

A systematic literature review of Social Networks uses by tourism stakeholders

Revisión sistemática del uso de las redes sociales por los actores del sector turístico

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Abstract

Social media has emerged as a transformative tool, enabling destination management organisations (DMOs), businesses, and tourists to engage in real-time interactions and co-create value through user-generated content. In this context, this systematic review examines the utilisation of social networks by tourism stakeholders, focusing on their role in marketing, decision-making, and sustainability. Employing the PRISMA protocol, 54 studies published between 2013 and 2022 were analysed, highlighting the diverse applications of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Key findings reveal that social media influences tourist behaviour, facilitates decision-making, and fosters trust through content shared by peers and influencers. Additionally, the platforms are pivotal for promoting sustainability and managing crises, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, challenges such as privacy concerns, misinformation, and overtourism persist, necessitating strategic approaches. The review underscores the need for future research on advanced technologies like augmented reality, localised studies, and the integration of sustainability in social media strategies. These insights contribute to understanding how social media shapes the tourism sector, enhancing its adaptability and sustainability in an evolving digital landscape.

Key words: social media in tourism, tourism and hospitality, sustainable tourism, tourist behaviour analysis, systematic review.

Resumen

Las redes sociales se han convertido en una herramienta transformadora dado que han permitido a las organizaciones de gestión de destinos (OGD), las empresas y los turistas, interactuar en tiempo real y co-crear valor a través de contenidos generados por los usuarios. Por ello, esta revisión sistemática explora el uso de las redes sociales por parte de los actores turísticos, centrándose en su papel en el marketing, la toma de decisiones y la sostenibilidad. Se aplicó el protocolo PRISMA, que dio como resultado la selección y análisis de 54 estudios publicados entre 2013 y 2022, en los que se destacan redes sociales como Facebook, Instagram y TikTok. Como resultados se obtuvo que se ha identificado que las redes sociales influyen en el comportamiento de los turistas, facilitan la toma de decisiones y fomentan la confianza a través de contenidos compartidos por usuarios y personas influyentes (*influencers*). Además, las redes sociales son fundamentales para promover la sostenibilidad y gestionar crisis, como se puso de manifiesto durante la pandemia de COVID-19. Sin embargo, persisten problemas como la privacidad, la desinformación y el sobreturismo, que requieren plantear nuevas estrategias. La revisión sistemática realizada destaca la necesidad de futuras investigaciones sobre nuevas tecnologías como la realidad aumentada, los estudios de proximidad, y la integración de la sostenibilidad en las estrategias de las redes sociales. Estas reflexiones contribuyen a entender cómo las redes sociales configuran el sector turístico, mejorando su adaptabilidad y sostenibilidad en un panorama digital en evolución.

Palabras clave: Redes sociales en turismo, turismo y hospitalidad, turismo sostenible, análisis del comportamiento turístico, revisión sistemática.

1 Introduction

Currently, social networks are regarded as a significant source of information (Teles da Mota & Pickering, 2020). These platforms are used for communication, socialization, and the promotion of goods and services on a global scale, which gives their significance in the tourism sector irrefutable (Domínguez Vila & Araújo Vila, 2014). Businesses use these media as a part of their marketing strategies, managing and updating the information they provide and showing direct and real-time relationships with their customers (Mas Mestanza, 2015). In turn, destinations use these media to cultivate a representation that situates the destination within the tourist and visitor perception (Feitosa et al., 2019). So, the use of social networks by those involved in the tourism

sector represents a multifaceted strategy that encompasses a range of stakeholders, including tourism enterprises, government bodies, and tourists themselves.

In contrast, tourists use social networks for the purposes of planning and socializing their trips. In a study conducted by Google, De Jorge (2017) found that over 92 % of visitors share their experiences through digital media. Similarly, Carter (2021) shows that travellers use social networks to search for various aspects of their travel plans, including the destination (27 %), accommodations (23 %), vacation activities (22 %), attractions (21 %), and restaurants (16 %). Chakraborty (2024) highlights that 89% of travellers look for travel inspiration on social media, with Instagram being the most used (45%), while 62% of travellers use Facebook for travel-related activities. X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook are popular with 57% of travellers for finding flash sales, special promotions and exclusive discounts. American Express Travel (2025) stresses that 80% of Millennial and Gen Z travellers prefer travel planning apps or social media to plan their trips. It also found that 83% of Millennial and Gen Z travellers find generative artificial intelligence useful for travel planning.

In general, social network platforms have become an integral part of daily life, offered benefits but also present significant challenges. A persistent concern is the adequacy of privacy protections (Pew Research Center, 2018). Another issue is the spread of misinformation or inaccurate content and the need for effective management of social media accounts by tourism organizations (Hruška & Pásková, 2018; Petrovic et al., 2021; Tafveez, 2017). A further concern is the impact on mental health, particularly among young people (Pew Research Center, 2018). Finally, there is a need to consider the effects on social dynamics and behaviours related to polarization or division between groups (Calais Guerra et al., 2021; Yamaguchi et al., 2021). In addition, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) underscored the pivotal role of social media in the contemporary business landscape, emphasizing the necessity for organizations to cultivate an active and engaging social media presence.

The significance of social network analysis for understanding human conduct is underscored by Teodoro & Naaman (2013), who investigated personal health and fitness activities on X (formerly Twitter). Their findings show that social networks can influence health behaviours through positive reinforcement, social support, and normative rules, motivating users to adopt healthy practices.

This evidence proves the significance of virtual media in the planning, organization, and post-sale of trips, showing a direct relationship between tourists and service providers. This results in the formation of a network of cooperation between the various entities forming the tourism value chain (Moscoso, 2013). Muñoz Mazón (2012) posits that a simple stakeholder relationship can have an impact on the sustainability of the system and its success (Merinero Rodríguez, 2009).

Consequently, the analysis of the relationships between stakeholders in the tourism sector is crucial for understanding the functioning of the system as a whole (Rodríguez Herrera et al., 2018). Vieira et al. (2023) indicate that tourists frequently rely on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and user-generated content as a means of acquiring information to inform their travel choices.

The content generated on social networks is produced and collected by individual users (or representatives of organizations) who take part in publicly accessible social network platforms such as X, Facebook, or Instagram. While these three are the most popular, there are other platforms that function as repositories of online information. Examples include Yelp (restaurant reviews) or Properati (listings of properties for sale and rent), among others. X is an information social network that allows its users to share in real time what is happening at that moment (Parselis, 2014). According to Statista, the projected number of users worldwide of this social network by 2028 is approximately 503.42 million people (Statista Research Department, 2025).

It is important to consider the implications of the interactions between users of social networks and the profiles of tourist actors. An inadequate management approach could lead to unfavourable outcomes, while a well-managed approach could reinforce positive perceptions and outcomes. In this sense, Merritt et al. (2013) proved that friendship ties within social networks are associated with periodicities in interaction time. Moreover, interaction patterns and prosocial behaviours serve as reliable indicators of friendship. In their research in X (formerly Twitter), Garcia-Gavilanes et al. (2021) emphasized the significance of cultural dimensions (pace of life, individualism, and power distance) on social media behaviour. Mcpherson et al. (2001) found that similarity drives social connections across relationships and settings, leading to homogeneous personal networks in terms of sociodemographic characteristics (the homophily principle).

Privacy is an important aspect of social networks that must be addressed for a better understanding of users' behaviours. Liu et al. (2011) discovered a notable correlation between user-defined friend lists on Facebook and the underlying social network structure. This finding has significant implications for the development of new tools designed to help the management of privacy settings on the platform. Raynes–Goldie (2010) reaches the conclusion that Facebook users, particularly those under the age of thirty, have expressed concerns about privacy on the platform. These concerns focus on controlling access to personal information rather than on how Facebook might use their information. To address these concerns, users resorted to subversive practices.

