

The Role of Digital Marketing in Tourism: A Bibliometric Analysis of Scientific Output in Indexed Journals from 2014 to 2024

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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing strategies have emerged as essential instruments to strengthen destination visibility and optimize user interaction. Consequently, within this Digital technology has become the tourism sector's element for the competitive development, driving innovative models of management, communication, and visitor engagement. framework, digital transformation fosters opportunities for innovation, diversification of tourism products, and the design of personalized experiences. This work seeks to quantitative and descriptive methodology and approach was adopted analyse the scientific evolution of digital marketing in tourism through a bibliometric examination of indexed publications in the Scopus database from 2014 to 2024. Utilizing VOSviewer software to map co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence, and thematic trends. The results indicate sustained growth in specialized literature, rising from a single publication in 2014 to 106 in 2024, the findings confirm that digital marketing constitutes a strategic pillar for tourism competitiveness and reflecting the increasing academic and professional interest in tourism Overall, aimed at enhancing visitor experiences, optimizing data-driven decision-making, and reinforcing destination presence within hybrid physical–digital environments digitalization. Five thematic clusters were identified, encompassing digital marketing, artificial intelligence, consumer behaviour, and social media applications. These contributes to a deeper understanding of current dynamics in the field and establish a foundation for future specialized research

Keywords: Tourism 4.0, tourism innovation, digital traveller, smart destination, social media

INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector is now intensely competitive, forcing destinations to increasingly adopt digital tactics, such as standard online advertising and social media interaction, to attract and sway travellers' choice (Herstanti et al., 2024; Ghonim & Awad, 2025). Consequently, digital technology has spurred major shifts in the travel industry, transforming the conventional tourism model into a modern, cost-effective, and highly customer-focused ecosystem (Satiti & Udin, 2025). Digital marketing is fundamental for the promotion of countries in tourism activities, and organizations must adapt to new technologies to achieve optimal performance and remain competitive in the market (Magoutas et al., 2024; Molina et al., 2024). Digital marketing provides significant benefits to tourism enterprises, based on the principle that these organizations invest efforts in aligning their processes with technological advances, reducing costs, fostering potential growth, improving customer service, and enabling more direct and interactive communication with their target audiences (Cui, 2024). Tourists have increasingly adopted technology's intensive use, and destinations have responded to this having high-tech devices (Rocha et al., 2024), including as virtual reality, the integration of human elements via technological, applications such, robotics, and blockchain. At present, tourism discourse largely relies on diverse strategies that can lead to

desired outcomes. Websites that employ engaging content about their products or services become more influential and effective (Liu et al., 2025). Moreover, characters and cinematic narratives have emerged as vital components in global tourism marketing (Zakharova, 2024). Mobile marketing is inextricably linked to tourism; during their journeys, tourists rely on smartphones or tablets to search for information about restaurants to dine in, museums to visit, or hotels to stay at (Yao & Yang, 2024). In positioning tourism services across different regions, creating favourable conditions for online content to influence customer behaviour through implementation of digital marketing strategies has proven effective (Sgroi & Mónica, 2024). For instance, in the southern area of Manabí in Ecuador, the use of digital tools has positively impacted the profitability and sustainability of tourism services, enhanced visibility and has attracted a greater number of visitors (Binh et al., 2023). In Peru, digital marketing has been crucial for the reactivation of tourism, enabling companies to remain connected with their clients and adapt to new market demands (Cevallos et al., 2023). However, because tourism marketing information is often fragmented, travellers struggle to build a clear and accurate perception of destination within an increasingly complex promotional landscape (Velásquez, 2025).

Tourism depends heavily on information, and the development of destinations increasingly depends on the capacity to monitor and adapt to modern trends, as well as on the mastery of new technologies and rapid adoption. Online tourism offers a wide range of advantages, from marketing to specific business operations that significantly influence tourists' decision-making processes (Qi et al., 2024).

