



Mapping Social Media Research Trends in Hospitality and Tourism: A Bibliometric Perspective

Ishani Sharma¹, Namita Sharma^{2*} and Nitin Patwa³

¹School of Hospitality and Tourism, Bahra University, Himachal Pradesh, India.

²Punjab Institute of Management & Technology, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab, India.

³S P Jain School of Global Management, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

*namitaresearch19@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social media has transformed the landscape of the hospitality and tourism industry, facilitating real-time interactions, user-generated content, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), while also creating challenges for businesses. The rapid growth of technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and mobile platforms has further accelerated social media's impact on tourist behavior, creating the need for a comprehensive understanding of these trends.

Purpose: This study aims to map the research trends in social media within hospitality and tourism, identifying key themes, influential papers, and emerging research areas. By conducting a bibliometric analysis, this paper seeks to provide insights into the evolution of social media research in the industry and highlight future directions for scholars.

Methods: A bibliometric analysis was conducted on 1604 documents published between 2004 and 2022, retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection. The analysis employed R software and the Biblioshiny interface to perform descriptive assessments, including keyword co-occurrence, co-citation networks, and visual depictions of research trends. The study examined publication types, author collaboration, country productivity, and key topics in the field.

Results: The study revealed significant growth in research on social media's impact on tourist behavior, with a 35.11% annual growth rate. Key themes include eWOM, destination marketing, and consumer behavior, with interdisciplinary contributions from marketing, e-commerce, and tourism studies. The most relevant sources and authors were identified, with "Journal of Business Research" being the most prolific journal. Technological advancements, particularly in artificial intelligence and big data, were found to drive much of the recent research.

Conclusion: This study provides a holistic overview of social media research in hospitality and tourism, highlighting its interdisciplinary nature and growing global collaboration. The findings underline the importance of integrating advanced technologies into future research, offering a structured framework for scholars to explore emerging areas such as corporate social responsibility and personalized consumer engagement.



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1. Introduction

Social media has become increasingly influential and has changed the dynamics of many industries, one among them being that of hospitality and tourism (Nusair, 2020). On a global scale, this industry has started to take into account the three major social media platforms, namely Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, for their information-seeking, sharing experiences, and influencing others' choices. This integration of user-generated content and real-time interactions has freed the consumers while at the same time caused problems and challenges for the businesses involved in tourism and hospitality (Kitsios *et al.*, 2022). As such, understanding

how social media influences the different dimensions of these businesses has become a crucial area of study. Attention towards the relationship between social media and tourism has been growing in the last decade, not only by scholars but also by practitioners. Most of the studies focused on different themes, such as electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), online reviews, destination branding, and buyer behavior in digital environments (Donthu *et al.*, 2021; Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Despite such growth, a wide gap still existed in understanding the evolving trends and focus areas within the industry, especially in the context of technological advancement and changes in consumer

behavior. The emergence of technologies supporting big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and mobile technologies accelerated the usage of social media in the tourism sector, and this demands updating information about newer developments on the part of researchers (Hays *et al.*, 2013). Despite this rich body of literature, a number of gaps can still be identified in understanding the full scope of social media's influence on hospitality and tourism. While previous studies have focused on specific aspects such as the role of social media in destination marketing or consumer decision-making, little effort has been made to broaden research trends across the field. This provides an objective, quantitative means of addressing this gap by ascertaining influential papers, key themes, and emerging areas of research. Therefore, bibliometric analysis informs this study in its search to give a holistic view of social media research within the context of hospitality and tourism, pointing out the current trends, thematic areas, and future research directions. This paper contributes to a number of ways; for example, it provides a systematic mapping based on the most influential research published on social media in the hospitality and tourism industry, using bibliometric techniques to identify top-cited papers, authors, and journals. Second, this study underlines how the research of social media has evolved from early exploratory studies to an increasingly complex analysis that embeds state-of-the-art technologies like big data and artificial intelligence. Third, this study identifies gaps in research, and hence, it may provide insight into new areas of exploration that could consequently guide scholars in developing a more cohesive research agenda. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: In Section 2, we review the relevant literature available for the study. Section 3 describes the research methodology, including study design, data collection, data analysis & visualization, followed by interpretation in Section 4, covering the discussion of the results. The implications of the study are covered in Section 5.

2. Review of Literature

The increasing influence of social media on hospitality and tourism has springboarded quite a remarkable level of research, in which scholars explored consumer behavior, destination branding, and electronic word-of-mouth. From simple communication tools, social media platforms have grown over the past twenty years into dynamic spaces of user-generated content that are fundamentally changing the way tourists plan, experience, and share their journeys. This literature review identifies the main themes dominating the study of the influence of social media on consumer behavior in tourism, the role of online reviews, and the integration of big data and artificial intelligence into tourism marketing strategies. The following literature review establishes the present status of research on these themes and looks for