In this context, Wang et al. (2013) proposed that privacy nudges could be an effective means of preventing inadvertent disclosures on social networks, thereby reducing the likelihood of regrettable disclosures. The authors emphasised the potential of privacy nudges in a range of

contexts beyond Facebook, including e-commerce, location sharing and mobile applications. On the other hand, Ur & Wang (2013) have devised a cross-cultural framework for evaluating user privacy in online social media, with a specific focus on cultural and legal considerations, as well as user expectations regarding data sharing practices and the communication of privacy information. The goal of this framework is to help service providers in finding deficiencies in the provision of user privacy support and to ease comprehension of cultural variations pertaining to privacy in social media among researchers, regulators, and consumer advocates.

Tourism companies are using social media, particularly for the purpose of self-promotion at a low cost. They employ platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to engage with audiences and send visually appealing content (stories, reels, photos, videos or text) that attracts potential visitors and enhance brand recognition and authority (Filyuk & Kuchyn, 2022; Flinta, 2024; Gutiérrez Montoya et al., 2018; Hruška & Pásková, 2018; Lama, 2024). Furthermore, the marketing of tourism has intensified, particularly in the wake of the SARS crisis. This has led to the emergence of a variety of content formats, including videos and live broadcasts, which have proven to be more engaging than traditional media (Xiaoluan, 2021). The role of Instagram influencers and the use of hashtags in the context of social media-induced tourism is also clear, as far as they can shape the destination's image and build trust among potential tourists (Abdul Razak & Mansor, 2021; Flinta, 2024; Tahalea et al., 2022).

Furthermore, they serve as a principal source of information for travellers, particularly during the pre-travel phase when users seek opinions and recommendations to evaluate and select a destination (Gretzel & Yoo, 2017). Location-based social networks (LBSNs) offer valuable insights into visitor behaviour and preferences, helping tourism businesses in making strategic decisions (Vassakis et al., 2019). A notable proportion of travellers use social networks to plan or change their trips, underscoring their influence on the planning and decision-making processes (Chilembwe & Gondwe, 2020).

The use of social media helps user engagement through the sharing of content, particularly following a trip, where tourists give their experiences and comments, thereby influencing the travel decisions of others or influencing their satisfaction and expectations (Gretzel & Yoo, 2017; Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2018; Lopez-Ortiz et al., 2023; Vieira et al., 2023). Platforms such as Instagram encourage interaction and engagement, making them an effective tool for the marketing of tourism products (Gutiérrez Montoya et al., 2018). It is therefore important to consider that even if only a low proportion (5 %) of photos shared on Facebook can produce large global cascades (considered as viral), the impact is significant since these cascades appeal to a diverse demographic and disseminate globally within a 24-hour period (Dow et al., 2013). Moreover, the

generation of content and information enables tourism companies to obtain immediate feedback, gain deeper insights into their target audience, and develop tailored offers, which are crucial for maintaining competitiveness in the market (Flinta, 2024).

It is also important to note that no studies have been identified in the last decade that have used a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine the use of social networks by stakeholders in the tourism sector. Previous studies related to SLR and tourism have focused on Airbnb (Marti-Ochoa et al., 2024), cruise tourism (Kulkov et al., 2023), ecotourism (Rhama, 2020; Salman et al., 2024), green tourism (Sanjaya et al., 2023), impact of covid-19 on the accommodation sector (Nekova, 2023), information flow (Medaglia et al., 2024; Pertheban et al., 2020), Islamic tourism (Alhammad, 2022), landscape of tourism cities (Gurung & Gowreesunkar, 2024), natural disasters and crisis management (Chen et al., 2022; Pascual-Fraile et al., 2022; Ramos-Giral et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023), pro-poor tourism (Yu et al., 2019), regenerative tourism (Corral-Gonzalez et al., 2023), resilience in tourism (Hu & Xu, 2022; Lamhour et al., 2023; Pocinho et al., 2022), rural tourism (Arman et al., 2023; Rosalina et al., 2021; Yanan et al., 2024), scenario planning approach (Seyitoğlu & Costa, 2022), social tourism (McCabe & Qiao, 2020), sustainable tourism (Harish & Rao, 2024; Mihalic et al., 2021; Rosato et al., 2021; Santos et al., 2020), tourism actors' responsible behaviour (Schönherr, 2024), tourism and gender (Trillo-Rodríguez & Flores-Ruiz, 2023), tourism enterprises and business issues (Heidari et al., 2018; Legendre et al., 2024; Trupp et al., 2024), tourism impacts on destinations (Salee et al., 2022), tourism marketing and promotion (Chihwai & Dube, 2023; Garanti et al., 2024; H.-C. Lin et al., 2020; Lopez-Ortiz et al., 2023; Mehrez, 2024; Mukhopadhyay, 2024), tourism supply chain (Alkier et al., 2023), use of natural and cultural resources (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022), user-generated video (Polat et al., 2023).

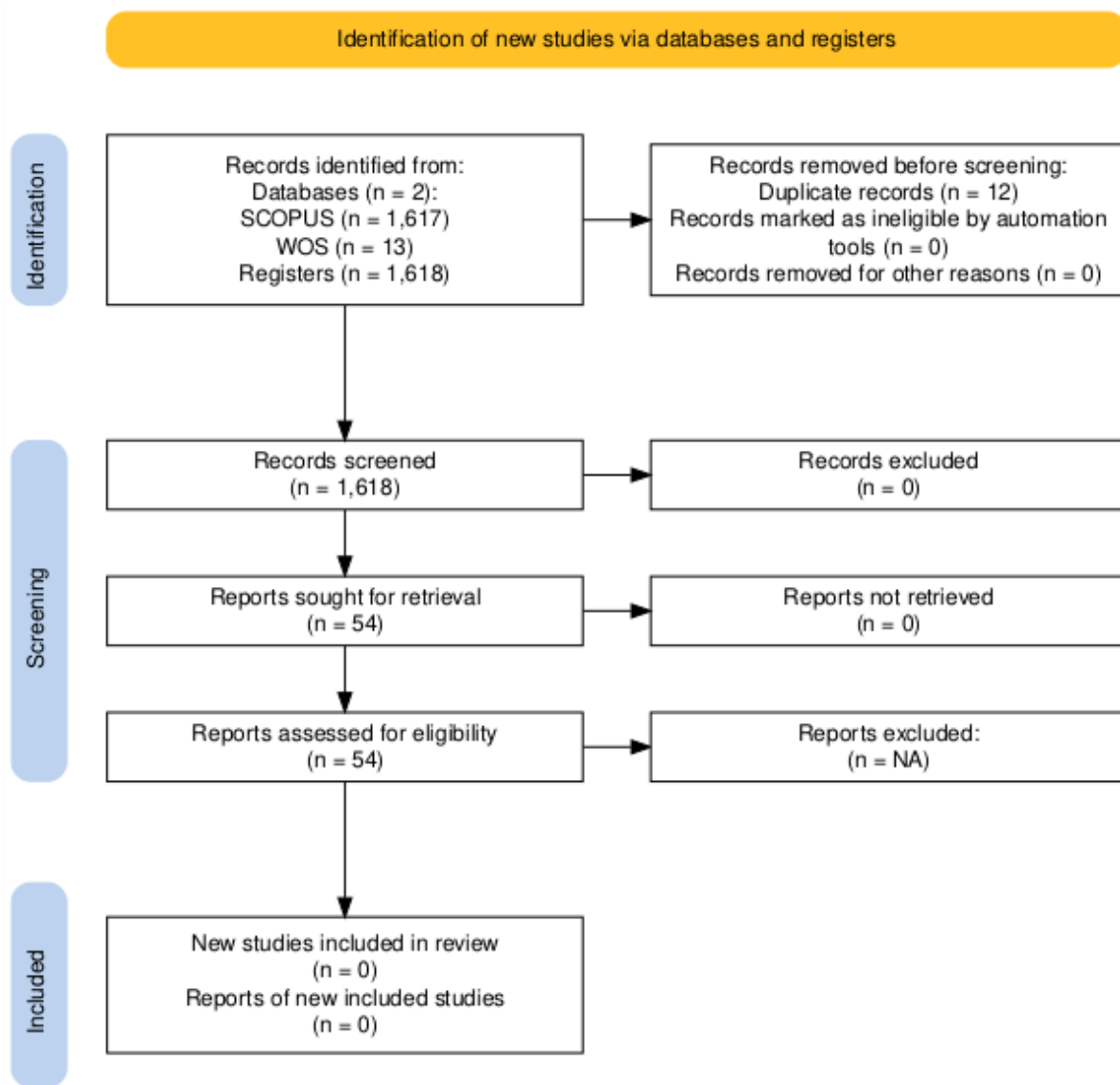
Considering the pivotal role that social networks play in the tourism sector, this study aims to elucidate the diverse applications of social networks by tourism stakeholders through a SLR. This research is significant in that it helps to delineate the issues that have been studied in a general way on the use of social networks worldwide and, in this case, directly in the tourism sector. This SLR will facilitate the identification of new research topics, as it will clearly show which topics are not currently being addressed.