Digital revolution through transforming access to information, the provision of services and social interaction has generated extraordinary changes in society (Fuga, 2024). Mass media play a pivotal role in shaping visibility and competitiveness of tourism destinations (Zúñiga-Collazos et al., 2025). Smartphones encourage and facilitate creation of online content; social media, tourism applications, and various forums and platforms enable tourists to share their experiences, recommendations, and opinions about destinations easily and quickly (Jara-Amézaga, 2023). This change has given rise to a data driven approach, in which continuous advances in digital technology are generating new service opportunities. These include platforms to optimize information delivery, strategies for providing services to clients, and the creation of new business models that ensure digital integrity (Nieves-Pavón et al., 2025), aiming to create a more efficient and cost-effective processes, while generating value-added opportunities (Zentner et al., 2022). In this context, it is a critical and urgent necessity for current and future hospitality and tourism managers to cultivate managerial digital transformation and acquire the digital business competencies required to lead the development and continuous improvement of their organizations' digital commercial capabilities (Hadjielias et al., 2022).

The relevance of this study consists in the analysis of the main digital marketing tendency applied to the tourism sector, as they constitute key tools for competitiveness, positioning, and the sustainability of tourism enterprises. This integration is necessary to address the complexities of the modern digital landscape, where consumer behaviour and media consumption patterns are continuously evolving (Qi et al., 2024; Busulwa et al., 2024). Within this context, it provides relevant contributions to the existing literature, while generating both theoretical and managerial implications that can guide future researches and practical strategies in the tourism field (Perišić et al., 2024).

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is an adaptive, technology-driven process's development that enables the creation, delivery, and maintenance of value for the individuals involved through intelligence systems, communication channels, and artificial products such as websites, social media platforms, and content creation (Cardoso et al., 2023). It also hinges on a suite of digital marketing strategies and tactics that utilize online platforms and technology to promote offerings a defined target audience (Sutherland et al., 2025). Digital technology is regarded as a central factor driving the economic growth of tourism; the core of a service lies in the value it offers for market exchange, and these services take on digital features, they function within a blended "*physical-digital*" environment (Warintarawej et al., 2024). Technology is utilized to seamlessly integrate the digital and physical realms, thereby creating unique interactive experiences for users. Consequently, the adoption of digital marketing has profoundly transformed how companies interact and communicate with their customers (Gensler & Rangaswamy, 2025; Blanco-Moreno et al., 2024), through digital media, individuals can be encouraged to share their travel stories and experiences (Rizvanović et al., 2023). Travel blogs, tourism communities on social media, and review portals are among the most popular channels for experience sharing among tourists (Bassano et al., 2019).

The impact of content has increased significantly in users' decision-making; tourists often rely on online reviews and shared experiences to authenticity and assess the reliability of information before making decisions (Confetto et al., 2023). Therefore, privacy-conscious marketing involves the ethical collection, management, and deployment of consumer data within the tourism sector (Wei et al., 2025). Simultaneously, the ongoing evolution of visual search technology in tourism e-commerce is providing user with increasingly intelligent and practical interactive experience (Zaman, 2024; Wu & Liu, 2024).

Digitalization in Tourism

The integration of visual search tools within tourism e-commerce is continuously progressing, offering users a more intelligent and convenient means of interaction (Alfaro et al., 2023; Yan

et al., 2024). In the era of smart tourism, characterized by digitalization, intelligence, and interconnectivity, the tourism industry is continuously evolving and improving thanks to contemporary information technologies. These technologies offer opportunities to enhance efficiency and productivity; they facilitate innovation in tourism offerings, the personalization of packages, destination planning, value chains, and ecosystems. The tourism experience must be reoriented toward the introduction of innovative digital solutions that enable travel, provide real-time access to information, allow for personalization, and ensure simplicity and speed in the acquisition of services (Li & Jiang, 2024). When planning their trips, tourists attribute importance to geographic location and the type of experience (including those shared by others), and they carefully consider destination options, which can ultimately make or break their experience at the destination (Santarsiero et al., 2024).