gaps that might be considered for future studies. Social media significantly influences various aspects of consumer behavior and decision-making processes in any industry, such as hospitality and tourism. Previous research has focused on various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter in order to understand their influence on destination choice behavior and experiences and reviews of tourists (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Of these, special interest is being gained by UGC platforms because it is through electronic word-of-mouth that tourists are able to share their experiences and influence the choices of other people regarding tourism destinations. Major changes brought about by this digital revolution have empowered the consumers, who now have greater ease in co-creating destination imagery and marketing campaigns. Among the most significant contemporary phenomena influencing the tourism sector is the rise of eWOM and online review platforms (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Indeed, several studies have documented that tourists make considerable use of online reviews to inform their decisions related to destinations, accommodations, and attractions. This motivation is, in essence, grounded in the desire to report back to fellow consumers. According to Ayeh *et al.* (2013), eWOM also plays an important role in destination branding and reputation management. With websites like TripAdvisor, this ability of consumers to voice opinions has caused a shift in power and therefore threatened the traditional marketing methods, as reported by Zhu and Zhang (2010). Most researchers have focused more on social media's influence on the behavior of tourists, mainly in the realms of decision-making, destination image, and satisfaction (Leung *et al.*, 2013). Social media sites thus offer a chance for direct and quick information dissemination affecting the methods through which tourists plan and manage expectations of their tour (Litvin *et al.*, 2008). In fact, the interactions over social media are usually one of the leading sources to inspire and inform potential travelers with regard to their choice of destination and booking behavior (Fotis *et al.*, 2012). Once again, this new generation, those millennial and Generation Z tourists, relies on peer-generated content when making their decisions either to travel or not, according to Zhu and Zhang (2010). Social media has nowadays become a powerful tool for destination branding (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). The fact that it can engage tourists through social platforms, on the other hand, is used with regard to user-generated content for marketing purposes. This shift has taken place in promoting tourism. Hays *et al.* (2013) and Mariani *et al.* (2016) presented how destinations could use social media to build and maintain their brand identities through visual storytelling on platforms such as Instagram. Such platforms provide much more authentic and engaging narratives, thus contributing to stronger tourist engagement

in brand loyalty (Kim & Kim, 2020). There has been increased interest with the development of the field in the application of advanced technologies, including big data analytics and artificial intelligence, in tourism social media strategies. Big data has come to be an important feature that enables the tourism business to analyze large chunks of social media data by providing insights into the preferences, behaviors, and trends of the consumer (Jimenez-Marquez, 2019). Besides, AI-powered tools, such as chatbots and recommendation systems, decrease frictions in tourism experiences by making them more personalized. It increases customer satisfaction and gratification, according to Buhalis and Sinarta (2019). Most importantly, these technology changes have created new avenues for study in the aspect of investigating the use of AI in predicting tourist behavior for marketing effort optimization. With the contemporary extensive volume of literature on the impacts of social media on tourism, a number of research studies are thick on the ground. Yet a few research gaps remain. In fact, all the studies have had their focus on either a specific social media platform or specific aspects like eWOM and/or destination marketing. A relatively smaller number of studies try to provide an overview of the trends in research in this area. Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) with regard to tourism, the topics of CSR and sustainability linked to social media have been touched upon very rarely in the literature so far, as highlighted by Mariani and Borghi (2018). In addition, while the adoption of AI and big data when researching social media is a rather new and popular application, much more research that explores how AI and big data have the potential to be integrated into hospitality and tourism studies remains highly relevant, as noted by Buhalis (2019).

3. Methodology

The methodology of the study unfolds in five major steps, according to the frameworks developed by Cobo *et al.* (2011), Zupic and Čater (2015), and Aria and Cuccurullo (2017):

- Study Design,
- Data Collection,
- Data Analysis,
- Data Visualization, and
- Interpretation.

3.1. Study Design

Initially, the study's objectives and research questions were established. The next step involved choosing a suitable database for creating a dataset for bibliometric analysis. The Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection was selected due to its comprehensive coverage of authoritative and impactful

academic publications across various disciplines. The search strategy was crafted by combining relevant terms like "social media," "digital platform," "online review," "social networking sites," "user-generated content," "influencer marketing," "eWOM," "behavioral intention," "revisit intention," "recommendation intention," "word of mouth," "loyalty intention," "tourist engagement," and "tourist satisfaction. Searches were conducted across titles, abstracts, and keywords, focusing on full-length journal articles in English while excluding conference papers, reviews, and reports from 2004 to 2022. A second search refined these results further.

3.2. Data Collection

The initial search yielded 3508 publications. This number was narrowed down to 2598 articles after focusing on journal articles and then further reduced to 2559 by applying an English language filter. After a thorough review of titles and abstracts, 955 articles were deemed unrelated to the research aim, leaving 1604 articles for analysis. These were downloaded in Bib format and uploaded to the Bibliometrix R package for bibliometric analysis using R Studio.

3.3. Data Analysis and Visualization

This stage leveraged R software and the Biblioshiny web interface for bibliometric assessments to perform a descriptive analysis and examine the research landscape, including keyword co-occurrence and co-citation networks. The findings were visually depicted through graphs and tables.

3.4. Interpretation

The final step involved interpreting the data. This began with an overview of key bibliometric indicators such as document types, annual publication trends, scientific sources and their growth, authorship patterns, keyword usage, citation metrics, country-specific outputs and citations, and international collaboration networks.

4. Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

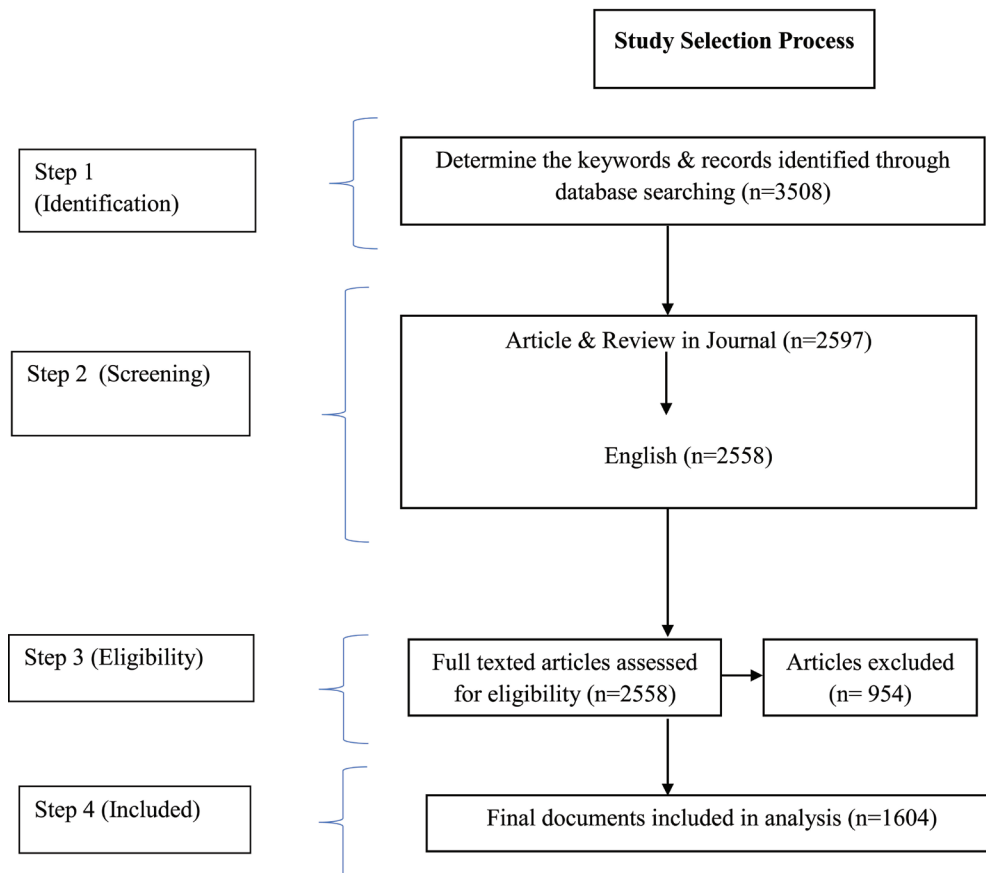
Timespan	2004-2022
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	384
Documents	1604
Annual Growth Rate %	35.11
Document Average Age	5.97

Average Citations Per Doc	75.64
References	81592
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	1313
Author's Keywords (DE)	3948
AUTHORS	
Authors	3498
Authors of Single-Authored Docs	142
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-Authored Docs	156
Co-Authors Per Doc	2.84
International Co-Authorships %	28.3
DOCUMENT TYPES	
Article	1532
Review	72

The bibliometric analysis of social media in influencing the behavioral intentions of tourists research from 2004 to 2022

provides a comprehensive overview of the field's research landscape (refer to Figure 1). The analysis covers nearly two decades, indicating a broad temporal scope (refer to Table 1). The field draws from 384 different sources, including journals and reviews, indicating a diverse set of publishing outlets. A total of 1604 documents were analyzed, showing a modest but significant body of literature on social media and behavioral intentions of tourists. The annual growth rate of 35.11% indicates a slow but steady increase in research output over the years. The average age of documents is 5.97 years, indicating ongoing research and interest. The research on social media and behavioral intentions of tourists is well-cited, suggesting its influence and relevance to the academic community. The field has a large and diverse research community, with 3498 authors involved. Most research involves collaboration, with an average of 2.84 co-authors per document. International co-authorships are significant, indicating a global effort. The majority of documents are articles, with 72 review papers essential for summarizing and synthesizing existing research. The bibliometric analysis reveals a growing, internationally collaborative, and influential field with a rich and diverse research agenda.

Table 2: Study Selection Process



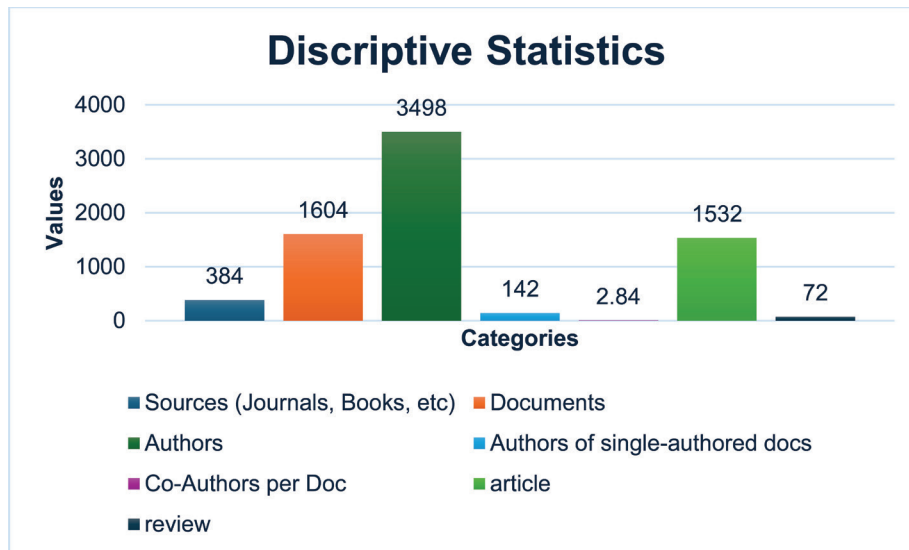


Figure 1: Visualization of Descriptive Analysis

The graph shows the annual scientific production of articles in the field of social media's influence on tourists' behavioral intentions from 2004 to 2022 (refer to Figure 2). Here are some key observations and interpretations:

- **Initial Growth (2004-2010):** The field had a slow start; this reflects the early stages of academic research, with very few articles published. We can also say that during this period, social media was just beginning to emerge as a tool relevant to tourism.
- **Steady Increase (2010-2015):** There is a noticeable increase in articles published annually. This period

shows a significant growth of social media platforms, as their impact on tourism behavior. There is a steady rise in the publications as scholars and researchers have begun to explore and contribute more on this topic.

- **Significant Growth and Fluctuations (2016-2022):** From 2016 onwards, the graph shows a rise, indicating significant growth in the number of publications annually. The fluctuations in certain years could reflect changes in tourism trends or technological advancements, as well as other global or regional events that impacted research activity.

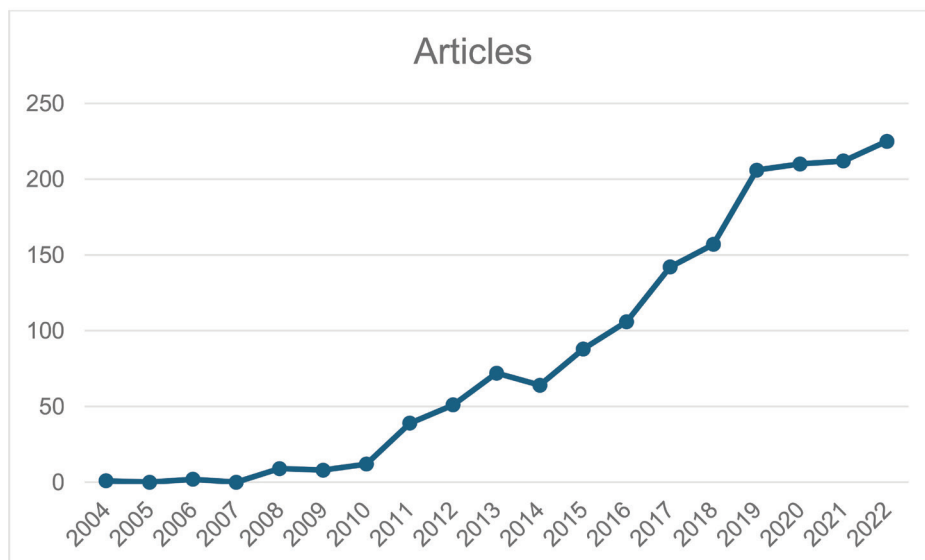


Figure 2: Annual Scientific Production

Figure 3 shows the main academic journals that contribute to the research on social media's influence on the behavioral intentions of tourists. The Journal of Business Research has the most, at 54 documents, showing that there is a lot of research on how social media impacts business and consumer behavior in tourism. The second, Decision Support Systems, has 35 documents, suggesting that technology is imperative in utilizing social media platforms to affect tourists' decision-making. In the same light, the International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality contains 33 documents, and the International Journal of Hospitality Management also contains 32 documents on what role social media plays in the hospitality industries, with a particular focus on how the online platforms shape the customers' experiences and decision-making. Other

relevant sources are Tourism Management, representing 29 documents, and Electronic Commerce Research and Applications, which is represented with 30 documents, talking about the importance of social media for the strategy of e-commerce and tourism management. Journals such as the European Journal of Marketing with 28 documents and the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services with 28 documents focus on marketing strategies and consumer behavior influenced by social media. As the figure depicts, research on the impact that social media has on tourists' behavioral intentions is actually very interdisciplinary, which includes business, hospitality, e-commerce, and marketing as the representations of wide academic interest in how social media drives the tourists' behavioral intentions.

