



Article

Exploring the Relationship between Social Media and Tourist Experiences: A Bibliometric Overview

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Abstract: In recent years, the relationship between the tourism experience and social media has become an increasingly popular research topic. Previous research has focused only on certain aspects of the tourism experience and social media, but none have covered the subject in depth. To fill this gap, this study takes a holistic approach and combines both concepts simultaneously. This article presents a new overview of scientific production through an in-depth bibliometric analysis on the “Scopus” platform, using the two software packages “VOSviewer” and “R Studio”. This article presents a synthesis of 62 papers published between 2013 and 2023, using citation and co-occurrence analysis to identify key trends and connections in research on this topic. We highlight the most researched concepts and the most important connections between various publications. Our analysis presents the most prolific research community, the evolution of research and the most active journals regarding this topic.

Keywords: tourist experience; social media; bibliometric analysis; citation; co-word (co-occurrence)



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1. Introduction

Experience isn't just about what happens to someone; it's about how someone responds to what happens to them (Decroly 2015). In other words, two people can have similar experiences, but their responses and reactions to these experiences can be very different. This quote underlines the importance of our ability to interpret and make sense of what happens to us and our ability to use these experiences to grow and learn. It implies that everyone has the power to choose how they react to life's events and that this can have a significant impact on our emotional well-being and personal development.

It is interesting to note that tourism research has been slow to explore the physical and intellectual aspects of the tourism experience that visitors undergo during their travels or stays (Decroly 2015). In its early days, this research focused more on the economic and geographical aspects of tourism, emphasizing flows, frequentation and benefits for destinations. From the 1970s onwards, tourism began to be studied from a more anthropological, sociological and psychological perspective, allowing us to consider the visitors themselves—their culture, motivations, representations, practices, emotions and sensations before, during and after their stays (Cohen 1979; Nash 1978). This new approach shines a light on interactions between tourists and destinations and devices designed to stimulate practice and evoke emotions and feelings in tourists (Decroly 2015).

As the tourism experience evolves via interactions among visitors, social media starts to play a part. Social media, as defined by (Obar and Wildman 2015), are digital tools that facilitate the production and dissemination of knowledge, concepts and other kinds of

expression via online communities and networks. Certainly, social media, which originally emerged in the late 1990s, are now widely used, with over 4 billion members worldwide ([Number of Worldwide Social Network Users 2027 | Statista 2016](#)). This powerful type of connection, which offers a wide reach, quick responses, accessibility and a range of interactive exchanges, has revolutionized communication in the hotel and tourism sectors ([Leung et al. 2015](#)). Benefits include greater internet visibility, increased income and online consumer involvement. The use of social media in this field has been extensively studied in the past, but quantitative research in bibliometric analysis is still necessary for a thorough knowledge of the relationships and trends among earlier studies ([Leung et al. 2015](#)).

Bibliometrics is a sort of statistical analysis of publications that provides a quantitative and qualitative overview of the academic literature, according to [Benckendorff and Zehrer \(2013\)](#) and Nicola [De Bellis \(2009\)](#). Using bibliometric data, it is now possible to gain a broad understanding of how the corpus of knowledge of a certain subject has grown over time. The information obtained in a database, such as citations, authors, keywords and journals read, may be examined using a variety of approaches, including citation analysis, co-citation analysis, bibliographic coupling with citations and co-word analysis with keywords. This study aims to fill a research vacuum by conducting a quantitative and systematic analysis of the literature on the tourism experience and social media in prestigious scientific journals. This article uses a bibliometric technique to expose and depict the development of this field of study in order to accomplish its goal. It combines citation analysis with co-word analysis.

In this article, the first part is devoted to a literature review including the conceptual presentation of the tourism experience and social media. In the methodology section, we describe bibliometrics and the steps we followed to collect and analyze the data. Finally, the bibliometric analysis presents a discussion and concluding remarks, including some limitations and suggestions for improvement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *The Tourism Experience, a Pivotal Concept in Tourism Research*

Although it has long been regarded as a crucial area of study, understanding the tourism experience is still one of the most difficult tasks. Depending on the type of trip and location, the tourist experience varies ([Yu et al. 2021](#)). Individual experiences may also vary based on visitor demographics, goals and preferences. Currently the idea of tourism experience has become important for both practitioners and researchers ([Bosangit et al. 2015](#)). In general, current research focuses on the analysis of the nature, characteristics and goals of the tourism experience ([Kim 2010](#)). Through leisure activities, visitors might learn something new and different from their daily lives. Moreover, the experiential vision redefines the role of tourism professionals and tourists by considering tourists as full actors in the creation of their own experiences.