2 Methodology

A systematic review of papers published in the SCOPUS and WOS databases was conducted to figure out how tourism stakeholders use social networks, such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, among others. The systematic review was conducted following the protocol proved by Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020)

(Liberati et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021). The four phase flow diagram of PRISMA protocol is presented in Figure 1, made with the R package and Shiny app for producing PRISMA 2020-compliant flow diagrams (Haddaway et al., 2022).

Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram.



To define the search string for SCOPUS and WOS for finding the primary studies, the Parsifal tool (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007) was applied, defining the research question through the PICOC model (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Wohlin et al., 2012). According to Boyd & Ellison (2007), the concept of social networking is defined as "Web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a restricted system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and browse their list of connections and those made by others within the system". Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), define 'social media' as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and enable the

creation and sharing of user-generated content". However, at the time of the RSL search, the second term was considered to encompass all social media and social networking applications.

So, the population was defined by the keywords "tourism actors", "tourism stakeholders" and "stakeholders in tourism"; the intervention by "social networks", "x", "Facebook", "Instagram", "TikTok", "twitter"; and the outcomes by "Social networks more used". The Boolean operator 'OR' was used in the search string to avoid exclusions in the population and intervention components, so that one of the keywords used in each component was searched for. Context and Comparison was not defined due all the themes and regions related with tourism was included. So, the research question guiding this research were What are the main fields of research on social networks used by tourism stakeholders?

The following variables were obtained for each paper: authors' names and affiliations, title, abstract, keywords, year of publication, source title, PID (mainly DOI), references, cited by, language of original document, document type and open access publication. The data were obtained in BIB format from databases, and the bibliometric analysis performed in Biblioshiny of Bibliometrix (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

An eligibility assessment was performed by a carefully screened of the abstract of each selected paper for finding those that clearly address the use of social media by tourism stakeholders. As result, 54 papers were obtained.

3 Results

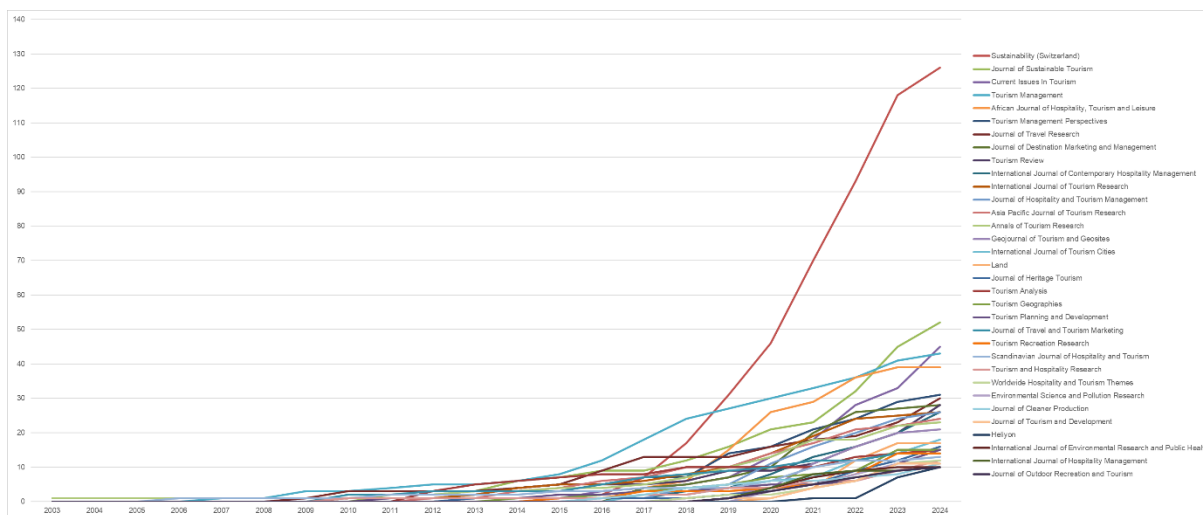
3.1 Global results

A total of 1,618 papers were retrieved from the Scopus and WOS databases and published between 2003 and 2024 (May). The quality of the data obtained was analysed using Bibliometrix, which revealed that 100 % of the papers had complete metadata. This included variables such as authors' names, title, source title, publication year, cited references, document type, cited by, and language of the original document. The quality of the metadata extracted for variables such as affiliations, abstracts, keywords, and PID (DOI) was deemed to be satisfactory, with a success rate of 99.81 %, 99.81 %, 98.15 %, and 94.75 %, respectively.

The 1,618 papers were published in 502 journals, with 49.57 % of these documents found in 33 journals, that published 10 or more papers (see Figure 2). It is noteworthy that 27 of the 33 journals are dedicated to the field of tourism research. The most relevant sources identified were Sustainability (7.79 %), a multidisciplinary journal, Journal of Sustainable Tourism (3.21 %),

Current Issues in Tourism (2.78 %), Tourism Management (2.66 %), and African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure (2.41 %).

Figure 2. Cumulative papers published by journal over time (2003-2024-May).

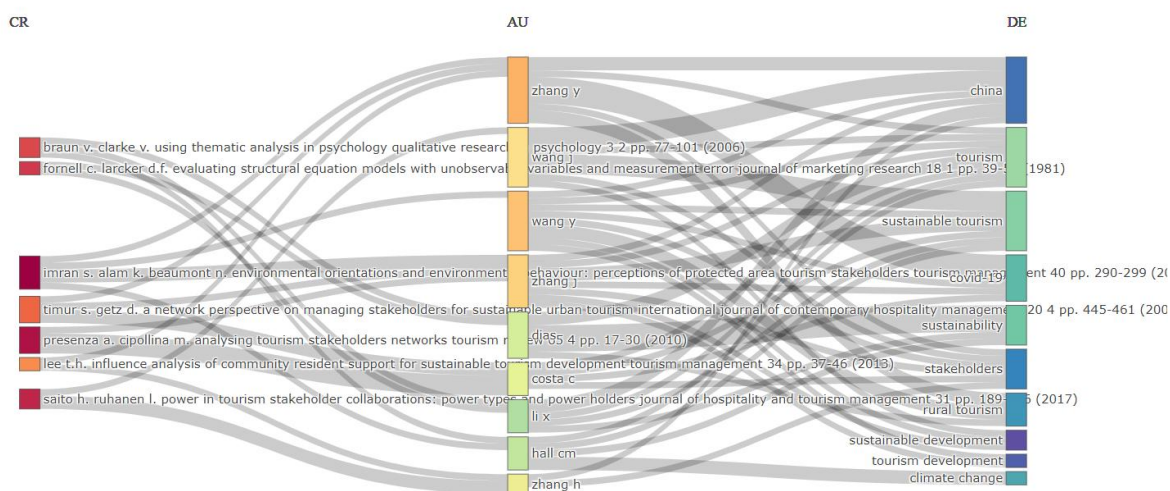


From approximately 2010 onwards, all journals demonstrate a gradual increase in the number of papers published about social networks and tourism stakeholders. However, this growth is relatively slow, which suggests that the period in question was characterized by a lack of interest in this specific topic. Conversely, an exponential growth is observed in the journals with the highest number of papers published between 2017 (start of growth) and 2024-May. Sustainability (Switzerland) with a cumulative total of more than 126 papers (growth of 1,800%), Journal of Sustainable Tourism with 52 papers (growth of 578%), Current Issues in Tourism with 45 papers (growth of 1,125%) and Tourism Management with 43 papers (growth of 239%). This notable expansion reflects a surge in interest and prominence of sustainability in tourism, potentially influenced by global forces such as climate change and the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The other journals' trends indicate a more moderate yet consistent growth.

