

## TRACING THE EVOLUTION OF MARKETING STRATEGIES IN TOURISM DESTINATIONS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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**Abstract:** Tourism destination marketing has evolved from traditional branding and promotional activities to data-driven, technology-enabled smart tourism ecosystems. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), the Metaverse, and user-generated content (UGC) are reshaping destination promotion and tourist engagement. This study aims to systematically review the evolution of tourism destination marketing strategies, examine the influence of digital transformation and immersive technologies, and explore the growing emphasis on sustainability-oriented marketing practices. A systematic literature review was conducted following the PRISMA framework. A total of 62 peer-reviewed studies published between 2010 and 2025 were selected from ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and Wiley databases. Bibliometric mapping using VOSviewer and thematic synthesis through the ADO-TCM framework were employed to identify publication trends, dominant themes, theoretical foundations, and emerging research directions. The findings reveal a significant transition from conventional destination branding toward technology-mediated smart tourism ecosystems. Research activity intensified during 2024–2025, driven by growing interest in AI, VR, and Metaverse-based tourism experiences. UGC and social media platforms have become more influential than traditional destination marketing communications in shaping destination image and tourist trust. The review also highlights a strategic shift toward sustainability and demarketing approaches to address overtourism and promote destination resilience. The study suggests that future destination marketing strategies should integrate immersive technologies, data analytics, and sustainability principles within adaptive frameworks such as the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model to enhance long-term destination competitiveness and resilience.

**Keywords:** Destination Marketing Organizations, smart tourism ecosystems, artificial intelligence, Metaverse Tourism, user-generated content, sustainable tourism

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### INTRODUCTION

#### Background and Rationale

There has been a significant shift in the tourism destination marketing environment over recent decades, from stable promotional strategies to a dynamic ecosystem with a high degree of technological development (Chotisarn & Phuthong, 2025). Traditionally, destinations were identified by the administrative boundaries (Paulino et al., 2021), which is why modern scholarly thinking views them as being a heterogeneous space of flows, which necessitates a fundamental change in their management and marketing (Reinhold et al., 2023). This has been facilitated by the so-called Insight Era, where Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) are encouraged to deploy artificial intelligence, big data, and real-time analytics to remain competitive (Huang et al., 2022). Digital innovations and integrations, such as virtual reality and user-generated content, have substantially increased engagement and customer satisfaction, which often exceeds that of traditional approaches (Kumar & Barua, 2024). Moreover, the global tourism sector has faced threats of unprecedented disruption, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) shifted toward experience-based marketing and focused on promoting tourism experiences rather than relying on general destination promotion (Pawłowska-Legwand et al., 2024). These shifts emphasize the necessity to understand the way the marketing strategies change to meet the present requirements

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of individualization, sustainability, and immersion into the digital world. This study is unique among the existing review literature since it narrows down its perspectives to examine the concept of Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and their strategic change in the world of data-driven smart tourism ecosystems. Although the more general reviews might address issues such as heritage branding (Kumar & Swain, 2025), the overall tendencies in the evolution of tourism marketing over the decades (Basumatary & Sarma, 2025; Geng et al., 2024), or the dynamics that defined marketing in a hospitality sector (Giraldo et al., 2024), the specific gap to be tackled in the current study is the translational aspect of technology capacity and further commitment of tourists to the beliefs promoted by a DMO. On the methodological side, it uses a two-fold analytical framework (VOS-viewer bibliometrics and the ADO-TCM framework) based on a modern, high-impact corpus (62 articles, 2010-2025) that offers the accurate answer to the question of the 2024-2025 boom with the help of AI and the Metaverse: a time frame that is not covered by the previous reviews on smart (El Archi et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2021). Thematically, it combines, in a unique way, the waning persuasive influence of official DMO communication in languages understandable to audiences compared to User-Generated Content (UGC) and influencer communications, a detail that is not academically investigated in depth in the reviews of social media marketing as the effect of platforms technologies is commonly discussed (Christou et al., 2025; Pahor Zvanut & Zabukovec Baruca, 2025). Moreover, it gives an in-depth geographic distribution of research and underrepresentation of the Middle East and Oceania, and a direct change in theoretical application of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model in a data-intensive environment was explicitly presented. The combination of the consideration of demarketing to over-tourism with the opportunities of the Metaverse and AI makes this review appear unique, a forward-looking strategic map of the continuity of the destination in the Insight Era, unlike the ones with a larger or more technologically-specific focus.