The tourist experience is at the core of fundamental theoretical research in tourism studies, and the application of grounded theory to research on the tourist experience is becoming increasingly widespread ([Xu et al. 2023](#)). Of course, there are many definitions of a tourist experience. [Larsen \(2007\)](#) defines this concept as a past personal travel-related event strong enough to have entered long-term memory. Some researchers of the tourism experience define from the point of view of destination marketers or the tourism industry, viewing tourists as consumers and considering that the economic and marketing importance of tourism activities lies in their consumption and spending ([Moutinho 1987](#)). [Quan and Wang \(2004\)](#) believe that tourists travel to experience something different from their daily lives, which they describe as a peak experience. However, [McCabe \(2002\)](#) considers that the tourist experience, as a whole, includes both peak tourist experiences and auxiliary tourist experiences such as eating, sleeping and playing. The latter are essential to the existence of the former. [Dittmer and Griffin \(1993\)](#) argue that food consumption is not only a means of generating revenue for the destination but also an essential component of the tourism experience. [Little \(1994\)](#) sees the tourism experience as a particular type of gaze

that integrates the power of the tourism industry and mass media institutions and is shaped and molded by the dominant culture, values and discourse (Godovykh and Tasci 2020).

Cohen (1979) defines the tourist experience as the relationship between people and their view of the world according to the society to which they belong. This definition requires a holistic understanding of the visitor, his society and his destination experience, based on personal, social and cultural factors. The tourism experience is therefore no longer an optional added value but an essential benefit of any tourism offering (Larsen 2007). As Pine and Gilmore (1999) emphasize, creating a memorable experience is paramount. These two authors define the tourism experience by focusing on the emotional, physical, mental and intellectual impressions people make at an event. Tung and Ritchie (2011) describe the tourism experiences as “subjective (affective, cognitive and behavioral) evaluations and processes of events associated with tourism activities before, during and after the trip”.

Social media has revolutionized the tourist experience, covering every stage of the trip. Prior to departure, these platforms enable travelers to research information about destinations, exchange tips and plan their itineraries based on shared experiences from others. During the trip, social media become virtual companions, allowing travelers to share real-time snapshots, videos and interactions with their social networks, creating a sense of connection and immediacy. Once the trip concludes, travelers use social media to share memories, recount their stories and inspire others to explore new destinations. These platforms have also fostered communities of passionate travelers who exchange knowledge and experiences while playing a pivotal role in managing the reputations of destinations and tourist services through posted feedback and reviews. As for social media, they play an increasingly important role in the tourism experience. Their presence and use in tourism continue to evolve, transforming the way tourism experiences are lived and shared.

2.2. Social Media: Towards a New Era in the Tourism Experience

Social media research has grown exponentially, and several algorithms linked to machine learning and artificial intelligence have been developed. Social media has become one of the most influential and effective ways for customers to share their thoughts and ideas (Akhtar et al. 2023). It provides greater reach and instant communication. Social media sites have billions of users worldwide and generate vast amounts of unstructured data, known as “big data”, which are studied in various fields, including marketing (Bello Orgaz et al. 2015).

Social media play an indispensable role in any tourism experience (Alkhodair et al. 2020). Today, tourists often use digital devices to document their encounters and experiences with people and places by posting photos, reviews and travel blogs on social media sites (Instagram, Facebook, WeChat, etc.). Online reviews tend to be short, so they reflect the essential qualities that reviewers are trying to emphasize. Tourism is now one of the sectors most affected by the use and spread of digital technologies (Safaa et al. 2021). Technologies and the hardware and software tools they impose—foremost among them the smartphone or multifunctional phone—question users, targets and communities about the power issues surrounding their appropriation, routinization and circumvention (Karoui and Dudézert 2012).

The evolution of social media use is challenging traditional methods of customer relationship management and customer behavior analysis. The web is the largest transformable-information construct; its idea was first introduced by Tim Burners-Lee in 1989 (Basic Definitions: Web 1.0, Web. 2.0, Web 3.0 2007). Much progress has been made regarding the web and related technologies in the past two decades. Web 1.0, as a web of cognition (information connections), web 2.0, as a web of communication (people connections), web 3.0, as a web of co-operation (knowledge connections), and web 4.0, as a web of integration (intelligence connections), have been introduced as the four generations of the web since the advent of the web (Aghaei et al. 2012). For the tourism and travel industry, web 2.0 technology is a key tool for gathering customer information and building productive customer relationships (Berezina et al. 2015).

Tourism narratives are therefore fundamental to the construction of the tourism experience (Yu et al. 2021). Specific moments in a story, such as a place or event experienced by an individual during a trip, are not only narrative “touch points” but also refer to specific knowledge about the event in episodic memory. These are important components of memory formation (Woodside 2010). Unlike narratives, where participants passively recall specific types of experience in response to the interviewer’s questions (Woodside 2010), online comments are memorable moments actively left by tourists.