A total of 3,914 authors were identified, being the more prolific authors: Y. Zhang (20 papers), Y. Wang (16), J. Zhang (14), J. Wang (13), C. Wang (11), H. Zhang (11) and C. Costa (10). Figure 3 shows the connections between documents cited (CR), authors (AU) and Keywords (DE), indicating the influence of the authors and the topics addressed by them. Figure 3 illustrates the connections between the ten documents most frequently cited (CR) by the ten most prolific authors (AU) and the ten keywords (DE) that highlight the focus of the papers published. Regarding the country of origin of the authors, most of the studies have been conducted in China, with a particular focus on topics such as sustainability, stakeholders, and rural tourism. Furthermore, the studies that addressed the consequences of the Corona Virus Disease 2019

(Covid-19) were also of significant importance. The most frequently cited reference among these authors was " Environmental orientations and environmental behaviour: Perceptions of protected area tourism stakeholders" authored by Imram et al. (2014) and published in Tourism Management. The results demonstrate that the authors do not prioritize researching the direct relationship between tourism and social networks. Instead, they explore the role of social networks as a supporting element in the topics or areas of study they study. Ultimately, this figure offers a comprehensive representation of the interconnections between citations, authors, and keywords, facilitating the identification of trends, pivotal influences, and salient topics within the domain of tourism research.

Figure 3. Three-Field Plot showing the relations between references, authors and keywords.

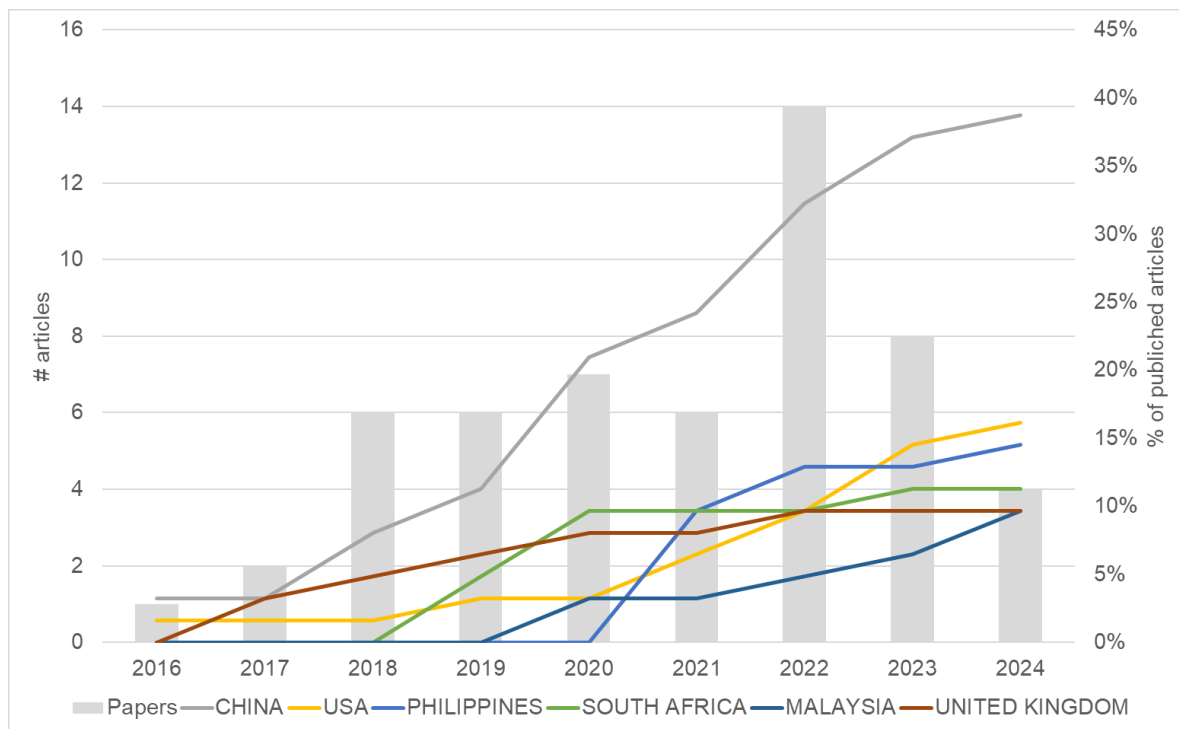


3.2 Main characteristics and evolution of papers published

Once the 1,618 articles were analysed, it was determined that only 54 articles effectively addressed the utilization of social networks by tourism stakeholders, with publication dates ranging from 2013 to 2022. Figure 4 illustrates a growth trend in scientific production (18.92% annual growth trend and 4.15 average age of papers), reaching its highest point in 2022. Following this peak, there is a discernible decline in production. The impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on scientific output has been both positive and negative. The surge in output during the 2021-2022 period may reflect the boom in pandemic-related research, while the subsequent decline may be attributed to a stabilization of output at a new, lower level. Regarding the production of scientific output by country, China is the country that has experienced the most pronounced growth. Between 2020 and 2023, a gradual increase was observed, with 39 % of the papers published during this period. This country is demonstrably at the vanguard of this field of research. In contrast, the United States demonstrates a moderate growth in its production, yet most published papers are concentrated within the 2020-2023 period. Among countries few

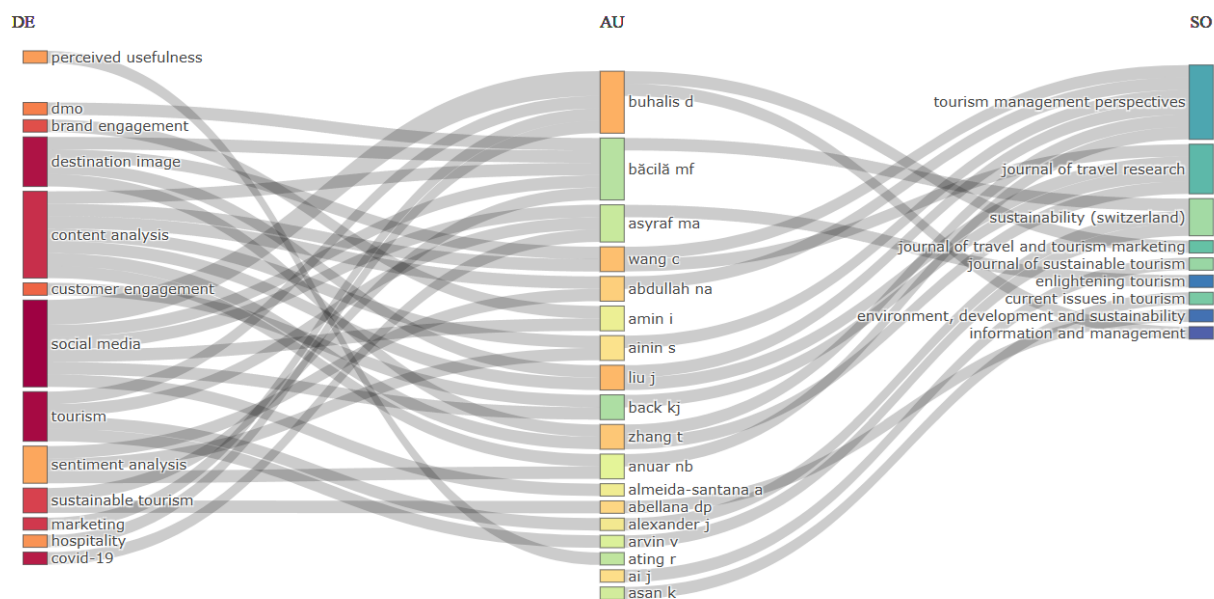
collaborations were observed, four papers between China and USA, and 2 papers between Australia and Thailand, South Africa and Australia, Sweden and Finland, respectively. The more prolific institutions are Cebu Technological University-Philippines (4 papers) and University of Central Florida-USA (3).

