

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TOURISM: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Purpose: This article focuses on a systematic literature review (SRL) of social media and tourism development and the level of attention given by researchers to undertaking research studies in this area. Reviews of the available literature have long been seen as a crucial step in determining the nature of the vast body of information in various fields of study and enabling further advancement.

Design, methodology, and approach: To meet the research objective, the study has set inclusion and exclusion criteria. As a result, only the Scopus dataset was chosen as a data source; scholarly published papers in English have been included; and articles beyond 2015–2023 were excluded from the analysis. Furthermore, the nature and validity of the systematic review paper conducted on social media and tourism are examined and evaluated using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA).

Findings: The study found that the number of research studies in the area of social media impact on the development of the tourism industry has been steadily increasing since 2015. However, a large amount of research work was produced by a few researchers who were interested in finding knowledge and sharing information on the subject matter. Moreover, the expansion of social media platforms has become a crucial tool to promote, guide, and develop the tourism sector. Now, due to the increasing integration between social media and tourism, they are inseparable.

Practical implications: This paper suggests that the role of social media in tourism is that social media can retain visitors' flow to the tourist area.

Originality and value: The study contributes to having more knowledge of social media and tourism from the literature review.

Keywords: systematic literature review, social media, tourism, PRISMA, destination

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms are digital tools that allow individuals to share, create and exchange content and ideas with one another. These platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, have revolutionized how people communicate and interact. They facilitate not only personal interactions, but also enable individuals and businesses to connect with wider audiences and build communities of like-minded individuals. Social media has become a crucial tool for communication, marketing, and relationship-building in today's society (DOLLARHIDE, 2023; Nations, 2021). Additionally, social media plays a significant role in influencing travellers' decisions on where to visit, as it promotes tourist attractions and increases their popularity among potential visitors (Liu et al., 2020; Surya & Efrianto, 2022).

The role of social media in tourist sentiment analysis reveals that information from Twitter correlates with that from the ECTA survey and is added to it. Both analyses reveal that since the start of the pandemic, tourists have prioritized safety more than anything else and preferred to travel alone to less crowded locations that were close by (Flores-Ruiz et al., 2021). Research and specialized literature tend to be quite scarce, despite the ever-increasing importance that social media plays in helping travellers create a clear image of the holiday place they have chosen. Despite an increase in social media-generated content, the process is still not fully understood, though research points to the significance of two different factors (i.e., tour operator-generated

content and user-generated content) in influencing destination image formation (Mazor Tregerman, 2021; Sultan et al., 2021).

The emergence of social media has altered how tourists consume and share their travel-related experiences. The "selfie" in particular makes it possible for tourists to express the parts of their trip experiences that they find personally meaningful. For lots of tourists, interacting with and participating in the local attire plays a significant role in their whole experience. Taking a photo while wearing traditional clothing may help a tourist convey the "other," promoting the exotic to their friends and family. Few studies have been done on the use of selfies in tourism and tourists' attitudes regarding taking selfies while wearing a destination's traditional attire because they are a relatively new phenomenon (Suhud et al., 2022).

Social networks have an impact on how we personally choose to travel, visit a location, or see a certain landmark. Travel decisions may be significantly impacted by a successful social marketing effort (Varga & Gabor, 2021). Regarding their effects on the promotion of a tourism asset in a rural area, the Roman villa of Noheda (Cuenca), the internet (social networks, websites, etc.), and traditional media (television, newspapers, word of mouth, etc.) are discussed. Both of the aforementioned information sources are important for publicizing such archaeological sites and influencing visitors' travel-planning decisions. According to the literature, social media and other technological channels can draw enormous crowds of tourists, but this hasn't happened at the archaeological site under investigation (Huete-Alcocer & Valero-Tévar, 2021).

Tourism is the practice of visiting and experiencing new locations for pleasure, business, or other reasons. It entails setting up journeys, lodgings, and other actions that improve the travel encounter. In many parts of the world, tourism is a significant economic and social activity that fosters the expansion and improvement of local economies as well as intercultural and interpersonal interactions between guests and hosts. It includes a broad range of activities, such as sightseeing, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, environmental tourism, and many more (LotusArise, 2021; Stokes, 2023). The tourism industry is going through significant changes with the introduction of social media networks and other new digital technologies. Several tourism-related processes have been impacted by this, including marketing, destination selection, traveller experiences, and tourist feedback, as well as a variety of tourism subsectors like hospitality, transportation, and tour operators (Frenzel et al., 2022).