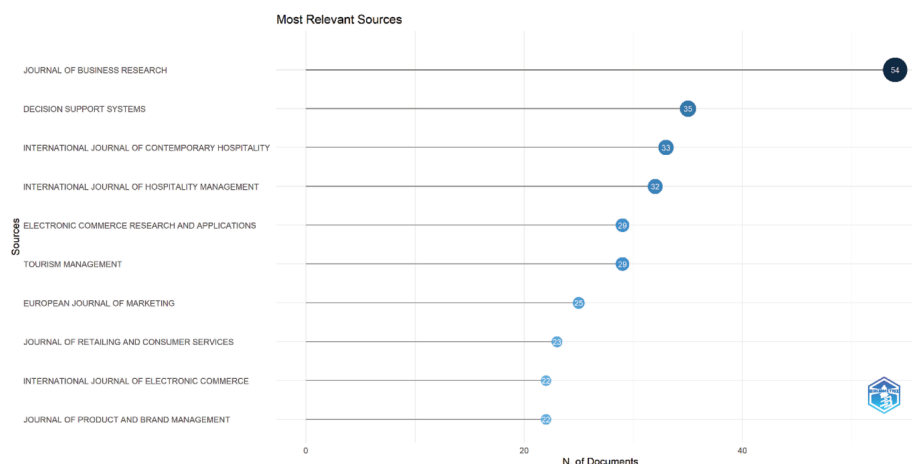


Figure 3: Most Relevant Sources

Figure 4 depicts the most relevant authors concerning the influence of social media on tourists' behavioral intentions ranked by the number of their publications. The figure of KIM J is the most productive with 15 documents, followed by ZHANG Z and XU X, with 12 and 11 publications respectively. Others, like LAW R, hold a key position with 10 publications, while FLIERIR R, LI X, and LIU Y come up with around 8-9 publications. DATTA B, LEE J, and WANG Y have fewer documents, reflecting lesser engagement. Conventional contribution differentials are shown in the chart above, with the bigger circle having more publications. Dominated by KIM J, but the count of publications does not signify the quality or impact of the research findings since the authors with fewer documents could have impactful work. The figure, in general, is a good starting point for determining the important contributors but needs to be put in combination with citation or impact data for a deeper understanding of their influence in the field.

Figure 5 overviews the productivity of various authors over time, measured by productivity against the number

of articles published and TCs on a yearly basis. Some authors, such as KIM J, ZHANG Z, XU X, and LAW R, have presented a constant publication record between 2008 and 2022; however, these authors have seen more recently an increase in the article count. FLIERIR R has shown a peak of productivity around the year 2020, with larger circles meaning more publications. Other prolific authors consistently publish, such as LI X, LIU Y, and DATTA B, but they publish fewer every year. Circle size corresponds to the number of the article(s) published, while color shade represents citation count. Darker shades mean higher citation count. Quite a lot of authors received extremely high citations in the years 2020 and 2021. Only a few authors, WANG Y and LEE J, published the least number of articles and did so rarely. The chart seems to indicate that a few authors are sustained in high output, while others contribute only occasionally but occur as highly influential at some point in time. This visualization helps in spotting the trends in research output and influence across years.

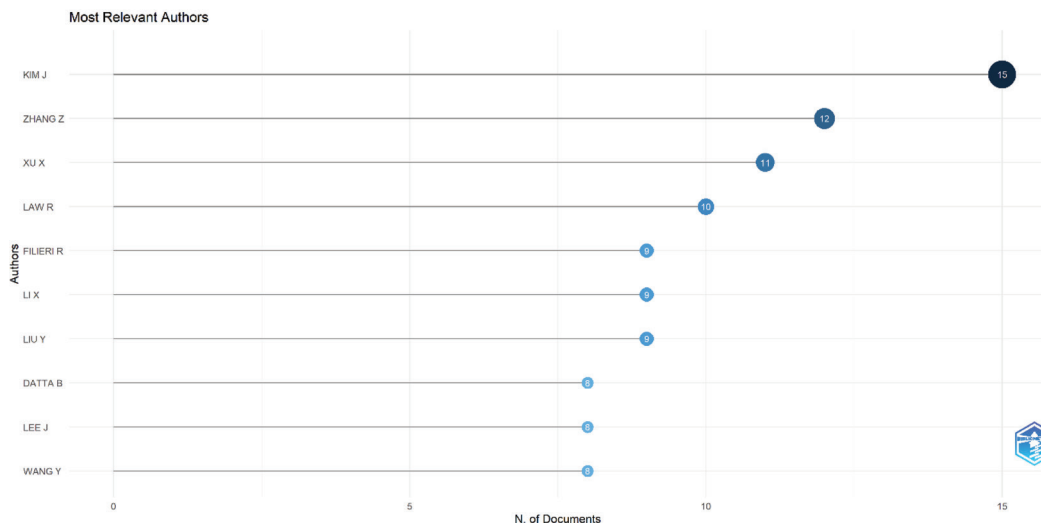


Figure 4: Most Relevant Author

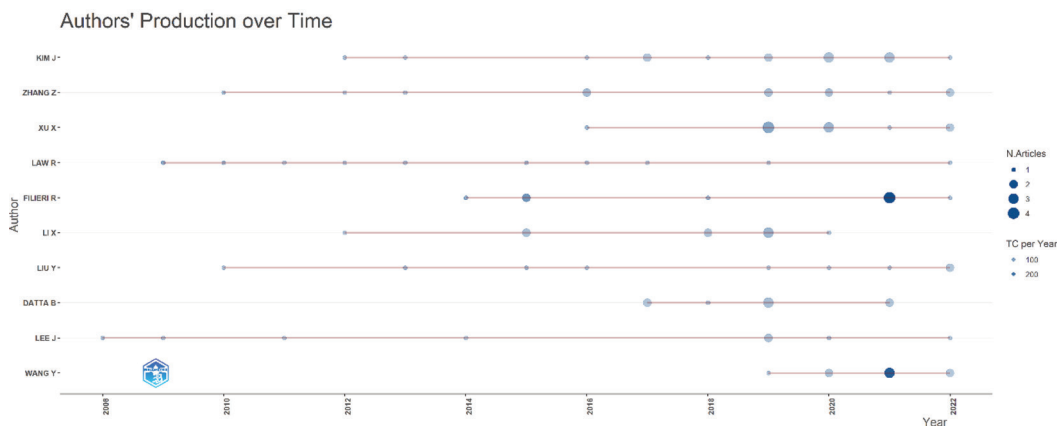


Figure 5: Author's Productivity Over Time

Figure 6 shows the most relevant affiliations ranking according to the number of articles published regarding the influence of social media on tourists' behavioral intentions. The ranking is headed by the School of Management with 37 articles, followed by Griffith University, University of Nevada, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and Universiti Putra Malaysia, contributing all with 26 articles. Further prominent contributors include the University of Valencia, at 25 articles, and Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, at 24. Other universities that fall into the category of having more modest contributions, at 20 each, are the University of Central Florida, Islamic Azad University, and the University of Seville. This figure underlines dramatic contributions within various world academic establishments and illustrates their contribution to further research in this subject area.