### Research Gaps and Problem Statement

Although the adoption of digital tools is high, there are still large loopholes in the application of strong destination marketing and the theoretical knowledge concerning the same. One of the recurring problems is the lack of interconnection between digital platform availability and strategic DMO capability to utilize. As an example, social media is everywhere, but most National Tourism Organizations cannot make effective use of it, because most of them do not have the mandates to use it effectively or the competencies to encourage two-way communication or genuine interaction (Alizadeh & Isa, 2015; Sevin, 2013). Also, much of the current literature is based on cross-sectional designs that only reflect the current transfer of perceptions of tourists, which do not consider the degradation or changes in destination images (Gato et al., 2022; King et al., 2015). The other weakness is the number of applied frameworks that are specifically applied to destination marketing; in most cases, the industry uses generic product marketing theories, which may not be an adequate solution to such complex issues as political instability or crisis re-entry (Chigora et al., 2023). Moreover, certain segments like the Millennials in the countryside are sometimes considered too difficult to capture since the perception of the marketer and the true need of the tourist are often misaligned (Lewis et al., 2021).

### Research Objectives

The main goal of this study is to follow the journey of tourism destination marketing strategies from the old branding to the integration of smart tourism ecosystems. Specifically, in this review, the aim is to:

1. To assess the effect of digital transformation, AI, and the Metaverse on the effectiveness of destination marketing.
2. To analyze the role of content strategies, such as storytelling and video marketing, in destination image and tourist behavior
3. To explore the shift towards sustainable and value-based marketing to include “demarketing” as a way to manage over-tourism.

### Contribution of the Study

The current research focuses on the academic literature by bringing a limited understanding to create a solid history of the evolutionary processes. Theoretical implications include the fact that it closes the gaps between the existing frameworks, including the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model, with the emergent constructs like the “Metaverse Tourism Marketing Ecosystem” (Hua Chin et al., 2022; Yawised & Apasrawirote, 2025). In practical terms, the results provide a practical direction on how the destination marketing organizations, especially in developing markets, can incorporate the use of crowd-working and digital innovation to enhance sustainability performance (Pratiwi et al., 2020; Zhao, 2023). Finally, this review establishes a research and practice pathway in the future by highlighting the need to adopt methods of adaptive and data-driven research and methods that will enhance the quality of visits and strengthen the resilience of the destinations.

### Conceptual Background

Traditionally, the industry of tourism destination marketing has changed its conceptualization of a supply-based and stagnant model of promotion into a changing and technology-mediated ecosystem. Traditionally, the conceptualization of destinations was within the administrative boundaries and administered using the linear channels of communication. The modern models re-conceptualize them as heterogeneous spaces of flows, which are fluid in the sense of travelling people and digital data as opposed to geographical spaces (Reinhold et al., 2023). In the contemporary tourism landscape, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) are increasingly transforming into data-driven entities by leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and big data analytics to support real-time decision-making and enhance marketing effectiveness (Huang et al., 2022). AI-driven digital transformation improves tourism marketing performance through data-driven prediction and enhances decision-making capabilities in proactive destination management (Kupi, 2025). Furthermore, the emergence of Smart Tourism has expanded destination marketing beyond physical boundaries to include immersive digital environments (Alshiha et al., 2025). In this regard, the Metaverse Tourism Marketing Ecosystem facilitates interaction and interoperability between physical and virtual worlds, creating new opportunities for destination engagement and visitor experiences (Yawised & Apasrawirote, 2025).

## Key Theories and Models

The literature itself is based on a series of theoretical lenses, which serve to explain the changing relationships between marketing stimuli and tourist behavior. The general theories identified in the review are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Key Theories and Models in Destination Marketing Research

Theory / Model	Description and Application in Context	Representative Citations
<b>Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory</b>	Often utilized to describe the process of elicitation of internal emotional reactions (Organism) by external marketing stimuli (e.g., social media images, VR experiences), which in turn result in behavioral reactions such as revisit intention.	(Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2025; Hua Chin et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2022)
<b>Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)</b>	Used to explain the process of adopting digital innovations both by tourists and businesses, with the emphasis on such aspects as perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in the context of tools such as VR and mobile apps.	(Deb et al., 2024; Florido-Benítez & del Alcázar Martínez, 2024; Kumar & Barua, 2024)
<b>Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)</b>	The attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are used to forecast tourist behavior intentions (e.g., to visit a given luxury or festival destination).	(Arasli et al., 2021; Dutt et al., 2022)
<b>Destination Image Theory</b>	One of the foundational theories that studies the formation of cognitive and affective perception of a place, the effects of the perception on competitiveness, as well as its decay following the visit.	(Guo et al., 2022; Huete-Alcocer et al., 2019; King et al., 2015)
<b>Resource-Based View (RBV)</b>	Concentrates on internal strengths of DMOs, implying that distinctive management abilities and learning commitments are important resources in realizing competitive advantage.	(Gato et al., 2022; Wang & Jin, 2019)