Tourism 4.0 should be oriented toward improving the quality of tourism practices that enhance quality of life and social value for both guests and local residents (Bogicevic et al., 2019). Digitalization of tourism services has paved the way for digital tourist interpretation as a means of information exchange between destinations and tourists (Pencarelli, 2020; Zhang et al., 2024); and local communities (Armutcu et al., 2023); It is established that the defining characteristics of high-quality digital content are its level of informativeness, its emotional resonance, and the empathy it conveys (Fan et al., 2022).

Marketing encompasses strategies to promote across various social media platforms, aiming to attract both potential and current customers through content that resonates with tourists' interests and preferences (Liang, 2024). Social media platforms host billions of users worldwide and have become key spaces where customers compare and research, making them strategic tools that the travel and tourism sector could implement for communication purposes (Chawla et al., 2024; Wright-Ríos & Martínez-Don, 2024). The choice of Instagram as a dissemination platform is justified by its visual nature, which makes it particularly suitable for promoting tourist destinations, as well as its popularity among young travellers, a key market segment (Sihombing et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2022). The integration of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) into digital marketing campaigns enables tourists to preview destinations and experiences, fostering a sense of anticipation and assisting them in the decision-making process. (Kola et al., 2024; Di et al., 2024; Anaya-Sánchez et al., 2024). Social media influencers have become significant drivers in shaping tourists' attitudes and behaviours; these influencers are individuals who have cultivated a substantial follower base through engaging posts related to travel experiences, recommendations, and opinions (Di et al., 2024; Omeish et al., 2024).

METODOLOGY

This study aims to analyse the scientific output concerning digital marketing within the tourism sector. The research utilizes a cross-sectional, non-experimental, and descriptive design, adopting a quantitative approach with a correlational scope, meaning variables were not manipulated. A bibliometric approach was employed to conduct a comprehensive review of tourism-related publications. This method is relevant as it advances current knowledge and establishes a foundation for future academic inquiry (Altarturi et al., 2025; Hidalgo et al., 2023). Data was gathered by searching keywords in the Scopus database, which was chosen due to its reputation high quality academic content and frequent use in bibliometric analyses (Santamaría et al., 2025; Sinh et al., 2024). The information was processed using the open-access software VOSviewer. Specifically, bibliometric analysis, including co-citation and keyword analysis, is proven to be highly effective in mapping the evolution and trajectory of research across disciplines (Yao & Yang, 2024; Wider et al., 2023).

The selected publications included the keywords “digital marketing” and “tourism.” A comprehensive search strategy was developed to ensure full coverage of scientific literature published between 2014 and 2024, considering thematic areas, language, and document type. Inclusion criteria focused on documents relevant to the research objectives, while exclusion criteria eliminated non-aligned studies. Articles in English, Spanish, and Portuguese related to digital marketing in tourism were retrieved for review. Duplicate records were removed during the data screening phase, and titles, abstracts, and keywords were systematically examined to exclude studies irrelevant to the research scope.

Table 1. Systematization of the Search Criteria

Data base	Keywords	Search period	Paper type	Language	Total number of Documents
Scopus	“Digital marketing in tourism” OR	2014-2024	Article	English, Spanish	330