Figure 4. Articles published by year and country.



180 authors were identified, with international co-authorship at 51.85%. Only six articles were single-authored. The most important authors were Buhalis D., Liu J., Wang C. and Zhang T. with two articles each. The relationship between top authors, top keywords and top source journals is shown in Figure 5. Popular research topics include social media, content analysis, destination image and tourism (deep red colours indicate higher frequency). The influential authors are Buhalis D., Wang C., and Zhang T. (deep orange colours indicate higher frequency), who are linked to multiple topics and sources, indicating high productivity and impact. The most relevant sources are *Tourism Management Perspectives* and *Journal of Travel Research*, although the number of articles published is lower than in other sources.

Figure 5. Three-Field Plot showing the relations between keywords, authors and sources.



The 54 papers were published in 40 sources, which, according to Bradford's law, can be divided into three zones: Core journals (zone 1), which include the most productive journals and are considered the most important in the subject under study; Second tier journals (zone 2), which include journals with fewer articles but still contribute valuable research; and, Peripheral journals (zone 3) with less production (Table 1).

Table 1. Sources categorized by Bradford's Law

ZONE 1		ZONE 2		ZONE 3	
SOURCE	FREQ	SOURCE	FREQ	SOURCE	FREQ
Sustainability (Switzerland)	4	Tourism Management	2	International Journal of Tourism Policy	1
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	3	Tourism Management Perspectives	2	International Journal of Tourism Research	1
African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure	2	Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes	2	Iranian Journal of Management Studies	1
Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	2	Acta Borealia	1	Journal of Cleaner Production	1
Current Issues in Tourism	2	Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	1	Journal of Consumer Culture	1
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	2	Cities	1	Journal of Destination Marketing and Management	1
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	2	Enlightening Tourism	1	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	1
Journal of Travel Research	2	Environment, Development and Sustainability	1	Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management	1
		Environmental Management	1	Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism	1

		Information and Management	1	Journal of Physical Education and Sport	1
		Information Technology and Tourism	1	Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events	1
		International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science	1	Journal of Product and Brand Management	1
		International Journal of Geographical Information Science	1	Journal of Vacation Marketing	1
		International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning	1	South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences	1
		International Journal of Tourism Cities	1	Tourism Analysis	1
				Tourism Recreation Research	1
				Tourism, Culture and Communication	1
				Weather, Climate, and Society	1

In terms of authors, names such as Zhang T., Wang C., Liu J. and Buhalis D. appear to be the most productive with two papers each. Eight cluster based on collaboration network were identified: 1) Zhang T., Wang C., Liu J., and Fang, S., 2) Back K. J., and Chung S., 3) Abdullah N.A. Ainin S., Anuar N.B., and Feizollah A., 4) Alexander J., Arvin V., and Cahigas M.M.L., 5) Almeida-Santana A., and Boza-Chirino J., 6) Buhalis D., Bettoni E.M., and Biz A.A., 7) Băcilă M.F. Ciornea R., and Drule A.M., and 8) Ating, R., and Besa M.S.

The most cited papers (total citations) are Buhalis & Sinarta (2019) with 388 citations (64.67 citations per year), Wut et al. (2021) with 173 (43.25), (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020) with 102 (20.40), Dewnarain et al. (2019) with 100 (16.67), Ainin et al. (2020) with 69 (13.80) and J. Liu et al. (2019) with 55 (16.50).

3.3. Evolution of topics addressed in social media in Tourism

We can get a general idea of the topics addressed by the selected papers by analysing the terms used as keywords (Figure 6). We found a significant focus on the analysis of how social networks platforms are changing tourist behaviour, destination promotion and tourism marketing management. The term “social media” is prevalent in this field, underscoring its status as a predominant theme in the research agenda. The terms “tourist destination” and “tourist behaviour” are also of particular significance, underscoring the necessity of comprehending tourist behaviour and the places they visit. The prominence of the term "Covid-19" and related

When analysing the keywords by theme, six clusters were identified based on density (degree of development) and centrality (degree of relevance). Social media, Tourist destination and Marketing are the most relevant and developed themes (motor themes), with a high transversal impact, which are leading the development of tourism research related to social networks, especially in areas such as tourist behaviour, digital marketing and social media interaction. We can consider this cluster as the backbone of contemporary tourism research on social networks. The second cluster identified (basic themes) brings together the central, but not yet developed, themes related to Tourism, Social networking (online) and Tourist destinations. These themes are fundamental but have potential for further theoretical and empirical development. In this sense, Mehrez (2024) also noted an increase in publications related to sustainable tourism, digital marketing (including social networks and big data) and smart tourism. As niche topics, Crisis Management and Disaster Management are highlighted because they are relevant and developed topics but not or little connected with others, so they are more specialised and less cross-cutting. As topics for new research (emerging or declining themes), we could consider topics such as Questionnaire survey and the role of the Media. These are not themes but methods, which explains their low thematic centrality, but they offer potential for innovative research from a conceptual and methodological approach. Finally, Data Mining and Perception also stand out as themes with medium development and good connection, indicating their growing methodological relevance.

The 54 papers were coded into eight not exclusive categories (Table 2), 27 focused on technology and marketing in tourism, 25 related to the analysis of the use of social networks for tourism stakeholders' behaviour analysis, 12 studied sustainability in tourism, 11 the impact of Covid-19, and 6 on climate change and tourism.

Table 2. Papers classified by category

CATEGORY	PAPERS
Technology and marketing in tourism	(Almeida-Santana et al., 2018; Amore & Roy, 2020; Asan, 2022; Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Chan et al., 2018; Chigora & Mutambara, 2019; de Bernardi, 2022; Dewnarain et al., 2019; Fuchs, 2024; Hale, 2018; Huang et al., 2023; Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020; Kruger & Venter, 2020; M. Lee et al., 2021; Lemy et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2020; J. Liu et al., 2023; Martínez et al., 2019; Muangasame & Tan, 2023; Shao et al., 2016; Thomaz et al., 2017; Van Dyk et al., 2020; Wozniak et al., 2017; Yamagishi et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2018; Yousaf et al., 2021; Zvaigzne et al., 2023)
Use of social networks for tourism stakeholders' behaviour analysis	(Ai et al., 2023; Ainin et al., 2020; Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Dadvari et al., 2022; Ditta-Apichai et al., 2024; Falk & Hagsten, 2021; Fuchs, 2024; Han & Bae, 2022; Huang, 2022; Huang, 2024; Hussain et al., 2018; Lemy et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2020; J. Liu et al., 2019, 2023; Mosweunyane et al., 2019; Polat et al., 2023; Shao et al., 2016; Taberner et al., 2022; Tao et al., 2021; Thomaz et al., 2017; Tom Dieck et al., 2018; Wozniak et al., 2017; Yousaf et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2022)

Sustainability in tourism	(Almeida-Santana et al., 2018; Asan, 2022; Băcilă et al., 2022; Ditta-Apichai et al., 2024; Hayes et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2023; Hussain et al., 2018; Lemy et al., 2021; Tao et al., 2021; Walsh & Dodds, 2022; Yamagishi et al., 2021)
Impacts of COVID-19	(Cahigas et al., 2022; Fong et al., 2024; Hanafiah et al., 2022; H. Y. Lee & Leung, 2022; Lemy et al., 2021; Muangasame & Tan, 2023; Pasquinelli et al., 2022; Polat et al., 2023; Seyitoğlu & Costa, 2022; Wut et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2018)
Climate change, risks and tourism	(Băcilă et al., 2022; Hale, 2018; Salim et al., 2023; Tao et al., 2021; Yamagishi et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2018)

3.4. Analysis of the fields of research on social media in tourism

3.4.1 Technology and marketing in tourism

The role of social media in the field of tourism has been a significant factor in transforming the interactions between DMOs, tourists and businesses. The analysis of the documents in question has enabled the identification of several key areas where social media has had a considerable impact on the tourism sector. These include the use of social media as a powerful tool for marketing, communication, and consumer engagement.