## Previous Research Trends (Thematic/Chronological Synthesis)

Migration of research trends on destination marketing has taken a different direction as compared to the early years of branding, to high technology immersion. The initial and leadership topics were centered on Destination Image and Branding, where the traditional media, simple brand equity dimension, influence the mindset of tourists (Chigora & Ndlovu, 2019; Huete-Alcocer et al., 2019). As Web 2.0 emerged, there was a drastic chronological change to Social Media and Digital Engagement, with researchers examining the influence of User-Generated Content (UGC) and electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) on destination competitiveness (Alizadeh & Isa, 2015; Hays et al., 2013). The latest literature led to the intersection of neuroticism, smart Tourism, and Immersive Technologies, where the revolutionary impact of AI, Virtual Reality (VR), and the metaverse is analyzed, and their impact on marketing effectiveness is studied (Florido-Benítez & del Alcázar Martínez, 2024; Yawised & Apasrawirote, 2025). At the same time, a theme of responsible marketing has also been implemented, beyond attracting to Sustainability or Demarketing, discussing the question of how marketing can control over-tourism or guarantee ecological integrity (Arasli et al., 2021; Olokesusi, 2019; Najafi & Costa, 2026; Himmawan et al., 2026).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Systematic Review Approach

This systematic review was conducted following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, which provide a minimum set of reporting standards for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Moher et al., 2010; Parums, 2021). Two methods were used in the study, and these include knowledge mapping of keywords and the PRISMA model (Pham & Le, 2024). Knowledge mapping was used to identify and categorize tourism destination marketing research, enabling the exploration of multidisciplinary themes relevant to destination marketing strategies (Raman et al., 2024). The PRISMA framework was applied to screen and filter studies based on publication year, source, topic relevance, and research methodology (Moher et al., 2010). This is a systematic review of existing literature, filling gaps, and recommending the way of research in the future (Danese et al., 2018). PRISMA improves the review process, which is reliable, minimizes bias, and defends evidence-based conclusions.

### PRISMA protocol

There were four major steps of the PRISMA process (Selçuk, 2019; Sohrabi et al., 2021). To describe the scope and objectives of the research, first of all, the research questions were clearly identified. Second, detailed search plans were formulated to collect pertinent studies. In the third step, research articles were filtered and identified according to predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Finally, there was data synthesis and extraction to analyze and interpret findings.

### Search Strategy

When conducting this research, a holistic identification process was employed wherein the identification was done based on ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and the Wiley databases. These keywords were used as specific knowledge to use in research based on the strategies of tourism destination marketing. ScienceDirect was filtered to receive titles about the current search keywords and the topic under study that the research was analyzing. Similarly, they were limited to the first ten pages of a search in Google Scholar and the Wiley library, and they were expected to respond to the keywords and research topic.

### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Table 2 demonstrates that the inclusion criteria of the studies are addressed in terms of the language, nature of

resources, publication year, and applicability to the Tourism Destination Marketing Strategies. It further involves exclusion criteria of research of unclear methodology, unsatisfactory data, and those not within the range of the established scope, and only the quality and appropriate research are included (Sarkis-Onofre et al., 2021).

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Literature Selection

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	Articles written in English	Articles written in languages other than English
Source Type	Journal	Non-peer-reviewed sources, including grey literature, opinion pieces, blog posts, review articles, and book chapters
Publication Year	Published between 2010 and 2025	Published before 2010
Journal Quality	Journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science	Journals that are non-ranked or non-refereed
Keywords	Focused on Tourism Destination Marketing Strategies	Unrelated to Tourism Destination Marketing Strategies
Methodology	Clear methodology	Lacking clarity in methodology or results
Scope	Studies specifically related to Tourism Destination Marketing Strategies	Studies outside the defined scope
Data Quality	Studies with sufficient data and clear conclusions	Incomplete or low-quality studies with insufficient data or unclear conclusions

### Data Screening and Selection Process

**Identification:** This part explains how records that can be used in the research were identified. It involves the use of databases such as ScienceDirect (n=738), Google Scholar (n=363), and Wiley Library (n=535), and search by specific search keywords or Boolean operators. To search, 1,636 records were found, their sources, and keywords, which were used to guide the search (Figure 1).

**Screening:** Out of the 1,636 records identified through the initial search, 896 records were excluded because they were not relevant to the study topic, 245 records were removed as duplicates, and 226 literature review papers were excluded. Consequently, 269 records remained for the screening stage (Figure 1).

**Evaluation:** This part entails the assessment of the (n=269) sampled records. Following the use of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, (n=77) records were eliminated according to the title evaluated, and one was left with a final record set of (n=192) records to be subjected to intensive analysis (Figure 1).

**Inclusion:** 62 records were included in the synthesis after consideration of 192 records, based on their quality and relevance. A total of 130 records were excluded for the following reasons: lack of access to full articles (n=9), excluded after abstract assessment (n=48), inappropriateness to the topic of review (n=24), repetition of information already represented (n = 18), insufficient information for adequate assessment (n=17), and non-relevant records (n=14). The remaining 62 records were obtained in Google Scholar (n=31), ScienceDirect (n=24), and Wiley Library (n=7) (Figure 1).