Tourists are eager to engage in tourism activities right away if they identify with the information they learn through social media without going through the identification process, in contrast to what the SIPS model predicted (An et al., 2022). Finding out how people perceive cities from tweets enables relevant organizations to comprehend the image that cities present on mainstream social media and take targeted actions to shape a positive international image, which can increase the willingness of international tourists to travel and strengthen cities competitiveness in the tourism industry (Garcia-Haro et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2021; Mantas et al., 2022; Wang & Li, 2021; Zhang et al., 2022).

Currently, social media has a significant impact on the travel and tourism industries, particularly on the behavior of travelers. Understanding the broad trends, functions, and effects of social media on the tourism industry is therefore crucial (Choonhawong & Phumsathan, 2022). One of the most significant contemporary developments is the interaction between social networks and tourism, which has led to new analyses and approaches to strategies for promoting tourism. Public authorities were compelled to participate in these new realities by modifying their promotional strategies to reflect the changing tourist demographics and carefully fostering interactions with them. The need to produce and disseminate images that can elicit high levels of engagement is growing (Bonilla-Quijada et al., 2021).

Social media has become increasingly powerful in tourism industry, with its influence growing exponentially. Both academics and industry practitioners have widely accepted the power of social media platforms as stakeholders (Mehraliyev et al., 2021; Tanina et al., 2022). A study was conducted to examine the adoption of social media analytics (SMA) technology and tools by small and medium-sized tourism enterprises in Tanzania and to understand the factors that influence their adoption. SMA has become a fundamental technology for understanding and gaining insight into social media data. (Tuti & Saputra, 2022). Social media plays an increasingly important role in travel information seeking and decision-making, but there is limited understanding of how groups of tourists collaboratively use social media to plan trips and the differences in practices between countries. For instance, Bangladeshi and Chinese travellers rely on known contacts, while Australian tourists use both known contacts and user-generated content to seek information (Fardous et al., 2021; Otto et al., 2016). The digitalization-oriented transformation provides enormous possibilities for all sectors, including manufacturing and service industries. However, tourism operators and policymakers have not taken full advantage of social media platforms, which have become a public good, to mitigate the negative effects of the political impasse that has impacted the tourism sector (Farhangi & Alipour, 2021). Operators should prioritize marketing and sales promotions through websites and social media while maintaining a quality brand and setting reasonable prices without exploiting consumers. In conclusion, strategies that emphasize knowledge management and team building should be implemented to promote sustainability in small regions. This study could serve as a useful guide for tourism businesses, as evidenced by recent studies (Chen et al., 2021; Tolossa & Pandya, 2023; Xu et al., 2022).

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between social media and tourism, while also bridging the gap between the literature of media and tourism. By conducting a systematic review of academic literature in both fields, this research provides valuable contributions to both areas. The systematic review method employed in this study has become more prevalent in literature and involves selecting relevant topics from databases guided by a review question. The research question for this study was formulated based on a previous theoretical study.

RQ

What is the association between social media and tourism?