2.3. Bibliometry: Unraveling the Hidden Patterns of Knowledge

Bibliometrics is a quantitative method of analyzing bibliographic data (Cancino et al. 2017) that enables us to study the performance of different research themes and topics within a field, as well as the interrelationships between them (Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004); but above all, it allows us to explore the intellectual structure of scientific research (Aria and Cuccurullo 2017). This method is particularly useful for managing large corpora of data and eliminating author bias. It is commonly used in many academic disciplines, including management (Donthu et al. 2021).

Bibliometric analysis has been widely used in business fields, including marketing (Chabowski et al. 2013), advertising (Kim and McMillan 2008), sales management (Johnson 2006), accounting (Zhong et al. 2016), strategic management (Vogel and Güttel 2013), supply chain management (Asgari et al. 2016) as well as hospitality and tourism (Palmer et al. 2005). However, until recently, bibliometric analysis—in particular, tourism experience and social media analysis—had not been widely used in these fields.

3. Materials and Methods

Based on the above arguments and using the bibliometric method, this study reviewed the existing literature by combining the two keywords “tourism experience” and “social media”. The following questions were addressed:

- (1) What are the main research themes elucidated in the analysis of the tourism experience in relation to social media?
- (2) Who are the most influential authors, articles and journals in this field of research?
- (3) Which theme is most likely to be developed in the future?

In order to develop knowledge of these two concepts and analyze the scientific literature published on the subject, a bibliographic analysis was carried out using the Scopus database, one of the most comprehensive electronic information sources with a scientific and interdisciplinary character. Scopus is the world’s largest database of peer-reviewed journals (Norris and Oppenheim 2007). This section identifies trends and maps in the published literature on the tourism experience and social media.

3.1. Data Collection and Research Strategy

The study was conducted in April 2023 and used the search term “Tourist Experience” AND “Social Media” in the “source title head” category of the Scopus database. The preliminary search identified 89 articles, and further filtering produced 62 articles. According to the eligibility criteria, the sample of articles included only scientific articles written in English. Other types of publication such as conference papers, book chapters, books and editorials were excluded. As the search period was not specified, all years from 2013 to 2023 were included. We exported all available results, including citation information, bibliographic information, abstracts and keywords, into an Excel file and finally collected the key statistics presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Main corpus information.

3.2. Data Analysis

VOSviewer software was chosen for the network visualization. It uses a unified framework for mapping and clustering and has been used by over 500 publications since 2006. According to (Van Eck and Waltman 2010), VOSviewer is a software tool for creating and visualizing networks with an emphasis on graphical representations for facilitating the interpretation of large-scale bibliographic maps. These networks include journals, authors and institutions and can be created on the basis of citations, bibliographic links, co-citations or co-author relationships. In the visualization, circles represent analyzed items linked to the corresponding denomination. The larger the circle, the greater the weight of the element in the network. Gaps between elements indicate relevance. The position and color are ways of grouping elements into clusters.

For added relevance, another freeware program called Bibliometrix, developed by Massimo Aria and Corrado Cuccurullo, was also used in this study. Bibliometrix for R Studio includes a utility called Biblioshiny which provides an easy-to-use interface for novice programmers. This enables comprehensive analysis with instant graphical representation. The software combines various bibliographic techniques such as co-word analysis, citation analysis and collaborative network generation to study the development of research fields. Consequently, we used both software packages to create comparative graphs and examined the results of specific types of analysis available in both.

4. Results

4.1. Description of the Analysis

This section of the analysis focuses on reviewing the literature linking social media to tourism experience, with an emphasis on trends and maps. Figure 1 shows the data used. It contains 62 publications over 10 years from 46 different sources by 158 authors. These publications generated a total of 3740 references and 1553 citations. Looking at the figures, we can see that the annual growth rate is -6.7% and that research is in decline. Among the authors, 12 articles were published with sole authors and 32.26 articles were co-authored with international co-authors, demonstrating the global dimension of the research effort. Each paper had an average of 2.76 co-authors, reflecting a degree of cooperation within the scientific community. In addition, the authors used a total of 284 keywords, attesting to the diversity of the subjects covered. The average age of the documents analyzed was 3.73 years, indicating that the references used were up to date. Finally, each article received an average of 25.05 citations, underlining its relevance and impact in the fields of tourism experience and social media.

4.2. Citation Analysis

A citation analysis is a link between two elements, where one element quotes the other. The closer they are, the stronger their relationship. To understand the trend, it was essential to see the most contributing articles, sources, countries and keywords for all 62 documents considered for this analysis.

4.2.1. Article Citations

Citation summaries for 46 journals show a total of 1553 citations, with an average number of citations per article of 25.05. Each article receives an average of 6.20 citations per year. The year with the highest average citation was 2018; the year with the lowest average citation was 2023, a zero value.

Figure 2 summarizes the publications and citations over the last decade. 2018, 2015 and 2013 are the most productive consecutive years in terms of citations, with 450, 310 and 217, respectively. 2018 and 2022 are clearly the years with the most articles published and the most citations collected. In 2022, 14 publications received 25 citations, and in 2018, 12 articles received 450 citations. That is an average of 37.5 per article.