### Data Extraction and Categorization

This research employed a standardized form to extract data, which was designed specifically to collect necessary information from each of the reviewed papers (Munn et al., 2014). The data extracted included some vital information of the authors, the publication year, the study site, the study procedures, the critical research results, and thematic trends regarding the tourism destination marketing. The key focus was placed on discussing the problems and advantages of tourism destination marketing, how the problems can be solved, and possible research directions in the future. The methodological system supported the complete overview of the existing literature on the development of tourism destination marketing strategies, centered on the experience-related innovations, including sustainable tourism, digital marketing, consumerism, and branding of the destination, in terms of tourism and hospitality.

### Coding process for qualitative/quantitative analysis

In this paper, a systematic review of 62 peer-reviewed articles on tourism destination marketing strategies was carried out, and the methodologies were divided into three significant approaches: Mixed-Methods, Qualitative, and Quantitative (Table 3).

Table 3. Methods used

Methods	No. of used methods
Qualitative	21
Quantitative	27
Mixed method	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>

The 14 papers that applied the Mixed-Methods approach included snowball sampling, census methods, interviewing, and questionnaires as their techniques to provide a detailed picture of complicated matters. The Purposive sampling employed by most papers in the Qualitative approach, which entails 21 papers, includes purposive sampling, systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA), convenience sampling, surveys, heterogeneous purposive sampling, and interviews to achieve an in-depth understanding. The Quantitative approach comprised 27 papers that applied statistical and empirical

methods, which were face-to-face questionnaires, geographically stratified random sampling, hypothesis testing, time-series data, factor analysis, and multivariate regression. The PRISMA flow diagram is shown in Figure 1.

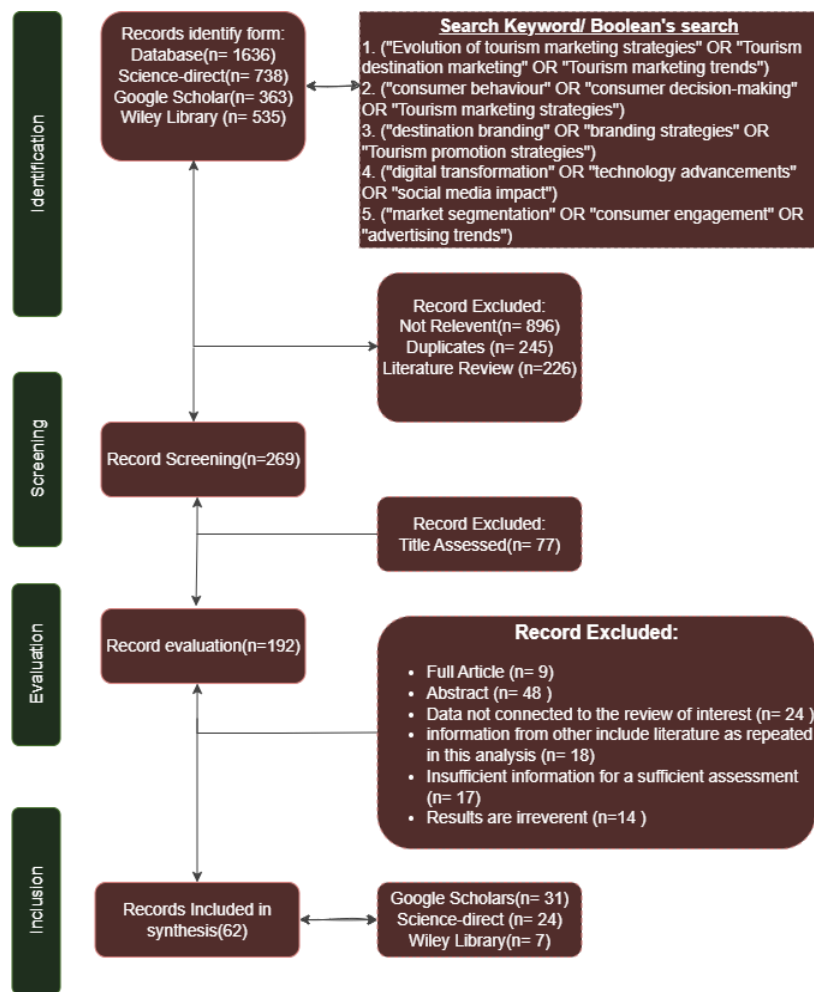


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram

### Data analysis methods

Data analysis was conducted in three phases to ensure that it became systematic and comprehensive.

**Phase One:** Following the export of the data to plain text, the VOS-viewer program was utilized to process the data that formed part of the studies. Bibliometric citation, co-authorship, and keyword bibliometric networks were also made using this tool (Guleria & Kaur, 2021; Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). These results were contrasted with general and author-chosen keywords and treated accordingly as the previously carried-out studies (González et al., 2018).

**Phase Two:** The data were thematically analyzed, with 62 review articles being the focus of this analysis to identify the arising themes regarding marketing a tourism destination. In the analysis, the topics of sustainable tourism, digital marketing, consumer behavior, and destination branding were found based on the proposed items (Ali, 2021; Marzi et al., 2025).

