



EWOM IN THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS USING CITESPACE

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Abstract. A thorough literature review is essential for systematizing and evaluating prior studies, as it helps identify knowledge gaps and guide future research directions. This study employs the CiteSpace scientometric analysis tool to comprehensively assess the academic works on eWOM in the tourism and hospitality industry. The bibliometric analysis, based on 932 articles indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection and Scopus from 2000 to September 2024, reveals that eWOM profoundly impacts activities within the tourism and hospitality sectors. Four major research themes are identified, including studies on the role and relationship of eWOM with tourists' decision-making, eWOM and sustainable tourism, eWOM, and new technological applications in the tourism and hospitality industries. Additionally, the study suggests future research directions, emphasizing the need to explore further the impact of emerging technologies, social media platforms, and consumer psychology on behavior in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Keywords: eWOM, bibliometric analysis, tourism and hospitality, CiteSpace

1 Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the Internet and digital technology, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has become a critical factor influencing global consumer decisions and purchasing behaviors [1]. eWOM is the sharing of information, opinions, and experiences about products or services by consumers through electronic channels, particularly online platforms and social media [2]. The dissemination of information via eWOM is swift and widespread, transcending geographical and temporal boundaries and creating a vast pool of information for consumers.

In the tourism and hospitality industry, eWOM is vital in shaping tourists' perceptions and expectations, directly influencing their choice of destinations, accommodations, and related services [3]. Given the intangible nature and the inability to experience tourism and hospitality products before purchase, consumers face higher perceived uncertainty and risk than tangible products [4]. As a result, tourists tend to seek advice, reviews, and discussions from those who

have already experienced the services through eWOM to reduce uncertainty and enhance trust in their decision-making process [5]. Accessing real-life experiences and objective reviews from the community helps mitigate risks and leads to more informed decisions [6]. eWOM provides detailed information about service quality, pricing, reliability, and customer satisfaction, offering tourists a comprehensive view of the products or services they are considering [7].

The volume of research on eWOM in the tourism and hospitality industry has steadily increased. With this surge in studies, it has become essential to examine the characteristics of existing publications and capture emerging trends, which have garnered significant attention from researchers. Analyses of previous literature reviews reveal substantial differences in the breadth and depth of focus. Most prior studies concentrated on general overviews of online reviews or social media in tourism and hospitality [4, 8, 9, 10]. Due to the differences in the scope and depth of focus in previous literature reviews, only a few reviews directly focus on eWOM in the hospitality and tourism sectors. As a result, this field has yet to be fully explored. Furthermore, compared to earlier reviews addressing the same scope, our study differentiates itself by the tools used and the stage and data sources analyzed. Therefore, our research contributes new findings not identified in previous reviews. For example, the study by Kumar and Wadhwa [11] examined 695 studies on eWOM in the tourism industry from 2001 to 2021 using VOSviewer and RStudio. The research identified four main aspects: e-WOM dimensions, e-WOM in tourism, performance analysis, and science mapping analysis. Through co-occurrence analysis of keywords, the study identified two major thematic areas regarding eWOM aspects and how eWOM influences tourists' decision-making and business activities. In contrast, our research, by conducting a co-occurrence analysis using authors' keywords, identified four more specific thematic research groups, including topics related to sustainable tourism, trust in the context of eWOM, and online information sharing—areas not covered by Kumar and Wadhwa. Additionally, compared to earlier reviews, the use of CiteSpace has been relatively limited; however, CiteSpace is a powerful bibliometric analysis tool that enables the visualization and analysis of the structure of scientific studies, helping to identify trends, emerging topics, and gaps in current knowledge [12].

The objective of this study is to utilize CiteSpace to conduct a bibliometric analysis of eWOM research in the tourism and hospitality industry, thereby addressing the following research questions: (1) What are the current research findings on eWOM in the tourism and hospitality industry? (2) What are the future research trends in this field? (3) What knowledge gaps still need to be explored? By synthesizing and evaluating the existing body of research, we aim to provide managers, tourism business practitioners, and researchers with a tool for analyzing the research network (including countries, organizations, authors, and journals) and identifying key research areas that require further exploration in the future.

2 Data and Research Tools

2.1 Data Sources and Selection Process

This study utilizes data from the Web of Science Core Collection, specifically indexed by the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE) and Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), as well as databases from Scopus. Given that data from Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus are widely used and globally recognized, these indexes are considered reputable and ensure that the research findings are more representative and credible [10, 13, 14].