Regarding marketing, social media facilitate a two-way conversation between tourism brands and consumers, enhancing consumer-brand engagement and supporting marketing activities such as information dissemination, product promotion, and customer service (Yousaf et al., 2021). In this context, DMOs have employed social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, X, or WeChat and Weibo (in China), as cost-effective tools for promoting destinations on a global scale, reaching and interacting with a broad public facilitating significant interactions with tourists and enhancing customer engagement, brand loyalty, real-time responses, revisit intentions and personalized marketing strategies (Almeida-Santana et al., 2018; Chigora & Mutambara, 2019; M. Lee et al., 2021; Lemy et al., 2021; H. C. Lin et al., 2020; Martínez et al., 2019; Shao et al., 2016; Thomaz et al., 2017). In this sense, Wozniak et al. (2017) study the return on investment (ROI) of DMOs in Belgium, France and Switzerland in relation to their social media marketing efforts. While the financial and human resources dedicated to online platforms remain modest, the results show weak engagement metrics compared to the financial input. The study suggests that DMOs need to strategically align their social media objectives to achieve more measurable results. But Van Dyk et al. (2020) highlight the need for DMOs to use both traditional and social media strategies to cater for different consumer learning techniques and response stages.

In particular, the efficacy of marketing strategies and tourism quality can be assessed by the extent of UCG, consumer engagement, perception and experiences, encompassing the quantity of

comments, posts and reactions (Thomaz et al., 2017; Kruger and Venter, 2020; Lin et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Lemy et al., 2021; Asan, 2022), which resonate with audiences more effectively than traditional marketing approaches. Yamagishi et al. (2021) examine how social media marketing strategies influence sustainable tourism development, highlighting three social media strategies - minimal effort, moving visuals, and collaborative strategies - each impacting metrics such as awareness, reach, and online engagement. The findings suggest that collaborative strategies have the greatest impact on awareness and engagement, demonstrating the potential of social media in promoting sustainability. (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020) show that emotionally charged content on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram significantly increase brand equity. Interactive features such as live streams and Q&A sessions deepen the customer-brand relationship, leading to greater loyalty and repeat visits. Furthermore, Hale (2018) and Yan et al. (2018) illustrate the efficacy of geotagged social media data (mainly Flickr and Instagram) in examining tourist movement patterns and preferences. So, DMOs can utilize this data to ascertain the most popular attractions and adjust their marketing strategies accordingly.

In addition, Amore & Roy (2020) highlight the untapped potential of food tourism in urban marketing, a topic that is missing from other studies. Huang et al. (2023) observe the role of digital technology in shaping the customer experience in fine dining, enhancing the customer engagement and brand storytelling, and sharing curated content about their culinary philosophy and sustainability initiatives.

Dewnarain et al. (2019) underscore the utility of social media analytics in anticipating tourist preferences. By analysing the sentiment expressed on social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) or TripAdvisor, businesses can anticipate the demand for specific services and adapt their offerings accordingly. For their part, Almeida-Santana et al. (2018) and Chigora & Mutambara (2019) highlight the dual role of social media in amplifying cultural nuances and mitigating negative perceptions.

In their respective studies, Muangasame & Tan (2023) and Zvaigzne et al. (2023) highlight the integration of advanced technologies such as augmented reality, mobile applications and fuzzy cognitive mapping to enhance tourism marketing and stakeholder collaboration. Also, Buhalis & Sinarta (2019) explore how real-time digital engagement enhances co-creation experiences in tourism and hospitality. They identify 'nowness' as a critical factor, where social media and mobile applications provide instant interaction opportunities for tourists and service providers. Their findings highlight how immediate feedback loops foster customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, particularly through platforms such as X and Instagram. Chan et al. (2018) and J. Liu et al. (2023) examined the impact of mobile technologies and real-time social media updates on tourist

behaviour. The advent of social media has resulted in a notable shift in tourist behaviour, with individuals now demonstrating a greater proclivity for spontaneity. This is evidenced by their use of such platforms to obtain real-time information pertaining to local attractions, weather conditions, and events. Furthermore, these platforms facilitate the direct booking of accommodations or activities through integrated features.

On other side, de Bernardi (2022) analyses marketing materials to understand how indigenous cultures are represented in tourism, and Shao et al. (2016) demonstrate how storytelling through videos can significantly enhance tourist engagement and awareness of cultural heritage. This is crucial for sustainable tourism practices that respect cultural integrity and promote authentic experiences.

The results of the studies show that social networks are not just communication tools, but strategic assets that are changing the way tourism companies interact with consumers, manage their brand image and compete in the global marketplace. Furthermore, the research into the use of social media for marketing purposes in the tourism industry shows that social media platforms are increasingly being adopted due to their perceived ease of use and effectiveness in enhancing marketing capabilities.

3.4.2 Use of social networks for tourism stakeholders' behaviour analysis

The phenomenon of social media has had a profound impact on the behaviour of travellers, offering them instant access to a wealth of information that has the potential to alter their decision-making processes. For example, tourists frequently seek authentic, first-hand experiences that have been shared by other users on social media platforms such as Instagram or travel review sites like TripAdvisor. So, the use of social media enables tourists to conduct research on potential destinations, make well-informed decisions and share their experiences in real time.

For example, Hussain et al. (2018) emphasise the significance of social media in rural tourism for attracting tourists. This is achieved by offering concise and accessible information, as well as enabling tourists to regulate their own activities. This is especially crucial in regions where traditional media reach is limited. Mosweunyane et al. (2019) examine the function of social media in facilitating engagement between tourism Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) and their internal and external networks. This enables the enhancement of international competitiveness through direct communication with stakeholders, circumventing intermediaries.

Social networks permit tourists to assess the appeal of a destination by observing the experiences of other visitors to that destination. As evidenced in several studies, travellers now rely on reviews and comments from other users to inform their decisions regarding their itinerary (Hussain et al.,

2018; Lemy et al., 2021; H. C. Lin et al., 2020). Additionally, tourists who visit a destination frequently disseminate their experiences through various forms of media, including photographs, videos, and reviews. In this sense, the use of user-generated content (UGC), has become a significant factor in the formation of informed travel decisions (Dadvari et al., 2022; Fuchs, 2024; Han & Bae, 2022; Y. C. Huang, 2024; Lemy et al., 2021; Shao et al., 2016; Thomaz et al., 2017; Wozniak et al., 2017; Yousaf et al., 2021) and building a community around tourism brands (Y. C. Huang, 2024; H. C. Lin et al., 2020). Consequently, the impact of such content on the information displayed by a tourism destination or business's brand image cannot be underestimated. As example, Taberner et al. (2022) research focuses on how Instagram shapes destination image for regions hosting small sporting events. They highlight the role of social media in co-creating the destination image, suggesting that stakeholder alignment can enhance sustainable branding and tourism strategies. In addition, we highlight that social media platforms have become crucial in shaping destination images and influencing tourists' decision-making processes. Yousaf et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of considering cultural differences when analysing the relationship between message design and consumer engagement on social media.