**Phase Three:** An Excel-based review matrix was created based on the ADO-TCM framework (Koi-Akrofi et al., 2023), using the filtering function (Areth Korothe et al., 2025). The matrix was to classify original information, e.g., theoretical frameworks, methods, and searches. The ambiguities, such as those arising in distinguishing between mixed methods and purely qualitative or quantitative approaches, were resolved through reliability checks. Publication trends were analyzed and visualized in results and tables with searches framed within the ADO-TCM framework (Mishra & Kiran, 2025) to improve understanding of tourism destination marketing research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Publication Trends

The 62 peer-reviewed articles that have been examined in the study show, in Figure 2, a clear advancement of research in tourism destination marketing. The preliminary research (2010-2015) laid the groundwork, and little value was added on the theme of social media emergence and competitiveness. An average increase was then seen in 2016-2019, which is focused on event-based marketing and image creation.

There was a great upsurge from 2020 to 2022, as a result of pandemic recovery and digital innovation. The next period (2024-2025) will be the highest point, but with game-changing investigations of the Metaverse, AI, and VR travel as a sign of the fast movement to immersive technology and sustainable smart tourism.



According to the dataset, the processed data has 198 items among 264 keywords arranged in 26 clusters comprising 693 links, and the overall strength of links is 709, which suggests a tight and connected structure of the research. According to the network visualization, the most central and influential keywords are destination marketing, tourism, social media, and destination image, as they have remained the most relevant over time. In the past, the focal point of earlier studies called upon such foundational concepts as destination image, destination branding, tourism marketing, cross-cultural issues, and destination trust. With the field advances, there was a switch to social media, e-WOM, digital marketing, and content analysis, which symbolized an increase in the importance of online platforms. More recent research fashions have involved higher-order and newer themes such as big data, machine learning, sustainability, rural tourism, and accessible tourism, and show a shift to a more technology-based, data-informed, and sustainability-focused destination marketing research.

**Network of co-authorship by countries**

The analysis shows in Figure 4 the 15 biggest contributors of the 45 countries that were identified in the research network. The most dominant influence turns out to be Italy, with the greatest number of citations (625) cited in 6 publications. The USA comes second as a huge power with 571 citations in 5 publications. The comparison between the volume and impact reveals that China has the highest productivity, with 9 publications, but with a relatively low number of citations of 167. On the other hand, Australia (4 publications, 468 citations) and Canada (2 publications, 410 citations) show outstanding research effectiveness as they have a significant impact in very few studies. Other important countries are France (3 publications, 359 citations) and Turkey (3 publications, 289 citations). The data demonstrates a definite difference between the countries with high publication volume and those with high citation impact, which may reveal potential opportunities for the high-impact countries, like India and Spain, to collaborate with high business volume contributors.

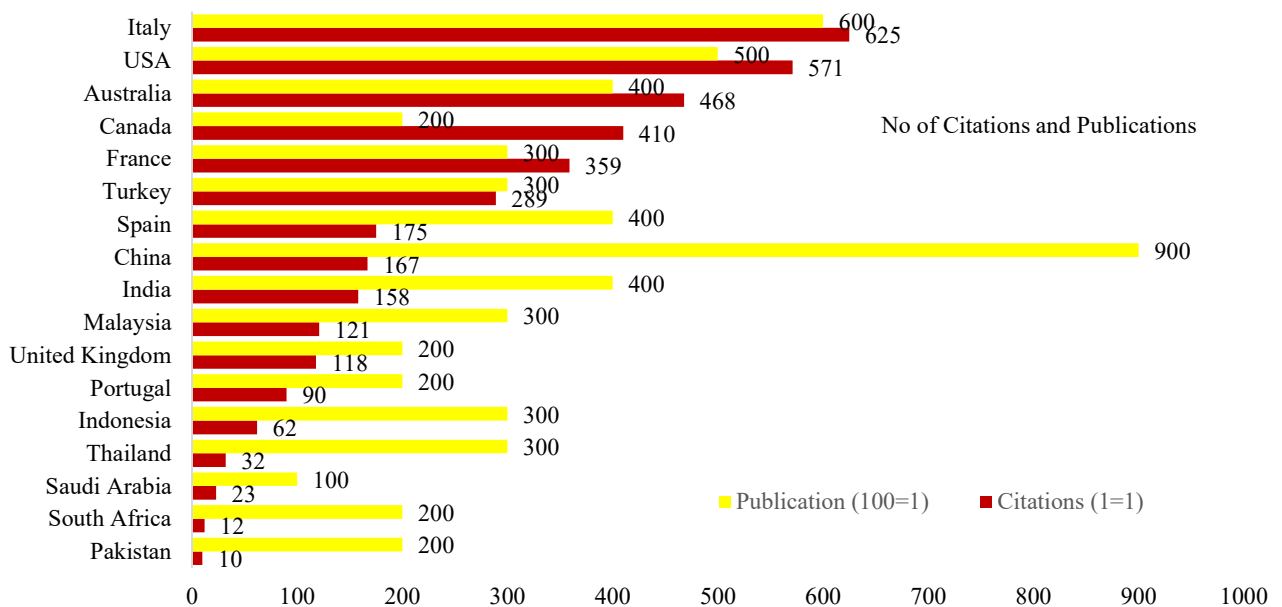


Figure 4. Network of co-authorship by countries

**Contributing Scholar Collaborations**

The cooperative approach among researchers has become critical in the research of business management, whereby different academic institutions are involved in the creation and sharing of knowledge. The network approach to depicting the collaboration of scholars emphasizes the correlation of influential scholars.