To ensure the accuracy of search results and analysis, we followed a strict search protocol by entering the following information on the WoS and Scopus search pages:

1. Keywords ("Electronic Word of Mouth" OR "eWOM" OR "E-WOM" OR "ewom") AND "tourism"
2. Document type: "Article"
3. Language: "English"
4. Publication date range: From "January 1, 2000" to "September 1, 2024"

After searching, 1,026 articles were retrieved (366 from Scopus and 660 from WoS). Two independent members screened the titles, abstracts, and content of the articles according to the following criteria: (i) The data must explicitly reflect the impact of eWOM in the tourism and hospitality industry or explain the relationship between eWOM and factors relevant to the tourism and hospitality sectors, and (ii) The data must contribute to research on eWOM within the tourism and hospitality industry. Irrelevant studies were excluded, and a third member was consulted in cases of disagreement to make a final decision. After screening, the number of articles included in the analysis is 932. This ensured the accuracy and validity of the data.

2.2 Research Tools

Various software tools are available to perform bibliometric analysis, each with advantages and limitations [15]. In this study, we selected CiteSpace due to its superior features compared to other software [12, 16]. CiteSpace offers unique functionalities, including: (i) Multidimensional analysis: CiteSpace provides clustering analysis, keyword evolution, and co-citation network analysis, enabling users to evaluate relationships in the literature from multiple perspectives, thus highlighting potential research trends and the development of knowledge. (ii) Visualization of results: The results are displayed as visual clusters, making it easier to interpret the relationships, evolution, and research structure in a clear and comprehensible manner. (iii) Handling large datasets: CiteSpace can process large-scale databases, supporting complex quantitative analysis and ensuring the reliability and reproducibility of research findings [16].

This study used CiteSpace to perform a visual bibliometric analysis of literature related to eWOM in the tourism and hospitality sectors. The analysis process included the following steps (Figure 1): (i) Import data files containing articles extracted from Web of Science and Scopus, then remove duplicates to obtain the final dataset from 2000 to 2024; (ii) Select a time range from January 2008 (no publications were found between 2000 and 2008) to September 2024, and set each time slice to one year. Text processing terms were selected from titles, abstracts, author keywords, and expanded keywords. The selection criterion was set to the top 25, meaning that the 25 most frequently cited or appearing items from each time slice were chosen. To improve processing efficiency and enhance the clarity of the visualizations, we applied data pruning options such as Pathfinder, Pruning Sliced Networks, and Pruning the Merged Network; (iii) Select nodes representing authors, organizations, and countries to create visual collaboration networks, illustrating collaborative relationships among these nodes and identifying the most influential stakeholders in eWOM research in tourism and hospitality; (iv) Select nodes representing cited references, authors, and journals to gather information about the co-citation status in this field; (v) Select nodes representing keywords to create a co-occurrence keyword network, allowing us to understand the research development, current hotspots, and potential turning points; (vi) The analysis of each segment provides an integrated and comprehensive view of eWOM research in the tourism and hospitality industry, enabling us to establish a knowledge framework and forecast future research directions or critical focus areas [16, 17].

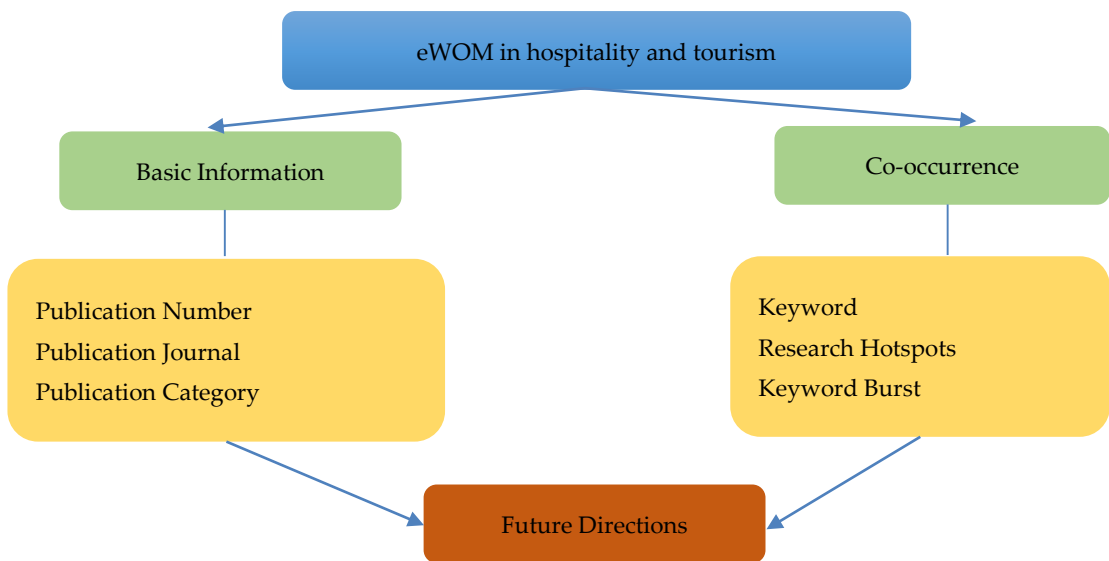


Figure 1. Study steps

3 Research Results

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

Number of Studies Over Time

The publication status of articles is often regarded as a critical indicator to measure the progress and level of interest in a particular research topic [14, 33]. Figure 2 presents the publication status of 932 articles on eWOM in the hospitality and tourism industry from 2008 to September 2024.