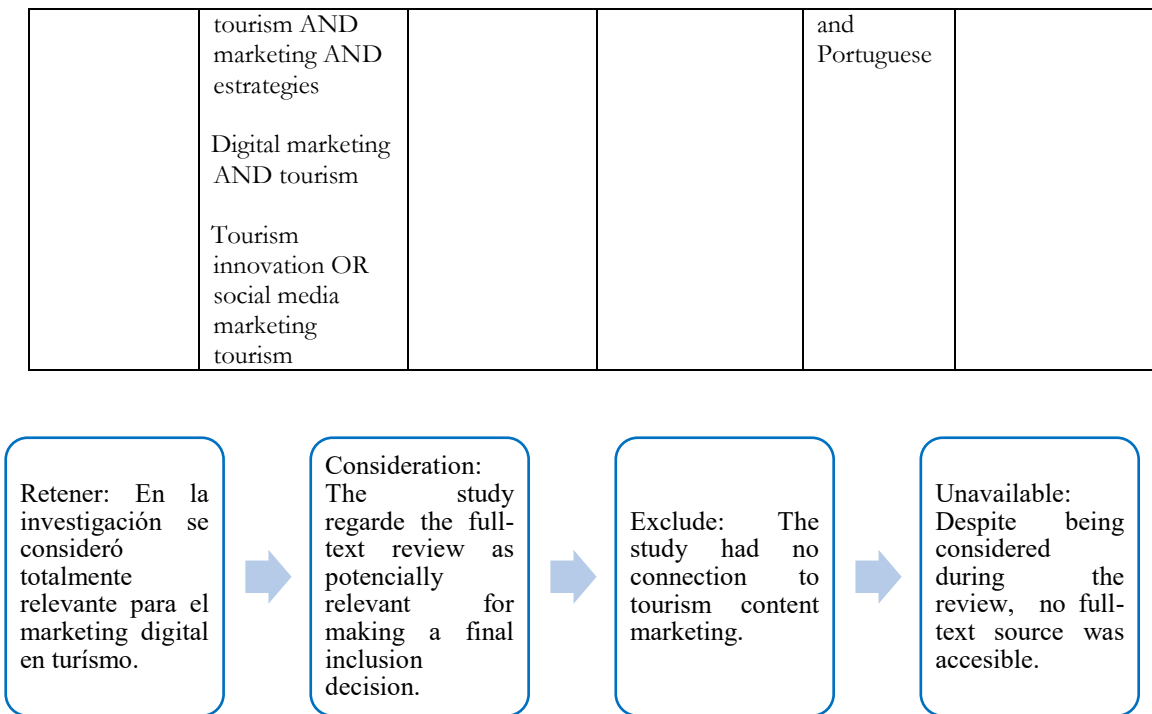


Figure 1. Proceso de las decisiones de cribado

Based on the criteria outlined above, studies categorized as “exclude” and “not available” were removed. Quality assurance was performed by the authors, retaining only peer-reviewed articles published in high-impact journals for further analysis. Data were sourced exclusively from Scopus, ensuring methodological rigor given the database’s stringent selection and evaluation standards for scholarly publications.