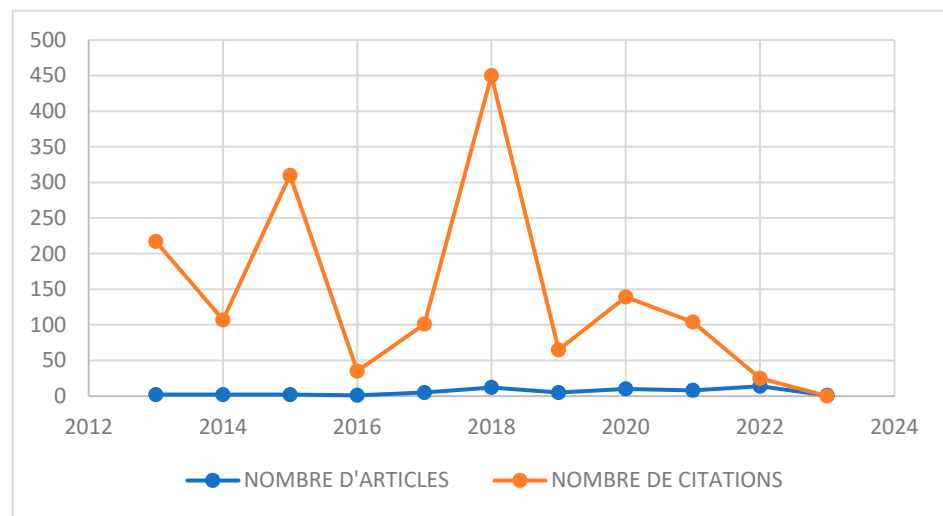


Figure 2. Number of articles and citations per year.

4.2.2. Journal Citations

Table 1 shows the publications by journal over the last ten years. It is clear that *Sustainability* (Switzerland), *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, *Tourism Management* and *Tourist Studies* are the journals with the highest number of articles published. Obviously, the top five journals cover all fields of study related to management, information processing, sustainability, tourism or destination marketing.

Table 1. Number of articles and citations selected in each journal.

Source Title	Total Publication (TP)	Total Citations (TC)	First Publication Year (PY Start)
<i>Journal of Destination Marketing and Management</i>	3	509	2013
<i>Information Processing and Management</i>	1	183	2018
<i>Tourism Management</i>	3	130	2014
<i>Sustainability</i> (Switzerland)	5	104	2017
<i>PLoS ONE</i>	1	73	2018
<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	4	66	2020
<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	1	63	2018
<i>Information Technology and Tourism</i>	2	49	2018

In terms of citations, *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management* ranks first, with 509 citations, *Information Processing and Management* ranks second, with 183 citations, *Tourism Management* ranks third, with 130 citations, and *Sustainability* (Switzerland) ranks fourth, with 104 citations. Finally, *PLoS ONE* is in last place, with 73 citations. So, what these scientific journals have in common is that they focus on topics related to tourism, destination management, information and data management and sustainability. However, it should be noted that *PLoS ONE* is slightly different from the other journals in that it is interdisciplinary and covers a wide range of scientific fields, not just tourism (Figure 3).

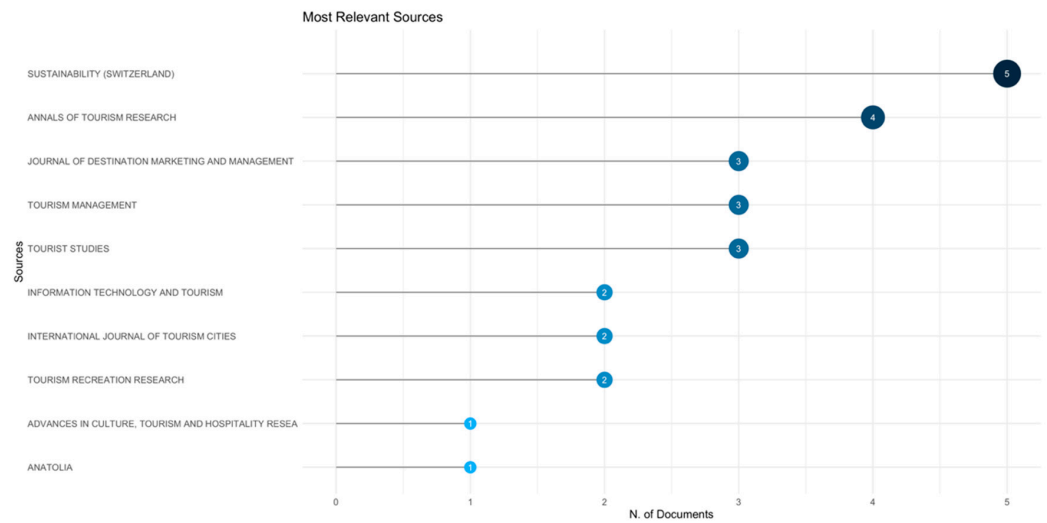


Figure 3. The most relevant sources.