The annual number of publications exhibits cyclical characteristics and can be divided into three distinct periods: (1) 2008-2010, (2) 2011-2018, and (3) 2019-2024. In the first period (2008-2010), this research area was still in its infancy, with only seven articles (0.75%) published. During the second period (2011-2018), 197 articles (21.13%) were published, indicating moderate growth compared to the initial phase. The rapid development of the Internet contributed to the expansion of eWOM, and its role in tourism and hospitality began to attract increasing attention [14, 18]. The third period (2019-2024) is a significant growth phase, with nearly 80% of the articles in our dataset published. This surge can be attributed to technological advancements, the rise of social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TripAdvisor, and notably the popularity of travel review and information-sharing platforms such as Yelp, Booking.com, Airbnb, and Google Reviews), changes in the behavior of new generations of travelers (Generation Z and Millennials), the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the application of big data analytics. These factors have made eWOM a crucial topic, garnering increasing attention from researchers in the tourism and hospitality fields [9, 18, 19].

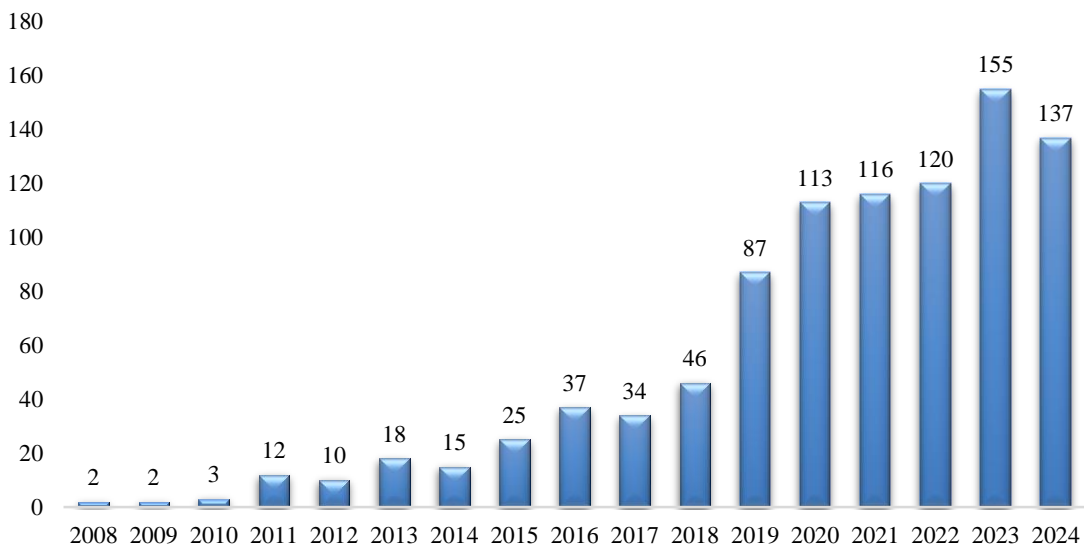


Figure 2. Annual publication statistics

Journal Publication Analysis

Table 1 lists the top ten journals that have published the most literature on eWOM in the tourism and hospitality industry, highlighting the most productive outlets in this field. Overall, journals that publish articles on eWOM in tourism and hospitality exhibit several key characteristics: (i) The journals with the highest number of publications are directly related to the tourism and hospitality sectors. Specifically, *Tourism Management* has the most articles (42), followed by the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* with 37 articles; (ii) There is a notable disparity in the number of publications across different journals: the top five journals account for over 172 articles, representing 18.79% of the total publications. In contrast, the remaining five journals contribute around 9.4%. This large discrepancy underscores the leading roles of *Tourism Management*, the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, and the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* in publishing research in this domain; (iii) The journals with higher numbers of publications tend to have high impact factors. Specifically, eight of the journals listed have impact factors exceeding 5, with the two journals publishing the most articles also having some of the highest impact factors. Notably, *Tourism Management* has an impact factor of 12.879, and *International Journal of Hospitality Management* has an impact factor of 9.5, demonstrating their substantial influence in the field. This information encourages researchers to improve the quality of their manuscripts and guides them in selecting appropriate journals for future submissions. Of course, journals not listed here also offer valuable submission opportunities, as the eWOM and tourism and hospitality fields are broad, and many other journals may be suitable depending on the specific focus of the research.