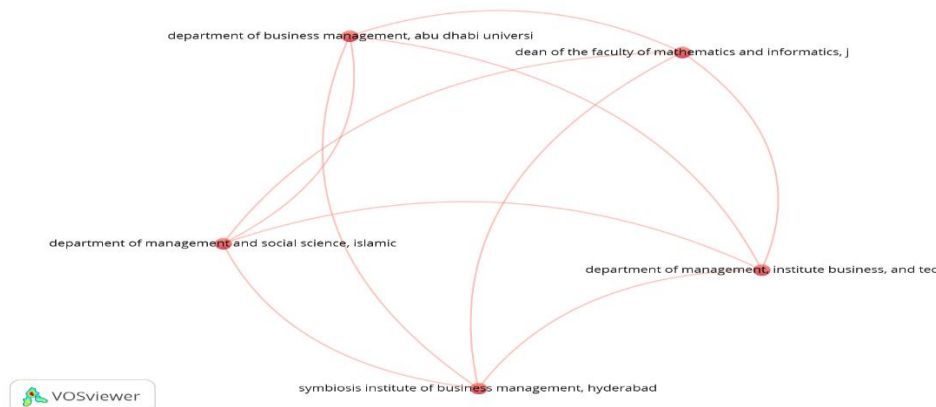


Figure 5. Contributing scholar collaborations

The key nodes are the Department of Business Management in Abu Dhabi University, the Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics, and the Department of Management and Social Science, all of which promote research collaborations in the area. The global network of collaborations is further boosted by such institutions as the Symbiosis Institute of Business Management in Hyderabad or the Department of Management Institute Business and Technology.

The co-authorship network, as revealed in Figure 5, in the 129 items, the network only has 5 items connected and 1 cluster, and 10 links with moderate total link strength, which indicates active collaboration in the academic community. Nevertheless, these institutions can strengthen their ties and the influence of their studies on the world level. The present system of collaboration indicates the high activity of these institutions, although it might be enriched with the help of more extensive foreign academic interactions.

### Co-Citation Network of Authors

Co-citation network displays the intellectual setting of research inputs in the field of business management. The main players within the network are Chee Hua Chin, Pooria Pasbakhsh, Winnie Wong Poh Ming, and respective researchers who have undertaken research collaborations that have high citation networks. Newcomers and scholars such as Abang Azlan Mohamad, May Chiun Lo, and Zaidi Bin Razak will also be influential in growing the network.

Figure 6 displays a fairly networked design with 6 items among a total population of 168 authors, 2 groups, and 11 connections. The network is marked by the overall strength of the links of moderate value: it is evidence of the increasing scholarly interest in this area. The interrelationships are an indication of how various research topics have been integrated to give us a holistic picture of collaborative scholarly research and the changing influence.