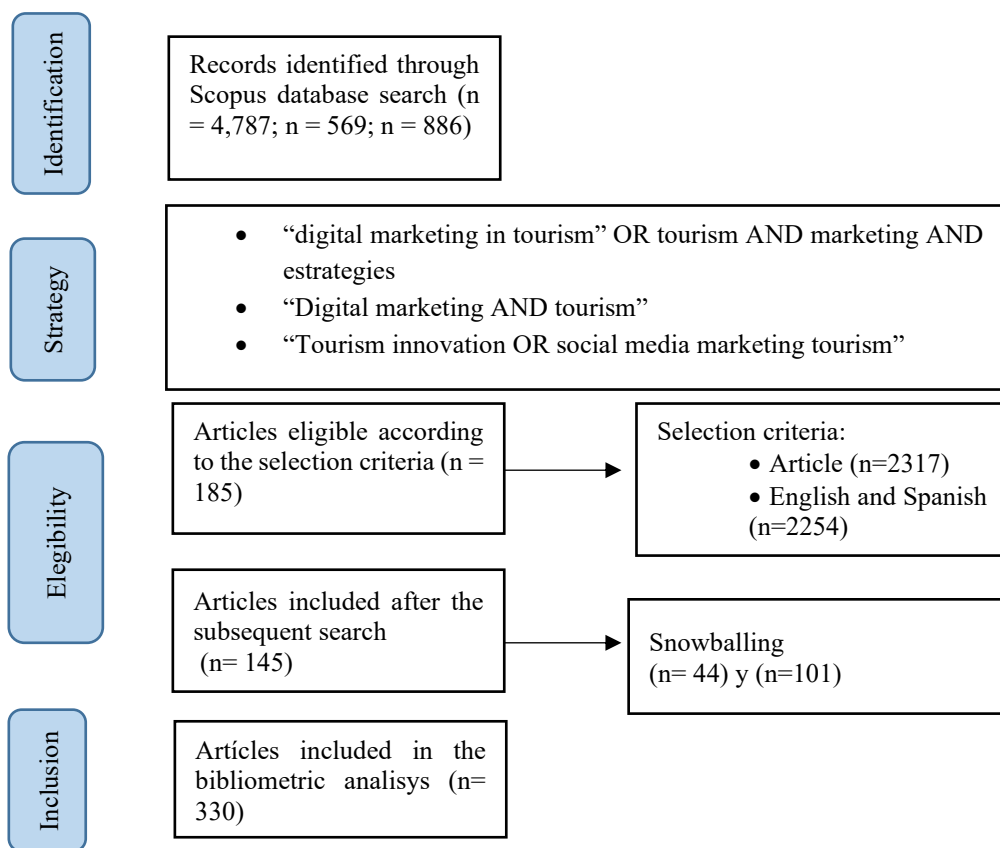


Figure 2. Flowchart of the Steps in the Methodology for Extracting and Filtering Data from Publications on Digital Marketing in Tourism

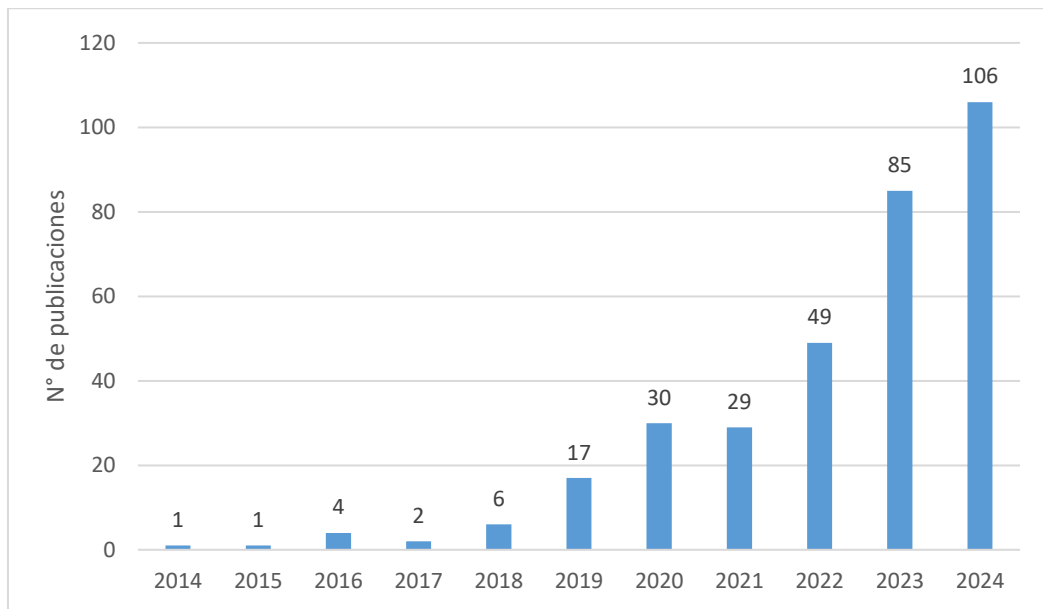


Figure 3. Average Annual Scientific Output on Digital Marketing in Tourism

RESULTS

The number's analysis of scientific publications during the 2014–2024 period reveals a sustained and significant growth trend in academic output on the studied topic. In the early years (2014–2016), research activity was minimal, with an average of only two publications per year, reflecting an initial exploratory stage. From 2018 onward, a progressive increase is observed, reaching 17 publications in 2019, suggesting an emerging interest within the scientific community. This growth consolidated between 2020 and 2022, with an average exceeding 35 publications annually, likely driven by the expansion of studies on tourism, digital marketing, and the sector's recovery following the pandemic. Finally, 2023 and 2024 mark the highest productivity peak, with 85 and 106 publications respectively, representing a stage of maturity and consolidation of the research field. This evolution demonstrates that the topic has gained global relevance, attracted the attention of diverse scholars and established itself as a key research line within tourism and related disciplines.