Table 1. Publication journal statistics

Ranking	Journal	5-year IF	Count	Percentage	H-index	Q
1	<i>Tourism Management</i>	12.879	42	4.59	255	Q1
2	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	9.5	37	4.04	169	Q1
3	<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality management</i>	8.8	34	3.72	126	Q1
4	<i>Current Issues in Tourism</i>	6.8	30	3.28	108	Q1
5	<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology</i>	6.4	29	3.17	51	Q1
6	<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	9.8	25	2.73	172	Q1
7	<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights</i>	4.3	17	1.86	23	Q1
8	<i>Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing</i>	5.9	16	1.75	104	Q1
9	<i>Tourism Review</i>	7.2	15	1.64	58	Q1
10	<i>International Journal of Tourism Research</i>	4.1	13	1.42	81	Q1

Publication Field Analysis

Table 2 and Figure 3 present the research fields and publication timelines of studies related to eWOM in the tourism and hospitality industry. This research topic spans multiple disciplines, including tourism, technology, economics, and the social sciences. The field of Hospitality, Sport & Tourism dominates with 36.7%, reflecting the significant focus of research on the impact of eWOM within this sector. Studies in this area have seen strong growth since 2010 and will continue to play an essential role through 2024. Additionally, fields such as Management (12.2%) and Business (8.6%) have also made notable contributions, highlighting that eWOM influences tourism behavior and is closely linked to management strategies and business operations in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Additionally, fields related to Environmental Science and Sustainability are emerging with respective shares of 6.7% and 4.6%, reflecting a growing trend in researching eWOM within sustainable and green tourism. The rise of studies in Computer Science and Information Science (1.7% and 1.8%) from 2020 to 2024 highlights the increasing importance of technology in analyzing and optimizing eWOM data, supporting the growth of the tourism industry through advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics.

Table 2. Publication category statistics

Ranking	Category	Count	Percentage
1	Hospitality, sport & tourism	342	36.7
2	Management	114	12.2
3	Business	80	8.6
4	Environmental Studies	64	6.7
5	Green & Sustainable Science & Technology	43	4.6
6	Environmental Sciences	41	4.4
7	Information Science & Library science	17	1.8
8	Computer Science, Information systems	16	1.7
9	Economics	12	1.3
10	Psychology, Multidisciplinary	11	1.2

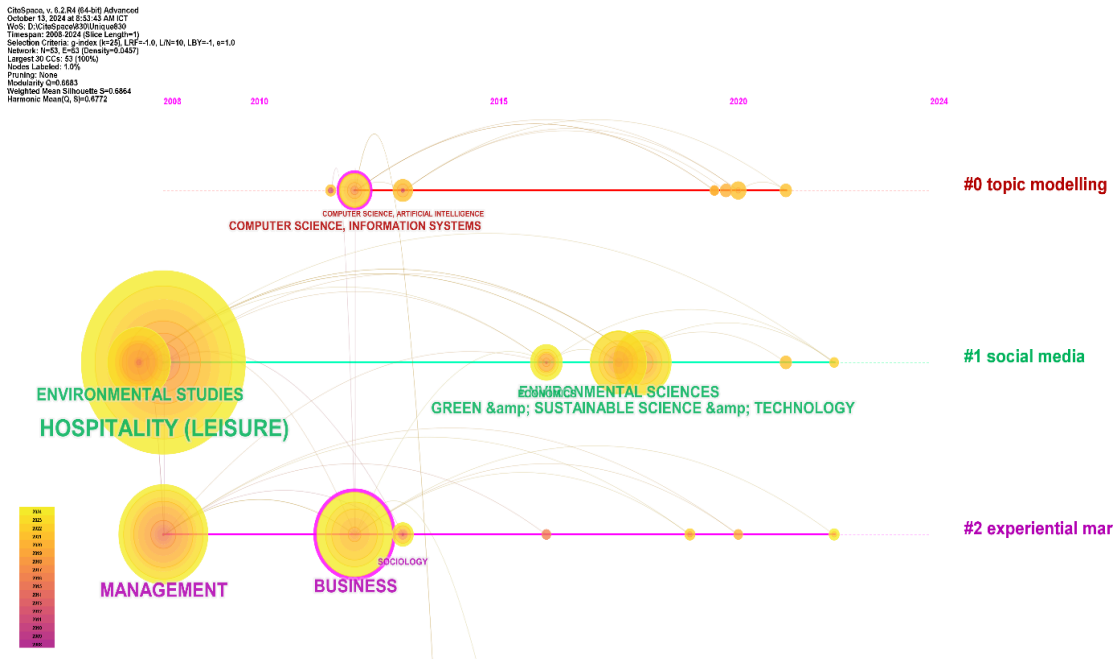


Figure 3. Timeline of Category (2008 - 2024)

3.2 Co-occurrence Development

Co-occurrence analysis focuses on keywords and terms frequently appearing in the literature to shed light on their relationships. The goal is to reveal the main themes of the research, establish connections between studies, understand past research hotspots, and predict potential future research directions [15, 19, 20].

Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

Table 3 lists the 15 most frequently co-occurring keywords in eWOM research within the tourism and hospitality industry, their occurrence frequency, centrality index, and first appearance year. Overall, "eWOM," "social media," "tourism," "impact," "satisfaction," and "online reviews" are the most frequently co-occurring keywords, with occurrence frequencies of 468, 221, 189, 155, 125, and 116, respectively. These co-occurring keywords are closely tied to eWOM in the tourism and hospitality sectors. For example, related studies have explored the relationships between eWOM, social media, and online reviews with tourism intentions, sharing knowledge about green tourism, and revisiting intentions, as well as the connections between eWOM and destination image, tourist loyalty, and tourist behavior [21–24]. These top co-occurring keywords outline the key research topics and hot areas in this field, providing valuable references for scholars to understand better the development of eWOM research in tourism and hospitality.

Table 3. Top 15 co-occurring keywords

Ranking	Count	Centrality	Year	Keyword
1	468	0.34	2009	eWOM
2	221	0.14	2013	Social media
3	189	0.17	2011	Tourism
4	155	0.11	2012	Impact
5	125	0.09	2013	Satisfaction
6	116	0.06	2009	Online reviews
7	107	0.04	2015	Hospitality
8	78	0.04	2010	Trust
9	75	0.04	2008	Model
10	74	0.03	2016	Customer satisfaction
11	68	0.03	2012	Information
12	63	0.03	2011	Behavior
13	62	0.03	2016	Reviews
14	59	0.02	2008	Destination image
15	46	0.04	2008	Communication

Figure 4 illustrates the co-occurring keyword clusters with 8,779 nodes and 526 connections. These co-occurring keywords span various topics. The main research themes on eWOM in tourism include: Travel intention (#0) focuses on factors influencing tourists' decision-making; Online reviews (#1) emphasize the role of online comments in shaping consumer behavior; Sustainable tourism (#2) reflects the growing concern for tourism development linked to environmental protection. Supplementary research clusters, such as online information sharing (#3), travel blog content (#6), and consumer consideration (#8), expand the analysis, providing insights into how eWOM impacts more detailed aspects of tourism behavior. Additionally, clusters like motives mode (#4), web-based text analysis (#5), and media influence (#7) may support further research, particularly in the fields of technology and data analysis. These research clusters can be categorized into four distinct groups as follows:

(i) Group 1, which includes clusters focused on travel intention, behavioral motivation, and consumer consideration, emphasizes the analysis of factors affecting travelers' decisions through eWOM. Studies on travel intention (Cluster #0) indicate that traveler satisfaction and experience play a crucial role in shaping destination choices, with eWOM as a powerful channel for transmitting information. For example, Ran's [25] study demonstrated that eWOM effectively promotes tourist destinations and positively impacts tourists' decisions. Additionally, Cluster #4 on behavioral motivation highlights research by Fatima [26], showing that latent motivational

factors can strongly influence tourists' intentions, such as the interaction between customers and chatbots enhancing positive perceptions and encouraging information sharing via eWOM. The consumer consideration cluster (Cluster #8) analyzes how customers choose destinations or hotels based on online reviews. Vermeulen's [27] research shows that online reviews impact tourists' decisions and help build trust in the services.

(ii) Group 2 focuses on online reviews, web-based texts, and travel blog content, clarifying the significant role of eWOM and online information-sharing in influencing tourists' behavior and decisions. Cluster #1 on online reviews examines how reviews on social media and other platforms can strongly influence customer behavior. Aksoy's [21] study confirms that eWOM is a crucial tool that helps travelers build their itineraries by consulting information shared by previous users. The web-based text cluster (Cluster #5) analyzes data from online reviews to evaluate customer satisfaction. For instance, Zhang's [24] study shows that satisfaction reviews, especially from customers with specific needs, can significantly impact the decisions of other tourists. Meanwhile, Cluster #6 on travel blog content emphasizes the influence of blogs on travel intentions. Chen's [28] study highlights that highly relevant blog content can motivate customers to choose specific destinations.