Figure 7 provides a view of productivity for these various affiliations over time after tabulating the number of articles published by each institution from 2006 to 2022. The School of Management really took off, in terms of productivity, around 2015 and, by 2022, was leading the total publications. Griffith University and the University of Nevada follow closely behind with steady growth from around 2010 forward. While the other two, Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Universiti Putra Malaysia, are also increasing their productivity quite consistently, the pace of increase is rather slow. Taking all the publications of these five institutions into consideration, it could be noticed that there have been greater publications within the recent years concerning the research area on the influences of social media on tourists' behavioral intention. This chart depicts the broadening contribution of these key institutions across time.

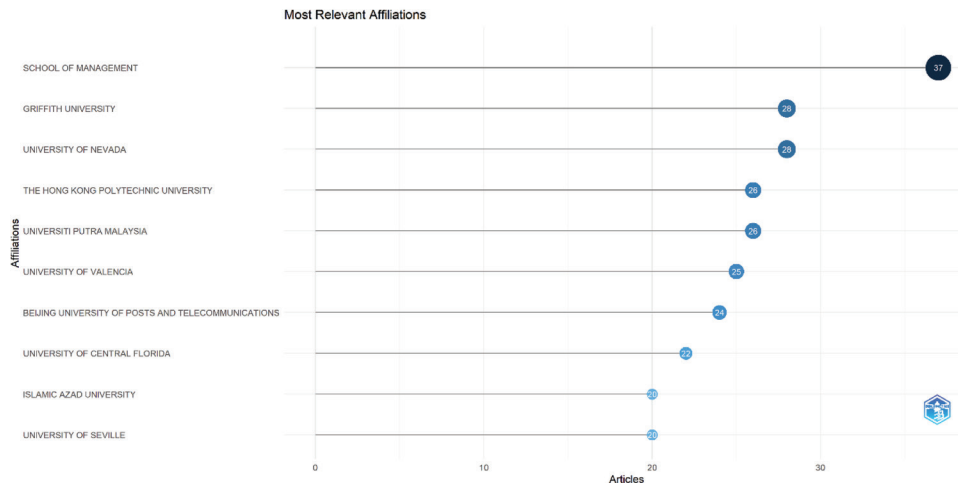


Figure 6: Most Relevant Affiliation

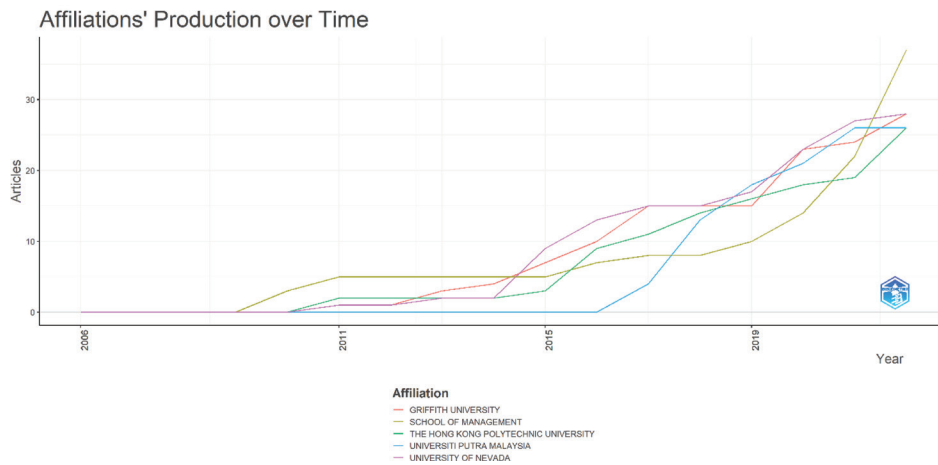


Figure 7: Affiliation's Productivity Over Time

Figure 8 shows some evidence from the world map, where different countries have different shadings corresponding to the number of documents that they have contributed to research dealing with the influence of social media on tourists' behavioral intentions. Darker shades signal higher productivity; thus, the most prolific seems to be the United States of America, followed by countries such as China, India, and various European nations. Figure 9 completes this, showing the production of articles in time for the five most important countries according to the impact factor: China, India, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the USA. In this graph the trend of the number of publications is increasing but with steep growth, and the predominance of China is from its series from 2013, proof of the existing evidence about growing scientific production with respect to this field in that country. The USA demonstrates regular growth, although at a slower rate. Further, India, Spain,

and the United Kingdom exhibit a steady, moderate rise in productivity. Coming together, these figures show not only the geographic spread but also the temporal evolution of research contributions of leading countries.