Figure 4 visualizes the publication trends of the various journals over time, highlighting periods of stagnation and growth in the production of scientific articles per journal. From a total of 46 sources, we can see that the leading journals in terms of publication only began to grow from 2019/2020, with a slight stagnation from 2022 to the present day. These trends reflect changes in research interests, trends in the field and academic contributions to these particular journals over time.

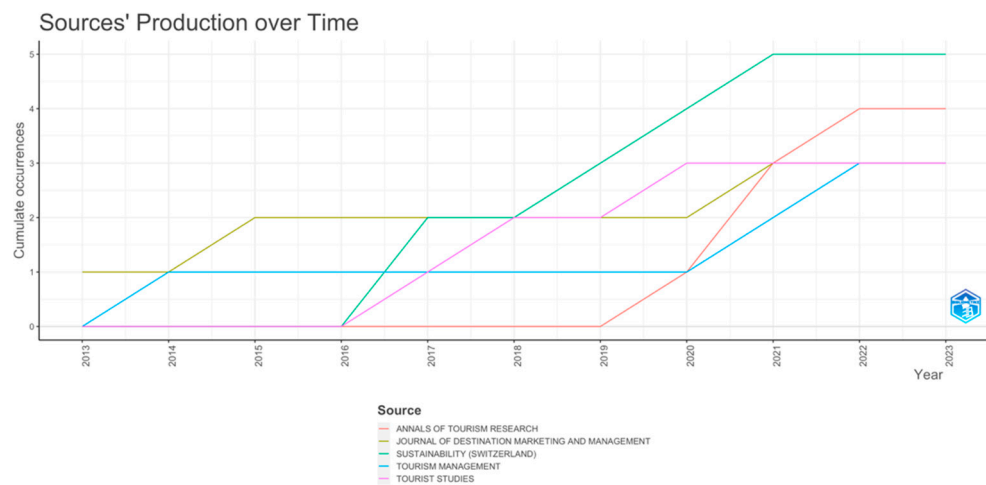


Figure 4. Production of sources over time.

4.2.3. Country Citations

The documents in the corpus come from 18 different countries. European countries such as the UK, Italy and Spain are the most frequently cited. In particular, the United States comes first, with 432 citations and an average of 72 citations per article. It is followed by the UK, with 314 citations and an average of 78.50 citations. Italy comes next, with 197 citations and an average of 65.70, followed by Australia, with 113 citations and an average of 18.80. Spain has 97 citations, with an average of 10.80, and finally, China has 75 citations and an average of 12.50. With regard to the output of countries over time, illustrated in Figure 5, a constant evolution is observed from 2017 to the present day, testifying to the interest of the world’s different continents in research in this field.

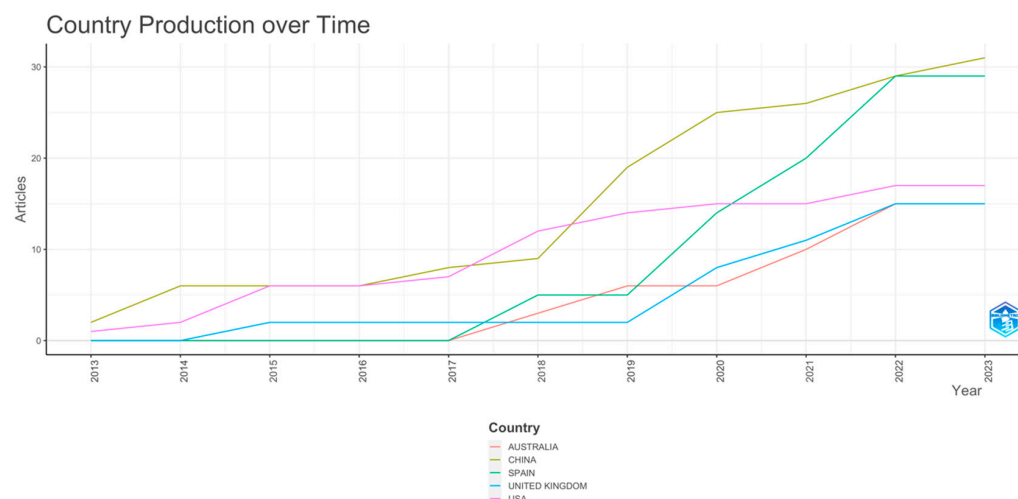


Figure 5. Country production over time.