(iii) Group 3 centers on topics related to sustainable tourism and trust in the context of eWOM and online information sharing. Cluster #2 on sustainable tourism explores the role of eWOM in building trust and promoting sustainable tourism behaviors. Aarsal's [22] research shows that residents can become reliable sources of information through online communities, providing tourists with accurate perspectives and encouraging responsible tourism behaviors. The information-sharing cluster (Cluster #3) focuses on user behavior when sharing travel information online. Rong's [23] study in Hong Kong demonstrated that user-shared information can spread rapidly within communities, significantly influencing tourists' destination choices.

(iv) Group 4 examines the impact of technology and social media on tourist behavior and decision-making, mainly by adopting advanced technologies such as the web and web services. Cluster #7, focusing on influence, investigates the role of the web in enhancing tourists' decision-making effectiveness. Noroozi's [9] research showed that semantic web technologies help provide more accurate and relevant travel information, supporting tourists in selecting destinations and services. This technology enables personalized information, increasing the reliability and accuracy of online data and making it easier for users to access relevant content and make more informed decisions. These co-occurring keyword clusters provide comprehensive insights into potential research hotspots and future research directions.

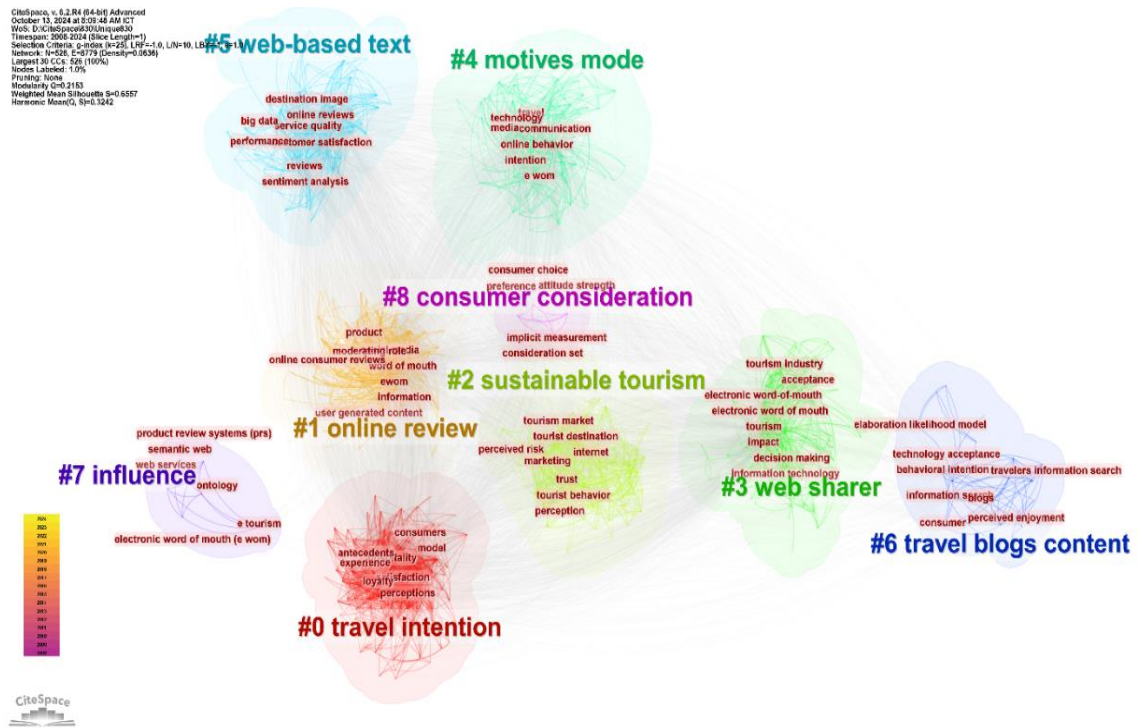


Figure 4. Keyword co-occurrence network

Analysis of Research Hotspots

Figure 5 illustrates the development of keywords from past research. Each node represents a keyword, and their connections indicate co-occurrence relationships in the studies [12]. The keywords are distributed along a timeline from 2008 to 2024, showing when they first appeared and became widely used in research. The evolution of keyword development in eWOM research within the tourism and hospitality industry reflects changes and expansions in the scope of study over time. From 2008 to 2012, keywords like "word of mouth," "eWOM," and "tourism management" emerged, indicating that early studies focused on the role of electronic word of mouth in building tourists' trust and managing tourism, mainly through online information sharing. During 2013–2016, keywords such as "customer satisfaction" and "service quality" became prevalent, reflecting a shift in research towards evaluating customer satisfaction and service quality through online reviews. Between 2017 and 2020, research expanded further with keywords like "perceived value" and "purchase intention," emphasizing the importance of perceived value and purchase intention in travel behavior. This period also explored the connections between online reviews, service quality, and customer decision-making. In the 2021–2024 phase, keywords such as "perceived value," "customer satisfaction," and "eWOM" continued to dominate, highlighting an ongoing focus on customer experience, the role of social media, and the impact of online reviews on consumer behavior in the modern tourism and hospitality