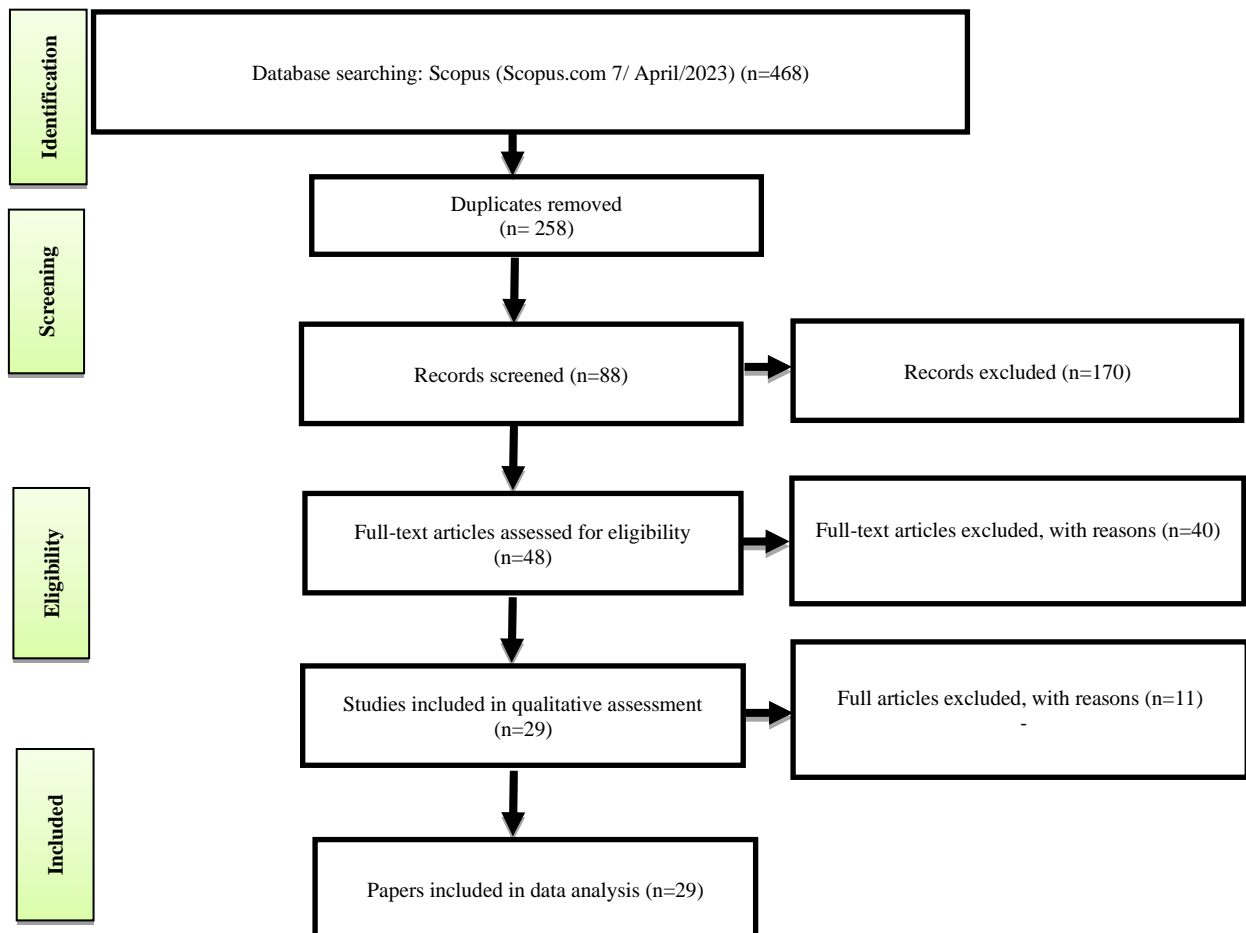
METHODOLOGY

In conducting this study, a systematic review methodology was adopted. Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) statement was created to aid systematic reviewers in transparently describing why the review was conducted, what the authors did, and what they discovered (Page et al., 2021). The statistical software ATLAS.ti22 was used in order to analyze qualitative data (Tolossa & Negussie, 2023).

2.1 Data extraction

The study set inclusion and exclusion criteria in order to manage the process and arrive at the proper outcome. As a result, during the data extraction phase, 468 articles were chosen, and the following attributes were extracted:

1. The Scopus dataset has been selected.
2. Only scholarly published papers are included.
3. Articles from the social field prepared in English have been included.
4. Extracted papers were published between 2015 and 2023; otherwise, they were excluded and
5. The extraction process was not limited by country or location.



2.2 Data tool and collection

The data in this study were in textual form; in other words, they are secondary data. The data were extracted

on April 7, 2023, through Scopus academic search engine data (<https://www.scopus.com>). Furthermore, advance search terms such as [asTITTLE-ABS-KEY(social media AND Touris*) AND (LIMIT-TO (OA,"all")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA,"SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA,"BUSI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE,"ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE,"final"))) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD,"Social Media") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD,"Tourism")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE,"English"))] have been followed in order to find appropriate articles so as to answer the research question. Thus, a total of 468 papers that were published between 2015 and 2023 were retrieved. The PRISMA diagram has been used to depict the data identification and screening process (see figure 1).

Figure 1: PRISMA diagram

The PRISMA diagram is a flowchart that is utilized to facilitate the process of conducting a systematic review in a structured manner. The diagram serves as a visual representation of the systematic review process and aids in ensuring accountability, transparency, and reproducibility throughout the research process. Additionally, the PRISMA diagram allows for a clear understanding of the final sample size of studies included in the systematic review.

The PRISMA diagram consists of four primary stages, namely identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Each stage encompasses specific actions and decision-making processes.

During the identification stage, the search strategy is created and implemented to retrieve relevant studies, with 468 studies being retrieved in this particular case. The flowchart in this stage typically depicts the number of records identified via various databases and other sources, such as reference lists and hand searching.

In the screening stage, the studies obtained during the identification stage are screened for relevance based on predetermined criteria. The flowchart in this stage demonstrates the number of studies that are excluded or included at each screening level.

In the eligibility stage, the studies included in the screening stage undergo further evaluation for eligibility, based on predetermined criteria such as quality and relevance. The flowchart in this stage displays the number of studies that are excluded or included at each eligibility assessment level.

