometric pairs were examined to research which countries are more effective in digital diplomacy studies. 19 of the 76 countries in total repeated at least five times as a result of the analysis. The links of the countries and their change over the years are shown in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Countries Where Digital Diplomacy Studies and Change over the Years Happen

When we take a look at the work of the last five years, it is found out that the United States (USA), the Netherlands, and India were the countries with the most studies in 2017. However, the countries with the most studies were Spain, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia in 2018. China, Singapore and Indonesia are placed in the following years. Detailed information about countries is shown in Table 4.

Countries	Number of Studies	Number of Citations	Total Link Strength
United States	98	901	7097
United Kingdom	55	606	5992
Australia	25	292	3845
Russian Federation	19	22	904
Sweden	15	57	1723
Canada	11	69	1201
China	11	47	1085
Netherlands	11	93	815
France	10	68	756
Switzerland	9	70	1062
India	9	56	685
Singapore	7	42	441
South Africa	7	32	477
South Korea	7	86	1055
Spain	7	15	366
Israel	7	68	937
Denmark	6	38	803
Nigeria	5	31	415

Table 4. Countries Having Digital Diplomacy Studies

Indonesia	F	7	<b>01</b> E
Indonesia	5	7	215

USA, United Kingdom, Australia, Russian Federation and Sweden are among the top five countries in terms of the number of studies. However, the Russian Federation is in last place in terms of the number of citations and total link strength. It means that although the number of studies is high, it is relatively less efficient than other countries. The clustering of countries and the heat map are presented in Figure 9.



Figure 9. Clusters of Countries and Heat Map

Countries are generally classified in three different clusters. There are nine countries, namely Denmark, France, Indonesia, Israel, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and USA in the first cluster. There are seven countries consisting of Canada, India, Netherlands, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa and Switzerland in the second cluster. There are Australia, China and South Korea in the third cluster.

# **Resource Analysis Findings**

When the resources of the studies are analyzed, it is seen that there are 207 sources in total. Nine of these sources were repeated five times. Resources found and descriptive researches are presented in Table 5. The links of the sources are shown in Figure 10.

Resource Information	Number of Studies	Number of Citations	Total Link Strength
Place Branding and Public Diplomacy	23	123	885
The Hague Journal of Diplomacy	18	174	659
Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice	9	197	133
South African Journal of International Affairs	9	1	0
International Journal of Communication	7	32	301
Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy	6	15	158
Acm International Conference Proceeding Series	5	5	61
Diplomatic Studies	5	0	425
International Affairs	5	50	74

Table 5. Digital Diplomacy Resources

Although 'Place Branding and Public Diplomacy' is considered the resource which has the most studies (23) and the highest total connection strength (885) on the field of digital diplomacy, 'Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice' takes the first place in terms of the number of citations (197).



Figure 10. Digital Diplomacy Resources

It is observed that there are four clusters in total and 1348 total link strength in the analysis of the resources. There are 28 links in total between the clusters.

# **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Data sets about the digital diplomacy researches were analyzed in this study. In this context, the relations and connections among keywords, authors, countries, and journals were surveyed at the work. These relationships were reported by performing bibliometric analysis and interpreting the maps that emerged as a result of the analysis. The current situation of digital diplomacy in the literature and how digital diplomacy studies have changed over time were revealed in this study.

It was figured out that the five most frequently repeated words were 'digital diplomacy', 'public diplomacy', 'social media', 'diplomacy' and 'soft power' according to the findings obtained as a result of the analysis of the keywords in the studies accessed from the Scopus database. This result is similar to the point of mentioning many different concepts in the definition of digital diplomacy, as Manor stated. When we take a look at the change in the use of keywords over the years, while words such as 'e-diplomacy', 'technology' and 'foreign policy' were used in the 2010s, words such as 'social media', 'digitalization' and 'cultural diplomacy' were used more intensively in the 2020s. As the reason for this, it can be shown that digital can be reached to more audiences with less cost after the 2020s. As it is known, different generations (such as BB generation, X generation, Y generation, Z generation) live in the same time period and these generations, which are different with their characteristics, have become more accessible in terms of digital. Therefore, different generations communicate with each other more easily and it is possible for public institutions and organizations to communicate more easily with these generations. It is figured out that Manor, I is the author who has the most work. Bjola C. is in the highest author in terms of the number of citations, and Holmes M. is ranked in the second place. Although Henry Kissinger's Diplomacy is evaluated as the main text and it is considered as the main source in academic studies, it is not digital diplomacy, and it shows the feature of work directly on diplomacy. In this context, it is not surprising that although Manor and Njola and Holmes's studies are not

the most used works, they are prevalent regarding both theoretical and practical aspects. It has been seen that the USA, United Kingdom, Australia, Russian Federation and Sweden are among the countries that give the most studies considering the analysis findings of the countries where digital diplomacy studies are carried out. The mentioned countries are also strong countries at foreign policy, moreover, they are also countries that have the right to speak in international organizations such as the UN and NATO. These countries are developed not only in academic works, but also in studies on political theory. Thus, the USA, the United Kingdom, Australia, the Russian Federation and Sweden are countries which possess the most studies on digital diplomacy. It has been determined that the although Russian Federation has advanced in terms of number of studies, it is in the last place in terms of the number of citations. This finds out that even though the number of studies in the Russian Federation is high, it is less interactive with the literature compared to other countries. "Place Branding and Public Diplomacy" is placed in the first place considering the journals with the highest number of studies. "Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice" ranks first in terms of the number of citations. When we consider the change in digital diplomacy studies over the years, we can say that there was little or no work until 2008, but fluctuations were experienced until 2017, but it developed and increased between 2017 and 2020. This increase has been replaced by a decrease after 2020 and it is currently back to its 2019 issue. Especially after the second half of 2019, the effects of the Covid-19 virus can be cited as one of the reasons for the increase. It can be mentioned that digital diplomacy has also gained acceleration during the pandemic process, as in all areas of trade, education and training activities and so on.

This study is important in terms of lighting the way on future studies and field research on digital diplomacy. There are hardly any studies in which digital diplomacy studies are evaluated bibliographically in the literature review. It is also important to fill the gap in the literature in this context. Only researches in the Scopus database were considered and VOSviewer analysis software was performed in the study. The work can be repeated in different dimensions in subsequent studies using different databases and different analysis software.

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