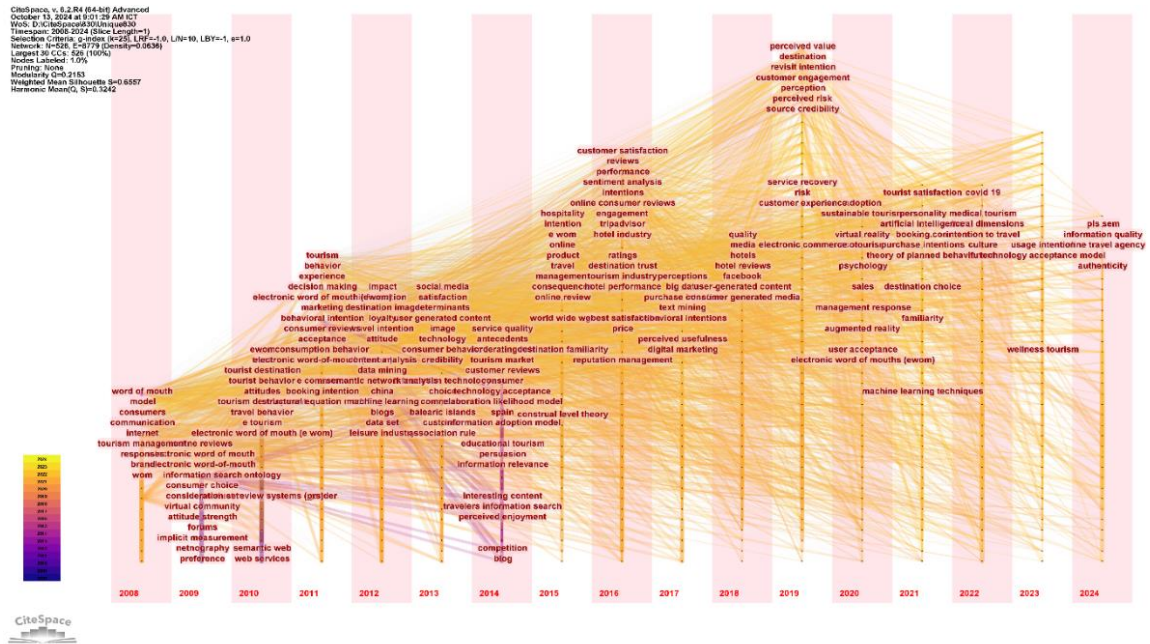


Figure 5. Keyword time zone

context. The progression of keywords over these periods demonstrates an evolution in research from understanding trust and information sharing to a deeper focus on perceived value and customer satisfaction in the digital tourism industry. These findings provide scholars with valuable insights into dynamic developments in key topics and guide them in selecting relevant research hotspots for future studies.

Keyword Burst Analysis

Figure 6 highlights the top ten research hotspots, including their first appearance, burst intensity, and duration over time. The development of keywords in eWOM research in the tourism and hospitality industry from 2008 to 2024 demonstrates a progressive expansion and deepening of the impact of eWOM, starting with early digital platforms like the Internet and communication. Over time, research has advanced, focusing on information search, user-generated content, and eWOM's influence on tourists' revisit intentions.

From 2008 to 2012, the keyword "internet" exhibited the most vigorous burst intensity (8.77), indicating the critical role of the Internet in laying the foundation for eWOM. Similarly, the keyword "communication" (burst intensity 5.52) underscored the importance of online communication in sharing information between tourists and businesses. During 2009-2015, the keyword "information search" (burst intensity 6.05) reflected the growing reliance of tourists on online information searches, while "electronic word of mouth" (burst intensity 7.32) highlighted

the increasing significance of eWOM in travel decision-making. In the 2012-2017 period, the keywords "information" (burst intensity 6.79) and "responses" (burst intensity 5.21) emerged, focusing on how information is shared and how customers respond to eWOM in the tourism and hospitality sectors. From 2017 to 2020, keywords like "user-generated content" (burst intensity 4.01) and "Facebook" (burst intensity 4.55) rose to prominence, reflecting the growing influence of user-generated content and social media in spreading eWOM. From 2019 to 2024, keywords such as "performance" (burst intensity 3.94) and "revisit intention" (burst intensity 4.04) became significant, concentrating on service performance evaluation and the impact of eWOM on tourists' intentions to revisit. This development underscores the role of eWOM as an indispensable tool in shaping travel decisions and experiences. Thus, future research can focus on these areas for further exploration.