4.2.4. Top 10 Article Citations

Overall, a total of 10 articles related to both social media and tourism experiences produced 1038 citations, in 9 different journals. The 10 most cited articles and authors are presented in Table 2. The publication with the most citations was “SoCoMo Marketing for Travel and Tourism: Empowering Co-creation. Value” by Buhalis D and Foerste M, with a total of 290 citations. (Buhalis and Foerste 2015), (Wang et al. 2013), (Vecchio et al. 2018), (Cong et al. 2014) and (Padilla et al. 2018) are the most cited authors in this research area and contributed the most to the study. The most cited articles include two related to destination marketing, four related to social media data and the rest related to tourism research (attractions, stable sustainability). Consequently, these articles address different aspects of tourism, such as marketing, smart travel destinations, the use of Big Data and social media to create value, tourism experience analysis, the influence of social media on tourist opinions and behavior, the tourism experience. design in specific contexts such as air pollution and the role of social media in promoting sustainable and responsible tourism behavior.

Table 2. Most cited articles.

Article Title	Authors	Source	Year	Citation
SoCoMo marketing for travel and tourism: Empowering co-creation of value	Buhalis D.; Foerste M.	<i>Journal of Destination Marketing and Management</i>	2015	290
China’s “smart tourism destination” initiative: A taste of the service-dominant logic	Wang D.; Li X.; Li Y.	<i>Journal of Destination Marketing and Management</i>	2013	198
Creating value from Social Big Data: Implications for Smart Tourism Destinations	Vecchio P.D.; Mele G.; Ndou V.; Secundo G.	<i>Information Processing and Management</i>	2018	183
Analysis of wildlife tourism experiences with endangered species: An exploratory study of encounters with giant pandas in Chengdu, China	Cong L.; Wu B.; Morrison A.M.; Shu H.; Wang M.	<i>Tourism Management</i>	2014	105
Temporal and spatiotemporal investigation of tourist attraction visit sentiment on Twitter	Padilla J.J.; Kavak H.; Lynch C.J.; Gore R.J.; Diallo S.Y.	<i>PLoS ONE</i>	2018	73
Tourist Activity Analysis by Leveraging Mobile Social Media Data	Vu H.Q.; Li G.; Law R.; Zhang Y.	<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	2018	63
New approaches to the study of tourist experiences in time and space	Birenboim A.	<i>Tourism Geographies</i>	2016	35
How live videos and stories in social media influence tourist opinions and behavior	Huertas A.	<i>Information Technology and Tourism</i>	2018	32

the keyword “Museum studies”. This suggests that the cluster explores visitors’ emotional interactions in the context of cultural tourism and museum experiences. Finally, the seventh cluster, “Big Data mining and Data mining in China”, includes the keyword “China” (3/9). This last theme focuses on the exploration and analysis of massive data using data mining techniques specific to China, which justifies the country’s strong interest in this area of research (Wang et al. 2013).

Table 3. Overview of co-occurrence clusters.

Cluster	Items	Links	Total Strength Links	Occurrences
Tourism and Social Media: Social Engage	Engagement	4	4	2
	Instagram	7	8	6
	Machine learning	2	3	2
	Smartphones	3	3	2
	Social media analysis	2	2	2
	Tourism	8	10	7
Content analysis and tourism management	Content analysis	7	10	3
	Leximancer	3	3	2
	Thematic analysis	7	7	2
	Tourist management	7	12	5
	Wild life tourism	5	5	2
Smart tourism and tourism behavior	Authenticity	4	4	2
	Place branding	1	1	2
	Smart tourism	5	6	3
	Social networking site	5	5	2
	Tourist behavior	13	19	11
Nature and tourism experiences: social media and sentiment analysis	Nature-based tourism	3	3	2
	Sentiment analysis	6	6	4
	Social media data	1	1	2
	Topic modeling	5	5	2
	Tourism experience	6	6	3
Co-creation and consumer engagement via social media	Co-creation	2	2	2
	Consumer behavior	4	5	2
	Social media	21	37	23
Emotions and Cultural Tourism	Cultural tourism	3	3	2
	Emotions	4	5	2
	Museum studies	5	6	2
Big data mining and data mining in China	Big data	2	2	2
	China	9	9	3
	Data mining	2	2	2

What these seven clusters have in common is that they all relate to tourism and the use of technology in this field. More specifically, each cluster presents an analysis, study or exploration of the use of different technologies in tourism, such as social media, machine learning, smartphones, content analysis, authenticity, social networks, big data and data mining in China.

The above analysis therefore reflects the wide range of topics, disciplines and methodological approaches that Scopus has continually published in relation to the tourism experience and social media. The results also show that social media and tourism—in particular, the tourism experience—are important areas for different groups. “Social Media” is clearly the keyword with the highest relevance and frequency of all the keywords in the 62 articles selected for this analysis.

Out of a total of 284 author keywords, the most frequently used keywords and phrases were social media, tourist behavior, tourist destination, tourism, China, marketing, tourism management, eco-tourism, internet and data mining (Figure 7). The focus on social media in tourism is a visible research interest in developed tourism experiences, and well-known publishing structures understand its future implications and willingly participate in the expansion of this research area.