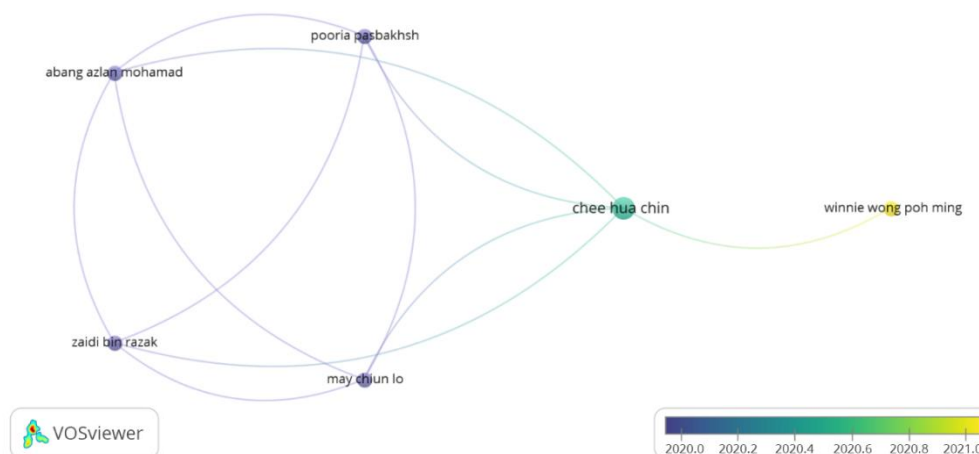


Figure 6. Co-citation network of authors

### Research Framework Findings

The analysis interprets the outcomes of the change brought by transformation in destination marketing, where the process of marketing has transformed into dynamic smart ecosystems. Online technologies create a connection between the technological background and effective marketing, namely, machine learning models (Arefieva et al., 2021; Florido-Benítez & del Alcázar Martínez, 2024) and the immersive Metaverse (Yawised & Apasrawirote, 2025). Social media interactivity and user-generated content (Hua Chin et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2022), along with behavioral interventions such as prompts to manage overcrowding (Siegel et al., 2023), support these drivers. Ethical and sustainable practices are also mentioned when it comes to crowd working programs and crisis-response demarketing (Chigora et al., 2023; Pratiwi et al., 2020). The findings show how these strategies achieve the level of visitor satisfaction (Wilopo & Nuralam, 2025), destination image fluidity (Huete-Alcocer et al., 2019; King et al., 2015), and long-term competitiveness (Assaker et al., 2014). Together, all these technological and sustainable questions are combined, which guarantees the sustainability of the contemporary smart tourism ecosystem.

### Theories, Contexts, and Methods (TCM Synthesis)

Tourism destination marketing theories and methods have transformed in relation to the digital and immersive technological developments. The models that have greatly contributed to this claim include the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, which describes how an external stimulus's characteristics affect tourists and lead to emotional and behavioral reactions (Hua Chin et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2025). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is another study of innovation adoption among tourists and businesses, especially virtual reality (Florido-Benítez & del Alcázar Martínez, 2024; Kumar & Barua, 2024). In the meantime, the core theory is the Destination Image Theory that examines the impacts of perceptions of a destination on destination competitiveness (King et al., 2015). Furthermore, the introduction of Smart Tourism and Metaverse marketing has made destination marketing more focused on data, having pushed the DMOs towards more data-oriented marketing, which incorporates AI, big data, and real-time analytics (Reinhold et al., 2023; Yawised & Apasrawirote, 2025). These transformations reflect the general tendency of the digital immersiveness and sustainability of the industry. According to the reviewed studies, a combination of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods is the most appropriate methodology for considering these transformations, and the key focus should be on technological and consumer behavior trends.

### Synthesis of Findings

The outcome of synthesis in the given study demonstrates a paradigm shift in tourism destination marketing, the so-called shift, which had a lot to do with digital development and the growing exposure of immersive technologies. The study portrays an important shift from traditional, non-evolving approaches of promotion to active, technology-facilitating marketing environments. The most significant milestone in the evolution of the given process is the manifestation of the so-called Smart Tourism that incorporates such technologies as artificial intelligence (AI) and the Metaverse that are capable of identifying and providing choices in real-time and involving visitors in a more profound experience (Huang et al., 2022; Yawised & Apasrawirote, 2025). Such a trend is associated with the outcomes that underline the growing influence of User-Generated Content (UGC) and travel vlogs to create the impression of the destination and gain the feeling of authenticity, and can surpass the traditional DMO messages (Pawłowska-Legwand et al., 2024). Besides, the study finds a geographical and thematic gap where Europe and Asia have the most to say regarding creative and smart tourism, whereas other regions of the world, such as Oceania and the Middle East, are underrepresented (Reinhold et al., 2023). Another response to the over-tourism problem mentioned by the study is the transition to sustainability and demarketing, with the focus on the use of digital tools to promote responsible tourism (Arasli et al., 2021; Olokesusi, 2019). Methodologically, a combination of mixed-method, quantitative, and qualitative studies has prevailed in the literature, which is multidimensional in nature in the issues discussed (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Bukar et al., 2023). This review depicts a dynamic sphere where digital production, sustainability, and customer reaction are coming into the limelight in dictating the upcoming trend in tourism destination advertisement.

### Implications for Theory and Practice

The results of this study contribute to the scholarly theories of tourism destination marketing (Figure 7). There is a considerable shift to a more dynamic, technology-driven, and interaction-oriented theoretical narrative rather than more traditional, image-based models. It has been demonstrated that classical models, such as Destination Image Theory, are becoming inadequate on their own to explain the behavior of tourists in digitally mediated environments. Rather, the emergence of AI, big data analytics, and immersive digital environments like the Metaverse requires the relocation of the conceptualization of destination marketing as an activity from a one-way communication to a dynamic, data-driven ecosystem (Huang et al., 2022; Yawised & Apasrawirote, 2025). The study also builds and increases the relevance of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model to the current tourism situations.