4 Research Gaps

Research on eWOM in the hospitality and tourism industry is rapidly growing and holds significant potential for future expansion. Based on the analysis of existing research clusters, we identify the following potential research directions that should be further developed in the future:

(i) The research clusters #3 Web Sharer and #7 Influence highlight the role of eWOM in sharing behaviors and its influence on current online platforms. However, new social media platforms such as TikTok, Threads, and Instagram Reels have not been thoroughly explored in the context of eWOM research. This gap calls for studies focusing on how these new platforms

Top 10 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

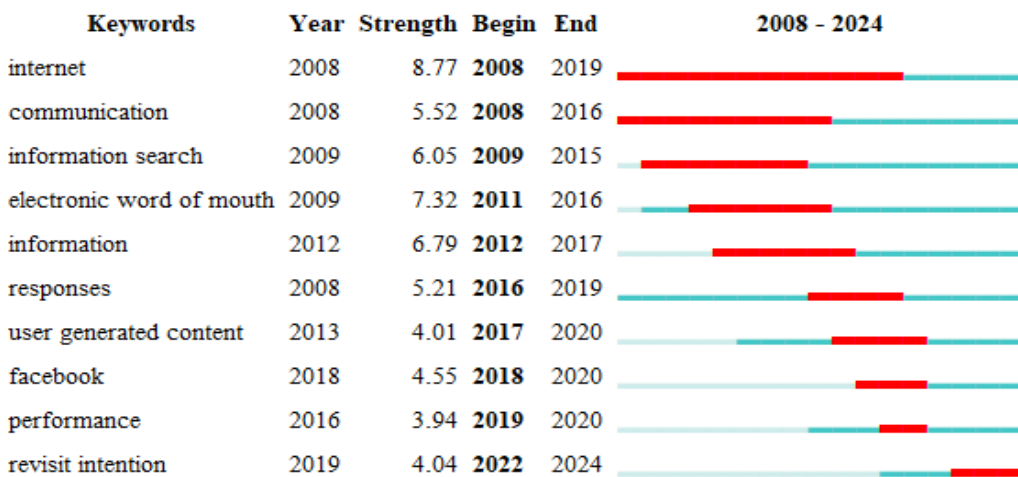


Figure 6. Top 10 keywords with strong bursts

shape trust, emotions, and decision-making in tourism, which can help businesses optimize their marketing strategies on these emerging channels.

(ii) Cluster #2 Sustainable Tourism emphasizes the impact of eWOM on perceptions of sustainable tourism. However, current research lacks insights into how eWOM influences customer behavior in choosing sustainable services and destinations. A critical research direction is Understanding stakeholders' role in sharing sustainable information through eWOM to enhance trust and promote responsible tourism behavior.

(iii) Cluster #1 Online Review indicates that online reviews play a key role in customer decision-making in tourism. However, a gap exists in optimizing these platforms to improve the quality of information, increase trust, and enhance customer experience. Future research should focus on designing accurate, transparent review systems that can effectively boost customer satisfaction.

(iv) From #0 Travel Intention, it is evident that service experiences and eWOM influence tourists' intentions to revisit. However, there remains a gap in analyzing how these factors impact customer loyalty and the decision to return. This is crucial for developing service and marketing strategies to increase customer retention.

(v) The clusters #5 Web-Based Text and #7 Influence emphasize the role of technology in content analysis and eWOM influence. However, integrating artificial intelligence (AI), semantic web, and big data analytics to personalize travel experiences and optimize information delivery remains underexplored. Research in this direction could lead to breakthrough improvements, helping businesses provide more accurate and tailored information to meet customer needs.

5 Conclusion

Since the early 2000s, the research field of eWOM in the tourism and hospitality industry has experienced rapid growth, contributing significantly to the global advancement of these sectors. To assess its evolution over the past two decades and identify future trends, this study systematically reviews current publications related to eWOM in tourism and hospitality using bibliometric analysis with CiteSpace software. Compared to previous reviews, this study is distinct in its methodology and the period and data sources analyzed, offering new insights into the field.

The main contributions of this research are twofold: first, key factors and their relationships within this field are identified using performance analysis across various metrics; second, the thematic structure of the field is analyzed and illustrated through keyword co-occurrence and citation analysis. These findings suggest more relevant research directions for future studies to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness.

However, this study has several limitations. One limitation is that it only provides an overview and keyword co-occurrence analysis. Additionally, the analysis does not include literature in languages other than English. Therefore, a more detailed, extended review that provides for collaboration and co-citation analyses would offer a more comprehensive picture of research issues. Moreover, expanding the search strategy across various databases and beyond the English language would provide a broader view of eWOM research in tourism and hospitality. By considering multiple databases and languages, future research can push the boundaries of this study to integrate a more inclusive bibliometric analysis of the eWOM field in tourism and hospitality.

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