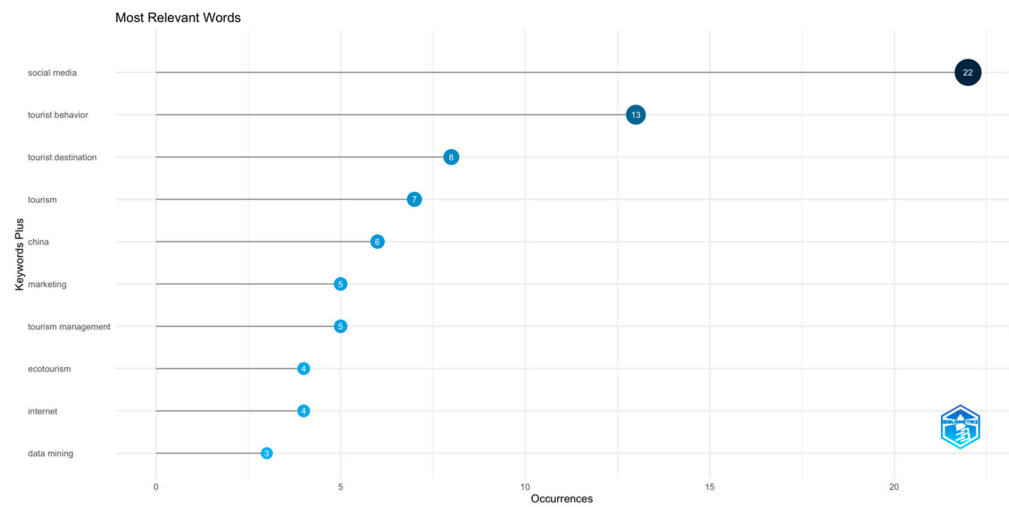


Figure 7. Most frequent words.

For a more detailed analysis, the thematic map shown in Figure 8 uses statistical analysis techniques to identify significant co-occurrences between words, phrases or concepts within the corpus. Each color or shape can represent a particular category or theme. As already indicated in Table 3, there are seven clusters, each with its own color and format. The larger the format, the more important it is. In addition, clusters of similar words and concepts show that they often appear together. In addition, items close together on the map tend to be more closely related in terms of co-occurrence.

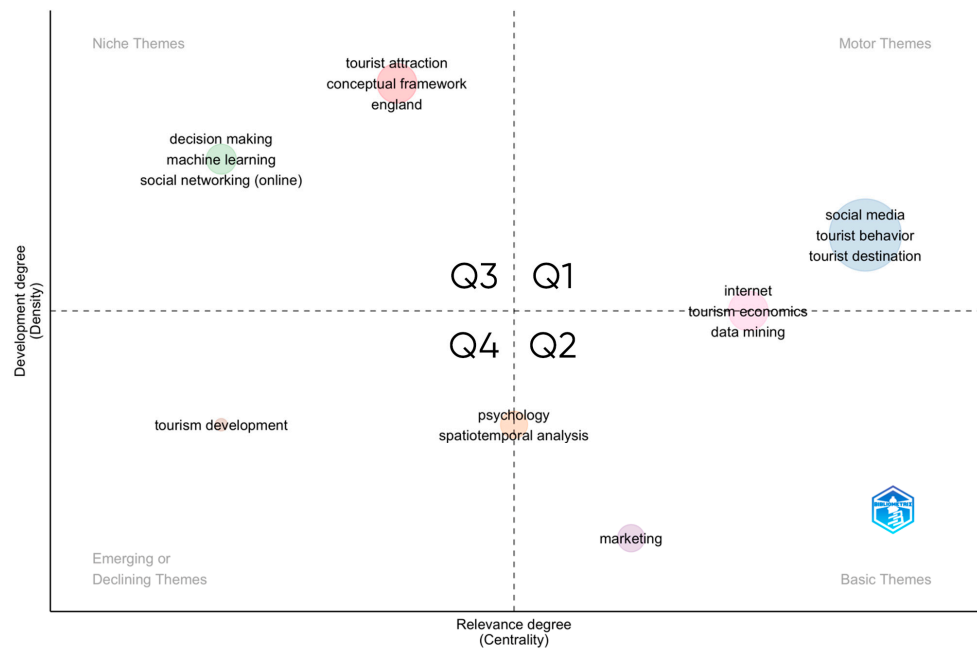


Figure 8. Thematic map of co-occurrence.