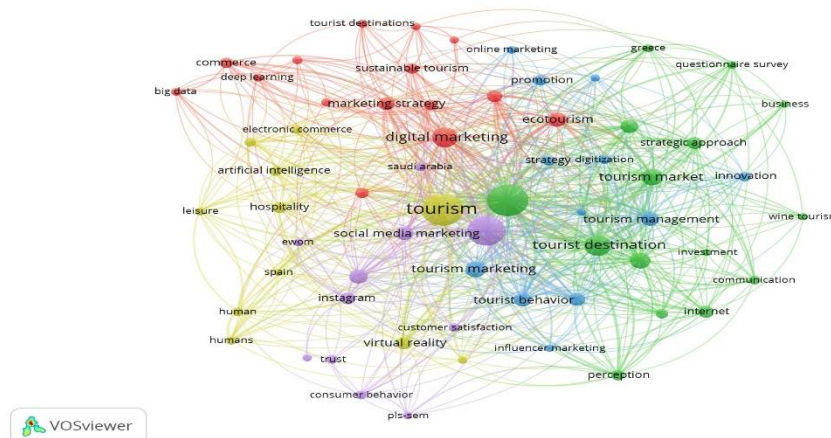


Figure 4. Co-occurrence Network of Keywords in Tourism Digital Marketing Research (Bedaduri et al., 2025).

The figure illustrates a keyword co-occurrence network related to digital marketing in tourism, organized into five thematic clusters distinguished by colour. Each node represents a keyword, with node size indicating its frequency of occurrence and connecting lines reflecting the strength of relationships between terms. The central node “tourism” functions as the core axis of scientific production, around which the main research approaches are structured.

The red cluster focuses on concepts such as *digital marketing*, *marketing strategy*, *sustainable tourism*, *destination marketing*, *commerce*, and *big data*. It represents a research line oriented toward the application of digital marketing strategies and their linkage to tourism sustainability, as well as the integration of technological tools. The blue cluster includes terms such as *tourism market*, *internet*, *marketing*, and *tourist destination*. This group reflects the

management of digital marketing, highlighting marketing as a key element for destination competitiveness. The green cluster encompasses terms such as *digitalization, e-tourism, influencer marketing, innovation, online marketing, promotion, and tourism marketing*. This cluster centres on tourist consumer behaviour and its interaction with digital strategies. Finally, the yellow cluster comprises *artificial intelligence, electronic commerce, tourism, and virtual reality*. Therefore, it represents the technological and innovative dimension of tourism, linked to automation and the application of artificial intelligence in the sector. The purple cluster includes terms such as *customer satisfaction, destination image, e-WOM, Instagram, social media, social media marketing, and visit intention*. This cluster is associated with the impact of social networks and virtual reality on the promotion of destinations and tourism experiences

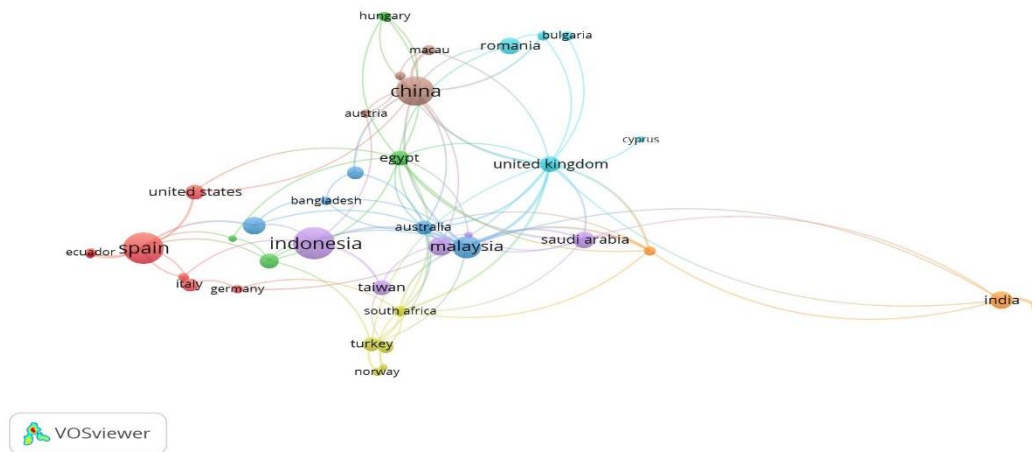


Figure 5. Country Co-Authorship Map in Articles on Digital Marketing in Tourism (Van & Waltman, 2010).