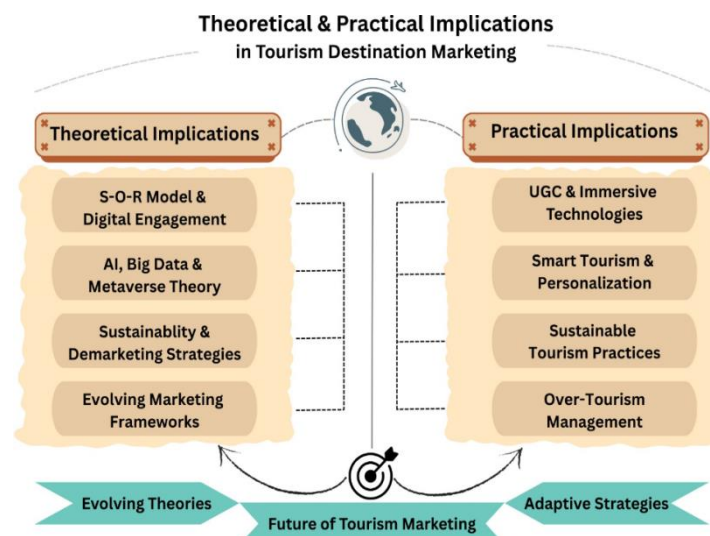


Figure 7. Visual representation of theoretical and practical implications

In comparison with previous applications that considered marketing stimuli as unchanging stimuli, the review emphasizes the role of interactive social media content, virtual reality experience, and personalization with the algorithm as complex stimuli that prompt tourists to develop more intense emotional, cognitive, and affective reactions. These internal reactions, in their turn, determine the behavioral outcomes, i.e., destination choice, engagement intensity, revisit intention, and sustainable travel behavior (Hua Chin et al., 2022). In addition, the synthesis indicates a progressive theoretical congruence of destination marketing research and sustainability research. The growing focus on responsible marketing and demarketing strategies is a symptom of the paradigmatic change in which marketing is not only demand-focused but demand-regulating and long-term destination resilient. This study highlights how adaptive, flexible, and data-driven theoretical frameworks would be beneficial in capturing the dynamics between digital innovation, tourist behavior, and ethical destination administration by integrating the constructs of sustainability in destination marketing theory (Arasli et al., 2021). All these points indicate that the future development of tourism marketing research should go beyond fixed schemes of promotion and search for an integrative theoretical basis to explain the influence of immersive technologies, behavioral processes, and sustainability requirements in an ever-more complicated digital tourism system.

Practically, this paper has practical implications for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) to become digital. The article relies on the importance of taking advantage of online experiences, such as AI, virtual reality, User-

Generated Content (UGC), and making contact with consumers in a manner that enhances engagement and trust compared to the more traditional approach to making contact with marketers (Kumar & Barua, 2024). These findings suggest that destination management organizations in developing countries should focus on the implementation of such technologies to make the destination and the tourist experiences more competitive (Pratiwi et al., 2020). Moreover, the introduction of Smart Tourism and the Metaverse can offer an opportunity to offer tourists an immersive, personalized, and engaging experience, which will be accepted by the customers, particularly Millennials and people who are conscious of technology (Reinhold et al., 2023). Observably, the paper proposes sustainability-focused policies and regulations like demarketing, which can be applied to control over-tourism and make sure that tourists can pursue responsible tourism (Arasli et al., 2021). By these dynamics, DMOs will be able to adopt a more sustainable, inclusive, and innovative destination marketing strategy that will always be responsive to the new tourist needs and environmental concerns.

## CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review synthesized evidence from 62 peer-reviewed articles (2010-2025) to explore the shifting nature of tourism destination marketing. The findings indicate that the process of digital transformation, and in particular the integration of AI, virtual reality, and immersive media and technologies, including the Metaverse, are focal points that contribute to the formation of modern-day tourism marketing policies. The application of User-Generated Content (UGC) and digitalization in terms of utilizing engagement tools is becoming seen as critical to establishing trust and authenticity, and it is more effective than the conventional perspectives used by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs). Another important aspect connected to the issue mentioned in the study is the importance of sustainability-oriented policies, e.g., demarketing, to meet the problem of over-tourism and enhance responsible approaches to tourism. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Destination Image Theory are valuable topics that can be used in explaining the impact of the external stimuli, technological breakthroughs, and destination perceptions on tourist behavior and the decision-making process.

Nevertheless, some geographical gaps, as well as gaps in the themes explored in the research, can also be observed, as the majority of studies take place in Europe and Asia, and only the Middle East, Oceania, and Africa are underrepresented. Also, some findings are limited by methodological bias in the form of excessive use of cross-sectional data and limited samples. Concerning the policy implications of the research, the study requests DMOs to adopt emerging digital solutions that utilize AI, immersive technologies, and user-generated content to facilitate visitor experiences. There is a need to consider how sustainability and responsible marketing activities can be incorporated in the agenda of policymakers, with consideration to ensure that the technological advancements do not destroy the authenticity and cultural integrity of the destinations. The governments must also invest in infrastructure that can accommodate the various needs of the traveler, including the elderly, the disabled, and the marginalized. Finally, the gaps in the region and cross-disciplinary methods should be addressed in future research to arrive at more inclusive, sustainable, and effective strategies for marketing tourism.

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