Figure 10 represents the most internationally cited documents during the period studied in the area of evidence on the influence of social media on the tourism consumers' behavioral intentions. The first place in the general ranking is occupied by a document entitled Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms. What motivates consumers to articulate their product irritates on the Internet is Hennig-Thurau (2004), J Interact Mark, with 3697 global citations, which explains the huge impact of this document in the field. Other highly cited works are those by Litvin SW (2008), Tour Manager, with 896 citations, and Zhu F. The two base papers are thereby included (Mark, 2010)—786 citations. Works of the following authors are also highly

influential: Trusov M. (2009); Mark(2010); and Chu S. (2011)—533 and 393 citations, respectively. Further, the persistent citation scores of the work of Kozinets RV 2010, J Mark, among others in the list, which range from 318 to 377, show the immense value of contributions that a few

studies have made toward an understanding of the role that social media plays in shaping the behavior of tourists. This is the situation where a couple of key papers have dominated the citation metrics globally.

Country Scientific Production

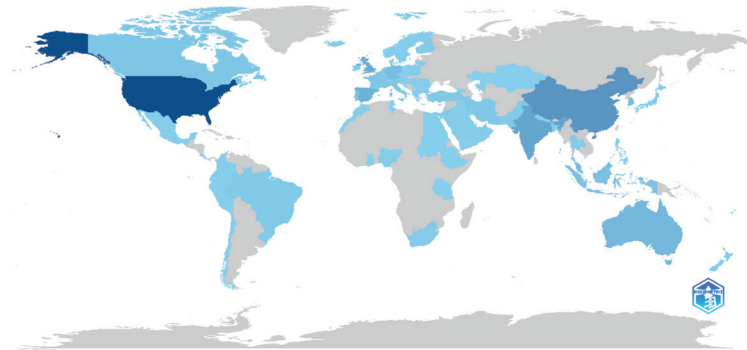


Figure 8: Country’s Productivity in Terms of Number of Documents

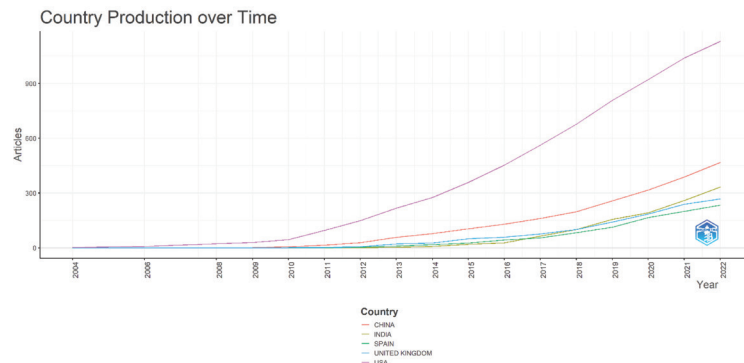


Figure 9: Country Production Over Time

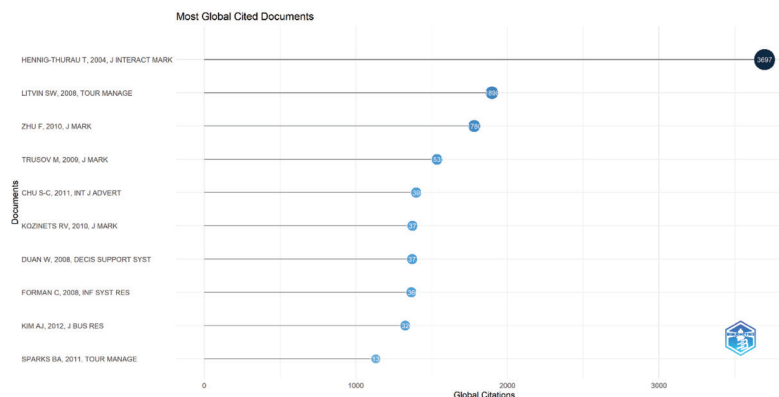


Figure 10: Most Global Cited Documents

Figures 11 and 12 reflect the word cloud and tree map, respectively, of some key themes and concepts from the research into how social media affects tourists' behavioral intentions. The most dominant terms in this word cloud are "social media," "social networking (online)," "sales," "marketing," and "word of mouth," as their size suggests that they were the most discussed themes. Other relevant terms are "electronic commerce," "internet," and "online review." Figure 12: Tree Map The themes have been further elaborated in the Tree Map to show their respective

proportions: "social media" takes up 7% of the total research focus, followed by "sales" at 7%, "social networking (online)" at 6%, and "marketing" at 5%. Most of both figures stress that digital platforms and online interactions are dominant in the shaping of consumer behavior and decision-making within tourism. These visuals give a very formidable overview of the major areas of priority in the domain of this research area, with a strong emphasis on digital marketing, consumer behavior, and electronic word of mouth.



Figure 11: Word Cloud



Figure 12: Tree Map

Figure 13 depicts the trending topics in research related to the influences of social media on tourists' behavioral intentions. The size of the circles reflects the term's frequency. Major topics like 'social media,' 'electronic word of mouth (eWOM),' 'sales,' and 'market' have grown steadily since 2015, turning them into core topics of the research area. The emerging topics of 'innovation,' 'corporate social responsibility,' and 'user-generated content' have only recently reached popular appeal, reflecting shifts in research focus towards more diverse and nuanced foci of digital marketing and consumer behavior. Other buzz-worthy topics are 'data mining,' 'online reviews,' and 'social networking online.' These (infrastructural) topics have considerable activity, reflecting the fact that this field of study is usually grounded in data analytics and digital platforms. The trend in the themes, as depicted on the timeline, evolves from consumer product-online platform themes to broader themes of social responsibility to innovation in the digital era. This trend analysis underlines that research in this area is dynamic and changing.