Another function of social networks is the role in building tourist trust, which significantly impacts the perception and image of a destination, and consequently in the destination selection process (Ai et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2019). Regarding this role, a crucial area of focus is the function of online influencers, as their dedicated followers tend to regard their recommendations as genuine and, subsequently, might utilize or reserve the services based on such guidance. This emphasizes the influence of influencers in the tourism sector, as outlined by Mosweunyane et al. (2019), who have highlighted that businesses can utilize influencer networks to enhance visibility and customer trust. Furthermore, as posited by Ai et al. (2023) in their study of affected areas by natural disasters, individual user posts exerted a more significant influence on tourists' propensity to visit a region than official accounts. Key psychological factors, such as perceived loss and a sense of community, mediated these effects, showcasing the power of peer-generated content in tourism recovery strategies.

The use of social media by those in decision-making roles within the tourism and hospitality sectors is primarily aimed at optimising capabilities and performance within the context of tourism marketing. This is achieved by understanding customer behaviour and leveraging social media's perceived advantages over traditional media, such as ease of use and usefulness. (H. C. Lin et al., 2020). Furthermore, the application of content analysis as a means of understanding the interactions and motivations underlying social network dynamics has been identified as a valuable

tool for informing decision-makers about consumer engagement and sentiment (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019).

A further illustration of this phenomenon can be found in the analysis conducted by Ainin et al. (2020), who utilised an extensive data set of tweets to evaluate the prevailing sentiments worldwide about halal tourism. The analysis yielded insights into the pivotal role that social media content plays in elucidating consumer preferences and regional trends, thereby underscoring the efficacy of targeted marketing strategies. Another use has been identified by Falk & Hagsten (2021), who examine the use of Instagram posts as a proxy for visitor numbers to World Heritage Sites. The study examines the impact of social media on tourism demand and site management.

In the context of culinary tourism, Huang (2024) examined the influence of social media engagement on brand equity for Taiwanese cuisine. The study concluded that the sharing of hedonistic experiences online had a positive effect on brand awareness and consumer perceptions of quality, thereby reinforcing the significance of social media in the context of culinary destination marketing.

Social media also has a pivotal role on stakeholders' development. As example, Ditta-Apichai et al. (2024) emphasised the pivotal role of Facebook in empowering female micro-entrepreneurs in the tourism sector. The study identified the platform as a conduit for learning, self-development, and business networking, thereby addressing critical gaps in social policy and fostering sustainable tourism practices in developing countries.

Notwithstanding the advances and new uses of social media in tourism and hospitality, the review conducted by Polat et al. (2023) emphasises that research in the domain of user-generated video (UGV) in the fields of hospitality and tourism is still in its nascent stage. While a plethora of theoretical developments have been witnessed, the research predominantly comprises descriptive inquiries. This underscores the necessity for the establishment of more rigorous theoretical frameworks and a more profound exploration of the implications of UGV in this domain. The study identifies four primary areas of focus in the context of UGV research: destination image perception, short-form videos and travel live-streaming, behavioural intentions, and crisis management.

Finally, the incorporation of social media into the tourism sector has transformed the way tourists engage with destinations, businesses, and fellow travellers. From the influence of UGC on decision-making processes to the shaping of spontaneous travel behaviours through real-time engagement. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TripAdvisor have become indispensable tools for both consumers and businesses.

3.4.3 Sustainability in tourism

A variety of strategies are employed by those engaged in the tourism sector to address sustainability. These strategies integrate mainly the environmental, socio-cultural and economic dimensions into both its operational activities and its marketing efforts.

In this sense, the studies conducted by Almeida-Santana et al. (2018) and Tao et al. (2021) highlight the dual nature of social media in the context of promoting sustainability in tourism. On the one hand, social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook provide DMOs with an effective means of promoting sustainable travel practices and educating tourists about responsible behaviour. Conversely, the same platforms can contribute to overtourism by excessively promoting certain locations, which may result in environmental degradation. Within this paradigm, the analysis of tourism representations of invasive species highlights the way marketing strategies have the capacity to perpetuate environmental issues (Hayes et al., 2023). This qualitative study, which was based on Instagram image analysis, emphasises the necessity for responsible promotion to ensure that tourism marketing is aligned with sustainability principles.

A study by Yamagishi et al. (2021) examines the function of social media marketing techniques in the promotion of sustainable tourism. This research emphasises the potential of social media to disseminate the sustainable tourism agenda effectively, thereby supporting the sustainability of tourist destinations. Asan (2022) conducted a study on the influence of travel influencers on bicycle tourism, a form of sustainable tourism. The study resulted in the development of the "Travel Influencers' Impacts Scale," a tool that identifies four categories of impact: informative effects, motivational effects, role model effects, and community effects. Băcilă et al. (2022) additionally posit that, despite the promotion of sustainable tourism by DMOs, there is often an absence of explicit emphasis on sustainable tourism practices, which represents a gap in strategic communication by decision-makers.

Overall, tourism stakeholders are adopting a multi-faceted approach to sustainability, using digital platforms and strategic communications to align with global sustainability goals and meet the evolving expectations of environmentally conscious travellers. Walsh & Dodds (2022) point out that tourism stakeholders are increasingly using social marketing to influence sustainable travel behaviour, emphasising the importance of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours (KAB) in promoting sustainable tourism practices. This approach is supported by intermediaries such as travel agencies and local tourism websites, which play an important role in educating tourists and promoting sustainable travel choices. The use of digital marketing strategies, including the creation of engaging content and virtual experiences, is also emphasised to build trust and promote sustainable tourism practices, particularly in the context of post-pandemic recovery

(Lemy et al., 2021). Ditta-Apichai et al. (2024) posit that these platforms function as learning resources, informal ecosystems, self-development tools, and business development exchanges, thereby promoting inclusion and sustainability in the tourism sector.

Furthermore, Băcilă et al. (2022) highlight that integrating sustainability into tourism is not only about promoting environmentally friendly practices, but also about addressing socio-cultural issues such as inclusiveness and local community engagement, which are crucial to preserving cultural integrity and enhancing the tourist experience. As example, in the field of gastronomy, the characterisation of Michelin-starred restaurants in China underscores the significance of authenticity and the utilisation of awards as strategic positioning tools. This approach, as elucidated by Huang et al. (2023), positions these restaurants as leaders in the culinary landscape. Conversely, sustainability-related practices are accorded a less prominent role. This analysis unveils prospects for the integration of sustainable practices into the domains of fine dining and destination marketing.

3.3.4 Impacts of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced how social media was utilized to address various aspects of the crisis, particularly in tourism and crisis management. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, played a crucial role in disseminating information and managing public perceptions during the pandemic. According to Wut et al. (2021), crisis management in the hospitality and tourism sector has evolved significantly in recent decades, with an increasing focus on the use of social media and digital technologies to mitigate impacts and foster recovery.

For instance, ferry service operators in Hong Kong used social media to announce service changes and promote local tourism, adapting to the fluctuating COVID-19 situation by encouraging outdoor activities and environmental consciousness among tourists (H. Y. Lee & Leung, 2022). Similarly, city tourism organizations leveraged social media to maintain brand engagement and communicate changes in urban tourism destinations. This was evident in the adaptive and transformative brand responses observed in Italian cities like Rome, Florence, Venice, and Milan, where social media was used to project new brand values and attributes in response to the pandemic (Pasquinelli et al., 2022). Furthermore, Seyitoğlu & Costa (2022) emphasised the role of social media in facilitating crisis communication and reputation management for tourism destinations. Digital platforms functioned as effective channels for addressing tourists' concerns, highlighting safety measures and promoting activities that were compatible with pandemic restrictions.