The country co-authorship map reveals that research on digital marketing applied to tourism is highly concentrated geographically in Asia and Europe, with Spain, China, Indonesia, and the United Kingdom emerging as the main hubs of scientific production. The networks display a South–South and North–South cooperation pattern, reflecting the global diversification of digital tourism research, although leadership remains concentrated in developed countries. Each node represents a country, with its size indicating the number of publications, while connecting lines illustrate the intensity of scientific collaborations, highlighting the most active networks and predominant links. The figure shows eight clusters: the red cluster includes countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United States; the green cluster comprises Egypt, Hungary, Jordan, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates; the blue cluster represents Australia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Portugal, and South Korea; the yellow cluster integrates Norway, South Africa, Sweden, Turkey, and Vietnam; the purple cluster includes Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Thailand, and Uzbekistan; the light blue cluster encompasses Bulgaria, Cyprus, Netherlands, Romania, and the United Kingdom; the orange cluster represents Canada, Ethiopia, India, and Pakistan; and the brown cluster includes Austria, China, Hong Kong, and Macau.

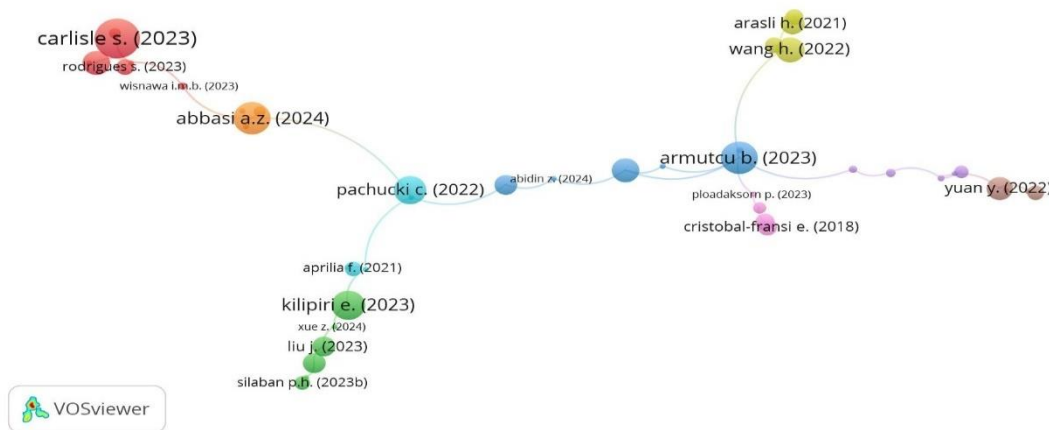


Figure 6. Author Citation Map by Documents in Articles on Digital Marketing in Tourism (Van & Waltman, 2010).

The figure shows the citation network between scientific documents related to digital marketing in tourism, allowing the most influential studies and the conceptual connections between them to be identified. Each node represents an article; the size of the node indicates its citation level and the lines reflect the reference relationships between the works. The colours distinguish the thematic clusters that group together the documents with the greatest conceptual affinity. At the centre of the network, Armutcu (2023) is seen as the main node, articulating several lines of research that link digital marketing with tourist behaviour, visitor experience and smart destination management. Likewise, Pachucki (2022) and Abbasi (2024) maintain close citation relationships with this central core, consolidating a network that reflects the progressive integration of technology, digital communication, and sustainability in the field of tourism. On the other hand, the paper by Cristóbal-Fransi (2018) appears as one of the oldest and most cited pieces of research, providing a theoretical basis for subsequent studies. In contrast, more recent authors such as Kilipiri (2023), Liu (2023) and Silaban (2023) form an emerging cluster that provides an empirical and applied update, focusing on the digital experiences of tourists. Complementarily, the cluster comprising Carlisle (2023), Rodrigues (2023) and Wisnawa (2023) represents a more recent line of research exploring digital strategy, while Yuan (2022) focuses on consumer behaviour and digital loyalty, extending the network towards analytical perspectives more centred on the user experience