In the first position, Q1 contains the main theme. This is the largest circle containing the most frequently cited keywords in the corpus, namely, “Social Media”, “Tourist behavior”, “Tourist destination”...). In second place, the keywords “Internet, Tourism Economics, Data mining”, with the addition of “Marketing”, are located in Q2, which contains highly developed and specialized themes that establish links with the main theme. In third place (Q3), the two similar groupings “Tourist attraction, Conceptual framework, England” and “Decision making, Machine learning, Social networking (online)” show a high degree of interconnection. However, these are disappearing or emerging themes. In the last position

(Q4), we find fundamental and transversal themes such as “Psychology, spatiotemporal analysis” and “Tourism Development”.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The primary objective of this study was to provide a broad overview of the existing literature on tourism experience analysis and social media. In order to understand the conceptual framework of this analysis, this paper used academic references from the Scopus database to show that the analysis of these two concepts at the same time continues to be a leading area of study. The present study applied two bibliometric analysis methods (citation and co-occurrence analysis) to examine research on the tourism experience and social media published in 46 journals between 2013 and 2023. The theoretical foundations and thematic evolution of research on these two concepts in different fields were explored.

Research in this field is declining in terms of annual growth rates. For this reason, it is important to broaden the scope of the study in order to gain knowledge on topics that can be further investigated, leading to new perspectives and innovative ideas in the field. The present study therefore aimed to locate active research areas and uncover emerging trends by assessing the most influential journals, countries, authors and co-occurrences in the field concerned.

The results of the citation analysis showed that the year with the most publications was 2022, and the year with the most citations was 2018. In addition, the most cited journal was *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management* in the field of tourism destination marketing and management. In addition, *Sustainability* (Switzerland) was the journal that published the most papers. In addition, the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Australia and Spain are the most prominent countries in this corpus. Of course, “SoCoMo marketing for travel and tourism: Empowering co-creation of value” is the most cited article, published in 2015 by the authors Buhalis D. and Foerste M.

On the other hand, co-occurrence analysis enabled us to deduce significant results thanks to the use of the two major software packages “Vos Viewer” and “R Studio”. This is reflected in the categorization of seven clusters which have been identified as social engagement in tourism and social media; content analysis and tourism management via developed software; smart tourism and tourism behavior; nature and tourism experience through sentiment analysis; co-creation and consumer engagement life social media; emotions and cultural tourism and finally big data and data mining exploration in China. The above results indicate that research on this corpus in the various fields has been shaped by social media as a main theme. Data mining seems to link social media research to marketing and social influence theories. Of course, similar themes relating to tourist attractions and decision making are topics that are either in decline or booming, not to mention the development of tourism as a fundamental theme. Nevertheless, future researchers should continue to investigate the impact of social media marketing on tourist behavior and the attractiveness of tourist destinations.

The study also analyzed thematic trends in tourism experiences and social media research in different fields by classifying keywords into seven themes, as shown in Table 4 as well as Figure 9, namely, “social media, tourist behavior, tourist destination, China, marketing, tourism management”. The study revealed the growth of social media search over time, with the increasing popularity of the term “social media” beginning to emerge in 2018, maintaining constant popularity until 2020 and then experiencing a significant increase in popularity in 2021. This may indicate the evolution of this topic over time in the context studied.

Table 4. Trend Topics.

Item	Freq	Year_q1	Year_med	Year_q3
social media	22	2018	2020	2021
tourist behavior	13	2019	2021	2021
tourist destination	8	2019	2020	2021
China	6	2017	2019	2020
marketing	5	2018	2018	2021
tourism management	5	2018	2020	2022



Figure 9. Keyword tree.

6. Limitations and Future Work

The current study is not without its limitations. First, this research work used the Scopus database as its data source. The future scope of investigation can be extended by using other databases such as Web of Science, Google Scholar and other sources; this will allow to benefit from a multi-source approach that compares databases in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the key differences and implications of using each data source. Second, this study only considered published articles for analysis. Future researchers could include conference papers, book chapters, review articles and books in their studies to obtain more comprehensive results. Third, the data source was limited to just 46 journals. Therefore, the patterns and trends generated by the study may not be generalizable to all tourism experience and social media research in tourism disciplines. Future research should include a larger number of academic journals over a longer study period for better generalization. The study used the keywords “Tourist Experience” and “Social Media” for data collection. Future researchers could use other keywords during data collection to obtain more robust results. In addition, other bibliometric software can also be used in future research, such as HistCite, CiteSpace, SciMAT, etc. There is a need for PRISMA analysis (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) and qualitative research as topics for future studies. It is an essential methodological approach for conducting literature reviews in a methodical and rigorous way, helping to produce reliable and informative results for decision making in scientific research. Furthermore, due to the limitations of bibliometric analysis, the definition of clusters as theoretical pillars of tourism experience and social media research could be biased. Furthermore, the categorization of keywords into themes, as a new research method, is not free from bias. Future research could develop an advanced classification method to better explore search patterns and trends. In terms of future implications, the focus on social media and data mining suggests that tourism professionals will increasingly need to understand how to use these tools to better understand travelers’ preferences and

personalize their offerings. Tourism destinations could also adopt more targeted digital marketing strategies to reach potential travelers. Finally, despite the limitations mentioned above, this study offers substantial insight into how research into social media analytics and the tourism experience is progressing.

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