Another area of focus in the studies was the relationship between social media and the management of risk perception. Digital platforms, such as Instagram, were utilised to maintain the relevance of tourism destination brands, projecting an image of safety and adaptability in the face of crisis (Pasquinelli et al., 2022). Furthermore, the role of social media in crisis management has been demonstrated to extend to the provision of geotagged data for disaster response, thus highlighting its utility in the gathering of real-time information during emergencies (Yan et al., 2018). This information was then used by destinations to promote digital strategies through sustainability and branding campaigns that responded to new tourist expectations in the context of the pandemic.

The pandemic also underscored the importance of UGC on social media, which influenced travel intentions and behaviour by providing reliable and trustworthy information, despite the perceived health risks associated with COVID-19 (Hanafiah et al., 2022; Pasquinelli et al., 2022; Polat et al., 2023; Yan et al., 2018). This content was crucial in shaping tourists' decisions and maintaining engagement with travel destinations during the pandemic.

From a theoretical perspective, studies applied models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour to analyse the interaction between tourists, social networks and perceived risks by COVID-19 (Cahigas et al., 2022; Fong et al., 2024; Yan et al., 2018). These theories elucidate how risk perception, credibility of sources and ease of use of digital platforms influence intentions to use social networks for travel planning (Cahigas et al., 2022; Fong et al., 2024).

Also, an innovative approach identified was the concept of “phygital” tourism, which combines physical and digital elements to enrich the tourism experience. Muangasame & Tan (2023) explored how rural communities in Thailand used digital strategies to promote cultural tourism and strengthen their resilience in the face of crisis. The integration of digital platforms and multimedia storytelling has enabled rural destinations to maintain their relevance while attracting a new segment of tourists interested in authentic and sustainable experiences.

Overall, social networks emerged as a vital tool for communication, brand management, and crisis response during COVID-19, facilitating the dissemination of information and adaptation to new tourism and social dynamics. Furthermore, the exploration of tourist behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic reveals that tourists increasingly rely on social media for travel planning and sharing experiences, indicating a shift in how travel information is consumed and disseminated (Lemy et al., 2021).

3.4.5 Climate change, risks and tourism

The retrieved papers offer insights into the way social media addresses climate change, particularly through its role in promoting sustainable tourism and managing crises. Social media platforms have been instrumental in disseminating information related to sustainable tourism, which indirectly addresses climate change by promoting environmentally friendly practices and awareness among tourists.

For instance, DMOs employ social media to incorporate sustainable tourism principles into their promotional content, although the explicit mention of climate change is frequently absent (Băcilă et al., 2022). This approach contributes to the development of a sustainable destination image, which can influence tourist behaviour towards more environmentally conscious choices. Furthermore, the utilisation of social media underscores the necessity of incorporating sustainability agendas, which may encompass considerations of climate change, into comprehensive communication strategies (Yamagishi et al., 2021). Furthermore, Salim et al. (2023) emphasise the significance of social media not only as a data source, but also as a medium for the communication of climate risk. Tao et al. (2021) found a strong correlation between climate perceptions and tourist satisfaction, as well as travel decisions. This underscores the potential of social networks to provide real-time data that reflects tourists' preferences and concerns regarding climate change.

Moreover, the role of social media in crisis management, such as during natural disasters, or in impact mitigation in ecological sensitivity areas, highlights its potential in addressing climate-related emergencies. Platforms such as Twitter and Flickr have been utilised for the expeditious dissemination of information and damage assessment during such events, which are frequently exacerbated by climate change (Yan et al., 2018). Flickr, for instance, has been utilised to map the environmental impacts of tourism using geolocated photographic data from Flickr, in conjunction with geographic information systems (GIS) (Hale, 2018). This underscores the potential of social network data in informing environmental planning and impact mitigation strategies in vulnerable regions.

Despite the limited direct mention of climate change, the overarching themes of sustainability and crisis management in these contexts suggest that social media serves as a valuable tool in addressing climate-related issues by fostering awareness and promoting sustainable practices in tourism (Yamagishi et al., 2021).

4 Discussion

The systematic review under consideration here highlights the transformative role of social media within the tourism sector, serving as a powerful tool for marketing, destination management, and stakeholder engagement. Tourism actors, including businesses, destination management organisations (DMOs), and tourists themselves, have widely adopted social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. These platforms facilitate real-time interactions, enhance brand visibility, and foster user-generated content (UGC) that directly influences consumer behaviour.

The prevailing theme pertains to the nexus between tourism marketing and social networks, with a particular focus on their application in the promotion of tourism destinations. DMOs and tourism enterprises leverage these platforms to engage audiences through visually appealing and interactive content, such as stories, reels, and live streams. The emotional and visual nature of such content has been demonstrated to enhance brand equity, loyalty, and the intention to revisit. Furthermore, UGC, including reviews and travel-related social networks posts, serves as a significant source of authentic information for prospective tourists, thereby influencing their decision-making processes. In relation to the UGC, there is an emerging methodological convergence in techniques such as data mining.

Furthermore, the behaviour of tourists has evolved in tandem with the proliferation of social networks. Influencers have been shown to play a crucial role in building trust and shaping the image of destinations (Jones, 2023), while peer-generated content serves as a credible and influential source for travel planning (Smith, 2021). However, the increasing reliance on social networks also gives rise to concerns, including issues of privacy, misinformation, and the risk of overtourism driven by excessive promotion.

The reviewed studies identify sustainability and crisis management as prominent themes. While social networks platforms have been identified as instrumental in promoting sustainable travel practices, their potential to exacerbate environmental degradation through overtourism remains a challenge. During the pandemic, the value of social networks in crisis communication and destination branding was demonstrated, with these platforms helping destinations to maintain their relevance and adapt to evolving tourist expectations. It is important to note that crisis management topic is well developed but isolated, and are possibly used in specific contexts (e.g. the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 or natural disasters).

There remains the opportunity to explore fundamental domains in greater depth, including tourism and online behaviour, whilst also enhancing the integration of methodologies such as surveys.

Moreover, the review identifies emerging areas of interest for future research. These include the integration of advanced technologies such as augmented reality, the role of social media in managing natural disasters and climate change, and the exploration of localised and under-researched topics, including niche tourism markets and digitalisation in rural destinations.

5 Conclusions

This review underscores the transformative role of social networks in the tourism sector, highlighting its impact on marketing strategies, tourist behaviour, stakeholder engagement, and destination management, offering unparalleled opportunities to connect with global audiences and foster authentic interactions. The findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of how user-generated content (UGC) and influencer partnerships shape consumer perceptions and decision-making processes. Furthermore, the study underscores the dual role of social media in promoting sustainable tourism practices and the potential challenges it poses, such as overtourism and the dissemination of misinformation. The insights derived from this study serve to augment extant literature by offering a nuanced perspective on the multifaceted influences of social media within the domain of tourism.

The review under consideration here highlights the necessity for practitioners to integrate social media into comprehensive marketing and destination management strategies. It is recommended that tourism businesses and Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) employ visually engaging and emotionally resonant content to enhance brand visibility and foster consumer engagement. The review underscores the importance of monitoring and managing UGC, emphasising its direct impact on potential tourists' decisions. The study further suggests that while social media can be a powerful tool for promoting sustainable tourism, practitioners must be vigilant about its potential to contribute to environmental degradation through overtourism. It is therefore vital for practitioners to engage in strategic planning and the responsible dissemination of content to mitigate these risks.

The review acknowledges certain limitations, including the potential for publication bias and the rapid evolution of social media platforms, which may outpace academic research. Future studies should explore the integration of advanced technologies, such as augmented reality, within social media to enhance tourist experiences. Additionally, there is a need for research focusing on the role of social media in managing natural disasters and climate change impacts on tourism. Investigating underrepresented areas, such as niche tourism markets and the digitalisation of rural destinations, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of social media's diverse applications in the tourism industry.

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