DISCUSSION

Digital strategies can be leveraged to promote tourist destinations, foster sustainable development, and strengthen online presence in the current landscape (Pricopoaia et al., 2024; Sharafuddin et al., 2024). The observed evolution in the number of publications between 2014 and 2024 reveals sustained and exponential growth in scientific output related to digital marketing and digitalization in tourism, highlighting the increasing interest of the academic community in understanding the effects of technological transformation on the tourism sector. This upward trend is consistent with previous findings and underscores the relevance of digital strategies in shaping contemporary tourism research, as pointed by (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Yao & Yang, 2024) they affirm that the number of academic publications has increased rapidly, particularly in emerging fields such as digital tourism. During the early years of the analysed period (2014–2016), the limited number of studies reflects an exploratory stage; however, from 2018 onward, and more markedly since 2020, the significant rise in publications indicates the maturity of the field and the consolidation of digital marketing as a strategic axis for tourism communication and promotion (Arango et al., 2024). This trend contrasts with the assertion by (Jami & Karimi, 2024) who argue that the tourism industry has undergone fundamental transformations in the way customers interact with companies due to the digital wave.

The bibliometric results support that the use of tools such as VOSviewer is essential for mapping and visualizing the knowledge networks underpinning this scientific evolution (Santos et al., 2021; Bedaduri et al., 2025). In this regard (Binh et al., 2023; Saheb et al., 2021), emphasize that bibliometric analysis enables the systematic description, evaluation, and understanding of the development of a scientific field, providing a clear perspective on its progress and dominant research themes. The sustained increase in publications reflects the transition toward a “physical-digital” environment within the tourism sector, where technology not only facilitates promotion but also redefines the visitor experience (Gensler & Rangaswamy, 2025). This aligns with the assertions of (Sutherland et al., 2025) who state that digital marketing constitutes an adaptive process driven by technology, allowing the creation and maintenance of value through multiple digital channels. Within this context, the commercialization of a tourist destination represents one of the key development policies, forming the basis upon which the desired growth of a destination can be achieved (Pahor & Vodeb, 2023). Furthermore, bibliometric findings reveal that recent research focuses on topics such as personalization, digital user experience, social media, and artificial intelligence applied to tourism. According to (Rodrigues et al., 2023) authors’ keywords were collected from each article considered in order to identify a set of key issues that best summarize the scope of the research, thereby enabling an appreciation of the diversity of themes and research phrases underlying the recognized literature.

CONCLUSIONS

The bibliometric analysis carried out shows that digital marketing in tourism has established itself as a strategic, cross-cutting and constantly evolving field of research. This scientific domain reflects the growing integration of technologies such as artificial intelligence and interactive platforms that are redefining the way destinations and tourism companies communicate, promote and manage their experiences. Recent literature emphasises that digital marketing not only optimises commercialisation processes, but also broadens our understanding of digital tourist behaviour, enabling personalisation and the co-creation of value. Likewise, the study confirms that tourism

digitalisation acts as a driver of competitiveness, with the exponential growth in scientific output reflecting the decisive role of the transformation of the global tourism sector towards a more intelligent and interactive model.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Declaración sobre el Uso de Asistencia de Inteligencia Artificial (IA)

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence tools, whether generative or assisted, were used in the collection, analysis, interpretation of data, or in the writing of the manuscript. All stages of the research were carried out entirely by the authors, ensuring the originality and academic rigour of the study.

Author Contributions

JMC: Writing – review and editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Software, Data curation, Conceptualization, Project administration. PELV: Writing – review and editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Supervision. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethics Approval

No aplicable.

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