Figure 14, Co-occurrence network of keywords in research into social media's influence upon tourists' behavioral intentions. Larger terms, which are also more central, such as "social media," "sales," "electronic word of mouth," and "electronic commerce," are those most frequently co-occurring keywords and, therefore, core topics in this research area. These terms are closely related to each other, especially to other related concepts such as "word of mouth" and "marketing," which suggests that a very close relationship exists among digital platforms, consumer behavior, and marketing strategies in tourism. Clusters are clear in the network, with the red nodes representing keywords related to e-commerce and sales and the blue nodes associated with consumer behavior, tourist destinations, and internet use. The green cluster shows the evidence of decision-making and marketing with its interaction in social media. This network visualization helps in the identification of the key areas of focus and how they interact with one another, showing the many facets of research on social media's impact on tourism.

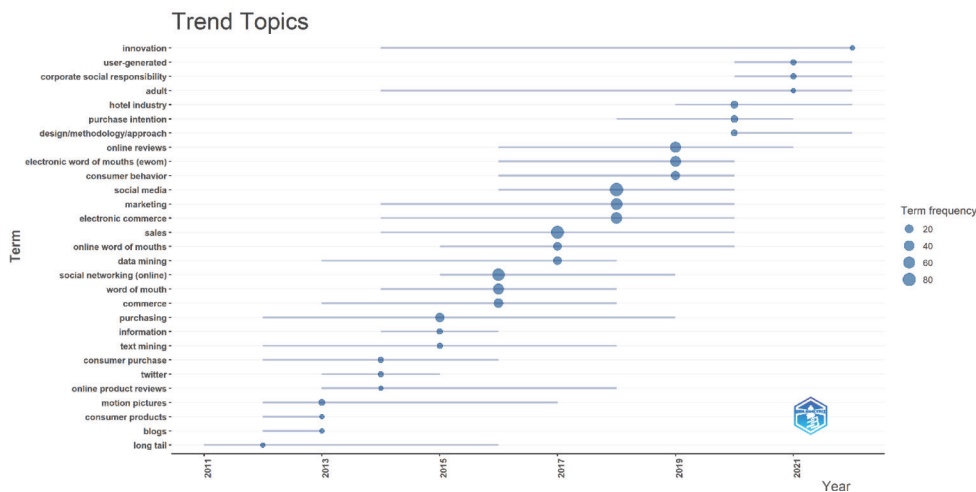


Figure 13: Trending Topics



Figure 14: Co-Occurrence Network of Keywords

5. Implications

5.1. Theoretical Implications

- **Expansion of Research Area:** The study offers a comprehensive mapping of social media research in hospitality and tourism, highlighting the evolution of research themes from early exploratory studies to more complex analysis involving large data and artificial intelligence. This expands the theoretical understanding of how social media influences consumer behavior and decision-making in tourism.
- **Framework for Future Research:** The identification of key themes, such as eWOM (electronic word of mouth, online reviews, and consumer behavior), provides a structured framework for further theoretical exploration, particularly in emerging topics like corporate social responsibility and innovation.
- **Interdisciplinary Integration:** The research on social media appears to be one interdisciplinary area, drawing its contribution from marketing-oriented e-commerce and consumer behavior. Therefore, to some extent, a theoretical integration between disciplines is already necessary when developing research on how social media platforms affect tourism.
- **Role of Technology in Consumer Decision Making:** This research focuses on increasingly deploying advanced technologies using big data analytics and artificial intelligence in tourism. Theoretically, this would be a signal that shifts the paradigm in studying consumptive behavior, extending from merely traditional models to more technologically driven frameworks.

5.2. Practical Implications

- **Strategies for Marketing:** For hospitality and tourism practitioners, the findings indicate marketing strategies that will drive consumer purchase decisions through the use of social media platforms. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to streamline efforts geared towards applying various tools such as e-WOM and reviews to facilitate online customer engagement in facilitating more sales.
- **Personalized Customer Engagement:** The increasing relevance of big data and artificial intelligence in such studies underlines the fact that businesses can use these platforms to fully personalize the experience for the tourists. The matched marketing and customer-engaging techniques based on data analytics can show much-improved customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility:** Considering this increased interest in corporate social responsibility as a research topic, even tourism businesses should be concerned with social and environmental problems in

their use of social media strategies. This can enhance brand reputation and gain customer trust.

- **Global Collaboration:** On analysis of the trend in international co-authorship and global collaborations, evidence was proven that exists for tourism businesses in developing global stances within their strategies. The engagement opportunities opened by social media platforms offer a wider outreach and influence when exploring international markets.
- **Adaptation to Moving Trends:** Social media playgrounds have grown so big, fast, and their role in the tourism industry is changing so fast that businesses operating in this industry need to be abreast of emerging online and technological trends. This becomes imperative if one is going to remain competitive in the dynamic tourism business.

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Ishani Sharma: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data curation, Formal analysis, Visualization, Writing – Original write-up; Namita Sharma: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – editing, and reviewing; Nitin Patwa: Conceptualization, Investigation, Project administration, Supervision, Visualization, Writing – editing, and reviewing.

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Chitkara University, Saraswati Kendra, SCO 160-161, Sector 9-C,
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