In the inclusion stage, the studies that are deemed eligible in the eligibility stage are finally included in the systematic review. The flowchart in this stage shows the number of studies included and excluded at each inclusion assessment level. Overall, the PRISMA diagram provides an organized and comprehensive way to approach systematic reviews.

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

A summary of the systematic literature review (SLR) is provided in the results section. Thus, the results in particular, study work patterns related to social media and tourism, analysis of researchers with an interest in the subject, and word cloud descriptions have been presented in this section.

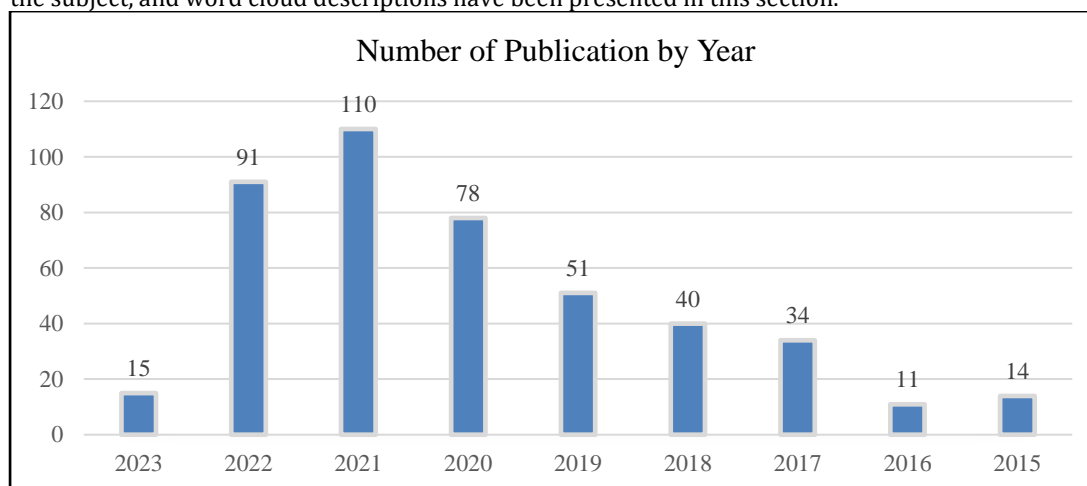


Figure 2: Number of publications by year

used terms show that many individuals are looking for distinctive and immersive travel experiences, including "destination," "information," "marketing," and others. Overall, the word cloud analysis of social media and tourism reveals that contemporary visitors prioritize sustainability and social responsibility while looking for immersive and authentic experiences. In the years to come, the tourism industries and locations most likely to succeed in luring and keeping visitors will be those that can deliver on their trends.

CONCLUSION

Social media's contribution to economic development has become a popular topic of discussion among researchers in recent times. Furthermore, many studies and reviews have highlighted social media's contribution to the service sector, particularly in the tourism industry. In fact, the relationship between social media and tourism has become so intertwined that they cannot be separated from each other (Ulrike Gretzel, 2018).

This study presents a systematic literature review of the relationship between social media and tourism. To ensure a focused and comprehensive review, the authors established inclusion and exclusion criteria and selected the Scopus database as their primary data source. The study examined literature published from 2015, to April 7, 2023, and ultimately screened 29 documents that met their criteria. The authors analyzed the final documents and identified several key findings related to the use of social media in the tourism industry. Social media has revolutionized the way people travel and experience tourism by providing information, sharing experiences, and influencing decision-making. It has become an effective marketing tool for destinations and a source of inspiration for travelers. Social media platforms have enabled tourists to share their experiences and connect with other travelers, allowing them to gain valuable insights and recommendations about travel destinations. However, excessive use of social media can also lead to overtourism, where overcrowding and environmental damage occur, which affects the sustainability of the tourism industry. Therefore, tourism stakeholders should use social media responsibly to balance the positive impacts with the potential negative effects. Overall, social media has opened up new opportunities for the tourism industry, creating a more accessible, personalized, and efficient way of traveling.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has important implications for researchers in the field. Based on the findings of this investigation, it is suggested that future studies broaden the scope of research to include related topics in media and tourism, with a focus on identifying areas for improvement in both fields. There are several themes that require further research, and as such, future studies should delve deeper into the relationship between these specific topics, although this may prove to be a challenging task. To enhance the comprehensiveness of this study, recent works have been incorporated into the analysis. The insights gained from this study have enabled the research question posed earlier, "What is the connection between social media and tourism?" to be answered. Moreover, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism has not been thoroughly examined in this study. The pandemic has been an external shock that has significantly disrupted our daily lives, and its impact on the tourism industry has been immense. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the effects of the pandemic on tourism and how social media can be utilized to mitigate its impact.

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